



SERMON NOTES

US N^o. 114

Date: Sept. 1st, 2013

Title: The King of Philippi

#22 in the Series on the Acts of the Apostles

1. Visiting the churches

- a. Paul and Silas take the land route to visit the churches Paul and Barnabas had begun nearly 5 years earlier. Silas seems to have been a strong and energetic man; appears that he worked better with Paul than Barnabas.
- b. Young Timothy, possibly around 14 years old, joins the team at Derbe.
 - i. Timothy was born in Lystra (*cf.* Acts 20:4); his Jewish mother was Eunice whose mother was Lois (*cf.* 2 Tim. 1:5) In Timothy's case, God used his grandmother and mother to prepare him for His service which should be highly encouraging to all of us. God's perspective extends beyond the horizon while we often limit ourselves through tunnel vision.
 - ii. Probably became a believer around Paul's first visit 5+ years earlier; had a good witness among the brethren. Paul then chose young Timothy to serve with him based on the recommendations of members of several congregations.
 - iii. Paul had Timothy circumcised, not for the sake of his salvation but so there would be less to hinder ministry among the Jews. *"By Jewish law Timothy was a Jew, because he was the son of Jewish mother, but because he was uncircumcised he was technically an apostate Jew. If Paul wished to maintain his links with the synagogue, he could not be seen to countenance apostasy."* (Bruce) The wording of Acts 16:3 implies that it was Paul himself who performed the circumcision
 1. *"As Paul saw it, being a good Christian did not mean being a bad Jew."* (Longenecker)
 2. Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism.
 3. While Timothy was a considered a Jew, another young helper, Titus, was not and Paul insisted that in Titus' case that he did not have to be circumcised (*cf.* Gal. 2:3-5).
 - iv. Timothy's history is pretty well known and his ministry went from youth to maturity.
- c. Paul and Silas encouraged the churches and shared the Jerusalem decree.

2. Direction by closed doors

- a. Paul and Silas determine to go west into Asia (Colossi, Ephesus, etc.), but are blocked by the Lord so they move further northwest and then try going northeast into Bithynia but are blocked a second time. Paul, beautifully responsive to the Holy Spirit, was willing to lay down his will and his plans for the direction that the Holy Spirit brings.
 - i. We note that the Holy Spirit actually forbade Paul to do something we would normally think of as good – preaching God's Word. However, the Spirit was guiding this work and Paul wasn't the right person in the right place at the right time to begin bringing the gospel to the

- Roman Province of Asia Minor. There was certainly nothing wrong with Paul's desire to preach the word in Asia; but it wasn't God's timing, so this was forbidden by the Holy Spirit.
- ii. Paul was guided by hindrance. The Holy Spirit often guides as much by the closing of doors as He does by the opening of doors. We know that some sort of sickness struck Paul during his first trip (*cf. Gal. 4:13*) which may have slowed him down and impaired him from going west or north. Fever in Perga?
 - b. We don't know how the Holy Spirit told Paul that he and his companions should not go into Asia. It may have been through a prophet, a vision, an inner conviction, or some other circumstance. The Holy Spirit guides us to the right places, but he also guides us away from the wrong places. As we seek God's will, we need to know what God wants us to do and where he wants us to go, but we also need to know what God does not want us to do and where he does not want us to go. To know God's will does not mean we must hear His audible voice. He leads in different ways, so when seeking God's will:
 - i. Make sure your plan is in harmony with God's Word;
 - ii. Ask mature Christians for their advice;
 - iii. Check your own motives to see if you are seeking to do what you want or what you think God wants;
 - iv. Pray for God to open and close the doors as He desires.
 - c. Paul has a vision of the man from Macedonia asking for help.
 - i. Grotius supposes that this was the guardian angel of Macedonia, and refers for illustration to Dan 10:12-13, Dan 10:20-21. But there seems to be no foundation for this opinion.
 - ii. The cry of the unbelievers, come & help us by bringing the gospel which is the best possible help. It is the church's responsibility to respond to the cry.
 - 1. By praying and preaching we are able to pull down the kingdom of Satan. The Gospel destroys superstition and idolatry, enlightens the eyes of men, and turns them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and saves them from utter ruin and destruction
 - iii. Paul's missionary team did not hesitate to follow him on the basis of this call.
 - d. Significant shift from *"they"* to *"we"* in this verse probably means that Luke joined the missionaries in Troas. Perhaps he even came as Paul's personal doctor. God wanted Paul and his team to go to Troas and pick up a doctor named Luke. Because God said *"no"* to Paul these two times, we have a gospel and a Book of Acts written by Doctor Luke; he was an eyewitness to most of the remaining incidents recorded in this book.
 - i. Luke joins in Troas; an Antiochene, an uncircumcised Gentile convert. Luke appears to have a good knowledge of nautical terms, perhaps practiced medicine in and around ships.
 - e. *"That they 'sailed straight for Samothrace' is quite revealing, because this is a nautical expression that means the wind was at their backs. So perfect were the winds that they sailed 156 miles in just two days, whereas returning the other way at a later time (Acts 20:6) it took five days."* (Hughes)

3. Philippi was *“the place where the armies of Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius in the decisive battle of the second Roman civil war in 42 b.c.”* (Hughes) Because of this, many Roman soldiers retired in the area and Philippi became a Roman colony which was more fit than any other in the empire to be considered the representative of Imperial Rome.
- a. The importance of the city
- i. There were gold and silver mine which had been worked as far back as the time of the Phoenicians.
 - ii. Founded by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great because there was no more strategic site in all Europe. Philippi commanded the road from Europe to Asia, for through the pass the road must go.
 - iii. At Philippi that Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius after their assassination Julius Cæsar, and thereby decided the whole future of the Roman Empire. Philippi attained to the dignity of becoming a Roman Colony. It was the custom of Rome to send out parties of veteran soldiers, who had served their time, and who had been granted citizenship, and to settle them in strategic road centers. Usually these parties consisted of 300 veterans with their wives and children. These colonies were the focal points of the great Roman road systems. The roads were so engineered that reinforcements could speedily be sent from one colony to another. They were founded to keep the peace, and to command the strategic centers in Rome’s far-flung Empire.
 - iv. *“These colonies had one great characteristic. Wherever they were they were little fragments of Rome, and their pride in their Roman citizenship was their dominating characteristic. The Roman language was spoken; Roman dress was worn; Roman customs were observed; their magistrates had Roman titles, and carried out the same ceremonies as were carried out in Rome itself. Wherever they were these colonies were stubbornly and unalterably Roman. They would never have dreamt of becoming assimilated to the people amidst whom they were set. They were parts of Rome, miniature cities of Rome, and they never forgot it. We can hear the Roman pride breathing through the charge against Paul and Silas in Acts 16:20,21, ‘These men are Jews, and they are trying to teach and to introduce laws and customs which it is not right for us to observe—for we are Romans.’ ‘You are a colony of heaven.’ Paul wrote to the Philippian Church (cf. Phil. 3:20). Just as the Roman colonist never forgot in any environment that he was a Roman, so they must never forget in any society that they are Christians. Nowhere were men prouder of being Roman citizens than in these colonies. And such was Philippi.”*
- b. The Jewish prayer meeting with Lydia in attendance.
- i. The fact that the Jews of Philippi had no synagogue and met by the river means that there were not many Jewish men in Philippi. *“Had there been ten Jewish men, they would have sufficed to constitute a synagogue. No number of women would compensate for the absence of even one man necessary to make up the quorum of ten.”* (Bruce)

- ii. Lydia was from Thyatira which was well known as a center for this purple dye and fabric made from it and it was a valued, luxurious product. The dyes used for making purple were expensive and highly regarded. Later, there was a church in Thyatira also, and it was one of the seven churches addressed in Revelation (cf. Rev. 2:18-29).
- iii. The European ministry begins with the conversion of a woman. Before Lydia was converted, the Lord had opened her heart. This is a work God must do in all who believe, because as Jesus said, *"no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."* (cf. Jn. 6:44). It is a most important element in evangelism to ask God to open hearts, for without this there can be no genuine conversion. She invites Paul et al to stay at her house, and we read that her household follows Christ.
 - 1. Jer. 31:3, *"The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.'"*
- c. The Python Girl bears witness to the ministry (cf. Mt. 8:29, Mk. 3:11, Luke 4:41, 8:28)
 - i. Because demons are created beings, not *"gods"* themselves, we believe that they cannot read minds, nor actually foretell the future. But they can read and predict human behavior, and can attempt to steer events towards a previously predicted conclusion.
 - ii. Paul did not need a demonic letter of reference, like Jesus, who often told demons to be silent, even when they told the truth about Him (cf. Mt. 8:28-34, Mark 3:11-12). The idea behind that *"very hour"* is that the demon came out immediately.
 - 1. Hos. 11:4, *"I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."*
 - iii. While Jesus cast out demons with His own authority, Paul was careful to speak to demons only in the authority of Jesus Christ. He spoke beyond the afflicted girl to the demon itself with this authority of Jesus. (cf. Eph. 6:12)
 - iv. The masters of the demon possessed girl cared nothing for the girl herself, only for their ability to exploit her demonic possession for money. They were occult *"pimps,"* prostituting her spiritually.
- d. Angry masters and jail.
 - i. There are two rationales for the arrest of Paul and Silas.
 - 1. They were most obviously Jewish and is indicated by how they began their accusation: *"These men, being Jews."* Luke was a Gentile, and Timothy was only half Jewish. *"Anti-Jewish sentiment lay very near the surface in pagan antiquity."* (Bruce) The objection that these men were Jews is even more interesting knowing the Jewish community in Philippi was small. Roman citizens had specific, zealously guarded civil rights while non-citizens had no civil rights, and were subject to the whims of both the multitude and the magistrates. Since they assumed Paul and Barnabas were not Roman citizens, they were offended that these obviously Jewish men harassed Roman citizens with their strange religion of a crucified Savior.

2. *"...they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."*
Paul habitually preached the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus is Messiah, he is of course also Lord, "*Kurios*." The main challenge was to the lordship of Cæsar, which, though certainly "*political*" was also profoundly "*religious*." Cæsar demanded worship as well as "*secular*" obedience; not just taxes, but sacrifices. He was well on the way to becoming the supreme divinity in the Greco-Roman world, maintaining his vast empire not simply by force, though there was of course plenty of that, but by the development of a flourishing religion that seemed to be trumping most others either by absorption or by greater attraction.

ii. Though they were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned for doing good, Paul and Silas were filled with joy, and sang praises to God. It seemed as if nothing would make them stop praising God. Anyone can be happy in pleasant circumstances, but real joy comes only from within, and is a gift available to Christians at all times.

1. Tertullian said, *"The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven."*

e. Deliverance. This earthquake was clearly supernatural.

i. It would have been easy for Paul and Silas to escape thinking God provided another miraculous jailbreak. But to them, the lives of others were more important than their own personal freedom and comfort. In not escaping, they showed tremendous discernment. The circumstances said, *"escape."* But love said, *"Stay for the sake of this one soul."* They were not guided merely by circumstances, but by what love compelled.

ii. The jailer goes to take his life, because under Roman law and custom, guards who allowed their prisoners to escape received the penalty of their escaped prisoners. Paul stops him.

iii. The jailer was so awed by Paul and Silas and by the love they showed to him, and from their ability to take joy even in misery, that he instantly wanted the kind of life that they had. God wants our lives to be natural magnets drawing people to Him. Our Christianity should make others want what we have with God; this was as dramatic as it sounds.

iv. *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* Paul's answer to the keeper of the prison is a classic statement of the essence of the gospel. This is salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone. The full idea of the word "*believe*" (Greek "*pistis*") means *"to trust in, rely on, and cling to"* the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Philippian jailer, Paul did not direct him to counseling. He did not give him a lecture on theology. He did not discuss the spiritual terminology of the jailer. He did not talk about sacraments or even churches.

v. The jailer and his family saw no reason to delay baptism; they were baptized that very night, and all this began around midnight (cf. Acts 16:25).

vi. If Paul and Silas were released the day after their beating, arrest, and imprisonment, why did God send the earthquake? We see that the earthquake had absolutely *nothing* to do with freeing Paul and Silas from prison. But it had everything to do with the salvation of a certain prison guard and his household.

vii. Magistrates now try to “sweep” them out of town, but they now bring to light their Roman citizenship. This has been a very serious offence on the part of the magistrates; everyone knows it and so when Paul asks for a public apology, he gets it. And the point of the whole thing is this, *“This is what the kingdom of God looks like when it’s on the road, arriving on earth as in heaven.”*

1. Prayer and testimony bring healing and hope to people, but this will often result in a challenge to an economic or political power structure at one level or another. This may well bring resistance against the message, and perhaps suffering for the church.
2. The church is not in the business of simply saying *“a plague on all your houses”* to all local magistrates and governments. Rather, the church must remind them of their God-given duty, must hold them to account. Only after this apology did they agree to go and then they would not be hurried out of town until they had brought their work there to a conclusion.

viii. The missionary David Livingstone summarized the spirit of Paul when he said, *“I am prepared to go anywhere, so long as it is forward.”* (Cited in Barclay)

4. Lordship / subversive

- a. Kurios
- b. What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Take aways

- a. The Women (Lois, Eunice, Lydia and the slave girl)
- b. The people drawn by God (Lydia, the slave girl, the jailer)
- c. The families that follow (Timothy’s, Lydia’s, the jailers); not saved merely because of the “one.” They were all saved because they trusted the word of God and the Jesus revealed to us through the word.
- d. Summary:
 - i. Scared into religion? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God.
 - ii. Emotional religion? Jailer grabs sword to kill himself and then accepts Christ; carried from suicidal fear to abounding joy in just a few minutes
 - iii. Sudden conversion? In that hour...
 - iv. Narrow Gospel? I am the way...

!Cæsar

!Shameful treatment of citizens

Phil. 2 aka Cæsar; Phil. 3 Paul’s parallel to the Philippians.

Is Jesus truly Lord of your life?