SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Sixteen, Verses 1–40

Come Over to Macedonia and Help Us — a young man named Timothy, two closed doors, a call across the sea, and three people set free in Philippi

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Paul takes Timothy, is forbidden by the Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia, and sees a man of Macedonia calling for help; in Philippi the Lord opens Lydia's heart, a slave-girl is freed from a spirit, and at midnight in the stocks Paul and Silas sing until an earthquake brings a jailer to his knees: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 16:1–40

Timothy · guidance · Lydia · prison · jailer

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Six movements from Lystra to Philippi and out of the prison

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"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;" — Acts 16:25

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 16:1–40

Come Over to Macedonia and Help Us — The Spirit says no twice, then calls the gospel into Europe — a merchant, a slave-girl and a jailer

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 16 in 6 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:31

"They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.""

† Before the Passage

Acts 15 ended with a parting. Barnabas took John Mark to Cyprus; Paul chose Silas, one of the two men the Jerusalem church had sent with the council's letter, and went overland "through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches" (15:41). This is the start of Paul's second missionary journey. He returns first to the towns of the first journey — Derbe and Lystra, where he had been stoned and left for dead (14:19) — and carries with him the decrees of the Jerusalem council (16:4).

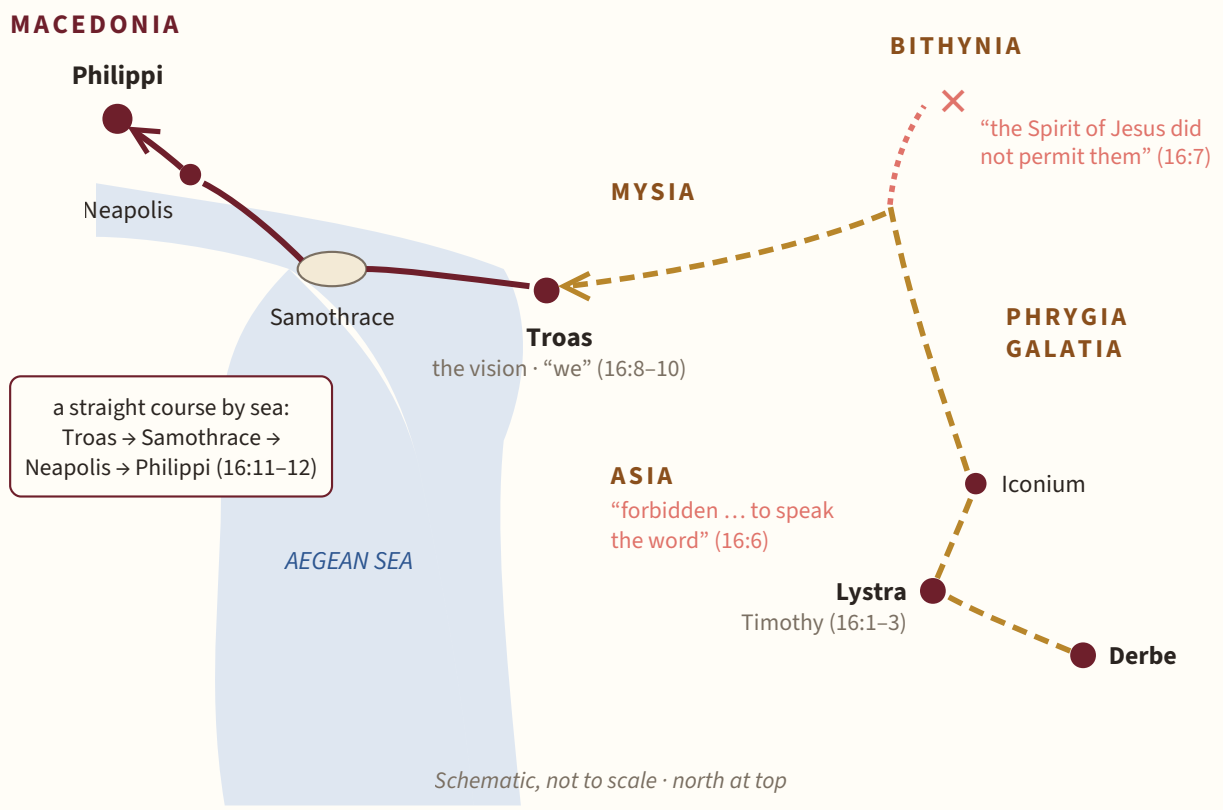
Then the plan runs out. Twice the Spirit closes a door — no preaching in Asia, no entry into Bithynia — and the team ends up at Troas on the coast of the Aegean Sea. There a vision calls them across the water to Macedonia. In verse 10 the story suddenly says "we": the writer, Luke, has joined the team. Guzik: "Because God said "no" to Paul these two times, we have a gospel and a Book of Acts written by Doctor Luke."

Philippi was "a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony" (v12) — a little Rome on Greek soil, proud of its citizens and their customs (v21). Guzik, with Bruce, notes there seem to have been too few Jewish

men for a synagogue, so on the Sabbath Paul looked for “a place of prayer” by the river. Philippi becomes the church Paul loves most warmly; years later he writes to them from another prison, “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20).

Watch the three people Luke chooses to show us in Philippi. A wealthy businesswoman from Asia, a worshiper of God; an enslaved girl owned by men who profit from a spirit in her; a Roman jailer who is about to fall on his own sword. Different in every way, each one is set free by Jesus Christ. The chapter ends with Paul — beaten, jailed, and a Roman citizen all along — refusing to sneak out of town.

FIGURE · FROM LYSTRA TO PHILIPPI



Trace the gold line from Derbe and Lystra north toward Bithynia, see the door shut twice, then follow the team west to Troas and across the sea to Philippi.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:1–5

A Disciple Named Timothy

A new partner from Lystra, a hard decision for the sake of the Jews, and churches growing daily

[1] *Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And* *a disciple was there, named Timothy*, *the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,* [2] *and he was* *well spoken of by the brethren* *who were in Lystra and Iconium.* [3] *Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him* *because of the Jews who were in those parts*, *for they all knew that his father was a Greek.* [4] *Now while they*

> *were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.* [5] *So* ✩ *the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were* ✩ *increasing in number daily.*
>
> ACTS 16:1–5

> *"and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 3:15

μαρτυρέω

MARTYREŌ · "WELL SPOKEN OF" · G3140

To bear witness, testify — the root of our word "martyr." In the passive, as here, it means to be well attested, to have a good report. Timothy "was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium" (v2) — two churches, not one. The same qualification is asked of the seven in Acts 6:3, "men of good reputation." Paul did not choose a partner on gifting alone; he asked what the believers who knew Timothy best had seen.

δόγμα

DOGMA · "DECREE" · G1378

A decision or ordinance — what "seemed good" (*dokeō*) to someone in authority. Luke uses it of Caesar's decree (Luke 2:1) and here of the Jerusalem council's letter (v4). Paul circumcised Timothy for the sake of the Jews (v3), and in the same breath delivered a decree saying Gentiles need not be circumcised. Not a contradiction: one was a matter of love for an audience, the other a matter of the gospel.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Paul quickly found a replacement for Barnabas and Mark: "Paul was impressed enough with Timothy to ask him to join their missionary team," and "No single worker in God's kingdom is irreplaceable." With Bruce, he explains that a Jewish mother made Timothy a Jew in the eyes of the synagogue, so circumcising him removed a stumbling block; it did not touch his salvation. "Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism." And the result: "Their work was successful because their first interest was in strengthening the churches."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls Paul Timothy's spiritual father: "Paul was a spiritual father, and as such a one we have him here adopting Timothy." Paul accepted him first just as he was: "Paul made no difficulty of taking Timothy to be his companion, though he was uncircumcised." He circumcised him only to open Jewish doors, because "He knew Timothy was a man likely to do a great deal of good among them," and Henry warns that this was no precedent for requiring circumcision. The decrees did their work: "And thus the church increased in numbers daily."

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:6–10

Come Over to Macedonia

Two doors closed by the Spirit, a vision at Troas, and the gospel called into Europe

> 6 *They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been △forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;* 7 *and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and △the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;* 8 *and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.* 9 *A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."* 10 *When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that △God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*
>
> ACTS 16:6–10

> *"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*
>
> ACTS 1:8

κωλύω

KŌLYŌ · "FORBID, PREVENT" · G2967

To hinder, prevent, forbid. Earlier in Acts the word asked whether anything could hinder the gospel: "What prevents me from being baptized?" (8:36). Here the One doing the hindering is the Holy Spirit (v6), and in verse 7 "the Spirit of Jesus did not permit (*eaō*, G1439) them." Luke does not tell us how — a prophet's word, a circumstance, an inner check. He tells us who. Asia was not closed forever; Paul spends more than two years at Ephesus in chapter 19.

ὅραμα

HORAMA · "VISION" · G3705

Something seen — the word for Peter's rooftop vision and Cornelius's angel (10:3, 17). The man of Macedonia does not ask for a preacher; he asks for help (*boētheō*, G997). Verse 10 adds a careful word: "concluding" (*symbibazō*, G4822), putting things together. Paul and his team weighed the vision with the closed doors and came to one mind: God had called (*proskaleomai*, G4341) them.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik's summary is four words: "Paul was guided by hindrance." Paul wanted Asia, "But it was the Holy Spirit's plan to lead him there" — later, not now. Both closed doors pushed him west to Troas, and the man of Macedonia asked for help: "The greatest help we can bring anyone is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ." Guzik reads the sudden "we" as Luke joining the team, and he sees grace even in the no: "Because God said "no" to Paul these two times, we have a gospel and a Book of Acts written by Doctor Luke."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry treats the closed doors as providence to be followed, not fought: “We must now follow providence, and submit to the guidance of that pillar of cloud and fire.” The vision itself teaches him something about how God calls: “We may sometimes infer a call of God from a call of man.” And Paul’s instant obedience is the model: “God’s calls must be complied with immediately.” Even where we are slow to finish, “we may be in our endeavours, and this shall be accepted.”

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:11–15

The Lord Opened Her Heart

A place of prayer by the river, a seller of purple, and the first household in Europe

11 *So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;*
12 *and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.*
13 *And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.*
14 *A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*
15 *And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.*

ACTS 16:11–15

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

JOHN 6:44

διανοίγω

DIANOIGŌ · “OPENED” · G1272

To open completely, open through — the compound of *anoigō* with *dia*. Luke loves it: the risen Jesus at Emmaus, when “their eyes were opened,” and when “He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:31, 45). Lydia was already “a worshiper of God” (*sebomai*, G4576) and was already listening, but “the Lord opened her heart to respond” (*prosechō*, G4337, to pay attention, to hold the mind toward). Paul spoke; the Lord opened.

προσευχή

PROSEUCHĒ · “PRAYER, PLACE OF PRAYER” · G4335

The ordinary word for prayer, here used for a place — the interlinear prints “[place of] prayer” (v13). Where there was no synagogue, Jews and God-fearers met in the open, often by water. Luke uses the word again in verse 16 (“going to the place of prayer”) and of Paul and Silas’s praying in the dark (v25 uses the verb, *proseuchomai*). The European church began at a prayer meeting of women by a river.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik draws a lesson for evangelism from the order of verse 14: Paul spoke, but the Lord opened. "Therefore, a most important element in evangelism is asking God through prayer to open hearts." Lydia's faith showed at once — "Immediately, Lydia set about doing good" — and her open home is an example: "Her hospitality was touching and a wonderful example." He enjoys the surprise of the story: "This woman was the first convert in Europe, and one might say that the Macedonian man turned out to be a woman."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermons on this chapter are not published in text, but a Ligonier clip of his teaching states the principle he always drew from texts like verse 14. He asks, "Where does faith come from?" and answers with what he calls the heart of Reformed theology: "If there's one phrase that captures the essence of reformed theology, it is the little phrase, regeneration precedes faith." Faith is not a power a man works up on his own; God changes the heart and gives faith. Luke's order — the Lord opened, then she responded — is that principle in a single sentence.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Lydia, the First European Convert" (20 Sept 1891, on 16:14) finds four forces at work: providence bringing Paul and Lydia together, Lydia's own diligence, Paul's simple talk by the river, and the Spirit. Her business was ordinary — "Thyatira was a city famous for its dyers" — and her meeting small: "It does not appear that there were any men, but only a few women." Then the key: "Lydia's heart was opened to attend to the gospel, that is, to desire it." "So, first, her heart was opened to listen very intently." And the fruit was a family: "Her household believed, and were baptized with her."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry puts it in four words: "Conversion-work is heart-work." Left alone, "An unconverted soul is shut up, and fortified against Christ," and only God can open it. Lydia's devotion was real but not enough: "It is not enough to be worshippers of God, but we must be believers in Jesus Christ." He likes that she was a working woman: "Religion does not call us from our business in the world, but directs us in it." He commends her generous hospitality to the preachers as well.

IV
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:16–24

A Slave-Girl Set Free, Two Men in Stocks

A spirit cast out, a business ruined, and the missionaries beaten and jailed

16 *It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having* ⚠ *a spirit of divination met us,*
who was ⚠ *bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.* 17 *Following after Paul and us, she kept crying*
out, saying, "These men are △ *bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of*
salvation." 18 *She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the*
spirit, " 🜨 *I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.*
19 *But when her masters saw that* ⚠ *their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them*
into the market place before the authorities, 20 *and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they*
said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, 21 *and are proclaiming customs which it is not*

lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.” [22] *The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.* [23] *When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;* [24] *and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

ACTS 16:16–24

Πύθων

PYTHŌN · “DIVINATION (PYTHON)” · G4436

Literally, the girl had “a spirit, a python” — the interlinear reads “of Python.” The name belonged to the serpent of Greek myth slain by Apollo at Delphi, and then to the god’s oracle; Guzik, with Boice, links the spirit to Apollo. Its only New Testament use. Her masters made money by her “fortune-telling” (v16). What she cried out was true (v17), but Paul would not let a demon advertise the gospel.

ξύλον

XYLON · “STOCKS” · G3586

Simply “wood” — a tree, a club, a beam. Here it is the wooden stocks that clamped the prisoners’ feet, sometimes spread wide to cause pain. The same word is used of the cross: Christ “bore our sins in His body on the cross” — on the *xylon*, the tree (1 Peter 2:24). The men who preach the One who hung on the wood now sit with their feet fastened in it.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains the girl’s value to her owners: “This girl, though demon possessed, was a source of money for her owners as a fortune teller.” Her words were true, so why was Paul annoyed? “He did not appreciate the source of the recommendation, and he didn’t need demonic approval of his work.” He quotes Bruce on the instant deliverance — “The words had scarcely left his lips when she was released from its power.” Then the backlash: lost profit, a charge of being Jews, a mob, a beating, and stocks. “After such a bad beating, they were put in uncomfortable conditions.”

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees Satan’s cunning in the girl’s true words: “It troubled him to see the damsel made an instrument of Satan to deceive people,” so Paul cast the spirit out to make the true way of salvation plain. The masters’ fury had one root: “See here what evil the love of money is the root of!” They dressed it up as patriotism, and it worked, for “The Romans were always very jealous of innovations in religion.” Yet even this was used: “The preachers of the gospel would never have had an opportunity of speaking to the magistrates” otherwise.

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:25–34

Believe in the Lord Jesus

Songs at midnight, an earthquake, a sword drawn — and a jailer’s question answered

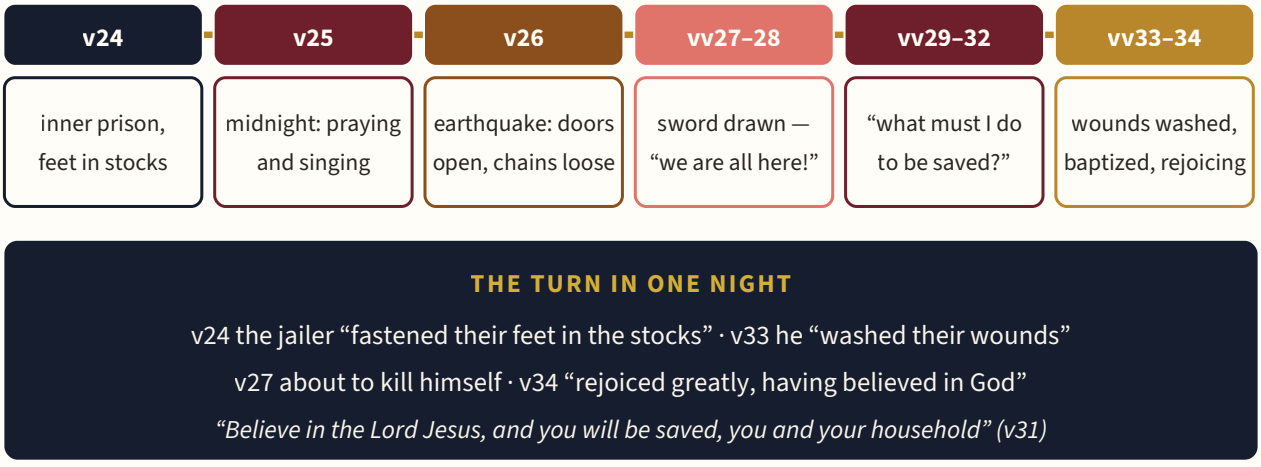
[25] *But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;* [26] *and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened.*

> 27 *When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.* 28 *But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"* 29 *And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,* 30 *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* 31 *They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* 32 *And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.* 33 *And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.* 34 *And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*
>
> ACTS 16:25–34

> *"He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death And broke their bands apart."*
>
> PSALM 107:14

> *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;"*
>
> EPHESIANS 2:8

FIGURE · ONE NIGHT IN THE PRISON



Follow the six panels across one night, then look at the bottom band: the same hands that fastened the stocks wash the wounds.

Ὑμνέω

HYMNEŌ · "SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE" · G5214

To sing a hymn, to praise in song. At the Last Supper, "After singing a hymn," Jesus and the disciples went out to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30, the same verb). The tense is imperfect — they kept on praying and singing — and "the prisoners were listening" (*epakroaomai*, G1874), a word for an audience straining to hear. Bleeding backs, feet in the stocks, and the inner prison became a church service.

σῴζω

SŌZŌ · "BE SAVED" · G4982

To rescue, deliver, keep safe, heal — and, in the gospel, to save from sin and judgment. The slave-girl had shouted "the way of salvation" (v17); now a terrified jailer asks, "what must I do to be saved?" (v30). The answer is one command — "Believe" (*pisteuō*, G4100, aorist imperative) — "in the Lord Jesus." "Your household" does not mean his family is saved by his faith: the word was spoken to all in the house (v32), and the household believed (v34).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik calls the earthquake "clearly supernatural," yet it is the singing he dwells on: "The Holy Spirit used the courageous praise of Paul and Silas in their terrible adversity." The prisoners did not run, and the jailer, sword drawn, was stopped by Paul's shout. His question gets the simplest answer in the Bible, and Guzik will not add to it: "This is salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone." Paul "pointed this obviously repentant man to faith in Jesus Christ," and the man's washing of wounds, his baptism and his joy followed that same night.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul preached Acts 16:11–34 on 12 December 2004 as "The Philippian Jailer." Only audio is published; Ligonier's description of the sermon says the jailer asked his question "When the Philippian jailer realized that Paul and Silas did not use an earthquake as an opportunity to escape from prison," and that Sproul shows how God "providentially sovereignly brings people to the end of themselves" "in order to lead them to Christ." The earthquake, the sword and the open doors were God backing a proud man into a corner so that he would ask the only question that matters.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Belief, Baptism, Blessing" (9 Feb 1890, on 16:33–34) stresses how fast the change came — converted at once, confessing at once, useful at once, joyful at once. The earthquake frightened him, but not mainly of the magistrates: "but he is afraid of what is to follow after death!" He was given one thing to do: "He had been told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." By morning "He had passed from death unto life!" Spurgeon pictures the new believer at work: "I think I see how tenderly the jailor washed their stripes." "And then he rejoiced that all his household were saved."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry admires two men praying in the dark: "No place, no time, amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God," and "We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart." "Those that are companions in suffering should join in prayer." He reads the jailer as the model of a man truly awakened — convinced of sin, asking what to do, and told to believe. And the change shows at once in kindness and joy: "Those who have themselves tasted the comforts of religion should do what they can to bring others to the taste of them."

VI
MOVEMENT

ACTS 16:35–40

Let Them Come Themselves

Paul claims his Roman rights, the magistrates apologize, and the church is encouraged

35 *Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."* 36 *And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."* 37 *But Paul said to them, "⚠ They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into ⟲ prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."* 38 *The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,* 39 *and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.* 40 *They went out of the ⟲ prison and entered the ⟲ house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

ACTS 16:35–40

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

FIGURE · THREE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI

THREE PEOPLE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI · ACTS 16:13–34

	LYDIA vv13–15	THE SLAVE-GIRL vv16–18	THE JAILER vv23–34
WHO	a seller of purple from Thyatira; free, well-off, devout	owned by masters; a spirit of divination made them money	a Roman officer under orders; his life for the prisoners
HOW REACHED	"the Lord opened her heart" while she listened	"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ"	songs at midnight, an earthquake, and his question
WHAT FOLLOWED	baptized with her household; opens her home	the spirit leaves at once; Luke tells us nothing more	believes, is baptized with his household, and rejoices

A businesswoman, a slave and a jailer — rich, owned and official — and one Lord for them all.

Read each column down: three very different people, three different ways Jesus reached them — and Luke tells us how each story ended, or that he does not.

ῥαβδίζω
RHABDIZŌ · "BEAT WITH RODS" · G4463

From *rhabdos*, a rod. The chief magistrates of a Roman colony were attended by lictors carrying bundles of rods — the "policemen" of verses 35 and 38. Beating a Roman citizen without trial was a serious crime, which is why the magistrates "were afraid" (v38). Paul later counts the cost of his ministry: "Three times I was beaten with rods" (2 Corinthians 11:25, the same verb). Verse 22 was one of them.

πιστεύω
PISTEUŌ · "BELIEVE" · G4100

The chapter's turning word. Timothy's mother was "a believer" (v1); Paul tells the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus" (v31); and the jailer rejoices "having believed in God with his whole household" (v34). The magistrates believe in power and in Rome; Paul uses Rome's law to protect a young church, and then leaves it in the hands of the Lord the jailer now believes.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that rights are not the first thing for a Christian — "God may ask us to lay down our rights for the good of another" — and here Paul uses his for the sake of the young church. The magistrates panic: "Upon learning this, the magistrates were filled with fear," and they want the problem gone quietly. "The magistrates acted as politicians often act by instinct." Paul will leave, but not sneaking: "Paul and Silas would not be hurried out of town until they had brought their work there to a conclusion" — they visit Lydia's house and encourage the brethren first.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry insists Paul was not proud: "It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice." A public apology would clear the gospel's name: "Let them come and stop the clamours of the people, by confessing that we are not the troublers of the city." He notes that Paul had not used his citizenship to escape the beating — "Paul did not plead this before he was beaten". The point was to protect the gospel and the believers left behind, not to protect Paul.

VII
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From prisoners set free to a citizenship in heaven

> *"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*
>
> ACTS 1:8

> *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."*
>
> JOHN 6:44

> *“To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.”*
>
> ISAIAH 42:7

> *“Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.”*
>
> PSALM 146:7

> *“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;”*
>
> ROMANS 10:9

> *“persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!”*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

> *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 3:20

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the jailer’s question and Paul’s answer as the pattern of every true conversion: a man thoroughly convinced of sin, truly concerned for his soul, pointed to Christ and told to believe.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter of open and shut doors. Guzik traces guidance by hindrance and salvation by faith alone; Sproul (from a Ligonier clip and his sermon's published description) sees God opening hearts and bringing proud men to the end of themselves; Spurgeon preaches Lydia's opened heart and the jailer's one-hour conversion; Henry gives counsel on providence, prayer and justice. They agree that the Lord, not the preacher, opens hearts. Sproul and Henry stood in a tradition that baptizes the children of believers; Spurgeon and Guzik baptized believers only — a difference that shows up when they read "household."

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Timothy	No worker irreplaceable; circumcised for love, not legalism.	— (no transcript available)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	A spiritual father adopts a son; churches increase daily.
II · Macedonia	Guided by hindrance; God's no gave us Luke's books.	— (no transcript available)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Follow providence; obey God's call immediately.
III · Lydia	Pray God to open hearts; the Macedonian man was a woman.	Regeneration precedes faith — the Lord opens, then she responds.	Her heart opened to listen, to desire, to believe.	Conversion-work is heart-work; religion directs our business.
IV · The stocks	No need for demonic approval; profit lost, beating given.	— (no transcript available)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	The love of money is the root; Rome jealous of new religion.
V · The jailer	Courageous praise; grace alone, through faith alone.	(sermon summary) God brings men to the end of themselves.	Converted, baptized, useful and joyful — all at once.	No place amiss for prayer; companions in suffering pray.
VI · Romans	Lay down rights for others — or use them for the church.	— (no transcript available)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Not honour but justice; clear the gospel's name.

ACTS 16:1–40 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Love bends where the gospel cannot.** Paul circumcised Timothy (v3) while carrying a decree that Gentiles need not be (v4). Guzik: "Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism." GUZIK
- **A good report from two churches.** Timothy "was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium" (v2). Paul trusted the witness (*martyreō*) of the men who knew him. THE GREEK
- **Guided by hindrance.** Two closed doors (vv6–7) and one vision (v9). Guzik: "Paul was guided by hindrance." Henry: "We must now follow providence." God's no was not the end of Asia; it was the timing of Europe. GUZIK
- **The Lord opened; she responded.** Luke's order in v14 is the order of grace. Sproul: "regeneration precedes faith." Henry: "Conversion-work is heart-work." SPROUL
- **Pray before you speak.** Guzik: "a most important element in evangelism is asking God through prayer to open hearts." Paul preached; only the Lord could open. GUZIK
- **True words from a wrong source.** The girl's cry was accurate (v17), but Paul refused a demon's endorsement. Guzik: "he didn't need demonic approval of his work." THE TEXT

- **Follow the money.** Her masters cared nothing for her freedom; "their hope of profit was gone" (v19). Henry: "See here what evil the love of money is the root of!" HENRY
- **Midnight songs reach prisoners.** "The prisoners were listening to them" (v25). Henry: "We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart." HENRY
- **The shortest gospel in the Bible.** "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (v31). Guzik: "This is salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone." THE TEXT
- **The same hands, one night apart.** He fastened their feet in the stocks (v24) and washed their wounds (v33). Spurgeon: "I think I see how tenderly the jailor washed their stripes." SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **Timothy was "well spoken of by the brethren" in two towns. What would the men who know me best say about my walk with Christ?**

Character is seen by others before it is used by God.

16:1-3; Acts 6:3

2 **Where has God shut a door on me lately? How might that "no" be guiding me toward something He has prepared?**

Paul was guided by hindrance (Guzik).

16:6-10

3 **The Lord opened Lydia's heart while Paul spoke. Whose heart am I praying for God to open — and am I speaking to him?**

Conversion-work is heart-work (Henry).

16:13-15; John 6:44

4 **The slave-girl's masters cared about profit, not her freedom. Where do I treat people as useful to me rather than as souls Christ wants to free?**

Their hope of profit was gone.

16:16-19

5 **Paul and Silas sang in the stocks at midnight. What is my "midnight" right now, and what would praise in it look like?**

No place, no time, amiss for prayer (Henry).

16:23-25; Ps 107:14

6 **The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and got one answer. How would I answer that question for a man in my group, in one sentence?**

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.

16:30-34; Rom 10:9

Acts 16 is a chapter of doors — doors the Spirit shuts, a heart the Lord opens, prison doors an earthquake throws wide. Through all of them the gospel crosses into Europe and frees a businesswoman, a slave and a jailer. If you are in a dark place tonight, sing; if you are asking the jailer's question, the answer has not changed: believe in the Lord Jesus.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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