

Selfless love empowers true ministry. The love of God's people will compel his ministers to endure not only physical shackles, but also the self-imposed shackles of worldly ordinances for the sake of others. By the grace of God we have been set at liberty to willingly endure trials, persecutions, and the legalities of this life for his glorious namesake.

Pt. 1 Acts 16:1-5 At Liberty to Minister

[Act 16:1-5 KJV] 1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father [was] a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul, the loving father.

Paul is in the process of visiting the previous church plants in Syria and Cilicia, the fruit of his labor. Syria and Cilicia are regions, each containing multiple cities. In Cilicia lies Paul's place of birth, Tarsus. He is said to be "confirming" (KJV) them at the end of chapter 15. This word means to strengthen **(1)**.

Paul was doing more than just sticking his head in to make sure everything was OK. We should remember that Paul and Barnabas had not too earlier been disputing with those who said the Gentile disciples needed to be circumcised after the manner of Moses (Acts 15:1-2). This implies more than the physical act of circumcision, but the circumcision that represented the adherence to the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:24). Paul was convinced, and indeed had been teaching throughout his ministry that salvation and justification before God were outside of the works of the law. Paul had received the gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11-12) and did not need approval from anyone else to continue to preach what he knew to be the true gospel. But the men who were compelling new believers to be circumcised had come down from Judea (Acts 15:1), and there seemed to be general confusion in the Christian assemblies on this topic. Therefore Paul had gone up to those who were considered by some pillars in the church (Gal 2:9) to confirm that his

gospel was the same as theirs, and to verify that he had not been laboring in vain. The elders and apostles recognized the grace given to Paul. They could not speak against it or add anything to it (Gal 2:6) and gave Paul the right hand of *fellowship* (Gal 2:9).

Paul, Barnabas and Silas had then taken the message back to the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 15:30). There were likely still those in the region who were preaching Jesus plus circumcision. Paul addressed an entire letter to the church in Galatia on this subject in particular. He called Jesus plus justification by the law not a gospel at all, but a perversion of the truth and a curse (Gal 1:6-9). This was a leaven that needed to be stopped before it spread. In Acts 16 Paul spends some time going through the cities and delivering unto them the decree from the apostles and elders (vs. 4) and confirming this faith.

Having Silas along (Barnabas had departed with John-Mark) would have also given Paul's gospel a seal of approval from Jerusalem. Silas had come from Jerusalem with the blessing of the apostles (Acts 15:22).

A parent's work is never quite done until their children have grown and had children of their own. The birth process is quick, messy, painful and joyful. The long process of teaching, nurturing, protecting and caring now begins. Paul loves the church. Throughout Acts and the epistles, we see Paul raising up leaders in the church to carry on when he is no longer around.

Timothy: A Young Man of Good Report

[Act 16:1-2 KJV] 1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father [was] a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul calls Timothy "his beloved son" (1 Cor 4:17). It's likely Timothy was converted during Paul's first missionary journey to that area (Acts 13), or that Timothy's mother and grandmother were converted and they shared with Timothy. Either way, Paul feels a strong bond to Timothy. This young man is mentioned by name 17 times. That's more than any other of Paul's companions.

Those in the body of Christ have the privilege of having a spiritual family in addition to the natural. The believers in Lystra and Iconium, as well as Timothy's mother and grandmother should be proud that out of their ranks

rose a young man like Timothy. Leaders raise leaders. Those who are strong in the faith raise others who are strong in the faith. Each of us would do well to make sure we are always bringing up a “Timothy”, not just for the sake of carrying the ministry forward, but because of our responsibility as a spiritual family. We should put the same care into spiritually raising others in the ministry that we would our own children. When Jesus’ mother and brothers stood outside asking for him, we said *“But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*

Timothy was well reported of in multiple regions. Those who would rise to leadership in the church must be of good report (1 Tim 3:7). In Paul's first visit (Acts 14:6) Timothy was probably a teenager. We don't know at what point the eldership laid hands on Timothy (1 Tim 4:14), but he was still young, hence the reminder to not let anyone despise his youth (1 Tim 4:12). Timothy probably replaced John-Mark in a sense.

Timothy's Age?

Timothy is called young in 1Tim 4:14. That word young probably refers to any man below the age of 40.

“The word for ‘youth’ (KJV) is *neotēs*, [and is] ‘used of grown-up military age, extending to the 40th year.’” **(2)**

Timothy could have been up to 39 years of age when Paul wrote to him in 1 Timothy, but he was probably younger. 1 Timothy was likely written around 62 AD **(3)**, or around the time of Acts 28. If Paul wrote 1 Timothy 10-15 years after the events in Acts 16, then Timothy could very well have been a mature teenager or in his early twenties when Paul picked him up to travel with him.

This should be encouraging to all young men and women in the faith. Age has nothing to do with God's ability to use us. Timothy was full of faith and well reported of. His reputation preceded him. In Philippians 2:20 Paul tells the church that it is his will send Timothy because he has “no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.” Always be ready. God is no respecter of persons. God will use whoever is seeking the things of Christ. Later on Paul instructs Timothy to:

*[1Ti 4:12 KJV] 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in **word**, in **conversation**, in **charity**, in **spirit**, in **faith**, in **purity**.*

For all the young believers, here are six things we must focus on if anyone is to take our ministries seriously:

- 1) Word (speech)
- 2) Conversation (Conduct)
- 3) Charity (love)
- 4) Spirit
- 5) Faith
- 6) Purity (this Greek word is used only one other time in scripture and it refers to how men in the faith are to treat the young women, "...as sisters, with all purity.")

[Sng 4:9-10, 12 KJV] 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [my] spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. 10 How fair is thy love, my sister, [my] spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! ... 12 A garden inclosed [is] my sister, [my] spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

The groom sees his bride as sensual and physically attractive, but also as a sister. Young men who would exercise purity should treat the younger women as sisters, even if they are dating. One good rule of thumb may be that if you would not do it to your sister, you should not do it to the person you are dating. Become friends, build trust, spiritually be brothers and sisters. Within marriage, the spiritual respect and camaraderie of brother and sister continue, and the physical aspect of a husband and wife are introduced to the "enclosed garden", creating a special bond that has been reserved for those two and none other. This is the same purity and singleness of heart that Christ desire for his church.

Q. Joseph and David were also called while young. How did adherence to the above six traits affect their ministry?

Timothy's Family: Generations of Faith.

Emphasis is put on the mother of Timothy, specifically that she was a Jew and

believed. We don't know if Timothy's father was a believer or if he had already passed on, we only know that he was Greek and likely uncircumcised. *Had* he been circumcised, there is no reason to think why he wouldn't have also circumcised his son Timothy. Timothy's mother and grandmother were both women of faith who taught Timothy the scriptures from an early age. It's likely they were converted during Paul's first journey to that region:

[2Ti 1:5 KJV] 5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

[2Ti 3:15 KJV] 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul would be referring to the Old Testament when he says scripture. Wisdom and salvation in the Messiah are all throughout the law, prophets and books of wisdom in our Old Testament.

Yes, it is foretold that the gospel will divide families (Luke 12:53), but in this case we see that the results from three generations of faith is a strong young evangelist making a meaningful impact on the Kingdom of God.

Timothy would have shown respect and been submissive to both of his parents, regardless of their beliefs.

[Eph 6:1-3 KJV] 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

One of the greatest things we can do as parents is be strong in the faith and teach our children the holy scripture. Paul praises Lois and Eunice for this.

Timothy: His name means "one who honors God". **(4)**

Paul circumcises Timothy: Love compels, not legalism.

[Act 16:3 KJV] 3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Paul is quite literally holding a written decree that circumcision and adherence to the law are not required. In the book of Galatians Paul even goes as far as to say that Jesus plus circumcision is not the gospel but a perversion of it and if anyone teaches such they should be accursed (Gal 1:6-8). So what is one of the first things Paul does upon returning from Jerusalem? He circumcises Timothy.

By circumcising Timothy, Paul did a work that was neither good or bad, but expedient for more effective ministry. Paul did not circumcise Timothy for any of the following reasons, 1) He feared the Jews 2) He thought it made Timothy more righteous 3) Timothy was half Jewish and therefore needed to be circumcised.

Being circumcised would have allowed Timothy to be more accessible to the *unbelieving* Jews throughout the course of his ministry.

"His [Timothy's] father was Greek. Under Jewish law at least as early as the 2nd century, a person was considered Jewish if his or her mother was Jewish. It is not certain whether such a law was in effect in the 1st century, but even if it was, Timothy would not have been accepted as fully Jewish because he was not circumcised." **(5)**

By being circumcised and a Jew by birth Timothy would have access to places he would not have had access to otherwise, particularly the Temple (Acts 21:9) synagogues, and other places of close dwelling such as homes or places where bread is broken.

[1Co 9:19-23 KJV] 19 For though I be free from all [men], yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with [you].

It was love, not legalism that compelled Timothy to be circumcised. To the Jews he became as a Jew for the gospel's sake. This physical act of circumcision did nothing to justify Timothy in the sight of God. Had Timothy been circumcised to keep the law he would be a debtor to keep the whole law (Gal 5:3). Timothy was at complete liberty *not* to be circumcised. Titus was

not compelled to be circumcised when he stood before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

[Rom 7:6 KJV] 6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not [in] the oldness of the letter.

When we wrap our minds around the fact that we are justified outside of the laws and principles of the world, it gives us liberty to partake in the physical things joyfully, knowing that it is our faith behind the acts that justify us. We are free to submit to many of the ordinances of man, not because these ordinances themselves hold any eternal value, but because we are doing it for the Lord's sake.

1 Corinthians 9 gave us liberty to *become* all things. Now 1 Peter 2 gives us liberty to *submit* to all things.

*1 Peter 2:13-19 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man **for the Lord's sake**: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: **As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men.** Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man **for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.***

We are called to submit to every human institution such as kings (insert President, Dictator, etc.) as long as it does not violate the ordinances of our King Jesus. At the end of the day, God is the one in control.

Our faith must be what drives our works, not the other way around.

The elementary principles and ordinances of this world don't determine our righteousness; therefore it is fine to partake in them and submit to them if it is for the Lord's sake. There is a danger that may arise however, when we forget that the outward acts themselves are just a means to an end. These are things we do "for the gospel's sake", not to justify ourselves, but because we've already been justified by Christ (Rom 3:24). We are saved by grace through faith but our faith doesn't stop at salvation. Having begun in the Spirit

are we “now made perfect in the flesh?” (Gal 3:3) No, we walk in faith (2 Cor 5:7). As new creatures the Holy Spirit gives us a love for God and a love for others that compel us to do good works. We know these works reflect our faith. This danger occurs when being led by the Spirit decreases and self-imposed religion increases.

Legalism is often used synonymously with the Old Testament law, but legalism can exist outside of the law.

[Col 2:16-23 KJV] 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]: 17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ. 18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, 19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. 20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

"...The body is of Christ." The *substance* is of Christ. All these external things point to Jesus. There are those who would beguile us (charm in a deceptive way) to glory in the work rather than the substance (Christ), and to glory in the ordinances rather than the head of the body. Paul states in vs 23 that will worship (self-imposed religion or worship which one prescribes to himself **(1)**), humility (the kind that is promoted outwardly) and the neglect of the body only have an outward appearance of wisdom. These ordinances or any others will never satisfy the craving of the flesh. Good luck stopping the indulgence of the flesh through adherence to religious rituals and religious moral values. Only through Christ can our hunger be satisfied, only in Christ can we find fulfillment.

There is a time to abstain from certain foods, a time to perhaps wear certain clothes or respect the traditions of a culture regarding a holy day. But we can happily do these things for the glory of God *because* we are dead to the ordinances of the world. Therefore we have liberty to abstain from them *or* partake in them.

It changes our perspective when we understand that we have liberty to or not to:

- Attend an organized church service on Sundays that is based very much on extra-biblical tradition.
- Use musical instruments in worship even though there is no example in the New Testament church.
- Use the titles like Reverend, Associate Deacon, Assistant Pastor, Pope, First Lady etc. even though there is no biblical precedence for it.
- Remove our hats and bow our heads when we pray in public.
- Call Sunday the day of rest instead of Saturday.

Many of these things are good and even beneficial for the current state of the church. But these things do not justify us. We have liberty not to do them. Yet if our hearts compel us to do them or condemn us if we don't, then we should listen to the Holy Spirit. There may be a tendency to think that we observe ordinance for the sake of those outside the faith in order to keep up a good appearance, but much of what we do is actually for those who are weak within the faith. But we must understand that these things can beguile us into a false sense of humility and self-imposed religion. By faith we operate from the inside out.

Persecution: there are those who will maliciously attack the works you do for God.

It's very possible that Timothy's circumcision was used as ammunition against Paul. When writing to the church in Galatians Paul makes the case that if he *did* still preach circumcision, why were the Jews persecuting him (Gal 5:11)? It's likely that these Judaizers (those attempting to add circumcision and the law in addition to Christ **(6)**) had used the fact that Paul had circumcised Timothy as misrepresented truth to convince the Galatians that they should now observe the law and Jewish customs in order to be fully saved.

What can we learn from this? The enemy will attempt to use what was meant for good against us. This may cause us to doubt a decision we made and wonder if it may have offended someone or caused an innocent person to stumble. If we are serving God whole-heartedly people will get offended. We may not be perfect, but we shouldn't believe that when we truly seek to minister we will hinder the Kingdom of God; that is the devil's trick.

[Mat 11:16-19 KJV] 16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is

like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 17 And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Being a men-pleaser will not profit others or us. If John (the greatest prophet born among men) and Jesus (the Son of God) offended the religious crowd by their good works, we can expect it to happen to us as well.

[Col 3:22 KJV] 22 Servants, obey in all things [your] masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

Being a man-pleaser has to do with eye service. It is putting man's opinion above God's.

Now there is never a reason to do what we know is sin, such as fornication or murder to justify a greater good. We are lead by the Spirit. Again, it wasn't legalism that compelled Paul to circumcise Timothy, it was Paul's liberty in the Spirit. Paul was free to circumcise Timothy for the sake of the Jews and their weaker brethren to "become all things".

Q. Have you ever had the liberty to do something but opted out of doing it or did it a different way in order to minister to others?

The church increased in numbers and faith daily.

[Act 16:5 KJV] 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Our last verse (vs 5) is a comforting verse. We see the decree of justification by faith outside of the law being delivered to the churches (vs. 4). Because of that, the churches were strengthened in their faith, and increased in numbers daily. Understanding the liberty we have in Christ will increase our strength.

Timothy had great faith outside of circumcision. Therefore he was OK with being circumcised for the sake of the Kingdom. Our faith *must* be outside of

legalism and works. If it is, we can freely partake in external works, and those works will strengthen and increase the church.

Q. Have you ever had the liberty to do something but opted out of doing it or did it a different way in order to minister to others?

Pt. 2 Acts 16:6-34 At Liberty to Suffer

[Act 16:6-10 KJV] 6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

The Macedonian Call. Listen to the Holy Spirit

After strengthening certain churches, Paul, Silas and Timothy set out to new regions

[Rom 15:20 KJV] 20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

Paul and Silas had a plan to preach the gospel to Asia. The Holy Spirit forbade them to do this. This forbidding is not just a “things didn’t work out”, or “I think they door may have shut so I’ll take that as sign from God” type of scenario. The Holy Spirit somehow communicated to them that they were to not go into Asia. Next, the Holy Spirit forbid them to go to Bithynia (Peter addressed the churches in Bythynia later, so either he or someone else ended up taking the gospel there - 1 Peter 1:1)

We hear God the most when we are actively serving in Christian ministry. I didn’t say just active in church, but actively seeking to walk in our calling. In this case, they were already laboring; already walking in the Spirit, therefore the Holy Spirit directed their path. God will use laborers.

When we look at the map we see that they were quite literally on the border of Asia. It made logical sense to continue on into Asia now that they had passed through Phrygia. Just because something seems convenient or logical does not mean it is God’s purpose.

Paul received the Macedonian call when he was in Troas, on the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea. Paul had run out of land. Sometimes God will wait until we

are at the end of a road and seemingly have no more options to give us the next step.

David purposed in his heart to build God a house (1 Kings 8:17). God's prophet told David to "do whatsoever is in thine heart, for the LORD is with thee" (1 Sam 7:3). Later God commanded the prophet to speak to David and tell him that his son would build the temple, not David. We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), and if our hearts do not condemn us, we have liberty to make decisions by faith (1 John 3:21, Rom 14:21-23) as we covered in Acts 16:1-5. Yet we must also be filled with the Holy Spirit and attentive to His leading. Our good intention may not be God's great and perfect intention. Therefore even when doing good deeds, we must listen for precise direction from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the answer will be, "do what is in your heart, for you have the mind of Christ", and other times God will give us other direction.

Q. Have you ever purposed in your heart to do something good for the Lord, but had your plans overruled?

Paul "assuredly gathered" that this was direction from the Lord. How great of a boost to our faith is direct revelation and commission from the Lord! Remember the delight of the disciples when Jesus gave them power and commissioned them to go from city to city. We would do well to remember that our Lord has commissioned each of us and endowed us with the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:15-17).

vs. 10 "we". This is the first instance of "we" in Acts. This most likely indicates that Luke the historian and doctor had joined himself to Paul at this point. This was another blessing of God rerouting Paul's journey. We now have a written account of the Acts of the Apostles.

The Church in Philippi

[Act 16:11-12 KJV] 11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next [day] to Neapolis; 12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, [and] a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

This was a quick and successful journey. As we follow Paul's progress in the city, it could appear that it was not immediately as favorable as the vision

followed by the successful voyage would have implied. When Peter received a vision by God the men from Cornelius showed up and everything seems to perform like clockwork. Peter did not encounter a spirit of divination, blasphemers, and was not beaten then thrown in jail. These things all happened to Paul after he was obedient to direct revelation of God. Paul was indeed called to share the gospel in Philippi, but God would also show Paul “what things he would need to suffer for His (Jesus’) name’s sake (Acts 9:16).

[Act 16:13-15 KJV] 13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted [thither]. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard [us]: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought [us], saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide [there]. And she constrained us.

We have no reason think the small group had anyone to stay with, so it’s likely they paid for room and board initially. It says they were there a number of days before their first convert. It’s likely they were waiting for the Sabbath so they could present the gospel to the Jews first, as was their practice (Rom 1:16, Acts 17:2).

Worship and prayer was held by a river, which is where they would have met (by the “seaside”) if there was no synagogue **(7)**. This most likely indicates that there were not enough Jews in Philippi to constitute the building of a synagogue. In particular, there was not the minimum amount of 10 males needed for the establishment of a legitimate synagogue **(4)**.

vs. 16 *want = customarily made* Paul and Silas sat down with the women and engaged with them.

Lydia, the first convert in Europe.

Lydia is described as a “worshipper of God”. This may mean that she worshipped the true God, but was not necessarily a proselyte to the Jewish faith yet. Cornelius was of the same state.

A seller of purple meant either purple garments or purple dye, different than a *wearer* of purple. Lydia was a business women, who was hard working and profitable it would seem if she 1) had business in multiple cities (she was

from Thyatira) 2) had a well off enough home to house Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke along with the rest of her family.

“The Lord opened her heart to head the things spoken by Paul.” This is consistent with the rest of scripture.

*[Act 13:48 KJV] 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.***

Lydia was also one of those who were already “ordained unto eternal life”. God is the one who calls and ordains eternal life. No one can come unless He calls (John 6:44). There are sheep and there are goats. Jesus’ sheep hear His voice because they are His (John 10:27).

Not only was the first convert of this important church a woman, but the women of that church also supported the ministry in a special way. Later Paul writes to them and says:

[Phl 4:3 KJV] 3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and [with] other my fellowlabourers, whose names [are] in the book of life.

[Act 16:16-22 KJV] 16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew [them] into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat [them].

These accusations brought against Paul and Silas contain snippets of truth. The gospel message would indeed “exceedingly trouble” the city, for those who reject the words of God will be judged more harshly by it.

Paul has answered the call from God, ministered to whom he could, delivered a woman from a demonic affliction, and now finds himself beaten and imprisoned. Where was the man from the vision? Why would progress seem so slow after God gave direct revelation that this missionary journey was his will? Perhaps God gave Paul the vision to give him the strength to endure what He knew was ahead. When God directs us, it does not mean the path excludes hard work, persecution or suffering. It could mean that God is encouraging us to endure the upcoming hard work, persecution and suffering that will abound for His glory.

Paul's verbal and physical suffering at the hands of those who opposed him in Philippi must have also given the church hope later when they themselves suffered in like manner. Paul later writes to them saying:

[Phl 1:29-30 KJV] 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

When we are doing things for Christ, when we suffer for righteousness, nothing we go through will be wasted. It will be for our benefit and the benefit of others.

[1Pe 2:19-21 KJV] 19 For this [is] thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory [is it], if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer [for it], ye take it patiently, this [is] acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

[Act 16:23-24 KJV] 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast [them] into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

They were beaten with a more than usual amount of stripes. The Greek implies a severe beating (5). Their wounds were not cleaned after the beating (vs 33), so the open flesh was exposed to the filth and contamination of the prison and chains.

Being cast into the "inner prison" denotes maximum security. Securing their feet in the stocks would have been very uncomfortable, almost a form of torture depending on how far the stocks were spread.

[Act 16:25-34 KJV] 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed [their] stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Still with raw wounds, painfully shackled legs and in a filthy environment, Paul and Silas contrast the dark tone with open prayers and songs. “Praises” here can also be translated as hymns. It’s very likely they were singing the holy scripture, perhaps one of the Psalms. What a textbook example of praising God in the midst of the storm. As readers looking from the outside in, there is a tendency to not empathize as much with these men’s situation because we know the outcome of the story. What we must remember though, is that for every Paul and Silas who get delivered by a grand work of God there is also the James who is not delivered and killed, dying a martyr's death (Acts 12:2). There are those who are named in the great chapter of faith (Hebrews 11), such as David and Rahab. Then there are those who are never named, only mentioned as “being tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection”, stoned, sawn in two, and slain with the sword.

We don’t know how God will deliver us from physical situations, sometimes it may be a miracle, and sometimes it may be death. Nevertheless, I will yet praise him.

[Psa 71:14 KJV] 14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

[Rom 5:3-5 KJV] 3 And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Q. As best you can, explain how it is possible to glory in tribulation.

Are there advantages to tribulation and persecution?

Contrast this deliverance from Peter's in Acts 12. God made a way of escape for Peter. Peter was the focus. Peter escaped and the guards who kept him were put to death because of it (Acts 12:19). In Philippi, God took off the chains of *all* the prisoners and opened *all* the doors, yet none escaped. God had sent Paul and Silas to Philippi for ministry, and there was ministry to be done in that jail.

I can imagine Paul's voice ringing through the halls in desperation, "Do not kill yourself!" What love! What forgiveness! This jailer had apparently not treated them kindly or even civilly, having put them in shackles in the innermost part of the prison and left their wounds untreated. This jailer is now confronted with a grace and mercy he does not deserve. And such is the gospel, those of us who are blessed enough to realize our unworthiness of it's message are the ones most eager to receive it.

Why did none of the prisoners flee? It was clear the presence of God was at work. After the prayers of Paul and Silas followed by the miraculous earthquake, I imagine they sat in awe, overwhelmed at once by both the peace and terrible power of God.

The jailer does not immediately ask about doctrine or about the nature of God. He connects the prayers and praises with the miracle and falls down on his face, not in awe of Paul or Silas, but in awe of the God they represent. What God can exercise such power while bestowing such mercy? "What must I do to be saved?" Here is the real reason for the shackles. Here is the real reason for the beating. This simple jailer was to become the first male convert in the church that would go on to become the Philippian church. Indeed, this is arguably the first male convert on the continent of Europe. But had he been the first or the last, one man's soul was worth the struggle.

Physical relief is finally given to Paul and Silas's wounds. They are washed physically, and the jailer's family is washed spiritually, perhaps in the same water.

The first house church in Philippi probably would have been at this jailer's house or Lydia's.

Paul and Silas had to depart the city not much later. We know Timothy left with them (Acts 17:14). It's encouraging to note that this very young and vulnerable church grew into a fruitful branch despite the apostle having to leave them alone so soon. Out of all of Paul's letters, Philippians is the only one that contains no direct rebuke or disappointment.

[Phl 1:6 KJV] 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:

Works Cited

- 1) Thomas, Robert L. *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated Edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998.
- 2) Earle, R. 1 Timothy. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 11: Ephesians through Philemon* (F. E. Gaebelin, Ed.) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981. 374.
- 3) Robinson, Simon J. *Opening Up 1 Timothy*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004.
- 4) Utley, Robert James. *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts. Study Guide Commentary Series*. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003.
- 5) Biblical Studies Press. *The NET Bible First Edition Notes*. Biblical Studies Press, 2006.
- 6) Utley, Robert James. *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians. Study Guide Commentary Series*. Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997.

- 7) Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). The works of Josephus: Complete and unabridged. Peabody: Hendrickson.