

Text: Acts 16
St Stephen's

Jan 26/27, 2008
Sat/Sun

All Shook Up!



Just to refresh your memory, we are in the middle of **Paul's second missionary journey**, which started about 20 years after Jesus was raised and lasted about 3 years. Paul has three men on this team with him: Silas, Timothy and Luke. They are now about six hundred miles out of Antioch (far right, topmost city) and have sailed **across the Aegean Sea** and entered ancient Macedonia, what we now know as **Greece**. They have crossed **into the continent of Europe** and found a foothold in the Roman colony of Philippi. Last week we heard the story of the first Christian conversion in Europe, **Lydia**.

Luke tells us:

When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:15 (NIV)

- Her heart opened - to the Lord...
- Her faith spread - throughout her family...
- Her home opened - to hospitality and ministry...

You see **this pattern** throughout Acts, and I want to draw attention to it today. Here is how **Peter** said it on the day of Pentecost:

*The promise is for you **and your children** and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*

Acts 2:39 (NIV)

When the gospel first came to the Gentiles, it was **an angel** that appeared to Cornelius and said this:

*He will bring you a message through which you **and all your household** will be saved.’*

Acts 11:14 (NIV)

The word ‘**household**’ meant parents, children, extended family, servants – all who lived under your roof. We see the phrase over and over in Acts, and prominently in chapter 16. **Lydia’s whole household** comes to faith and is baptized.

And then we turn to our passage for today and see that the **Philippian jailer’s whole family** comes to faith and is baptized. Here is the way Paul and Silas said it to him:

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you **and your household**.”*

Acts 16:31 (NIV)

If I could sum it up, what we see in Acts is that the promise of the Gospel and the power of the Gospel is given by God to whole families. **When he reaches for you, he reaches for those near and dear to you. ‘God works in groups.’** (say that)

I want to start with a testimony of how this has happened to one of our own families.

Testimony of Stan and Gail Southern...

Let’s take some more time today and look at **another family**. We are still in Philippi. In the middle of the chapter there is a dramatic incident in which **a girl is delivered from a demon** by Paul. But it turns out that the girl was a slave and used by her owners as **a fortune teller**. When Paul delivered her, **the business collapsed, and the owners were furious** at Paul:

When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

Acts 16:19

They **arrested**, beaten - and thrown into jail. Then we **meet the jailer**. A Roman jailer was a **blue collar guy** – very different from Lydia. He was **a tough guy**, we figure that out pretty quickly. Here's the Message paraphrase:

After beating them black-and-blue, they threw them into jail, telling the jailkeeper to put them under heavy guard so there would be no chance of escape. He did just that—threw them into the maximum security cell in the jail and clamped leg irons on them.

Acts 16:23-24 (The Message)

Just track how this went: **arrested** and convicted without trial or process. They were **stripped**, tied to a post and **beaten** across their backs with rods that would leave them bruised and bloody and barely able to stand. They were **given no food** or water or medical attention. They were tossed into the **maximum security cell** - the inner dungeon – behind two walls, no windows, no fresh air or light – and if that wasn't enough, the jailor clamps on the **leg irons**.

Can you hear him **slam** the cell doors and **taunt** them on the way out?

This is **a tough guy**, running his little prison with an iron fist. We don't know how he came to be like this – just that he is. Maybe he is out to **prove himself**. That will do it. Maybe he is **bitter** about his life or **angry** at the world. That will do it, too. So there he is.

Don't you know people like that? Tough. Hard. Mean. Running their office - running their family - running what they can run, with an iron fist. It doesn't work so well...

I tried that when I married Bec. I was a tough guy. I thought I could run a marriage that way. Doesn't work. Thought I could raise kids that

way! Doesn't work! Thought I could run a church that way! Doesn't work! **James the Br of Jesus** said, "*the anger of man will not work God's righteous plans.*" But lots of us try. **James Dobson**: "*You can't drive a car by honking the horn.*" But lots of us try.

We get a very **different picture of Paul and Silas**. Hours have passed and most everyone, including the jailer, have gone to bed. They can't seem to sleep. They are sore and weak and hungry and thirsty, and...

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25

I bet they were!!! These guys deliver a slave girl from a demon and get arrested and beaten within an inch of their lives for it – and there they are in sharp pain, locked up and chained up in this hole – and they are having **a hymn sing** (a music team/choir rehearsal)!!

They are not **angry** but happy!

Not filled with **bitterness** but filled with joy!

How does that happen? It happens when you can see a God that is **greater** than your circumstances, **larger** than your troubles and you know he is **on your side and at your side**. That **changes the equation**. Ever since Paul laid eyes on the risen Jesus in his glory on that road to Damascus, **it changed the equation of his life**.

So Luke says the **prisoners were listening** to them. They had never seen anything like this.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

Acts 16:26-27

Luke tells us **the jailor woke up** saw the prison broken open and drew his sword to **kill himself**. Why would he do that? Well, in the ancient

prison systems, the **jailor's life was forfeit** if his prisoners escaped. Every guard, every jailor knew it.

But I think there was **another reason**, too. In that one moment, **his angry, tough world cracked**. When he went to bed that night, he was **in charge**, and everything was **locked up and secure**. He made sure. But at midnight **God shook his world**. The earth moved, and the jail fell apart and his world cracked. He knew **it was all over**. So he was going to **die like he lived** – a tough guy. He **reached for his sword**.

From inside Paul saw it and called out to him..

*"Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell **trembling** before Paul and Silas.*

And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 16:28-31

Just **get inside him** for a moment:

God had shaken the earth, and he was afraid...

God had collapsed his jail, and he wants to die...

But what shook him most of all was that Paul and Silas **didn't run**.

That was when **he saw it**...

The prisoners were singing God's praises.

The guys **inside the prison were free**

And the guy outside **was the captive**

Sometimes God **shakes your world**, and all you know is that the old way of living isn't working, not at all. **So he falls trembling before them:** *'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'*

And Paul has this wonderful response, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

I love **the preposition, 'on'**. To believe 'on Jesus' is to make him your foundation. Solid ground under your feet, to **move your whole life onto him**. And that is what he did, right there.

The **change was immediate**. We are told that that very night he and his whole family heard about Jesus. There is that '**household**' promise again. 20 minutes earlier his life was over. His family was gone. Now, he is about to **get it all back, all new**. He brings Paul and Silas home with him, and the whole story comes out.

- About who was **free** and who was the **captive**
- About how **this jail of a tough and hard and mean life** didn't have to be his life, not anymore...
- And about **this Jesus** who could open prison doors – any prison doors and make captive men free...

And the whole family moved that night, **moved their lives onto Jesus**, *Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and **washed their wounds**. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his house and **set a meal** before them, and **he and his entire household rejoiced** because they all believed in God.*

Acts 16:33-34 (NLT)

I want to remind you that when God reaches for you, he reaches for those near and dear to you. And that he can open the doors to any prison, break the chains of any captive...

Maybe you have **a member of your family** out there...

- Remember if God's promise is towards you, it is towards them... When he reaches to you, he reaches to them; God works in groups.
- Remember that this is the God who will rock the earth to reach a heart. No one is beyond his reach..

Maybe **you** are out there...

- he can open the doors to any prison, break the chains of any captive...