

- B. The Mocking of the Serpent by the Power of God (16:25-39)
- i. Difficult and unlikely circumstances can't frustrate the saving ways of God.
  - ii. The irony of the jailer's question (30): "*Sirs, what must I do to be **saved**?*"
  - iii. Instead of the whole prison being emptied, his whole house is rescued.
  - iv. 31-34 The Jailer and His Household
- C. Not only did slaves bring salvation to slaves; *captives took captive their captors* by the saving power of God. (Is. 14:2)

### LIVE THE STORY

*We must not only love the Gospel Story, we must begin to live the Gospel Story, indeed, to have the Central Character live in us.*

- What do you think of the statement: *Participating in the mission of God is a privilege not a right. And we are called to give up some of our rights to participate.*
- In what ways is Lydia a model for believers today? How does she demonstrate the saving grace of Christ?
- Why do you think the encounter with the female slave gets Paul so worked up? Why do you think it took Paul several days to get so worked up? How does Paul's action in response to this directly address what provoked him?
- How does the fact that God uses unexpected people in the most unlikely of circumstances to bring His saving work to people speak to you in your own life today?
- Why is it important for all believers to know that God is more likely to use us when we are at our weakest? How might that have encouraged Paul and Silas in stocks?
- What is the mission of the gospel costing you? What rights or comforts is the Lord calling you to lay down for the advance of the Gospel?

## Slaves of God, Captives of the Gospel, and the Power of God to Save

Jerry Cisar — November 2, 2014

Text: Acts 15:36—16:40

### Introduction: Salvation Against All Expectations

- A. God's M.O. in human history is that He helps us in a way contrary to natural human expectations.
- B. God's mysterious ways culminate in the cross and become known as *the wisdom of the cross*. (1 Corinthians 1:25-29)
- C. God's M.O. of bringing salvation is not just despite weakness, but through weakness and suffering as the messengers willingly endanger themselves and become nothing for the sake of Christ.

### I. Two Unexpected Sacrifices for the Sake of the Mission

- A. Unexpected Division (Acts 15:36-41)
  - i. Paul suggests a return trip to strengthen the churches.
  - ii. After complete unity is reached in serious doctrinal disputes in the 1<sup>st</sup> part of Acts 15, here we have sharp, unresolved disagreement over what **appears** to be fairly unimportant matters of mission.
    - a) Barnabas wants to bring his cousin Mark along; Paul didn't think it was appropriate to bring one who had departed mid-mission last time.
      - Gospel ministry is a privilege not a right.
    - b) Luke 9:62

- iii. Not only were churches led by a plurality; mission teams were led by a plurality.

#### B. Unexpected Additions (16:1-5).

- i. Not only will Silas fill the role Barnabas had, but Timothy will fill the role Mark had.
- ii. It is quite unexpected that Paul requires Timothy to be circumcised. It appears to be a contradiction.

- iii. When one wants to join in Gospel mission, there are often rights which we are called to lay down.

- a) 1 Corinthians 9

- b) Christianity is not all about our rights—in fact the Gospel is about the One who did not cling to His rights, but gave Himself up!

- iv. Stronger faith and growing churches came at a cost.

### II. Unexpected Appeals that Direct the Success of the Mission.

#### A. Unexpected Appeal from a Man (16:6-12)

- i. The Holy Spirit forbids them from going into Asia and Bithynia.
- ii. There Paul has a vision of a Macedonian man urging him, “Come help us!”

#### B. Unexpected Appeal from a Woman (16:13-15, 40)

- i. The gathering place for Jewish worship
  - a) 10 Jewish men were required for a synagogue.
  - b) But the first heart the Lord opens in this new region is not a man but a woman.
- ii. Lydia's home now belongs to the Lord.
  - a) 2 Corinthians 12:15
  - b) v40 a place for the church to gather

### III. Unexpected Messengers in Unexpected Circumstances.

#### A. The Mocking of Messengers by the Serpent (16:16-24)

- i. There is a female slave that spirit of divination (ESV) or by which she predicted the future (NIV).

- *“a spirit of Python”*

- ii. Her message and mocking

- a) *“These men are slaves of the Most High God...”*

- b) *“...who proclaim to you a way of salvation.”*

- iii. Her owners made huge profits by her demonization and unjust enslavement (16, 19).

- iv. What greater way to demonstrate that they truly proclaim the way of salvation than to bring deliverance, salvation to her, while *“bringing down rulers.”*