

ACTS 16:12 – 40 THE PERFECT STORM!

Recap: Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke have been redirected from Asia to Macedonia, (mainland Greece) and are now reclaiming sacred space on a new continent, Europe. They are now in Phillipi.

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

Phillipi – a Roman colony

MAP (From previous weeks, showing Phillipi, in Macedonia.)

Lydia – a Greek woman, God-fearer, wealthy, as she trades in purple dye.

Why pray at the river? Why not the synagogue?

No synagogue. Why? Small Jewish contingent.

River – Red Sea, Jordan.

She and her family are baptized. Paul needed a base of operations. Why?

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. 17 This girl

followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.”

18 And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

Slave girl, spirit of divination – pythian spirit.

Why is Paul agitated? Isn't she saying the right things? No!

Their context: "Most High God = Zeus, et al. Not the God of Abraham. (remember, very small Jewish contingent. Salvation = Caesar's idea of salvation."

Jesus and the word salvation. Used of being delivered from dire circumstances. Example: demons or sickness.

Bad PR.

Finances are now affected. A riot ensues.

20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." 22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The jail – think of a small-town jail where the jailer lives adjacent to or in the jail with his family.

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food

before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Praying and singing hymns.

Why kill himself? Penalty for allowing prisoners to escape = death. Suicide was seen as honorable thing to do.

Paul stops him.

“What must I do to be saved?” Does the jailer want a treatise on salvation theology? No! “How do I get out of this mess?” Remember what salvation meant in that context.

Paul tells him that he needs Jesus to get out of the mess. And he Gospels him. What has his message been so far? There is a new king now! He and his family are baptized.

He washes Paul’s wounds. He uses water on Paul and Silas – they use water on him.

Then they all go back to jail.

35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, “Let those men go.”

36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.”

37 But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown

us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.”

38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

The magistrates release them.

Paul asserts his rights.

Why now? Did he have time to do so the day before? Had he screamed out that he was a Roman citizen yesterday, the whole scene would have stopped. (Cisero and Verres?)

But he didn't do it then. Why? Had he done it then, he would have avoided the beating and incarceration, but would have been told to leave at once. By waiting, he took his beating and put the authorities between a rock and a hard place. Now they (authorities) were scared, and he could promote the Gospel with a little more time and room to work. The authorities had messed up by denying him due process. This was a major deal! Paul used the situation to his

advantage. He wouldn't be bothered there, again.

He gets a public apology and then goes back to Lydia's house for a time, before going to the next city.

Let's go back and look at what caused the problem. Paul had gone into a situation where malevolent, dark powers ruled. When he cast out the spirit of divination, (in the name of Jesus) he took back sacred space and the evil powers fought back in the only way they could. They spooled up the people, using the issue of money. The people referred to them as Jews, a very small contingent in Phillipi, (no synagogue) and had them beaten.

So, we have a demonic source for the problem, acting through a very practical issue, money, which was exacerbated by the fact that they were an ethnic minority.

Religion, money, politics and ethnicity were involved.

Don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not getting political.

But we must see the source of the unrest. If we only look at the "downstream effects" we will miss the point and the lesson, not fixing the problem.

We must pray now like we've never prayed before!