



Sermon Discussion Guide

05.21.23 Message | Steven Mayfield | Acts 16:16-40

Key Scriptures:

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’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. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.” But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.” The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.



Message Highlights:

- What can feel like a setback or stuck-ness can oftentimes be a repositioning by the Holy Spirit for greater things.
- God often calls us to set aside what we would prefer to do so that we do the thing he wants us to do instead.
- When we choose to act on God's will rather than our own, we find the freedom we've hoped for and get to invite others into that same freedom.

Conversation Starter:

Has anyone ever attempted to (or successfully) pranked you? Once you realized everything was under control, how did the truth of the situation create clarity or a sense of relief in you?

Discuss the Message:

1. Why were Paul and Silas seized and arrested in Acts 16:16-40?
 - a. Have you ever been challenged or criticized by others for seeking after God?
 - b. How has this pushback impacted your faith?
 - c. How can Christian fellowship serve as a means to encourage us and steady us as we pursue God's will?
2. What were Paul and Silas doing before the violent earthquake occurred?
 - a. Reread Acts 16:22-23. How do Paul and Silas' prayers and praise demonstrate their belief that the Holy Spirit was at work?
 - b. How can you invite the Holy Spirit into trying circumstances in your life?
3. What were the jailer and his household filled with after coming to believe in God?
 - a. Reread verse 27. How does the jailer's joy reflect a transformation of his values system?
 - b. How have your values and desires transformed since knowing Jesus?
 - c. Where in your life can you surrender your own plans for God's desires for you?

Pray:

God, we're grateful that you are in charge of our stories. Thank you for being faithful and steadfast as we depend on you for guidance and for our daily needs. Would you help us to continuously abide in you, whether we are facing setbacks or experiencing great joy? We want to choose you and your ways above all else, and we ask that you continue to reveal more of yourself to us each day. Thanks for the freedom that Jesus Christ offers us. Amen.