



*Study of Philippians*

*The house church at Philippi  
and beyond  
with the women who led there.*

*“Grace and peace to you from God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

## Table 2

## Acts 16(Part 2)

Welcome to the table! I'm so glad you're here. I'm thankful for every opportunity to serve you a divine meal. Instead of serving you a warm autumn soup or offering you some spiced cider to drink. I'm inviting you to the table to nourish your souls with the Bread of Life and the satisfying thirst quenching Living Water. There is a wellspring of Life inside of every Believer, so let's bring our cups to this divine source to be filled.

Kimberly joined me at Table 1 (the podcast) to have the appetizer portion of the meal. We got a little fired up over the content, but we didn't close our Bibles because we got a little miffed at Paul. We sat in the tension of the passage. We didn't leave the table until we were filled with joy.

**Whatever comes to the surface, let's stay at the table with Jesus.**

Friends, if you get miffed over something you read in the Bible or get upset at another Believer for something they did or didn't do, please don't stop reading or cancel the person who offended you. **Sit with God in the tension until you can face the person who offended you even if the person is... God.** God doesn't cancel you when you get mad at Him over something in the Bible that you don't like or agree with. That's good news!

Listen to the podcast to prepare you to come to table 2 with a knife and fork ready to have a meal with Jesus. Listen to our conversation and my lesson: [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#).

Beloved, hindsight really is 20/20! When I say Acts 16 has been a chapter that has formed me, I mean it. Far beyond choosing our daughter Lydia's name from this chapter. This chapter has marked the course of my life. My heart for those being held captive by the darkness of human trafficking was formed by Paul's encounter with the slave girl. I hope I never stop asking, "What happened to her?" and "How can I do for others what I hope was done for her?"

Reading immediately then about how the enemy seized the opportunity to retaliate against Paul through the evil of antisemitism has given me an awareness of this evil that still lurks below the surface. The way Paul and Silas respond with singing joyful praise to God instead of stewing in the injustice and inhumane ways they were treated has taught me to unleash the power of praise in my life. (Sometimes I temporarily forget!)

The unnamed jailer who came to salvation through the witness of men rejoicing rather than being bitter is amazing! Clearly having joy through trials is a powerful witness. I want this response to become my default setting.

God worked through their praise to set a captive free and change the eternal direction of his entire household. One minute they were on the broad path that leads to destruction; the next minute they were on a narrow path that leads to everlasting life.

God birthed and continues to birth empathy in me through the encounters Paul had with every person in this chapter. I'm thankful to get to walk through this chapter with you. As we read Acts 16, may the Spirit work in redemptive and healing ways in us. May we all be changed through having our hearts and minds cleansed through the washing of the Word ([Ephesians 5:25-27](#)). I pray this chapter has sanctifying effects on our lives. Where there is sin, we will be cleansed. The Father has promised His Son a *radiant Church* that is *without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*. Let's humble ourselves so that we can bring our hearts and minds into alignment with the heart of God. **His Words before my words:** [Acts 16](#).

Let's carefully work through these verses.

*16 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. 17 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." 18 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.*

**What are the phrases that stand out to you?** Sit quietly for a few minutes in the tension. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to the surface anything He wants to purge from you. My tip: set a timer for at least 5 minutes. Listen and wait.

I'll share with you what I was thinking about: In the USA we are in this election season. I've grown annoyed and a little bit numb to it all. So numb I forget to pray. One of things that is most annoying to me is that candidates are doing some fortune telling with their grim predictions about what will happen if the other candidate wins. They paint a very dismal picture. Similar to the slave owners, people are making a great deal of money selling their dismal narrative. What perplexes and annoys me the most is the Church is caught up in the dismal narrative.

**We have gotten dragged into the culture's empire mentality instead of staying anchored in the Kingdom of God.**

In the verses I see Paul losing sight of the slave girl. Who's proclaiming the gospel in this passage? Demons! The demon who possessed the slave girl is the one saying, "Stay away from these men! They're trying to save you." The same demonic strategy is at work in our present time. The spirits at work in this dark world are vilifying Christians and in a lot of ways we're helping them. Lord, have mercy.

*"It really is a curious evangelism strategy to despise the people you are trying to bring to Jesus."* Pastor Rich Villodas

After days...Paul turns around and rebukes the demon. He addressed the demon. Why did Paul ignore the slave girl for days? I don't have an answer for that question, but it really annoys me! I have to face this annoying quality in my flesh. I ignore people and withhold the gospel from people who annoy me. Lord, have mercy.

The slave girl in the passage was a victim of human trafficking. I work in the anti-human trafficking space. I sit with women who have been through dehumanizing treatment. I see them. But, I miss seeing a lot of other people. I have to remind myself that everyone I encounter is made in the Imago Dei of God. I can't dismiss people who Jesus loves. I can't withhold the gospel from people who are perishing apart from Jesus. I can't continue to pray for my family and friends while remaining silent before God about the deep needs of my enemies. **I'm learning my enemies are the people who I don't pray for, because who I neglect in prayer reveals how much I really don't love all my neighbors.** Friends, let's pause and think about who we were not praying for.

Lord, break our hearts for the people who annoy us. Let's start there.

Antisemitism comes to the surface here: **20** *They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar* **21** *by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."*

Let's invite the Lord to search our hearts to see if there is even a trace of this deplorable practice in our hearts. What about racism? Do you use any dehumanizing language to refer to any group of people?

A Violent Earthquake was God's response to Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns. I joked on the podcast that I didn't want a literal earthquake in response to my prayers. Not in the seen realm anyway, but in the unseen world governed by the powers and principalities of darkness now that's another story. Scenes from the Tolkien classic Return of the King are dancing in my mind. If my prayers can cause volcanic eruptions and earthquakes of catastrophic impact on the kingdom of darkness... I'm good with that! Every. single. Day.

**How much more would you pray and worship if you believed your prayers were literally driving back darkness?**

Friends, I believe with all my heart that God is working through our prayers in remarkable ways. Recently I went on a silent retreat. During my time, I finished reading the New Testament for the year. I was up to 2 Peter. As I read these final letters and Revelation my heart was stirred to renewed hope.

**Light really triumphs over darkness!**

I pondered what my first spoken words would be as I prepared to leave my retreat. I thought about ways our enemy had come after me and the ones I love. I decided my words would be to put the darkness on alert. I am not staying in defense or reactive prayer mode. I'm turning my prayers into prayers intended to drive back the darkness. Are you curious to know what I said?

"Lord, have mercy." Followed by, "Satan, I'm coming for you."

I will not live captive to fear. This is why I said on the podcast, “You can be like me and walk into the darkness without fear.” I’m only able to say such things, because I know the victory has been secured by Jesus. He has triumphed over Satan, sin, and death.

*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*  
*Colossians 2:15*

My new favorite Bible verse is Revelation 20:10.

**What are the situations that make you fearless and what makes you fearful?**

Read verses 31-34 again. **What parts of the jailers' conversion story resonates with you?**

I’m struck by his immediate hospitality. He began to wash and bandage their wounds. Then the jailer and his entire household was baptized. A meal was set before them. They broke bread together. **The gospel is restorative to broken people.** We all start life broken off from God and stricken with sin sickness. Paul spoke the gospel to them, restoring them to right standing with God. They had peace with God and then could experience the peace of God. What a night! What a glorious night in the Roman colony of Philippi!

Look how God took these despised Jewish men and gave them a seat at the table with their former enemies. The religion that was supposedly throwing the city into an uproar (20) brought eternal peace and joy to a family held captive. The real prisoners in this story were not Paul and Silas, it was the unsaved. **What was it that opened the door for the tables to be flipped?** Prayer and praise! Joy is contagious. Let’s try spreading more joy in the world. It’s a much better narrative than fear. The world has plenty of fear without Christians adding more logs to the fire. **Throw those logs of fear onto the fires of hell through fearless prayers and songs of joy.**

When you got to the end of Acts 16, did you wonder why suddenly the magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be released? I wonder if the earthquake woke everyone up. I would imagine the goings on in the dungeon spread throughout the city. It was very wise of Paul to insist they be escorted out of the prison. He played his ace with the bombshell that He and Silas were Roman citizens. They knew the illegal beating they endured and the incarceration

was illegal because of their Roman citizenship. There was no trial. The magistrates didn't want to answer for the crimes committed against Roman citizens.

The last stop before leaving town was going back to Lydia's house to encourage the Church at Philippi. I believe it was for the sake of this small Church meeting in Lydia's home that Paul insisted on the officials escorting them from prison. Paul was if anything zealous for the protection of the Church. This will become even more clear as we work through the letter he wrote to them. We know the name of only one of the Living stones. We know of two households that have been baptized into Christ. This is the backdrop we will keep in mind as we study Philippians.

One more bombshell to close out our study of Acts 16.

**Lydia was most likely the overseer of the Church meeting in her home.**

Excerpt from Tell Her Story: *Acts 16:40 is an important clue that Lydia had an immediate impact as a leader within the fledgling Christian community. As a household manager, she was a natural person to exercise oversight and care for believers, many of whom were already in her care as part of her household. Gordon Fee says, "When Christians met in the home of a female householder, by the very sociology of things it would have never occurred to them that a person from outside the household would come in and lead what was simply understood as an extension of the household. To put it plainly, the Church is not likely to gather in a person's house unless the householder also functioned as the natural leader. Thus Lydia would have held the same role in the church in her house as she did as master of her household." If this is true, then the term episkopos (overseer, manager) would have been a natural title for the role she played in her household and therefore also in the Church community.*

See you next week in Philippians 1. Keep following the Table Flipper, and leave the table flipping to Jesus.

By grace,

Julie