

Acts 16  
Verses 11-25

11 The north side of Samothrace has a safe harbor where they must have stopped for the night. This 69 square mile island has a mountain 5250 ft. high that was a landmark for sailors. No one would mention this unless they were an eye witness observer relaying the facts. Neapolis is the main port of Macedonia and serves the largest city Philippi, which is nine miles inland. The Egnatian Way was a major Roman road from the port to Philippi. It goes on through Amphipolis and Thessalonica, ending at the Adriatic Sea.

12 Philippi (Colonia Julia Augusta Philippensis) was established as a Roman colony by Augustus as a home for military veterans. (It was the place Brutus and Cassius – murderers of Julius Caesar were defeated by Octavia –42 BC) It served to establish a Roman military presence there and to Romanize the Macedonia region. There was a large Latin speaking population. The citizens were probably tax exempt with full rights of Roman colonies. Philip of Macedon took it over (father of Alexander the Great) and named it after himself.

13 Next to the city was the River Gangites. The word for "place of prayer", *proseuche*, can mean a designated location for prayer or a synagogue. There is an inscription in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century that refers to a synagogue in Philippi. We can't tell by the text if there was one or not at the time of Paul's visit.

14 Lydia was the first of three people that were touched by Paul's first visit to Philippi. Inscriptions have been discovered that refer to a guild of dyers in Thyatira. Two such inscriptions refer to "sellers of purple". Purple was a royal color and as the best purple was derived from the marine shellfish called a Murex, it was quite expensive. Lydia must have been well off to house her family and Paul's team. She was not Jewish but attended Jewish meetings, probably attracted to the idea of one God. In Jewish inscriptions, 80% of the God-fearers are women.

"The Lord opened her heart." Luke understands that salvation is a work of God in the heart of individuals. Thank God that He opened our hearts too.

15 She was either widowed or divorced. She and her family received the Gospel and were baptized. Her household would include her children and servants. We'll see the next convert's household also included. The Lord means for our whole family to be saved though He predicted this would not always be the case. Mt 10:36 It was probably a real test for Silas (an elder from Jerusalem) to stay in a Gentile woman's home, an opportunity for him to grow spiritually.

16 Luke refers to the python spirit possessing this woman. There was a cave 80 miles northwest of Athens at Delphi. Legend says it was guarded by a great snake. Apollo killed the snake and became the new guardian of the cave, an entrance to the underworld. People would come from great distances to hear from the oracle of the cave, Pythia. She would go down into the cave and become possessed, return spouting gibberish, and then translate into Greek prose the instructions for the seeker.

17 The demon within the girl speaks the truth but the message of salvation is not to be preached by demons. This demon uses the same term as the demon that confronted Jesus, most high God. Luke 8:28 *Elyon/Hipsistos* Local Greeks and Romans might think she was referring to Zeus. To Paul and Silas this was harassment by an unclean spirit.

18 By the authority of Jesus, Paul commands the spirit to leave her, and the spirit obeyed. You have the same authority. The local culture saw the python spirit as helpful and not something to be delivered from. Paul knew it was evil. The early church father Origen wrote of a demon called Python that spoke through people. At first glance it seems the spirit was on the wrong track to pronounce that Paul and Silas showed the way of salvation, but see where this all leads and you will realize the demon knew what he was doing.

19 Apparently this demon could actually predict things as she has now lost the ability to make them money. Most of this kind of thing today is skillful trickery, but that doesn't mean that demons are no longer at work. Paul and Silas are dragged to the forum. Luke uses the proper word for the officials, *strategoï*, which shows he understood how a Roman colony was governed.

20-21 Romans in general were anti-Semitic. The men did not bring up the real reason, but used the anti-Jewish bias. Roman would not allow any gods that were not accepted by the State. Jesus as Lord was a violation of that rarely used law.

22-23 Timothy and Luke may have escaped because they were not Jews, but Paul and Silas were handed over to the *rhabdychoi* – rod bearers. We don't know why Paul did not use his Roman citizenship to get out of this. Was he enduring what he knew some converts would have to endure? (Philippians 3:20) This was a humiliating and painful punishment. Not all who suffered this punishment survived. This was the first of three beatings he received for the cause of Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:25)

24 The inner cell was reserved for the worst socially and criminally. A set of Roman stocks were discovered in Pompei. It was a long metal comb with space between the teeth for legs. A rod went through the teeth and fastened it to the ground. It was not only security but also a form of torture. The only way movement possible was to sit or lie flat on your back.

25 They must have been singing psalms and new hymns of praise to Jesus. Colossians 3:16 What should we do when things seem to be at their worst? Praise God from Whom all blessings flow! There is nothing that lifts the spirit like a song of praise. What a demonstration of the Holy Spirit, even greater than delivering that poor girl!