

The Supernatural Work of God in and through His People
How God Opens Hearts, Delivers Captives, and Breaks Barriers for His Kingdom

Acts 16:11-33

Salvation is not religious worship but spiritual transformation;
Deliverance is not human compassion but supernatural liberation;
Proclaiming the Gospel is not human persuasion but miraculous intervention.

God Transforms Religious Hearts

- ❖ God directed Paul and his companions to Philippi in Macedonia, and they went to a place of prayer.

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↳ Mission begins with divine direction, not human strategy!

↳ The greatest help we can offer others is to bring them the message of salvation through the Gospel.

Acts 16:14 “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.”

↳ The story of Lydia reveals that worshipping God is not enough; we need God to open our hearts to Christ, and this happens as we hear the gospel.

↳ Only God can open the hearts of the hearers for salvation.

1 Corinthians 2:14 “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

Ezekiel 36:26a “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you...”

↳ True conversion produces obedience: Lydia’s baptism reveals that she believed, repented, identified with Christ, and followed Jesus.

Acts 16:15 “And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us.”

↳ Lydia’s open heart became an open home, a place of encouragement for the first church of Philippi.

God Delivers Captive Lives

- ❖ The missionary team faced a slave woman who suffered spiritual oppression and human exploitation.

Acts 16:16-18 “As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying out, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.’ ¹⁸And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out that very hour.”

↳ The gospel confronts the spiritual darkness at the heart of the world, where God advances His kingdom in the midst of spiritual opposition.

↳ We are ambassadors for Christ, sent by God to bring spiritual freedom.

Mark 3:13-15 “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him. ¹⁴And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach ¹⁵and have authority to cast out demons.”

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 “And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”

↳ God’s servants need discernment; not every spiritual voice is from God.

Acts 16:19-24 “But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, ‘These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.’ ²²The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

↳ Obedience to God may lead to suffering.

God Turns Suffering into Proclamation

❖ God provided a spiritual awakening through Paul and Silas’ testimony in prison and a powerful earthquake so that the jailer and his household believed, were baptized, and began serving Christ.

Acts 16:25-30 “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and 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 bonds were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ ²⁹And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

↳ Spirit-empowered faith worships God in dark seasons; they worshiped, then God sent an earthquake.

↳ Our suffering can become a pulpit; people are always listening; they watch how believers respond when life is painful and unfair.

↳ Paul and Silas did not run when the doors opened. Their restraint made their message credible.

1 Peter 3:15-17 “But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”

↳ The essential Gospel answer is Christ: ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’ Salvation is not earned by religious effort but received through faith in Jesus.

Acts 16:31-32 “And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”

Acts 16:33 “And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”

↳ True faith bears immediate fruit: the jailer washed their wounds, welcomed them into his home, was baptized, and rejoiced with his household.

Endnotes:

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