

Acts 16:16-40

A Gospel that fits Everyone Part 2

Introduction: Acts is the history of the earliest Christians. We've been seeing throughout this book that the Gospel -The good news of what God has accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is for all people. The common thought in our day is that Christianity works for some but not for others, there are religious, christian types and then there are other types. Or another way we say this is "true for you, but not for me." But the claim of Christianity is not just that it is relatively true but that it is true for all people.

This text shows a great diversity of people who come to Jesus. Last week we looked at Lydia - the upper class fashion designer type, who is a moral person but who comes to faith in Jesus, because she has a deep need for meaning, and hope. We also looked at the Slave girl who is a mentally ill, demonically oppressed, (Culturally likes a crack prostitute), enslaved to her masters and her demons - she finds rescue and healing through the person of Jesus Christ. And now we come to our third example: The Philippian jailer. Though many came to faith in Jesus Christ in Philippi, as verse 40 shows, Luke highlights these three because they clearly demonstrate how God breaks down dividing social barriers and unites all different kinds of people in Christ because the Gospel is for everyone.

1. The Philippian jailer

1. What do we know about this man?
2. **He is ex-military.** A Roman soldier who retired from the military were often given a civic/governmental job. He's the town jailer in a Roman colony. He would have seen and fought in many brutal battles.
3. **He's middle class**, blue collar. He has a government Job. He's not Lydia - wealthy and affluent, but he's also not a slave girl, he's somewhere in the middle.
4. **He is a cruel and brutal man.** As I mentioned this man was a soldier, a man of war for one of the most brutal armies in the history of the world. But we also see that this brutality and cruelty carried over into the way he ran the jail as well

1. He doesn't wash their wounds - Paul and Silas were beaten with rods by a mob, they would have been bloody, possibly having cracked ribs and definitely bruised. He doesn't treat them or care for them at all.
2. Though he isn't commanded to he puts them in the innermost part of the prison, away from the light, away from the fresh air.
3. He puts their feet in stocks... this was an instrument of torture. It spreads out your legs causing pain, and cramping... it's an act of cruelty, severity and further punishment.. and no one told him to do this. He was just that cruel.
5. **He isn't looking for God.** We could say he is completely indifferent. Lydia is seeking, the slave girl was tormented, but not him, he's not seeking, he's not tortured (not obviously anyway) he's indifferent.
 1. So the jailer is a hardened, ex military, middle class, blue collar man who is indifferent to the Gospel.
 2. Therefore Paul does not have an in or an audience with this man - He isn't in a place to speak truth or the Gospel to him. So Paul and Silas are going to show the Gospel through their lives...

2. How do Paul and Silas show the Gospel through their lives?

1. **In the face of suffering, Paul and Silas express peace and joy**
 1. They are praying and singing hymns and everyone is listening - Remember they had been beaten severely but instead of groaning, complaining, cursing their persecutors or despairing of life, they are singing praises to God.
 2. Only Jesus can give this to you. If your hope is in anything in this created world suffering will destroy it. Only Jesus Christ can give you a joy and peace that nothing in this world can affect.
 1. "Only Love of the immutable can bring tranquility. God alone is the place of peace that cannot be disturbed, and he will not hold himself from your love unless you withhold your love from him." - Augustine
 2. "There is only one thing that is immutable. It is God, his presence and his love. The only love that won't disappoint you is the one that can't change, that can't be lost, that is not based on the ups and downs of life or of how well you live. It is something that not even death can take away from you. God's love is the only thing like that. Not only can your poor performance not block it, but even the worst possible circumstances in this life - sudden death - can only give you more of it." -Tim Keller

2. In the face of cruelty Paul and Silas show kindness and forgiveness.

1. We're told that at midnight (As they were praying and singing) an earthquake occurred and it shook the foundations of the Jail - **"And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When 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. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."**
2. Living in a shame/honor culture meant that this man would bear the full weight of responsibility for these escaped prisoners - execution. So he attempts to take his own life. But Paul and Silas call out to him to reassure him that no one has escaped, and not to take his life.
3. The fact that Paul and Silas don't run away, break out and leave this man to the punishment he would have deserved, they remain in the prison though freed by a miraculous act by God - Means that they have saved his life when they easily could have repaid him for the cruelty he had shown to them...and when he comes in falling on his knees they don't condemn him or even talk about their situation they are ready and eager to share Jesus with him.
4. I think sometimes we forget the power of forgiveness. i was reminded of this story this week.
 1. Following the tragic Amish school shooting of 10 young schoolgirls in a one-room Amish school in October 2006, reporters from throughout the world invaded Lancaster County, PA to cover the story. However, in the hours and days following the shooting a different, an unexpected story developed. In the midst of their grief over this shocking loss, the Amish community didn't cast blame, they didn't point fingers, they didn't hold a press conference with attorneys at their sides. Instead, they reached out with grace and compassion toward the killer's family. The afternoon of the shooting an Amish

grandfather of one of the girls who was killed expressed forgiveness toward the killer, Charles Roberts. That same day Amish neighbors visited the Roberts family to comfort them in their sorrow and pain. Later that week the Roberts family was invited to the funeral of one of the Amish girls who had been killed. And Amish mourners outnumbered the non-Amish at Charles Roberts' funeral. It's ironic that the killer was tormented for nine years by the pre-mature death of his young daughter. He never forgave God for her death. Yet, after he cold-bloodedly shot 10 innocent Amish school girls, the Amish almost immediately forgave him and showed compassion toward his family. In a world at war and in a society that often points fingers and blames others, this reaction was unheard of. Many reporters and interested followers of the story asked, "How could they forgive such a terrible, unprovoked act of violence against innocent lives?"

2. How indeed? The Amish people have at the heart of their community The christian teaching from Jesus to love and forgive our enemies, but it is not just Jesus' teaching but his own life - Jesus incarnated the very action of loving ones enemies and forgiving one's enemies... This is exactly what Jesus did for us - we did not deserve his love or forgiveness but he forgave us freely of his own grace. Grace is radical, it is disarming, it is life transforming.
3. He falls down on his knees and asks them, "Sirs, What must I do to be saved?" What happened; what brought about this openness? Was it the way Paul and Silas had joy in the midst of suffering? Was it the mighty earthquake that came, it would seem, in response to their singing? Was it the fact that they didn't run away and leave him to death or punishment? I would say it was all of these things working together that broke through to this hardened man - he experienced the power of the joy, kindness, gentleness, and forgiveness of the gospel through these men. All of this worked together to break through to his indifference and hardness...
 1. If it is the beauty of the Gospel that drew Lydia in, and the power of the Gospel that rescued the slave girl, it is the grace, kindness and forgiveness of the of the Gospel that reaches to the hardened Philippian jailer.

2. Notice also that their response is so simple - believe. To a macho roman soldier like this man this must have been so antithetical to the way he lived and the way he thought. It is so opposite of every religion that says "do this and that and you will be accepted." Live up to this standard. This are crushing weights to any and all who would try to carry them. They can never offer relief, or the removal of guilt, they cannot forgive your sins when you fail. Maybe that answer -simply believe- is antithetical to the way you live your life, you feel that you must do something to earn, to deserve, God's favor. You are asking - What must I do??? The Gospel shows us that "we are more flawed than we ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted than we ever dared hope." -Keller
 1. Or we are so evil, depraved and blind that the Almighty God had to come down from heaven in order to save us, yet we are so loved by him that he was willing to do it!
 2. You cannot do anything to earn God's favor, or his love and acceptance; his standards are so much higher than you or I could ever go.. This shows us how lost and hopeless we truly are... all our righteousness before God doesn't even amount to a drop in the bucket..
3. What must I do? The answer is the same for every single person - believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. How can it be that simple? Because Jesus paid it all - satisfying the wrath of God that each of us deserve for the life we have lived; simultaneously Jesus lived the perfect life that everyone of us owes to God. He measured up because we never could. He died in our place so that we would not be eternally separated from God but rather that we might be united to him for all eternity. So believe in him, Look at him - he is hanging on the cross, suspended between heave and earth, Look at him hanging in God forsakenness for us. Look to him and keep on looking to him - as the hymn says, "This is all my righteousness - nothing but the blood of Jesus. This is all my hope and peace, nothing but the blood of Jesus!"
 1. In this simple call to believe, God invites all people, anyone and everyone is welcome to receive forgiveness of sin and God's righteousness and acceptance through Jesus - Young and Old; Talented and not so talented; beautiful and

not so beautiful; strong and weak; brave and fearful... and the list goes on.

3. **Three marks of the Gospel -**

1. **And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 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. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.**
2. There are three clear marks of what the gospel does when it has come into your life
 1. **Compassion** - he took them and washed their wounds..and he placed food before them. Mercy and hospitality at work where cruelty and indifference had been.. (Testimony about Refuge from Tom Griffith)
 2. **Confession** - he identified with Jesus Christ - confessed him as Lord and savior by being baptized along with his whole household.
 3. **Joy** - It says he rejoiced along with his whole household, that he had believed in God. - this word “rejoiced” always signifies a deep spiritual joy - what he saw and heard in Paul and Silas he’s has received and experienced himself...
 4. Isn’t it interesting that joy and suffering are two of Paul’s biggest themes in his letter to the Philippians??

4. **The Unity and Diversity that the Gospel brings**

1. Lydia, the slave girl and the jailer are all saved by the same Gospel and welcomed into the same church yet they could not be more opposite from each other.
2. **Ethnically**
 1. Asian - Lydia
 2. Greek - Slave Girl
 3. Roman - Soldier
3. **Class wise**
 1. Upper class - Lydia
 2. Lower class - Slave Girl
 3. Middle class - Soldier
4. **Spiritually**
 1. Spiritually open - Lydia
 2. Demonically hostile -Slave Girl

3. Morally indifferent - Jailer

5. Personality

1. Gentle - Lydia
2. Mental - Slave girl
3. Brutal - Soldier

6. Philosophically

1. Intellectual need - Lydia
 2. Physiological need - Slave Girl
 3. Moral need - soldier
7. We've talked about this before but Jewish men in their culture were taught to pray - "God I thank you that I am not a woman, a slave or a Gentile... only God could turn that around and build a new family, a new people out of what had been racially, socially, ethnically, religiously despised...
 8. These three persons are as different as they can possibly be. But everyone one of them needed the gospel though they didn't even know it and so do you. The Gospel is for everybody. Everybody needs Jesus - And today you can look to him, you can look away from whatever thing you've been looking to for hope, peace, value, purpose, fulfillment. Only look and believe whoever you are and he will save you - he will rescue you.

5. Conclusion:

1. The last part is rather strange and upon reading it at first it can seem as though Paul is messing with these city officials...why didn't he tell them before being beaten that he was a Roman citizen?
2. It seems that Paul suffered as an example to the other believers in Philippi, those who would not have the same rights that he had as a Roman citizen... he didn't use his get out of jail free card even though he could have. But now when the offense is done - he makes it very clear that everything that was done to them was completely unlawful - possibly as a means to protect the church that is left in Philippi.
3. Through this situation though, Paul and Silas become a radical picture of Jesus himself who could have kept himself from suffering, imprisonment and death but willingly took it all on for our sake, that we might be set free, that we might be saved, that we might see how truly beautiful God's grace is...
4. To the extent that we know Jesus, his grace, and what he did for us to that extent it will change our lives

5. We can endure hardship from others and for others because Jesus endured for us..we can forgive others because Jesus forgave us at the cost of his own life. We can rejoice no matter what circumstance we are put in because Jesus came and died in our place and has overcome all things and secured for us a glory that is beyond compare.