

Bi134 Acts

Lesson Bi134-31 Delivered from Prison in Philippi

A stalker, unjust beating, going to prison, earthquakes—these are the news items we read about in the paper and see on television. This is twenty-first century news, but it was first century news too.

During their time in Philippi, Paul and his missionary team stayed with Lydia in her home. One day they were on their way to a prayer meeting. By chance they met a slave girl who was possessed by an evil spirit. She began to follow them around, and day after day kept shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God. They will tell you how to be saved.” Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned to the girl and spoke directly to the demon inside her. “In the name of Jesus Christ,” he commanded, “Come out of her!” Immediately, the demon left her. She was free!

This did not sit well with her owners. They had been using her demonic ability to predict the future to earn money for them. So they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace. There, they set them before the local authorities. “These Jews have the whole city in an uproar,” they complained. “They are teaching people to break the law.”

Hearing the shouting, a mob began to form. Therefore, without even looking into the facts of the matter, the magistrates ordered the two missionaries to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they then flogged them, they threw them into prison. To ensure that they did not escape, the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in stocks (Acts 16:16-24).

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to the Lord. The other prisoners listened as they sang. Suddenly, the place began to shake violently causing the cell doors to fly open. Miraculously the chains began to fall off the prisoners’ feet. The jailer woke up and noticed the doors standing wide open. Assuming the prisoners had escaped, he drew his sword and was about to commit suicide. When Paul saw this, he shouted at him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!”

At that, the jailer ran up to Paul and Silas and fell down before them trembling. “Sirs,” he pleaded, “what must I do to be saved?”

Paul answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they took time to teach the jailer and his family about the Lord. The jailer in turn ministered to the missionaries by washing their wounds. Paul and Silas baptized the man and his family in water. The jailer brought them into his house and served them a meal. Everyone’s heart was filled with joy, because they had found the Lord.

The next morning the magistrates sent the police to Paul and Silas. “You are free to leave in peace,” they told them. But Paul would have none of this. “We are Roman citizens,” he told them. “You had no right to beat us without a trial, but you did anyway. Then you put us in

prison. Now you expect us to sneak out of town? I don't think so. Let the city officials come themselves and publicly escort us out of town."

The police reported this back to the city officials. They were alarmed to find out Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. So they went back to the jail and apologized to Paul and Silas for what they had done. They then urged Paul and Silas to leave the city at once. The apostles, however, went to Lydia's home. There, they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them in the Lord. Then, judging that their work in Philippi was done, they set out for Thessalonica (Acts 16:25-40).

From the stories of Paul's missionary work in Philippi, we learn three important ministry lessons. First, we hear the account of the deliverance of the slave girl. This reminds us how important it is that we, as Christ's witnesses, be able to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the spiritual gift of discerning of spirits, Paul determined that the girl was possessed by a demon. Then, through the gift of miraculous powers, he drove the spirit out of her.

In the same way, every minister of Christ should be filled with the Spirit, and they must know how to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Had Paul not been able to do this, the slave girl would have remained in bondage. Further, Paul and Silas' ministry in Philippi would have been much less effective.

The Bible commands us to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18). It further commands us to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts" (1Cor 14:1). Those who ignore these commands can never be the effective ministers of the gospel that God intends for them to be.

Secondly, from the story of Paul and Silas' deliverance from jail, we learn how the Spirit can give us joy in times of trial. Joy can be a powerful witness to others. Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of joy while in the worst part of the prison. As they sang, the other prisoners listened. This Spirit-prompted worship was a powerful witness to the other prisoners. It helped to open their hearts to the message of the gospel.

Joy during times of trial is evidence that one is full of the Spirit. As we abide in Christ, walk in the Spirit, and obey the Lord's commands, our lives will be filled with the joy of the Lord. Such joyful lives will serve as a witness to those who observe us. As a result, they too will be encouraged to follow Christ.

Finally, from today's story, we learn how to be better witnesses for Christ. When the Philippian jailer inquired about how to be saved, Paul and Silas were ready with an answer. They told him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." The Bible teaches that the two essential elements of true saving faith are repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:21). Repentance toward God involves acknowledging one's sins, asking forgiveness, and turning from sin to walk in newness of life. Faith toward the Lord Jesus involves believing in his death and resurrection, inviting him into one's life as Lord and Savior, and trusting him alone for salvation.

Every Christian should, at all times, be prepared to answer the question, "What must I

do to be saved?” It is the responsibility of pastors and other church leaders to train everyone in the church how to lead others to Christ.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us some lessons on how to be effective witnesses for Christ.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that, if we will remain full of the Holy Spirit and focused on the message of the gospel, we can witness for Christ under any circumstances.

Let’s **review** some important truths we have learned from this lesson.

1. What important lesson do we learn from the story of the deliverance of the demon possessed servant girl in Philippi?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that, from this story, we learn the importance of our being able to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, you are right.
2. How did Paul and Silas’ praying and singing songs of joy in the night affect the jailer and the other prisoners?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you answered that their Spirit-inspired joy helped open the hearts of the jailer and other prisoners to the message of the gospel, you answered correctly.
3. When the Philippian jailer asked, “What must I do to be saved?” how did Paul answer him?
 - A. [PAUSE] If you said that Paul answered by saying “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it several times until you can accurately tell the story of Paul and Silas’ ministry in Philippi. Further, you should begin to cultivate the spiritual fruit of joy in your own life and ministry. What are some ways you can teach others to show forth joy in their lives?