

39—Acts 16.16-40—What Must I Do to be Saved

- I. Introduction
 - a. There are a lot of things people enjoy that is the result of many behind the scenes actions of others long before you arrive. Today, you get to see the behind-the-scenes actions of God to bring salvation to these people in Macedonia.
- II. Main Point
 - a. The work of God’s grace to save
- III. Outline
 - a. How the World understands the world they live in
 - b. The darkness does not thwart God’s plans
- IV. Exposition
 - a. As we break into this next scene, we are quickly reminded of the satanic darkness Jesus encountered in the Gospels is still alive and well. There we saw the demonic world subject to his authority. Will that remain to be so after he was raised and ascended into heaven? I think we see pretty quickly the same patterns of deception and the same authority sovereignly reigning over the darkness. But let’s see how the world understands this darkness.
 - i. We left off last week at Lydia’s house where she prevailed upon the missionaries to stay with her. We observed unusual hospitality to strangers that was a result of the work of grace in her heart through the gospel of Christ.
 1. Paul and company had met her on the riverbank just outside of town at a place of prayer.
 - ii. It seems Paul’s crew continued to go to the place prayer and on one of those occasions, it happened that as they were going to the place of prayer a slave-girl with a spirit of divination met them.
 1. The language suggests this was arranged providentially. Things don’t just happen. There’s a purpose behind these things.
 2. Just like many people understand the world differently as though things just happen by accident or luck, the people of Philippi thought of this slave-girl as having a special gift.
 - a. They understood her to have a python spirit.
 - i. There are plenty of similarities as to how the people understood this spirit of divination and how it related to these false gods. They thought Apollos to be able to tell the future.
 - ii. In many ways, the Greeks and Romans would have consulted Apollos before going into battle much like Israel consulted YHWH.
 - iii. This slave-girl was thought to have this spirit of divination because she was a fortune teller. And she must have had some success at it because she brought in a lot of money for her owners.
 3. So, keep this in mind as we see what happens next because how the people understand the world and understand what this girl can do causes Paul to respond in a particular way.
 - a. She follows Paul and his crew crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the or a way of salvation.”
 - b. It says in verse 18 that she kept doing this for many days.
 - i. No doubt Paul was wise enough to know that she might either give up and leave them alone and, he was probably aware of what could possibly happen if he did what Jesus often did.

1. Even now our IMB missionaries are trained for such cultural awareness depending on where they are going.
 2. They must...we must be keenly aware that the world thinks much differently about things and some of them are landmines.
 3. There are plenty of risks and dangers when you start shining the Light into the darkness.
- c. Well, like many of us would have been, Paul becomes annoyed with this girl.
- i. You might be wondering why he was annoyed. Wasn't she helping this missionary team?
 1. At the very least, the people probably thought that Paul and his crew wanted money for what they offered just like this slave-girl. That alone would have hindered their work greatly.
 2. But we must also be aware that our witness can be ruined by those we associate with. Her reputation gets attached to those she's with.
 3. Fortune telling and sorcery are forbidden in the OT and the NT. You can see how this was going to cause a great deal of problems as they shared the gospel of repentance and faith.
 4. The very things she was doing were things they all needed to be saved from.
 - ii. But what is the worse outcome? Is there anything they can do that will not hinder what they are trying to do?
 1. Oftentimes there are no good foreseeable options in a world that does not understand the truth.
4. Now, Paul understood this spirit of divination or python spirit much differently than the people of Philippi.
- a. There are no other gods. This was a demonic spirit.
 - b. You might recall when Jesus encountered the demonic, they knew who he was. They would say, you are the Holy One of God and he would silence them.
 - c. Paul responds the same way Jesus did. And here is further evidence that the risen Lord Jesus is reigning from heaven: Paul say, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."
 - i. This slave-girl and the people of Philippi had never met a Christian before. They had never encountered the true and living God.
 - ii. They have lived their lives deceived. That's not to say that this spirit wasn't real or had no power to coerce things.
 1. But how they understand it is not reality. Indeed, they have met servants of the Most High God. They do come with the message of salvation.
 2. But as your going to see, they care nothing about the Most High God. They appear to thing they have no need of salvation.
- iii. Well, as you should know, King Jesus prevails! That very hour the spirit came out of her. All authority in heaven and on earth is his. The unclean spirits are and will always be subject to the Most High God.
1. That should give you great comfort because Jesus is not only the ultimate authority over demonic spirits but also all things. Paul and company will need this truth tucked away in their hearts.

2. Because when the owners of the slave-girl discover their hope of gain came out when the spirit of divination came out, they dragged Paul and Silas to the marketplace to stand before the magistrate.
3. Again, how do they understand the world they live in?
 - a. The owners understand that they make the rules because the story they tell the magistrates is not why they brought them in.
 - i. They claim they are disturbing their city because they are Jewish.
 - ii. They claim these Jews are advocating for customs that Romans cannot accept according to their laws.
 - iii. When we want a certain outcome, we think it's okay to do whatever it takes to get that outcome.
 1. These people aren't from around here. They aren't like us. We don't accept their practices but we are fine with lying.
 - iv. That's how they understand the world. They became like what they worship. This is normal for them. Apollos is not holy. Apollos is not righteous. Apollos has not revealed the truth. He hasn't commanded this you shall do and that you shall not do. They created a god of their own making and they make up the rules as they like.
4. Their way of describing what happened results in the outcome they wanted.
 - a. They easily insight a crowd and that is easily persuaded. No one asks any questions. No moral standards are obvious.
 - b. Last week we were told this region was a Roman colony. Philippi was not a Roman city. But because it was a Roman Colony, Roman law was in place.
 - c. The magistrates have Paul and Silas stripped and beaten with rods.
 - d. They are thrown into prison.
 - e. They are guarded securely by placing them in the inner prison or what we might call these days—the hole.
 - f. These two were such dangerous criminals they placed their feet in stocks.
5. If these slave owners tell the magistrates and the crowd that Paul removed their slaves ability to tell fortunes and with it destroyed their profit, does this go down like this?
6. But right now before we go any further if you are in this situation can you say that God is sovereign and he has some purpose for this because he sent us here?
7. I could ask this a different way. What if you are Lydia what would she say about Paul and company being there?
 - a. What about you, being here at UHBC? What about me? Why are you here and why am I here?
 - b. I'm not going to be anymore detailed than that but maybe you will think through the details. Maybe you will connect the dots.
- iv. But if the risen Lord Jesus has authority over these spirits and all things then why didn't he stop this?
 1. Two of his messengers were stripped and beaten with rods. They now lie in their own blood in a dungeon with their legs strapped to a log with holes in it. How do you use the restroom like that? Who will bring dinner?
 2. I could go on about the conditions of their situation. But I want you to answer the question, why did God call them to Macedonia only to let them get beat up and arrested?
 - a. Is this somehow out of God's hands? Should we change his title above and call him the almost high God?

- b. How do you understand the world you live in? How do you understand your life? your situation?
 - c. We should probably linger here for a while but must move on in the story. There's much more to see.
 - b. The next point in the outline states that God's plans cannot be thwarted.
 - i. We're tempted to think that these men have somehow overpowered the almost High God and knocked him off course from his plan to send the gospel to Macedonia. Is that how you see it?
 - 1. My guess is that you would say no they haven't. But you might say this obviously didn't go as planned and the missionaries will just have to make the best of it.
 - 2. What if I say this was the plan. God arranged this to happen this way to accomplish his purposes?
 - ii. We are about to hear a man ask, "What must I do to be saved?" But before he can ask that question, he needs someone to ask who has the right answer.
 - 1. If he were to have paid for the services of the fortune teller what would she have told him before Paul and company arrived.
 - 2. If Paul and Silas are not arrested, who would he have asked?
 - iii. Furthermore, why does he ask the question at all?
 - 1. If you think that life happens randomly or by some idea of luck then well this was just an unfortunate accident and Paul and Silas just make the best of it.
 - a. Their stars didn't line up right that day. They must have stepped on a crack in the sidewalk. A black cat must have crossed their path. Or some other superstition people believe. What an awful world to live in if those things determine the outcome of our lives.
 - iv. I believe God is the Most High not the almost high. I believe God arranged this meeting just like he arranged the meeting of Lydia in the last passage. God sent these messengers to speak the gospel to people that they might come to faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls.
 - 1. In the midst of God's plan for Paul and Silas, they praise the Lord.
 - a. Notice there in (Acts 16:25) ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
 - i. I can't go into great detail here but the singing hymns to God was the praying.
 - 1. Just know when things are hard you can scarcely think of a word knowing songs of praise can be your way of praying.
 - 2. Singing is how you battle. Singing is how Paul and Silas prayed to the Lord.
 - ii. And this praying was overheard.
 - 1. The prisoners might not have listened if these missionaries weren't also bleeding!
 - 2. They may have had a similar beating but never did men sing and pray to God. What do you think most men did when they were beaten and thrown into prison like this?
 - 2. We read Psalm 16 as our call to worship. Imagine if you can that among many hymns they might have sang, that the last one they sang was Psalm 16 just before this earthquake happens in verse 26.
 - a. Let me remind you of the last few verses of that song: (Ps. 16:7-11) ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also

- dwells secure. ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- b. Now as they were praying and singing: (Acts 16:26) ²⁶ and 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.
- i. The prison was shaken but Paul and Silas were not shaken.
 - ii. The foundation of the prison moved but Paul and Silas's foundation didn't move.
- c. How do you explain this? How do you understand this scene?
- i. The building remains intact. The ceiling and walls do not fall in on anyone.
 - ii. But the prison doors open.
 - iii. The chains were unfastened for all the prisoners.
 - iv. How does that happen?
 - v. And if that's not amazing to you then ask yourself what any hardened criminal would have done at that moment when freedom was possible?
 1. No one left.
3. And now we finally get to the reason God has Paul and Silas in Macedonia and in prison.
- a. Notice in (Acts 16:27-30) ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- i. If someone asks you that question, do you have an answer for them?
 - ii. Why does he ask this question? He seems to have slept through the singing.
 1. Maybe he had already heard Paul and Silas preaching throughout the city.
 2. Maybe someone from Lydia's household had told his wife and they talked about it over supper.
 3. He heard it somewhere since they had arrived.
 4. But additionally, he is shocked that all the prisoners are still there and his life had been spared.
 5. He comes trembling with fear and asked Paul and Silas this question. Why does he ask them and no one else?
 6. You can think what you want but before this jailer asked this question, God had been at work. God saves.
 7. We get the answer to his question in (Acts 16:31-33) ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 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.
- v. Have you ever thought about the lengths God would go to save someone?
1. The unlawful suffering of Paul and Silas gives you some idea to what lengths God would go.

2. But really, the greatest length he went was the sending of his only Son. If he sent him to suffer then he will send us to suffer.

V. Response

a. How should we respond?

- i. We followers of Christ should respond like the jailer: (Acts 16:34) ³⁴ 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.
 1. Do you believe God did all of that to save this man and his family? Do you think Paul and Silas suffered a bloody beating to tell this man about Jesus? Do you believe God sent Jesus to die on a cross in your place that might be saved and raised him from the dead that we might have eternal life?
 2. You can't help but rejoice when you see just how great God's grace is.
- ii. For you unbelievers, you may not know it but you are still in chains. You are in the prison of your own sin. You have witnessed what God has done to save this jailer. Why are you asking the question like him? Why are you not believing? Why are you not rejoicing?