

- **Wrapping up Acts 16, bringing to close Paul's adventures in Philippi. But before we do, observation from what we saw happen here...**

‡ **PAUL AND TEAM HAD Three KEY encounters in Philippi:**

- **First with LYDIA, a wealthy businesswoman**
- **Lydia had lots of resources- and a heart opened to the gospel. When she believed, immediately was 'all in'- opening her home to Paul and team**
- **Next encounter was with a possessed slave girl**
- **Opposite end of spectrum from Lydia. NO resources. She was a double victim, in bondage spiritually and to the greed of her owners.**
- **She was disturbance-and God's intervention on her behalf came at a great cost to Paul and Silas. Mob turned on them, arrested, beaten, and thrown in jail.**
- **Then, the jailer, man who became hopeless to point of suicide. To show him freedom and hope of Christ, P&S were willing to sacrifice their own freedom and security.**
- **Think of these stories. QUESTION- When we- as a church- pray for God to bring people to faith- to bring people into our circle of influence- into our church...**

‡ **Who do we pray for God to bring us?**

- **We pray for Lydia's! LYDIA came with great blessing to Paul and his team. She had ears to hear, a heart to believe, and resources to share.**
- **The young woman and jailer, on the other hand, came at great cost.**
- **BUT ALL THREE NEEDED TO KNOW THE HOPE AND LIFE OF CHRIST, and it was God's plan to use Paul and his team to bring all three into the Hope and Life of Christ.**
- **FRIENDS! This is a risky prayer, but while we pray for God to bring us Lydia's, may we also pray- and have expectant and willing hearts- for God to bring us our equivalent of the slave girl, and the jailer. People who may be hard, even offensive to us. People who bring nothing but their brokenness and need of Christ, and require great love and sacrifice.**
- **God didn't turn the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman world upside down by just calling people who were influential and safe. He did it by also calling the unlikely, the unstable, and the unsafe- the slave girls and the jailers. GOD STILL WORKS THIS WAY TODAY. Are we willing to join him?**
- **OK! Let's finish this part of the story- There was an earthquake- Paul and all the prisoners DIDN'T flee, jailer and all his household came to believe in Christ- it's now the following morning and here we see what happened next...**

**Acts 16:35-40** When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." <sup>36</sup> The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

<sup>37</sup> But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

<sup>38</sup> The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. <sup>39</sup> They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup> After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

- **THIS is interesting. Paul and Silas are released, free to go- in fact, ENCOURAGED to go- but instead, Paul finally decides to play a card he's been holding back all this time: he chooses to...**

#### **☩ Paul plays the citizen card**

- **Let's push into this, because there's more here than first meets the eye.**
- **In 1<sup>st</sup> century Mediterranean world, being a Roman citizen was a BIG deal.**
- **Only about 10% of the total population of Roman Empire were Roman citizens (if that).  
Different ways you could become a citizen-**
  - **Granted citizenship. Perhaps for service performed to the empire, or an honor bestowed upon you for some reason.**
  - **Citizenship could be purchased- great fundraising mechanism for the empire, and it was expensive**
  - **Or, perhaps most securely, you could be BORN...**
- **Paul (as we later learn), was born a Roman Citizen. This was very unusual because he was Jewish.**
- **Not sure, but Many scholars believe it most likely that Paul's father, a Jew from Tarsus, was granted citizenship for some reason. Thus Paul was born a Roman citizen, but raised as a devout Jew.**
- **THIS put Paul in a socially awkward position. AS A ROMAN, he would have been held in suspicion by his fellow Jews- as the Jews hated the Romans.**
- **AS A JEW, Paul would have been looked down upon by other Roman citizens, who viewed Jews with disdain and contempt.**
- **However, his dual citizenship ALSO gave Paul a tremendous advantage, because as a Roman citizen, he possessed several extremely important RIGHTS.**
  - **Right to a trial if accused of crime**
  - **Right to appeal decisions against him- all the way to Caesar if necessary.**
  - **MOST importantly, protection from torture and punishment without being convicted after a trial.**
- **Paul was not immune from danger- as we have, and will again, see. BUT, he couldn't just be abused and conveniently be made to disappear. Roman authorities had to follow their own laws in dealing with him, which could at times include protecting him from his enemies.**
- **This security afforded Paul the ability to be bolder than others in proclaiming the Gospel, as he had a significant degree of protection from unjust persecution and harm.**
- **AT LEAST, all this would be true IF he claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. Which up to this point, he has NOT DONE.**
- **THIS BEGS THE QUESTION- why didn't Paul claim his rights of protection as a citizen BEFORE he was arrested, beaten, and thrown in jail?**
- **AND WHY, having already been set free, does he choose to claim his rights of citizenship NOW?**

† **Why not then, and why now?**

- *One theory is that before his arrest, Paul was concerned he wouldn't be able to get the magistrates full attention over the chaos of the rioting crowd. This is unlikely- if Paul wanted to claim his rights of protection, he almost certainly could have done so. Likewise, he had not claimed his citizenship in prior similar situations.*
- *MORE LIKELY- in that moment- Paul acted out of concern for the wellbeing of the slave girl and the other new believers in the city.*
- *You see, right then all the anger and attention of the mob was focused on him. If he all of a sudden aligned himself with the roman authorities in order to gain their protection, it could have given a sense of betrayal or abandonment to the small community of believers he led and represented. MOREOVER, in that moment, it could have placed the attention of the mob back on the slave girl and the other believers in the crowd, putting them at great risk.*
- *BOTTOM LINE, Paul and Silas chose to keep silent and endure unjust treatment because of their LOVE for the other believers, and their desire not to compromise their Gospel witness.*
- *OK... BUT THEN, having been released, WHY CLAIM rights of citizenship now? Revenge? Desire to embarrass and frighten the authorities? Actually, probably not.*
- *NEED TO THINK DEEPLY HERE, because it is our tendency (of our flesh) to first think about protecting and justifying ourselves. This is NOT WHAT Paul does.*
- *If Paul and Silas had just left quietly, this would leave the matter of their innocence publically unresolved.*
- *PAUL was NOT a troublemaker- as he had been accused of being- and it was important that the other believers not be seen as troublemakers either.*
- *Paul wants their innocence publically known- wants it made clear that arbitrary abuse as they received was NOT legitimate or allowed.*
- *By taking this stand, Paul provided protection to the other believers who could have been vulnerable to persecution for their faith in Christ.*
- *Remember, Philippi was a highly Romanized city, and it's likely that at least some of these new gentile believers were Roman citizens themselves.*
- *Paul's action here made it public knowledge that what just happened was unacceptable by law, and should not happen again.*
- *BOTTOM LINE- Paul claimed his rights of citizenship when he did NOT to protect or justify himself, but for the benefit of the other believers, AND for the preservation and integrity of the gospel witness.*

† **YOU SEE- for Paul, The power of being a citizen was not to claim his rights for his own benefit, but for the benefit of others, for the sake of the gospel, and to bring honor and glory to God.**

- *Let's bring this story into today. What I'm about to say I do so with great love and humility.*

- **Over the last 18 months the Christian community in America has spent lots of time very publically, and loudly, claiming its rights as citizens.**
- **“BECAUSE OF OUR RIGHTS as American citizens, there are things we should not have to do. There are things we do not have to endure.”**
- **Additionally, many Christians have invoked their rights as citizens of heaven. Their religious rights as people of faith. “Because of our faith and religious convictions, there are things we shouldn’t be required to do, things we don’t have to endure, even if other people have to do so.”**
- **Make no mistake! THERE ARE TIMES when God will lead us to contend for the rights inherent to a free and just society- because to do so benefits the wellbeing of everyone, not just ourselves.**
- **AND YET- there is a truth the church today needs to seriously consider...**

**Reality!** When we consider both the specific and overarching teaching of the New Testament, the calling and character of *Christ in us* is not one of claiming our rights to protect our own interests. Rather, it is the love to **LAY DOWN** our rights to benefit **OTHERS, FURTHER** the Gospel, and bring **GLORY** to God.

- **Scripture speaks to this CONSISTENTLY- but perhaps clearest, most profound and practical example is what we see in the letter Paul would later write to this very community- Philippians 2:1-11**

**Philippians 2:1-11** Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **(Its not about you!)**

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another **(in all of life), have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- **Did we hear this? When faced with injustice, persecution, suffering and even death, JESUS DID NOT CLAIM HIS RIGHTS AS GOD. He surrendered his rights. WHY?**
- **SO THAT GOD, in the FULLNESS of his Grace, would be glorified... AND SO THAT PEOPLE WOULD COME TO KNOW the redemption, the life, the hope and peace... the freedom that comes from hearing and receiving the faith that Jesus Christ is Lord.**
- **And so, this leads to...**

✠ **A question for the church today**

- **When we consider the broad response of the Christian community to the events of the past 18 months- AND the nature of the Christian response to these same unfolding events**

**RIGHT NOW... have we led people CLOSER TO or FURTHER FROM the grace and goodness of Jesus Christ and the Glory of God?**

- **Not an easy question, and it cuts across the full spectrum of political and ideological opinions. But it is an essential question to ask going forward.**
- **IS MY STANCE, my attitude, words, actions.... HOW I VIEW and seek to claim MY RIGHTS- is this drawing people toward Jesus, strengthening the community of the church, and making God beautiful.... OR, am I making it more difficult for people to turn to God, weakening the community of the church, and diminishing God in the eyes of people around me?**
- **Let me read from Ephesians 2- passage directly relevant to this.**

**Ephesians 2:19-22** *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

- **Believers- we are citizens of heaven- citizens of the kingdom, the family, household of God. And TOGETHER as the church (not just as individuals)- TOGETHER as the community of faith, WE are the presence of God in this world, as God lives in and through us by his Spirit.**
- **And IT IS HIS PURPOSE to reveal who He is- His hope for this world, to the people of this world, through how we influence and live in relationship with the people of our community.**
- **THIS IS THE POWER of being a citizen. From the freedom of our hearts, to live as an ambassador within our community to the gospel, the goodness, and the Grace of God. NOT first seeking to claim our rights for our own benefit, but desiring to strengthen God's church, make God beautiful and bring the hope of Christ to the people around us.**
- **PRAY**

✠ **Communion: Remembering, confessing, and proclaiming**

- **Entering into a time of worship through celebration of communion.**
- **By observing communion we REMEMBER- as scripture calls us to do- remember the sacrifice of Christ so that we may be forgiven, redeemed, and receive new life in a restored relationship with God.**
- **In addition to remembering, Communion is also a time of confession- confession that In Christ we have received a new source of life- that we NOW LIVE because Christ Lives in us. On the same evening that Christ celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples, he also said this...**

**John 14:15-20** *"If you love me, keep my commands. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me.*

*Because I live, you also will live.* <sup>20</sup> *On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.*

- ***Today, as we tighter receive the bread and cup, representing the body and blood of Jesus, may we open our hearts to the Spirits leadership- conviction- of how we experience and express the life of Christ- given to us- to those around us.***
- ***INSTRUCTION. PRAY. COME TO TABLE***
- ***Friends... by our participation in the Life of Christ, by our words and actions, may we proclaim the miracle of the cross to our community until the day Christ returns again.***

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

<sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

- ***PRAY.***