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Beyond the Walls – Acts 16

Acts 16:1-40

By Kirk Gambrell

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Using This Study

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.



In Acts chapter 16, Paul continues his missionary journeys. At the beginning of the chapter he meets a young Christian named Timothy. Timothy was not a Jew. His father was a Greek and therefore he had not been circumcised. Paul has Timothy circumcised despite teaching that we are not under the law. He does this so that Timothy is able to have a more effective ministry. Today we will look at what things we should and shouldn't do in order for us to have the most effective ministry possible and to be all that God has called us to be.



Read Acts 16:1-40 (NET)

¹ (Paul) also came to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple named Timothy was there, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but whose father was a Greek. ² The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was Greek. ⁴ As they went through the towns, they passed on the decrees that had been decided on by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the Gentile believers to obey.

⁵ So the churches were being strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number every day.

⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to do this, ⁸ so they passed through Mysia and went down to Troas.

⁹ A vision appeared to Paul during the night: A Macedonian man was standing there urging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"

¹⁰ After Paul saw the vision, we attempted immediately to go over to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹ We put out to sea from Troas and sailed a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days. ¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵ After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.

¹⁶ Now as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit that enabled her to foretell the future by supernatural means. She brought her owners a great profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed behind Paul and us and kept crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ She continued to do this for many days. But Paul became greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out of her at once. ¹⁹ But when her owners saw their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰ When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion. They are Jews ²¹ and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans."

²² The crowd joined the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After they had beaten them severely, they threw them into prison and commanded the jailer to guard them securely. ²⁴ Receiving such orders, he threw them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the rest of the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly a great earthquake occurred, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open, and the bonds of all the prisoners came loose. ²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, because he assumed the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul called out loudly, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹ Calling for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell down trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them outside and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."

³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house.

³³ At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household. ³⁵ At daybreak the magistrates sent their police officers, saying, “Release those men.” ³⁶ The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent orders to release you. So come out now and go in peace.” ³⁷ But Paul said to the police officers,

“They had us beaten in public without a proper trial—even though we are Roman citizens—and they threw us in prison. And now they want to send us away secretly? Absolutely not! They themselves must come and escort us out!”

³⁸ The police officers reported these words to the magistrates. They were frightened when they heard Paul and Silas were Roman citizens

³⁹ and came and apologized to them. After they brought them out, they asked them repeatedly to leave the city. ⁴⁰ When they came out of the prison, they entered Lydia’s house, and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and then departed.

EXAMINE His Word (Observation) (For personal preparation)

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the foregoing passages.

1. Who is involved in the text? Author, audience, main characters.
2. Where and when is this taking place? Geography and timeline.
3. What actions are carried out or commanded? Look for the verbs.
4. Is there anything repeated?

5. What is emphasized?

6. Is there anything in these passages that is related to other areas of scripture?

7. Are there things to be noted that are alike or unlike such as similes and metaphors?

2 EXPLORE His Word (Interpretation) (For Community Group discussion)

What does God MEAN?

8. After Paul so staunchly fights against being under the law, why does he have Timothy circumcised?

9. What is the significance of Lydia being a dealer of purple cloth?

10. In verse 18, why do you think Paul was annoyed at the slave girl who was proclaiming truth about Paul and Silas?

11. Why did it matter that Paul was a Roman citizen?

12. Why did Paul willingly leave the city even though the leaders had mistreated him unfairly; he would have had legal recourse.

③ EMBRACE His Word (Application) (For Community Group discussion)
Why does this MATTER to me?

13. Paul repeatedly teaches we are not under the law, but in verse 3 he has Timothy circumcised. How do we know which laws are most important for us to follow in our own life?

14. In Paul's life, he repeatedly shows that glorifying God through spreading the gospel is the most important thing in his life. What are some activities that show up in our own lives when we view glorifying God through the spread of the Gospel as the most important thing?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW, to FEEL, and to DO...

SERMON NOTES