The Founding of the Church at Philippi
Acts 16:12-40

Paul and Silas have answered the Macedonian vision and have arrived at Philippi. Their ministry here changes the lives of several people: A business woman named Lydia; a soothsayer; and a jailer with his family. This leads to the founding of the church at Philippi which Paul would later send an epistle.

I. A PRAYER meeting is attended (vs. 13-16).

- The first thing Paul and Silas do is find a prayer meeting (v. 13).
- Prayer meetings could be held anywhere.
- Women are often great “prayer warriors” (v. 14).
- Great things result from prayer meetings—People get saved. The church at Philippi was born out of a prayer meeting.

A. Lydia’s salvation (v. 14). God opened the heart of Lydia as she heard the preaching of God’s Word by Paul.
   1. Lydia was most likely "well-to-do." She was a business woman who sold purple cloth (cf. Luke 16:19).
   2. Lydia was following her conscience regarding God, and God gave her more light.
   3. Lydia illustrates how one person getting saved could open the possibility for the establishment of an entire church congregation.

B. Lydia’s obedience in following the Lord in baptism (v. 15).

C. Lydia’s generosity (v. 15). The Lord opened her heart and she opened the door of her home to the preachers.

II. A POSSESSED damsel is delivered (vs. 16-22).

- When the Gospel breaks new ground, there is opposition by Satan to hinder the work (Simon of Samaria—Acts 8:5-25; Bar-jesus the sorcerer of Pathos—13:4-12; The soothsayer (fortune teller) of Philippi—16:16-22).
- The devil shows up at PRAYER TIME (v. 16)!
- Our conflict mainly involves spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-11)

A. "Spirit of divination" (python). "Divination" is the ability to speak secret knowledge from a source other than God. (ILLUS: Jeanne Dixon)
B. Money gained by sinful businesses (v. 16). Greed. Filthy lucre.
   1. Gambling
   2. Drugs
   3. Pornography
   4. Tobacco
   5. Liquor
   6. Abortions

C. Sometimes the devil may speak the truth, but only to accomplish his secret agenda. By trying to ally himself to Paul, he could gain creditability or compromise Paul’s creditability.
   1. Although what this woman was saying was true, her source was Satanic. If Paul appeared to be in agreement with what she was doing, it would give people the impression that his ministry was also linked with the occult.
   2. Jesus would not receive the testimony of devils either (Mk 1:23-25). If Jesus, or Paul, accepted what the devils were saying, people would think that everything else the devil’s said must also be right.

   That is one of the main problems with modern bibles (NIV, NASV, etc.). If one accepts 90% of it as accurate, he is going to be deduced regarding what is not correct. A little leaven...

   3. God’s work doesn’t need the devil’s publicity (vs. 17-18).
   4. v. 18—“This did she MANY DAYS...” Satan won’t quit!
   5. People getting saved will hurt certain merchant’s pocket books (v. 19; 1 Tim. 6:10).

   Slander (vs. 20-21). Often preachers are portrayed as “trouble-makers.” The real trouble-makers were the slave-master’s greed for money (1 Tim. 6:10). [See Acts 17:6; 1 Kings 18:17 regarding who the real trouble makers are.]

   6. vs. 22-23—When compromise fails, Satan will use persecution to hinder God’s work.

III. A PRISON keeper is saved (vs. 23-40).
A. The SECURING of Paul and Silas (v. 24). No way of escape (humanly).

B. The SINGING at midnight (v. 25). "...songs in the night" (Job 35:10; Ps. 42:8; 149:5).
   - v. 25 — There are twelve midnight episodes in Scripture (Ex. 11:4; 12:29; Jud. 16:3; Ruth 3:8; 1 Kings 3:20; Job 34:20; Ps. 119:62; Mt. 25:6; Mk. 13:35; Luke 11:5; Acts 16:25; 20:7; 27:27).

SILAS: “Paul, what are we going to do?”
PAUL: “First, I’m going to pray, then I’m going sing and praise God!”
SILAS: “Sing??? Are you kidding? I’m bleeding and hurting all over!”
PAUL: “Yes, I’m hurting too on the outside, but I have the joy, joy, joy in my heart! Remember what Jesus said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Mt. 5:11-12).

   - Not only did the prisoners hear Paul and Silas’ praying and singing, but GOD HEARD ALSO!
   - A miracle (prison foundation shaken without collapsing... doors opened... chains loosed... no prisoners escape even though they could... jailer shaken in amazement!)

D. The SAVING of the jailer and his family (vs. 29-34).
   1. FEAR—“... came trembling...” (v. 29; Prov. 9:10). The night’s events brought conviction about his relationship with God.
   2. HUMILITY— “...fell down before Paul and Silas...” Reversal of v. 24.
3. RESPECT—“Sirs...” (v. 20). If a person does not respect you, they will not listen to what you have to say.

4. PLEA—“What must I do to be saved?” Admission of ignorance.

5. ANSWER (v. 31)—“BELIEVE (faith/trust/rely) ON (not about) the Lord Jesus Christ...” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Ken Davis relates this story in his book, How To Speak To Youth, (pp 104-106): While in college he gave a speech on, "The Law of the Pendulum"—A pendulum can never return to a point higher than the point from which it was released. Because of gravity, when the pendulum returns, it will fall short of its original release point. Each time it swings it makes less and less of an arc, until finally it is at rest.

He demonstrated this law by attaching a 3-foot string to a child's toy top and securing it to the top of the blackboard with a thumb-tack. He pulled the top to one side and made a mark on the blackboard where he let it go. Each time it swung back he made a new mark. It took less than a minute for the top to complete its swinging and come to rest. He asked how many BELIEVED the law of the pendulum was true. Everyone raised their hands, including the teacher.

Hanging from the steel ceiling beams in the middle of the room was a large, crude but functional pendulum (250 pounds of metal weights attached to four strands of 500-pound test parachute cord.). Davis invited the instructor to climb up on a table and sit in a chair with the back of his head against a cement wall. He brought the hanging 250 pounds of metal up to his nose. Holding the huge pendulum just a fraction of an inch from his face, he said, "If the law of the pendulum is true, then when I release this metal, it will swing across the room and return short of the release point. Your nose will be in no danger. Sir, do you believe this law is true?" There was a long pause. He finally answered meekly, "Yes."

He released the pendulum. It made a swishing sound as it arced across the room. At the far end of its swing, it paused momentarily and swiftly started back. The teacher immediately jumped off the table. Davis then asked the class, "Does he believe in the law of the pendulum?" The students unanimously answered, "NO!"
6. HOUSEHOLD SALVATION. Soul winning should begin at home. A father has considerable influence upon his family when he gets saved.

7. BAPTISM follows salvation. No infants in his family getting baptized. They were all old enough to "believe" (see v. 34).

8. TRANSFORMATION of the jailer’s life (vs. 24, 33-34).
   - Cleanse wounds given a meal
   - REJOICING / FELLOWSHIP (v. 34).

E. The SETTING FREE of the preachers (vs. 35-39).
   1. Paul is claiming his “civil rights” as a Roman citizen. Philippi was a Roman colony (16:12). Roman citizens had certain privileges. No Roman could be imprisoned without a trial. Paul was a Roman citizen and was beaten and imprisoned “UNCONDEMNED.”
      - Paul also asserted his Roman citizenship on another occasion (Acts 22:24-30).
      - God ordained government (Rom 13). There is nothing wrong with a Christian claiming his civil rights under the United States Constitution.
   2. By demanding the magistrates to release them publicly, they were forcing them to admit their error and declare Paul and Silas’ innocence.
   3. This would also preclude others being imprisoned unjustly because they were Christians.

F. The SOOTHING of the brethren (v. 40).
   1. Paul and Silas did what Peter did when he was freed from prison (Acts 4:23 ; 12:12). They return to their preferred company—The brethren! Saints prefer the company of other saints (1 John 3:14).
   2. Paul and Silas were still hurting from the severe beating of the day before, but they are the ones who are comforting the brethren! Don’t let your own pain keep you from bringing comfort to others. As G. Campbell Morgan said, "The sufferers comforted those who did not suffer." The selflessness of Paul and Silas is a rebuke to many of us who are more interested in being comforted than giving comfort to others.