

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for February 14, 2016

The Courage of Paul
Acts 16:35-40

Acts 15:36-18:23 records Paul's second missionary journey to Greece. The two converts noted in Philippi were Lydia a wealthy religious importer of expensive fabric and the jailer, who would have been a retired Roman military man of high rank. These two people reflect the diversity of the church.

1. Paul is resolved to be freed (16:35)

The reason the magistrates changed their minds about Paul was their superstition over the earthquake.

The policemen, literally "rod-bearers," who carried rods with axes attached, were likely the same people who beat Paul and Silas in Acts 16:22-23.

2. Paul resists his freedom (16:36-37)

There is a definite contrast that Paul makes between how he was put in jail and how he was being released.

Roman law afforded its citizens a full public trial and exemption from degrading beatings. Paul waited until after his release to effectively communicate his citizenship.

If Paul accepted this secret release, the question of his innocence would not be publically resolved and he could be considered a fugitive. More importantly, a public exoneration was necessary in order to protect his fellow believers from mistreatment in the future.

This choice by Paul lived out Jesus' instruction to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Wise and righteous living keeps the needs of others in view. Paul made this clear to the Philippians a decade later (Philippians 2:4).

3. Paul is requested to flee (16:38-39)

One of the roles of a magistrate was to protect Romans from injustice. The magistrates were so concerned that they had violated the law by ordering the beating of Paul and Silas that they pleaded with them to leave Philippi.

The magistrates had power to put Paul in prison but no power to free him quietly. There are times when an appeal to our rights as a citizen of a government not only serves us but also serves our fellow believers, for our real citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

4. Paul reassures the fellowship (16:40)

The house of Lydia was large enough to function as the central meeting place for the believers, which included at least two households (16:15, 33). Paul was able to stay long enough to encourage the church in Philippi, and his ministry would remain (Philippians 1:3-6). The book of Philippians tells us:

- They would face persecution (Phil. 1:29)
- They would face false teachers (Phil. 3:2)
- They would face relational problems (Phil. 4:2)
- They would face attitude problems (Phil. 4:4-9)

From Acts 20:5 and the use of the pronoun “we,” it is evident that Paul left Luke behind in Philippi to care for the church. It would be another five years before Paul would return to Macedonia (Acts 20:1) where they would be rejoined.

The Philippian church would share with Paul in his affliction by being of fruitful service to Paul in Thjessalonica (Philippians 4:15-16), in Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:8-9), and in Rome (Philippians 4:18). The Lord is able to use young churches to further His work.

May we be faithful to serve the interest of others as if they were more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4).