

## **20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning**

### **Week 39 (September 20-26, 2015)**

This week we will follow Paul and Silas as they seek and find God's will for their next mission journey.

**Sunday**, September 20 (read Acts 16:1-5)

*So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers. (Acts 16:5)*

Paul's purpose for the next mission journey is to strengthen the churches that he founded on a previous trip (Acts 15:36). In Lystra, he meets a young man named Timothy who could be helpful to the missionaries, so he has him circumcised by Dr. Luke in order to avoid criticism from the Jews who know of the young man's background (v. 1-3). They inform each church that the Jerusalem council has decided not to force Gentiles to live under the rules and regulations of the Jewish law (v. 4; see also Acts 15:23-29). The churches of today, just like those founded by Paul, prosper numerically and spiritually once they realize that they are **under grace** and not under the law (v. 5). Do you fully understand this truth? The Lord wants to set you free to serve the Living God and to grow His Church! As Paul writes, ". . . if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law" (Galatians 5:18).

**Monday**, September 21 (read Acts 16:6-10)

*During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9)*

God has a particular place for each of us to serve and a special person or group of people whom He has prepared for our message; therefore, don't be surprised when the Holy Spirit says "no" to **your** plans (v. 6). You may even go toward "Plan B" only to run into another roadblock placed there by the Lord Himself (v. 7). If you will wait patiently on Jesus, He will reveal to you the place of your next assignment, perhaps in a vision in the night (v. 8-9). Paul is planning something really big, but God, as He often does, sends his team off to answer the prayers of **one man** in Macedonia. As we saw with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, the Lord can accomplish great things in a seemingly small venue (Acts 8:26-40). Are you willing to go where He sends you? You will find spiritual success only when you are.

**Tuesday**, September 22 (read Acts 16:11-15)

*When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. (Acts 16:15a)*

Following the call of God, Paul and his companions arrive in Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading city in Macedonia (v. 11-12). They look for a quiet place to pray outside the hustle and bustle of a city filled with Gentiles, finding a spot by a river where women are already gathered to pray (v. 13). (Women still make up a large percentage of those who attend scheduled prayer meetings. Thank you, ladies, but guys, let's change that trend and do our part!) Paul meets a well-to-do woman named Lydia who worships God in her current knowledge, even though she does not know Jesus as her Savior. He introduces her to the Lord and baptizes her along with **her entire family** (v. 14-15). Wow! What a day! Because of the prayers of one man and the obedience of Paul, an entire family will be in the kingdom! You can be assured that God will produce results when you are faithful to His call!

**Wednesday**, September 23 (read Acts 16:16-21)

*When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. (Acts 16:19)*

During the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America thumbed her nose at God by saying, “We don’t care about morality, because the economy is good.” In today’s text, you will note that some things never change. We meet a slave girl who is possessed by a demon that allows her to predict the future. Her owners monetarily profit from her fortune telling (v. 16). By her satanic possession, the girl correctly and continually identifies Paul’s ministry goals until he becomes so troubled that he casts the demon out of her (v. 17-18). God does not allow Satan to get the glory by declaring the goals of the mission through a demon-possessed girl. The owners of the slave girl are furious because of their loss of income, so they bring Paul and Silas before the authorities for judgment (v. 19-21). Though it may seem unfair that the men who are doing God’s will are being punished, our Lord has a plan for a jailhouse revival. We’ll study that tomorrow.

**Thursday**, September 24 (read Acts 16:22-25)

*About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, **and the other prisoners were listening to them.** (Acts 16:25, emphasis mine)*

The excited mob joins in with Paul’s condemners until the magistrates have the two men severely beaten. Following the lashes, Paul and Silas are placed in the inner cell of a Roman prison with their feet in the stocks (v. 22-24). These men of God went where God wanted them to go. They said what God wanted them to say. They did what God wanted them to do. Shouldn’t they get an air-conditioned doghouse for their efforts? If you believe **that** doctrine, read Hebrews 11. God has a plan beyond what these men can see or feel. At midnight, Paul and Silas are not complaining about their situation; instead, they are singing **hymns** to God (v. 25). I doubt if Paul and Silas sing beautifully, but God hears it in perfect harmony (see Ephesians 5:19), and they are strong witnesses to the other men in the prison. We will continue this marvelous passage tomorrow.

**Friday**, September 25 (read Acts 16:26-31)

*They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—**you and your household** (Acts 16:31, emphasis mine)*

Today’s text begins with Paul’s version of “Jailhouse Rock”. The earthquake causes **all** the prison doors to open and **everyone’s** chains to come loose (v. 26). I’ll bet you are thinking that those violent men bolt for the door. Thinking the same thing, the prison guard plans to commit suicide because he will have to suffer the penalty for all the escaped prisoners (v. 27). Rapes, murders and robberies are all on his shoulders now! Paul shouts (v. 28), “Don’t harm yourself! We are **all** here!” The jailer calls for lights (v. 29) and asks the question I live to hear (v. 30): “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer to that question is printed above and motivates my entire ministry (v. 31). I am trying to teach my readers to claim the promises of God! This is my personal favorite. I will spend Eternity **with my family**, because I believe and trust this wonderful promise, reminding God daily that my family is safe in His care, even though some of them don’t know it yet.

**Saturday**, September 26 (read Acts 16:32-40)

*The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—**he and his whole family.** (Acts 16:34, emphasis mine)*

The word “believe” means **trusts in, clings to and relies on**. It takes place in the **heart**, not just the head. Signs of genuine salvation are present: 1) he washes the wounds he inflicted, 2) he and his entire family are baptized, 3) he listens to the Word of God, and 4) he feeds the preacher (v. 32-34). The rest of the story is almost humorous as Paul and Silas receive an escort out of the prison where revival took place. The Bible does not confirm my thoughts, but I believe those other prisoners received salvation as well, because they chose to stay in prison with a couple of Christians who were enjoying their salvation instead of escaping back into the lost world of “freedom” (v. 26-28). Will the real prisoner please stand up!