



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 51 A Liberation that Leads to Justice**  
**By Pastor Jody May 09/17/2023**

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**Acts 16:35-40 ESV**

<sup>35</sup> But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." <sup>36</sup> And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." <sup>37</sup> But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." <sup>38</sup> The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup> So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup> So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**[PRAY]**

**[INTRODUCTION]**

Well over the last 3 weeks we have studied what true Gospel Liberation looks like. It didn't matter what class or ethnicity you are from, the good news of **Jesus saves, and He saves completely.**

It didn't matter if you are rich, and that's good news, for Jesus taught us it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Mat. 19:24) than for a rich man to be saved. So, for a "rich" woman, named Lydia, to be saved it was just as much as a miracle as it was for the woman who was demon possessed.

It didn't matter if you were neck deep in slavery to idolatry, as that poor slave woman. She was enslaved to a spirit that would use her to control others, and physically enslaved to men that abused her and used her for their purposes. She had no hope just like Lydia to be saved, **BUT GOD**, and Paul called that demon out of her out of frustration and God's predestined will.



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Lastly, it didn't matter if you are a blue-collar joe indebted to the government for your livelihood. The jailer was the last stop for law enforcement in his town, and he became God's last stop to bring in the new law of Grace. And make no mistake about it, all three were saved against their will and to be rescued all three were taken from this world and graciously transplanted into the Kingdom of God. Which taught us this principle for life:

**To be freed from the world one must be enslaved to Jesus.**

Absolute freedom we said is an allusion, you either belong to this world or you belong to God, you either serve the prince of this world or you serve the Christ, but you **CANNOT** serve two masters, as Paul taught us.

**Romans 6:22**

But now that you have been **set free** from sin and have become **slaves** of God,

And that is a wonderful position to be in, it means I belong to someone, someone takes care of me, someone watches over me, someone ensures my Salvation, it's not up to me!

As well, now that we belong to God, He's going to ensure His people are treated rightly. That's what we will be looking at today as we wrap up Chapter 16 and our first visit to Philippi. Let's check back into our story and see how Paul and Silas will be moving along.

<sup>35</sup> But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." <sup>36</sup> And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

You see the attitude toward these men has changed. Just a few short hours earlier they had beaten these men within an inch of their lives and had thrown them in the stocks. That is a lot of work, intimidation, and torture for just an overnight visit. No, what has happened is that these men after dealing with the terror of a night earthquake, being awoken to the news of a prison collapse, learning that the men had been set free but chose to stay



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understand something now. The one God over all is the true God and He has come a calling and has shown the townsfolk and the local deities who's in charge.

The question this may generate for you is why did God wait till now? If these men belonged to God? If He loved them, why didn't He rescue them sooner?

**[ILLUSTRATION]**

***“A wizard is never late, Frodo Baggins. Nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.”***

The truth of the matter is that God has reasons for waiting to deliver His justice, or His right ruling, He's never late and He's always on time, because it is God's plans that we are living for and His plans are what is best.

**MAIIN POINT:**

**God's Justice Comes Just in Time, to do His "Just" Will.**

You see we need to grasp hold on that today because the **world teaches** us to **desire immediate gratification with retaliation.**

The world says you have a right to demand justice, that will bring you relief.

The Gospel teaches us God has the right to demand justice, but Jesus bought you relief from God's wrath.

The world says that trials and sufferings by the hands of others can only be righted by reparations.

The Gospel says that all trials and sufferings were thought out by God so in your tested spirit you no longer desire reparations.

Our **gratification comes** not from vengeance but **from the usefulness of our trials and sufferings to be used** for His glory.

**Romans 12:19 ESV**



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<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

God has a plan for justice and it’s better than yours, let’s learn to trust Him together. Let’s look today and see why God’s justice doesn’t always come when you want it or expect it: because it is related to the growth of the Kingdom, it comes when it is the right time for the evil doer to learn a lesson and God gets glory, and it will come to help develop new missional relationships.

**1. God’s justice comes when it’s time to procure Kingdom growth.**

<sup>37</sup> But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.”

First let’s go back and retrace the nature of what has happened, Paul uses the word uncondemned - ἀκατάκριτος (*akatakritos*), ον (*on*): adj.; ≡ Str 178; TDNT 3.952—LN 56.19 **without a proper trial**,<sup>1</sup> putting that together with publicly and now we have a case where there are now witnesses that they have had no trial. This is the ancient world, Roman provinces did not have to have a trial for behavioral coercion for the purpose of peacekeeping. BUT it was a different matter altogether when you are a Roman citizen for that was your right to have a fair and public trial.

Paul most likely was carrying a diploma which is a small wooden diptych, which would state his Roman name and place of origin. His citizenship meant he was owed voting rights, certain tax exemptions, safe passage through Roman territory without hassle from government, buy land as he pleases, and he was due fair trials, or else Roman federal government would become involved. Prior to all this, Paul also operated with a predominant view of life.

**2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV**

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<sup>1</sup>Swanson, J. (1997). [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.



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Therefore, we are **ambassadors** for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Paul was a duly appointed, political representative, for the Kingdom of God 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> he was provided by God's providence through an earthly inheritance the right to travel where he pleased.

Now whether Paul tried to tell them up front we do not know, or perhaps they ignored his claims that he could have been making while they were beating him. Whatever way it happened **they didn't do their due diligence**, but Paul sees this as an opportunity for God's Kingdom. Often Paul viewed his incarcerations and torture as the front door to get his message delivered for God. He was owed an audience, and he would have it!

**[GOSPEL CHALLENGE]**

Many Christians now a day, would rather other Christians be quiet and not speak out against the undo mistreatment of the church. My friends let me call all of us to remember that it is **not just Paul that is an ambassador of Christ but we ourselves**. We do not work as slaves for our government our government are public servants of God, and it is our duty to call them to answer when they go against Gods' will and when they have not justly governed.

**LBCF Chapter 24.1 Civil Government**

God, the supreme Lord and King of the whole world, has ordained civil authorities to be under him and over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword, to defend and encourage those who do good and to punish evildoers.<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>Romans 13:1-4.

Let me rind ourselves, God still hardens hearts of those in power, just like He did to Pharaoh in the OT, for the reason of revealing His glory at the proper time.

It is time for Christians to participate in voting again, in all areas educating our neighbors when our politicians don't do their job.



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It is time for Christians to go to our local School Board meetings where we have the rights as parents and tax payers to call them not to endanger the lives our students with policies or state indoctrination. It is time as Christians to go to City/County Council Meetings so that our leaders understand we are watching them and are holding them accountable for making empty promises.

We need to like Paul, graciously **decline the invite to exit society quietly** and we need to exercise our rights as citizens of God’s Kingdom first and American Citizens second and call those to question who do not abide by God’s laws.

And let us not be mad and grind our teeth and scream at God *why did you let America die, why did you let the enemy take over*, two reasons: 1<sup>st</sup> it was the **right judgment** of God on a nation, and 2<sup>nd</sup> God can do what He wants with America for America can’t save men only God’s glory revealed in Jesus can!

**God’s Justice Comes Just in Time, to do His “Just” Will.**

**2. God’s justice comes when the unjust are to learn their lesson.**

<sup>38</sup>The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. <sup>39</sup>So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

Luke is careful to record that these rulers were afraid when they hear they were Roman citizens. They were afraid for the same reason that all politicians fear when they make a mistake, **they will lose what power they have** for all political power is based in authority outside of oneself.

1<sup>st</sup> off they have **endangered their political standing with Rome**. If you remember Rome had made them an independent colony that lived tax free. Because of the crime of torturing and detaining Roman citizens Rome proper had the right and ability to come in, remove those from power, and punish them for misconduct. The worst-case scenario they come back under the control of Rome increasing everyone’s tax structure. You and I both know that would make you the most unpopular politician in town.



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2<sup>nd</sup> because of the prisoner's political status **they had to protect them**. After riling up the crowd into a frenzy over fear, they now had to keep the crowd at bay. This puts them at odds with the crowd and it makes them look like turn coats.

3<sup>rd</sup> again because of their status they had **no right to force them to leave** (they had to ask nicely). Paul and Silas had every right to stay and even buy property in that town if they chose to do so. No, in their political haste they have caused political suicide. Let us not forget the encouragement of Christ from Luke's first volume.

**Luke 18:7-8 ESV**

**<sup>7</sup>And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.**

So here's how Philippi's leaders learned their lesson.

**GOSPEL LESSON** - God withholds justice to teach these men how to treat God's people, and how God was the true power behind their political endeavors.

It's probable that Paul had a good reason to let them come to him. He now has the upper hand, and he is able to let the leaders know that the new converts are citizens as well, and that they have every right to be treated fairly and to be protected according to Roman law. In essence Paul is showing the separation of political power from God's power but even in that separation all power is given by and remains under the control of God.

The church of Philippi endures persecution like the rest of the churches in Asia in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but their trials most likely don't come by way of the government, and in turn they like Paul, get to practice their rights as Roman Citizens.

Family let me just say you may feel the burden not to practice politics, and your right to vote in this day and age, but your civil rights God ordained just like these folks in Philippi. They didn't always get a choice on the official they



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wanted either, but they used their rights as free citizens to help with the spread of the Gospel as they could, as should we.

**3. God's justice comes when its' time to develop missional relationships.**

<sup>40</sup>So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

- His justice developed continuing partnerships.

So, we may not always get the attention of God like we want when things happen us to us that we don't want. But again, it worked the way it was supposed to work, according to God's will. God's justice was to let Paul and Silas have the upper hand after a beating so they would not be stopped from their last visit to Lydia's home encouraging them and instructing them on what would happen next. Later on Paul thanks God for the way He did it.

**Philippians 1:3-5 ESV**

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

God's justice prepares future relationships by how he works out His justice now. The way that God started Paul's relationships in Philippi stayed with him and supported throughout the rest of his career.

- His justice created empathy for other Christian Work,

**Philippians 4:15-18 ESV**

<sup>15</sup>And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. <sup>16</sup>Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. <sup>17</sup>Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. <sup>18</sup>I have received full payment, and more. I am well





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supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Because Paul and Silas endured their harsh treatment early on, it allowed the church at Philippi to see how hard and tedious the work of the Gospel is. It created in them a heart of giving and love towards Gospel proclamation.

I got to spend time with another church planter friend of mine this week that started the same time I did and we relived a little bit those years, and we were able to talk about the relationships and partnerships for the Gospel we were able to develop and I think it was because we had such a hard time trying to start Reformed churches in the heartland of Arminianism.

- His justice gives stories to share with future church family.

**1 Thessalonians 2:2 ESV**

But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict.

God's justice is never slow it just comes when it supposed to and sometimes it so you and I will have stories to share for encouragement for the next generation. Paul is sharing with the Thessalonians what it took to share the Gospel, that his work with them was not in vain, and what he suffered in Philippi was to show them it was worth it, his suffering was worth their Salvation.

There it is guys God's justice comes many times after suffering so that the Salvation of His children might take place. It is an honor and privilege to suffer for the cause of God, for it shows the value of Christ and His people.

**[CHALLENGE]** Let me just encourage all of us today.

Perhaps today you think God is moving slow in your life, that He is slow in moving in your life to bring you relief. Could it be because God is growing you? Could it be because He is preparing others around you to witness what



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He will do through you? Could it be because He is setting up those that persecute you to teach them about His sovereignty? Is He building up your testimony so you will have that to share with your friends and your kids? Will you tell them how it was not a waste of time for you to endure suffering, but it was worth it if it helped in their path to Salvation? These are things instances that just keep proving to us over and over again that:

**God's Justice Comes Just in Time, to do His "Just" Will.**

**[PRAYER]**

**[COMMUNION]**

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ESV**

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that elected that we would imitate His Son through suffering so we would have the opportunity to glorify Him.

Go in the name of the Son, that endured His life as the suffering servant, taking our due justice upon Himself so we could know the love of God.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that enables us to endure, patiently waiting for God's justice to come when He is ready, so that we can share with others the testimony of God's perfect timing.