

BIG IDEA: God’s gospel/good news goes forth no matter what. God works even when there are barriers.

1) INTRO

- Barriers – beaver dam in Ontario fishing trip
 - We face barriers/obstacles/opposition in life
 - We face them in living for JC
 - How are we going to respond to barriers/opposition?
 - We see barriers constantly in Acts...see again today
- BIG IDEA
- We’re in Philippi, a Roman colony
- The missionaries we’re with are P&S, Timothy, and Luke
 - They picked up Timothy earlier in ch 16
 - Went to Macedonia
 - Luke joined along the way – “they” (v8) “we” (v10)
 - Made it to Philippi & Lydia became a follower of JC
- In midst of the good/joy of Lydia’s conversion, our missionaries today find themselves facing opposition

2) WRONGLY ACCUSED (vv16-21)

- First barrier/opposition has to do w/ the slave girl w/ demon
 - She has a spirit of divination
 - lit. “A python spirit”
 - Imagery is tied w/ priestess of Oracle at Delphi
 - Was believed that this spirit overpowered women & allowed them to foretell the future
 - Both Grks & Romans put much weight in divination
 - She was a slave girl...soothsaying/divination was profitable
 - She followed them around saying that they’re servants of the Most High God who proclaim the way of salvation
 - “Most High God” – El Elyon, the Absolutely Sov God – an OT title (used ~50 times) for the God of Israel
 - She did this for many days...until Paul had enough
 - I first asked myself why he was annoyed...this message is true

- But, Ref Study Bible – Paul is annoyed by the publicity that the evil spirit is offering through the girl
 - This message doesn’t come from evil, but from God
- Schreiner – “there’s clear separation between evil & good
 - There should be in our lives
 - We run from evil & run to good by power of HS
 - Soothsaying, divination, seances, horoscopes, ouija boards, mediums – we don’t participate in evil
- So, Paul’s fed up...commands evil spirit in name of JC to come out
 - It does...God is powerful over all
- This makes the owners of slave girl mad
 - Can’t make profit on her in this way any more
 - So, they take P&S to the magistrates/officers of law
 - They point out that they’re Jews
 - Anti-semitism was common in Greco-Roman world
 - They also accuse them of causing trouble/disturbing the peace/causing chaos
 - Which is not true
 - They’re also accused of essentially teaching a foreign religion that’s not approved by the state
 - Which is true...Roman citizens were only supposed to practice religions approved by state
- They continue to face further barriers/opposition

3) WRONGLY PUNISHED (vv22-24)

- Second barrier/opposition is that they’re wrongly tried & punished
- We see the crowd joins in attacking them
 - Magistrates/law officers join in taring their clothes off and giving orders that they be beaten w/ rods
 - They didn’t follow the proper protocols of the Roman justice system here
 - They didn’t investigate the charges, didn’t organize a proper hearing, didn’t give P&S chance to defend selves
 - Then they’re beaten (illegally) and thrown into prison
 - Jailer is order to keep them there safely

- Jailer puts them into the inner prison
 - The most secure part of the prison
- Jailer also took further steps & put their feet in the stocks
 - This meant they had to sleep in sitting position or lying on the floor
 - Changing positions to avoid cramping was nearly impossible...incredibly painful
- But, in midst of all of this, God's still working
- BIG IDEA

4) GOD'S STILL AT WORK (vv25-40)

- P&S are worshiping
 - They're praying & singing
 - They're trusting God
 - They're showing joy & peace in midst of opposition
 - When we face barriers/opposition, sometimes all we can do is pray & sing
 - And, really these are the best things we can do
 - Pray – we call out to God for help
 - Sing – songs w/ words that can strengthen, encourage, comfort us greatly
 - P&S are singing and the other prisoners are listening
- There was an earthquake
 - Earthquakes are common in this area, but timing here is miraculous
 - Immediately doors are opened
 - Immediately bonds are broken...chains undone
 - Everyone is free
 - Jailer wanted to kill himself
 - Remember if a Roman guard allowed someone under their care to escape, the punishment that was theirs went to guards
 - They were personally responsible, could be executed
 - But, Paul tells him not to do it – they're all there
 - The jailer is amazed and trembling
 - Then we see the reason for the jailer

- God's purpose for the earthquake wasn't to save P&S, but to spiritually save the jailer
- "What must I do to be saved"
 - Probably asks this after seeing/hearing P&S singing and praying
- Their message is to believe in the Lord JC and you'll be saved
 - It's the same/consistent message throughout Acts: salvation comes through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone
 - This is the simple yet profound answer to the repentant sinner
 - Salvation comes through believing the Gospel
- They speak the good news of JC to jailer and his household (v32) and they come to saving faith and are baptized and rejoice w/ a meal
 - There's disagreement among scholars whether there were babies in the household who were baptized
 - The text shows us they were baptistic – ate together (v34)
 - They rejoiced that they believed in God
 - His household would have included family & servants
- The magistrates decide the next day that P&S could just be released
 - But, Paul makes a big stink about it
 - He says that since they were beaten in public and tried unfairly...that it's not right for that to happen to them, Roman citizens
 - It was contrary to Roman law to beat Roman citizens without trial
- Paul's insistence on an apology might seem arrogant, but in the culture of the day – a culture of honor & shame – public exoneration was essential to show that Paul's message was legit
 - This is an effort to protect the reputation fo the church in Philippi

6) APP & CLOSING

- This passage gives us confidence
- People will oppose the spread of the Gospel, but God's in control
 - He'll make sure his message spreads
 - Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Roger Youderian...Steve Saint baptized by man who killed his dad