

Multiplication by Division

Bible Characters

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Scripture text is taken from Acts 15, beginning at verse 32, and you'll find that in the Pew Bibles on page 1720, beginning at Acts 15, beginning at verse 32.

32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers. 33 After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord. 36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. 39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:32–41)

The word of the Lord. ["Thanks be to God."]

May we pray.

Lord, help me in a clear, concise, and compelling way to extract out of these scriptures the message you want your people to hear today, not only inside

this building, but throughout the world through the marvels of the internet. Lord, bless this word and help me for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

ANGER LEADS TO DIVISION.

Now we have an amazing picture here of who Paul really is. Paul lost his temper. He actually lost his temper. That's very plain. It says they had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. He got angry. He got really angry because he strongly believed that it was not right to bring John Mark on this journey because John Mark had gotten discouraged on the way and had turned around and sailed back across the small portion of the Mediterranean Sea and had gone back to Jerusalem.

And you know that his mother was a prominent member of the Jerusalem church because when Peter was released from jail, it turns out that that was the home where Peter went (Acts 12:12). So, John Mark came from a well-to-do Jewish family who were believers in Christ and who lived in Jerusalem, and he went back home.

MISSIONARY WORK IS DIFFICULT.

Have you ever thought about missionary work is not easy? Missionary work is not easy. I told the story to you about the time that I was doing a pastors' conference near Mexico City, and it was in a hacienda, and they had a peacock who wandered around. And I ate something that, once I tasted it, my throat said, "It ain't coming down here." And sometimes it's very hard to eat food that other people really enjoy. I like bizarre cheeses like Limburger, and I love blue cheese and all those—many people, that just gags them. But I like to get my penicillin with blue cheese.

So, anyhow, being a missionary is not an easy thing. And you face trouble. They faced trouble in Cyprus. And so that's why John Mark left them. And Paul did not want that to happen again. Barnabas was insistent. He wanted to bring John Mark. And they got so angry with each other that they parted company. Now I want to hit the heart of the message right here.

THIS DIVISION LED TO MULTIPLICATION.

The heart of the message is: **This is multiplication by division.**

We don't know all of what happened with John Mark and Barnabas, but we do know, holding your hand there, if you'll turn over to 2 Timothy with me for a moment, that at the end of Paul's life, because 2 Timothy is Paul's last letter, and we read there, let me get it there, 2 Timothy, and that's chapter four, and these interesting words on page 1856, page 1856, and he says these words in verse 11: "Only Luke is with me."

Now, we're going to see something this morning that Luke joined the ministry with Paul in the very next chapter, chapter 16, because it's interesting that the person changes from "they" and "them" and "he" and "him" to "we," because Luke joined Paul in Acts 16.

Now that's one interesting thing. Now notice what it says in the next sentence.

Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you,
because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (2 Timothy 4:11)

GODLY PEOPLE CHANGE THEIR OPINIONS OF OTHERS.

You know what I see here about Paul? He could change his mind. You know the biggest problem we have with people is they have trouble changing their minds. Paul changed his mind. He went from being adamantly, vehemently angrily and "irritatedly" opposed to being with John Mark because he had a grudge against John Mark because John Mark abandoned them in Pamphylia.

But now here Paul as an old man realizes, I was wrong. Wow. Can you say with me today about something in your life? I was wrong. Why don't we say it out loud? If there's anything in your life that you were wrong about and you now see you're wrong, say with me, "I was wrong." I was wrong. Hey, that's something good to learn to say: "I was wrong. I was wrong." Paul changed his mind, and he embraced John Mark as a wonderful helper for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Now we go back to Acts 15, and where it says there in verse 39, they had such sharp disagreement that they parted company.

WE NEED TO USE OUR SPURS.

Now that is an interesting word. It's found not only there, but it's found also in Hebrews chapter 10:24, which I mentioned to our two children this morning. So, you might want to turn there because it's interesting. This is a positive example of being sharp and annoying people. And I pray that I can irritate you in this way this morning. Turn with me, if you would, for a moment to Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 24, and that's the top of page 1874, and we'll pick up the reading at verse 23. This is the same word that is used of the sharp disagreement that is between Paul and Barnabas, and he says, in verse 23, Hebrews 10:23:

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:23-24)

Spur. Now what does that word mean? (*paroxysmos*, παροξυσμός)

† παροξύνω, † παροξυσμός.

ὀξύνω, orig. "to sharpen" (→ ὄξος, 288 f.), but transf. like the composite παροξύνω, "to spur on," "to stimulate," pass. "to be provoked"; Xenoph. Mem., III, 3, 13; Isoc. Or., 1, 46. The word usually means "to stir to anger," pass. "to be irritated," "incensed"; Eur. Alc., 674: πατρός μη παροξύνης φρένας. The word is common in this sense in the LXX, while the more neutral sense is almost completely absent. It is normally used with ref. to God: Nu. 14:11: εἶπεν κύριος . . . ἕως τίνος παροξύνει με ὁ λαὸς οὗτος; The pass. is very common, Dt. 1:34: κύριος . . . παροξυνθεὶς ὤμοσεν.

The noun παροξυσμός is rare. A neutral sense of "incitement" is found neither in secular Gk. nor the LXX, but the word is used for "provocation," "irritation" in Demosth. Dr., 45, 14: ἡ παροξυσμὸς ἢ φιλονικία, Dt. 29:27: . . . ἐν θυμῷ καὶ ὀργῇ καὶ παροξυσμῷ μεγάλῳ, cf. Jer. 39:37.

In the NT the verb occurs at Ac. 17:16; it is said of Paul that when he saw pagan Athens παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, "his spirit was provoked or incensed in him." The expression seeks to emphasise the honest anger of the apostle, and can hardly suggest that he was stirred or stimulated to preach or to win converts. 1 C. 13:5 says of love: οὐ παροξύνεται, "it does not let itself be provoked." Pl. uses this

expression with a conscious eye on the tensions in the church at Corinth, where there had been a good deal of provocation.

The noun παροξυσμός is found in the usual sense of “irritation” at Ac. 15:39, which tells of the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas. An unusual occurrence is at Hb. 10:24: κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους εἰς παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων, where παροξυσμός, in keeping with the first meaning of the verb, can only have the sense of “incitement,” “stimulation.” Perhaps the author is intentionally suggesting the idea of spurring on or stimulation to give special force to his summons to love and good works. (Seesemann, Heinrich (1967). “παροξύνω, παροξυσμός.” In Gerhard Friedrich Kittel, (Ed.) Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromily, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans) Vol. V, p. 857).

(At this point in my sermon and from time to time, I begin to interact with a young man who had just turned five the week before. He was sitting on the front row with his grandmother, while his grandfather was sitting in the choir area ready to lead the singing again. Quentin Majors rides horses and is always dressed as a cowboy. He has on cowboy boots, complete with real spurs.)

Do you ever put on spurs when you’re riding a horse? What does that make the horse do?

“It makes it buck.”

That’s right, it makes the horse buck. But when you’re wearing spurs on the back of your boots, you can stick them in the side of the horse. I guess it’s a pony you ride. Do you ride a pony?

“A big horse.”

You ride a big horse? Wow, that’s something.

So, when you wear spurs, you stick them in the side of the animal, and they are spurred to do what you want them to do.

Now, this is what he says here in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24, and it's a word picture. I love bringing out word pictures because you get these pictures somewhat in an English translation, but when you look at the original languages, you get pictures that you often miss.

Now on a black and white TV, you get the story, and you understand it. But suddenly with a word picture, you see it in high definition, in wonderful color, and with surround sound. So, the picture here is, what is my job in terms of you who are here this morning and those of you who are watching on the internet?

My job is to stick a spur in your side. That's what it is, to spur you on. It's to provoke you to think. You know why? Most people don't think. And it requires some kind of activity to annoy them enough to get their attention to say, "What did that man just say? Why did he say that?"

To spur you on . . . My job is to stick the spur in your side, so you'll do what? So that you will be motivated, "to continue on in love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

And verse 25—boy, this is important.

WORSHIPPING WITH THE LORD'S PEOPLE IS ESSENTIAL.

I had somebody write to me this morning on Facebook as I took a picture of Sandy driving me up here. And I had a very, very dear friend whose name is Harvey, and he wrote me and said, "You need to not wear yourselves out and wear your car out and have a big screen TV there and do this on the internet."

And I said to him, wow, I said, "Harvey, I totally disagree with you. Nothing is like gathering together with God's people where our five senses are all experiencing the power and presence of the Lord. Because when we're together, we actually can physically touch each other."

We can sense each other—not only hear and see, but we can smell each other. And that's why always, after I shave on Sunday morning particularly, I wear a strong cologne because after three hours of car, I don't want my natural body odor to be offensive. So, my favorite aftershave is one that I started wearing before I met Sandy, and it's from the Virgin . . . It's a lime

from the West Indies. I love that. That's what I wear, that or Bay Rum, because they're strong, but by the time I see you, they're pretty weak. So anyhow, we can smell each other.

Wow. How do you smell? I hope you smell okay. I can't notice you because my lime aftershave is so strong it overpowers that. So, we can see and hear and smell each other.

We don't taste each other. We don't want to do that. But we can when we have the Lord's Supper. We can taste the Lord as we partake of the bread and the wine because God is present in a way we don't understand.

It's a mystery because Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. He's not on here on earth at all. But by the power of the Holy Spirit who lifts us up where the Lord Jesus is, we actually taste him in the bread and in the wine.

And we also get to touch each other. We touch the bread in the Lord's Supper, and we touch one another. It's wonderful. Do you know scripture often says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)?

Now you better get permission before you do that. And I often will ask somebody, a stranger, if I've had a good conversation, may I touch you? Because I found that when Sandy and I pray for people, and we touch them, there's a power present in that praying that isn't there any other way.

So, I told my dear friend Harvey, "I strongly disagree with you."

Don't forsake the assembling yourselves together. Is that irritating? Well, it's irritating to some people. And notice what he's saying here.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)

Now, I want to say this about the separation that occurred with Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas didn't go off and decide to have home church all by himself. That is a wicked idea. It's a wicked idea to quit going to church.

It's a good idea, if you can't get along, to part company, but then go to another church. Don't abandon the Church of the Living God. The worst thing that happened in 2020 was when the church, believing some nonsense, decided not to meet anymore.

Do I believe you should take precautions? Sure. Do I believe that it's healthy to wear a mask if you're sick? It doesn't protect you from other people, but it protects other people from you. If you're sick, wear a mask. That's why doctors and hospitals and surgeons, in particular, wear masks.

Social distancing, it turns out that was a hoax, and shutting down churches and businesses was something catastrophic. Not even during the Black Plague, not even during the Bubonic Plague, did the Roman Catholic Church release people from their obligation to attend mass, particularly on Easter and Christmas Eve.

But do you know what? In the insanity that America went through with all of this, we quit meeting. Now, I have made a promise to you. God helping me, I will still come here as long as I am your pastor, no matter what the government says.

Because I believe that we should always obey the government in everything unless the government commands us to sin (Acts 5:29).

And I want to say, it is a sin no longer to meet with brothers and sisters in Christ. We don't need to do it in a way that calls undue attention to ourselves, but we need to meet. Why?

And I told my dear brother Harvey, I said, that was the worst thing that happened to the Christian church. Because when people quit meeting, what do they do? Wouldn't you rather drink coffee in your pajamas and eat pancakes while worshiping on the big TV?

So again, am I irritating somebody this morning? Am I irritating to say, "If you leave this church, go to another church, but you're in very serious sin if you just stay home."

Does that irritate you? I hope so. I'm trying to spur you on with those spurs in the side. That's my job. And so, please, say with me, if you would, repeat

after me, “Bob, it’s your job to irritate me.” All right, amen, that is my job. And so, you see how clearly this is the case.

WE SHOULD BE ANGRY AT SATAN’S DECEPTION OF PAGANS.

Going back to Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas separate, and there’s a lot of anger there. And it’s interesting, we see something that’s very clear. If you look to the verbal form of this word, again, and you go over to Acts chapter 18, you see there these words in Acts chapter 17 and verse 16, and that’s page 1723, “In Athens,” it says, Acts 17:16.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed (*parōxuneto, παρωξύνετο*) to see that the city was full of idols. (Acts 17:16)

What does that mean? Was his goal to preach the gospel? Yes, but that wasn’t what was happening inside Paul at this point. Paul had a temper on him, and Paul felt his hackles rising. He felt himself distressed. He became angry inside because he saw the foolishness of these brilliant Athenians who had a reputation for being the greatest thinkers throughout the entire known world. Athens, with their various schools of thought, they had the Stoics; they had the Epicureans; they had others. But the whole thing is the entire city was given over to idolatry and paganism.

And it made him mad because Paul had been steeped in the Jewish faith and he knew that the idols of the Gentiles are demonic and evil entities (1 Corinthians 10:20). And so, it provoked him, it irritated him, made him angry. Now, so we see that Paul struggled with a temper.

Do you struggle with a temper? I’m going to ask if anybody here has never lost your temper, would you stand?

That’s terribly tricky because it makes you all say, “I’m not going to stand up and lie.”

So, everybody loses his or her temper once in a while. You may not lose your temper the way I lose my temper, and I may not lose my temper the way you lose your temper. But we’ve all lost our temper.

We've all said things we shouldn't have said, done things we shouldn't have done.

And so, we see here Paul struggles with a bad temper.

What do you struggle with today? That's an interesting thought, isn't it? You know something I get out of this that blesses me enormously?

God takes a man with a bad temper who got irritated, lost his temper, and stormed off, separated from Barnabas, and God takes a man like that, and God uses him to establish the Christian church.

And so, we see this and it's clear as we read in verse 39 of Acts 15:

39 They had such a sharp (again you got that picture of those spurs) disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. (Acts 15:39–41)

THE HOLY SPIRIT DIRECTS WHERE THE GOSPEL WILL FIND FERTILE SOIL.

Now, I find that striking, isn't it? Now, why don't we have the record of what Barnabas and John Mark did? Because there was nobody writing down what they did. And how we know that what happened here with Paul is because in the course of Acts chapter 16, you begin to see something clearly. And this is in Acts 16, and we look here beginning at verse 6. Acts 16:6:

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. (Acts 16:6)

Now wait a minute. Who kept them from preaching the gospel in Asia? God did. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ kept them. Why?

This is a very important truth, Beloved in Christ. It is that not every place is ready to hear the gospel. There has to be spiritual preparation. Think about D-Day that occurred on June 6th back in 1944. And what happened? Before

they stormed the beaches at Normandy, what was happening offshore? They were shelling those German fortifications up there on the top. It was all a big secret, and then they started firing the big guns. They had to soften it up.

And let me tell you, what we need to do and why world missions require enormous prayer is we have to soften things up. There is a time when people are receptive and a time that they're not.

Whether they're receptive or not, we still have an obligation to share. But notice that the Lord's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, kept them from preaching the word in the province of Asia. Where is Asia? Where they're talking about Asia Minor. And so, he's hindering them from doing that. Now it says, notice again, the pronoun, verse 7, Acts 16:7.

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. (Acts 16:7)

Why? The Spirit of Jesus wanted them to be very fruitful. The Spirit of Jesus had a plan to carry out God's wonderful plan of salvation. And so, the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So, look now at verse 8.

So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. (Acts 16:8)

Where is Troas? Anybody remember Hector? Anybody remember Achilles? Anybody remember the Trojan War? The great poet Homer wrote about it. Troas is Troy. This is the port of Troy. This is where those sneaky Greeks built their Trojan horse and left it there and appeared to abandon the mission to take the city of Troy.

And the stupid people from Troy thought, "Look at this, where did this come from? My gracious, look at this beautiful horse." And it had wheels on it.

And you know, I bet you when you were a little boy, you sat on a horse that either had rockers underneath it or had wheels on it. Is that right?

"Mm-hmm." (Quintin)

And so, what happens is, amazingly, like little children, they bring this horse inside the gates of Troy, which had a very impenetrable wall. They brought

it in there. You ever heard the expression, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts?” Wow, this is where it comes from.

So, they’ve stopped here at Troy, at the port there by Troy. And then notice what happens. Verse 9:

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)

Verse 10, “After Paul had seen the vision . . .”

What is the pronoun that follows that with the next clause? “We.” At this point, we know that Luke has joined in this. We don’t know when he joined.

We know that in the first part of Acts 16, that when Paul and Silas came to Derbe and then to Lystra in verse 1:

Where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. (Acts 16:1)

That Paul brought Timothy on board.

Now just think about our New Testament. We have two letters to Timothy and one to Titus. And we have what? We have the Gospel of Luke, and we have the book of Acts by Luke.

Now Luke was not an apostle. Luke was not Jewish, but he was a believer, a Gentile believer, and he was a doctor. And so, he joins the team along with Timothy. Just think of how impoverished our New Testament would be without this split. And so, we see this here very clearly. “And after,” he said, in verse 10, Acts 16:10.

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. (Acts 16:10)

And it’s an amazing story that follows. I’ll sum up the rest of the chapter with you for a moment.

So, Paul goes, and along with Silas, and they're going to various places. They're there in Philippi, and they begin, notice that on the Sabbath day, it says on verse 13, "They looked for a place of prayer."

Here's the beautiful thing. Do you know that God in his providence prepared for the gospel throughout the known world by having Jewish people live throughout the known world, where they had synagogues and they gathered? But in Philippi, there's no synagogue. And so, what they did, because this was their evangelistic method, they never went on the Lord's Day.

Why would they not go to a synagogue on the Lord's Day? Because nobody's there. They went to the synagogue when people are there, which is from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. And so, on the Sabbath day, since there was no synagogue in Philippi, they figured that people would gather by the river, and that's what they do. And it says in verse 13:

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. (Acts 16:13)

Well, it sounds like the American church. Where are all the men! Thank God we have men here today. But are you aware of how many churches are woman-led because nobody will step up to the plate among the men?

Wow, a church ought to be led by men. But when there are no men around, it's totally legitimate for a woman to lead. And that's the thing. But it ought to be led by men. And that's what we see so clearly in the epistles of Paul and other places. But there are no men. And it's like the modern American church in many places where it's only women.

But these women gathered. There are no men there. Isn't that striking? And it says, "We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there."

Verse 14:

One of those listening was a woman named Lydia (And we named our first child Lydia, after this woman, because of what

you read next.), a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. (Acts 16:14)

Notice the next sentence. And dear ones in Christ, never forget this. Never forget this. Never forget this. Without our prayers, the Spirit doesn't tend to work. So, the most important thing we can do is to plead with God, to open the hearts of people. And my prayer this morning for you who are watching on the Internet is that God, the Holy Spirit, will open your hearts to respond to the things I'm saying. Because unless the Spirit of God moves in your heart, your heart will remain closed like a steel trap.

And so, notice what we read there.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. (Acts 16:14)

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, EVERY TIME SOMEONE BECOMES A BELIEVER AND IT IS MENTIONED HE HAS A FAMILY, THE WHOLE FAMILY IS BAPTIZED.

Now notice what else happens here. She was the head of a house. You know, normally the husband's the head of the wife, but in some cases the husband's not the head of the house. In this case, Lydia was the head of the house. She was evidently a wealthy woman selling purple in Philippi. And it says, look at verse 15:

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

Now I want you to think of that for a moment. In every single case in the New Testament, when someone is baptized, and there's a mention that the person had a family, the whole family is baptized.

You know what I believe? I believe in household baptism. And in every case, I want to say it again, and I challenge anyone who's listening, find me an example of a baptism in the New Testament where someone is mentioned at the time of having a family where the whole family was not baptized.

Why does the whole family get baptized? Well, it's just like this, spurring on with those spurs.

Have you ever branded a cow?

(Quintin)

You have? You have actually branded a cow? I am amazed.

When you brand a cow or calf, you get that thing really hot and then you stick it to the side of the calf so that when that calf's out in the free range, what happens?

Everybody knows who that calf belongs to.

And this is the way it is with baptism. When someone is converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, as Lydia was, all of her household, all of her calves, were branded with the Bar-J.

What do I mean by that? That's baptism. Baptism is like a branding iron on people that they belong to the Lord.

That doesn't mean that they become a believer personally, but they belong to the Lord, and they're under his special care and protection (1 Corinthians 7:14). And when we put the branding iron on children here, we ask the congregation to pledge themselves to pray and intercede for that child and to do whatever they have to do to make sure that that child knows the Lord.

And we are so grateful for Mabel Cook, whom I baptized here when she was just a tiny baby. And we made that promise regarding Mabel Cook.

And so, notice again:

When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us. (Acts 16:15)

Wow, that reminds me of Southern people. One day, my daddy's sister, who died at the age of 102 and a half—and I would never have had a home if it had not been for my Aunt Inez leaving me some money to get a home of my own. But she used to tell this story.

There was a salesman who came knocking on her door. And she invited him in, and she listened to his spiel. And then it was time for him to leave, and she was tired of hearing him. And so, what she did is, what Southern people do. She said, “Oh, it’s dinner time. Won’t you stay for dinner?”

And you know what he said? He was obviously not one of us. He said, “Well, since you twisted my arm.” And she always told that story thinking this man was an idiot because that was a polite Southern way to say, “Hey, Buster, I’ve had enough of this. Hit the door.”

But Southern people always disguise what they really mean with all kinds of euphemistic expressions and indirect ways of communicating.

And by the way, do you know that Abraham was just such a man? Because when he negotiated the price to buy a cave for his dead wife Sarah, he did the Southern way.

Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, 4 “I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead.” 5 The Hittites replied to Abraham, 6 “Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.” 7 Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. 8 He said to them, “If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf 9 so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you.” 10 Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. 11 **“No, my lord,” he said. “Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead.”** 12 Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land 13 and he said to Ephron in their hearing, **“Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field.** Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there.” 14 Ephron answered Abraham, 15 **“Listen to me, my lord; the**

land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.” 16 Abraham agreed to Ephron’s terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. 17 So Ephron’s field in Machpelah near Mamre—both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field—was deeded 18 to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. (Genesis 23:3-17, emphases mine)

So, I’m saying, you know, people oftentimes look at Southern people and say, “Oh, you people are so disingenuous. You just spread on that malarkey.” Malarkey. I heard that recently. “You spread that malarkey on and on and on, and it just makes it sound so nice, but you’re really saying something that’s the opposite.”

And Abraham was that way. He negotiates with this man, and they do the same thing. But he did twist their arms.

PAUL MET A PYTHON.

Now, there’s one other thing before we leave here, and that is, along the way, he met a python. You ever seen a python? I once bought my boy a ball python snake. And they’re very shy snakes. And so, I bought a mouse for that python to have a nice meal. And you know what happened one day? I went to the cage, and there the mouse was eating the head of the snake. Ball pythons are very delicate snakes. But listen. If you read on here, you see something, verse 16:

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit. (Acts 16:16)

Do you know what the Greek word is there for that spirit? A spirit of python (*Púthōn*, Πύθων). And that goes back to the oracles of Delphi and the worshippers of snakes. She had a spirit of python.

πύθων, ωνος, ό (fr. Πυθώ, the region in which the city of Delphi lay) orig. ‘the Python’, acc. to Strabo 9, 3, 12 the serpent or dragon that guarded the Delphic oracle; it lived at the foot of

Mt. Parnassus, and was slain by Apollo. Later the word came to designate a spirit of divination, then also of ventriloquists, who were believed to have such a spirit dwelling in their belly . . . of Python: of a soothsaying divinity. It deemed such women worthy of foretelling the future who were in ecstasy with the Python's spirit and exhibited at the whirling of the divinity an appearance of conception . . . πνεῦμα πύθωνα a spirit of divination or prophecy (in apposition like ἄνθρωπος βασιλεύς) Ac 16:16. (Frederick William Danker, ed. (2000), *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. Third edition (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press), p. 897)

That's weird, isn't it?

By which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. (Acts 16:16)

PAUL LOST HIS TEMPER, BUT GOD USED IT FOR SALVATION.

Now listen, when you see a sign, somebody says, you know, "fortune-teller," most of them, they can't do that. But let me say something. There are people who can do that. And when they can do it, you better watch out. Because they're tapping into the dark powers. And that's what she was doing. Look at verse 17:

This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." (Acts 16:17)

Now look, you know, Hollywood stars say, "I don't care what they write just so they write about me." But the way she was doing it was hindering the work of the gospel. She's dogging them. Now notice what happens next. Verse 18: "She kept this up for many days. Finally . . ." Here's Paul. You want to say, "Paul is just like me." Finally, it says:

She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled (diaponéō, διαπονέω) that he turned around and said to

the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her. (Acts 16:18)

διαπονέω: pass. “be worn out/**at the end of one’s tether**,” Zerwick, Max, and Mary Grosvenor (1974). *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press) *in loc.*, emphasis mine).

Wow.

Now, Paul lost his temper. Did God still honor His Word? Absolutely. Even when you’re upset and angry, when you speak in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have power and authority.

You know, you ought to say, “In the name of Jesus, I have power and authority.” Why don’t we say that together? “In the name of Jesus, I have power and authority.” And so even Paul, though he’s upset and angry, his word had power and authority and what happens? You know what happened next.

The whole thing that happens next.

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)

So, what did they do?

“They stripped them, and then they had them beaten with rods” (Acts 16:22-23).

They’re bloody. I wonder if Paul had foreseen what was going to happen if he wouldn’t have just said, “Oh Lord, just help me, give me patience.” Because he’s then committed inside the jail, where he’s put inside the most inner part of that jail, and his feet and Silas’ feet are put in stocks. You know, that’s where your feet are there.

Can you imagine how uncomfortable he was? Can you imagine how much he hurt? He’s bleeding. Silas is bleeding. They’re bruised, and they can’t get

comfortable. Have you ever been where you just couldn't get comfortable, no matter what you did? You ever get into bed at night and say, "I just can't get comfortable. I just can't get comfortable."

Imagine that you've been beaten like this, and you just can't get comfortable. What are you going to do? And here's the secret. And so, we read here. In verse 25, Acts 16:25

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. (Acts 16:25)

You want to know how to get comfortable? You know how to go back to sleep when you wake up in the night and you can't get back to sleep? I'm going to give you, their recipe. I'll tell you what, the devil will help you go to sleep if you begin to pray. The devil will help you get comfortable.

And here they are, they're singing hymns, and they're singing their hymns as prayers to God.

You ever thought about when you sing, most hymns, there's some hymns that are a testimony, but other hymns are prayers to God. And it's like that with the Psalms. Most of the Psalms are praises to God, but some are prayers to God. And that's what they're doing in the middle of the night. And it says:

And the other prisoners were listening to them. (Acts 16:25)

Now look at the very next verse, verse 26.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. (Acts 16:26)

Now, what happens next? Look at the jailer, verse 27:

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. (Acts 16:27)

Why was he going to commit suicide? Do you know what would have happened to him if he hadn't killed himself? He would have been tortured so severely and so agonizingly that he thought, I need a quick trip to end all this. And notice what happens next.

But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"
(Acts 16:28)

And look what's next. Verse 29:

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."
(Acts 16:29-31)

Notice that again, as with Lydia, here's a man who has a house. Look at verse 32.

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. (Acts 16:32-33)

Wow.

Once again, every time you see in the New Testament someone is converted to the Lord Jesus, and it's mentioned that he has a family. Remember, the Ethiopian eunuch did not have a family (Acts 8:26-39). Every time you see that somebody has a family, the whole family is baptized. And the Philippian jailer was the head of his house. And so, they're all baptized. And then look what happens after that. Verse 34:

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)

WE ARE LIVING IN PERILOUS TIMES.

And let me tell you, in a world such as the world that we're living in, which is far more dangerous than you and I can imagine, the world is in far worse shape than we can imagine, because there are unseen forces at work, both human and supernatural, that are a great danger.

We are thinking back to the Kennedy family, we are where we were during the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 16-28, 1962). And we're like that right now if we only realized it. We're that close with the nuclear clock ticking. We're in serious trouble. Our nation is in serious trouble.

Our nation is on the threshold, potentially, of riots in the street. Am I saying that's going to happen? No, I'm not saying that. I'm not a prophet, but I'm simply saying we are in far worse shape than we can imagine. We're in very, very, very serious shape. And what on earth can you have to give you peace and joy?

You know what you have? The Lord Jesus.

IF YOUR ALL IS ON THE ALTAR YOU WILL HAVE PEACE AND JOY.

Nothing will give you peace, nothing will give you joy, like giving your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and laying it all at his feet.

You know why we don't have peace and joy? You say, "Well, I'm a believer, Bob, but I'm lacking peace and joy."

You know what's missing? Is your all on the altar today? Take your worst fear. What is your worst fear? Think about it for a moment. What is the worst fear you've got? And you know what?

The secret to peace is to bring it to Jesus and say, "Lord, I love you. I trust you. I know that you're going to take care of me and mine. And Lord, therefore, I lay it, all of this, if the worst thing happens, I'm trusting you in Jesus' name."

And to you especially who are listening online, do you know the Lord Jesus? Wow. I would be living in abject terror right now, the last day of June 2024, if I did not know the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly after events that we witnessed on television this week. To know the Lord Jesus? Wow! Do you

know the Lord Jesus? To know Jesus is to know peace. To know Jesus is to have joy. May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the joy of the Lord be yours in Jesus' name.

May we pray.

Lord, bless us. with the joy and peace of knowing you and yielding absolutely everything to you, of laying our burdens at your feet, casting all our cares on you, because you care for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our closing hymn is number 488. And as you sing this song of invitation, I'm not asking you to come forward, though we certainly are happy for you to come forward.

(At this point Quentin Majors walked up to help his grandfather lead our final song) "You've got on spurs, don't you? Wow, I can't believe it."

So, I'm asking you in your heart of hearts, as you sing this song, make it your prayer to give it all to Jesus.