



Life Group Sermon Study Notes

“Love the City”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe – March 22, 2020

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What’s your favorite board game?
- What’s the strangest thing you’ve ever eaten?
- If you were a kitchen appliance, which one would you be and why?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Acts 16:16-26 ESV

16As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. 17She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." 18And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. 19But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. 20And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. 21They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." 22The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. 23And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. 24Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

In our text, Paul and Silas are in the city of Philippi on their missionary journey to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. In a place of prayer, they encounter a slave girl who thereafter follows them for days. Out of her mouth were words of praise to the Most High God; yet in her spirit there was opposition to God. Paul doesn't let the situation distract him. He confronts the spirit to leave her in the name of Jesus – leading to the city being turned upside down. The slave's owners and the city recognized her deliverance posed a threat to their finances, so Paul and Silas were publicly beaten and sent to prison. Even still Paul refused to be distracted; the message of the gospel continued in the prison. Through the prayers and singing of Paul and Silas, God miraculously opens the doors to the prison and loosens the chains. Instead of seizing the moment to leave, Paul used it as an opportunity to preach the Gospel to the jailer.

In an extraordinary way, Paul and Silas model how to have godly reactions. They had a conviction that sharing the gospel to as many as possible was worth the cost of physical pain, humiliation and inconvenience.

In our lives there are always times of distractions that manifest at church, work and home. Will we exercise our authority in Christ to speak against them – whether it be a spirit, technology, or difficult circumstances? Distractions can cause us to take our eyes off of God while revealing to us our priorities. Instead, we have an opportunity to use them as fuel in being more persistent to share the Gospel. May our lips praise God and be paired with a lifestyle where we see God and recognize he has the greatest security and power for our lives and the world.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Are there things that distract you from truly living for God?
- It was three days before Paul spoke against the spirit – Can you recall a time that in hindsight a subtle distraction was actually spiritual opposition?
- Based on Paul and Silas example, how would you rate yourself on having godly reactions?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as other requests you may have.

- Thank God for the power of prayer, worship and the Word to bring hope in all situations.
- Ask God for strength and wisdom for these challenging times in our city and world.
- Ask God to deepen our conviction of the value of sharing the Gospel.