|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SERIES** | ACTS: Church for The People |
| **BIBLE** | ACTS 16:6-34 |
| **TITLE/TOPIC** | Church for the Nations |
| **OVERVIEW** | Christianity is not an American religion. What we know as “Christianity” began with a group of devout Jews who believed that a man named Jesus of Nazareth was God’s Messiah. They believed in Him and dedicated their lives to tell the whole world about Jesus’ life, miracles, teaching, death, resurrection and soon return. Through these Holy Spirit empowered men and women, the invitation to become a follower of Jesus expanded from Jerusalem and into the continent of Europe. Jesus is for all people from every nation! |
| **SCRIPTURE BREAKDOWN** | **Acts 16: 6-10 God leads to unreached nations through Holy Spirit restraints and visions.**  Paul and his church planting team were travelling to many towns, many regions. They were in modern day Turkey, Mediterranean Sea to the south, Black Sea to north, Aegean Sea to the west. The Holy Spirit kept them from preaching cities and province called Asia, text says “Spirit of Jesus would not allow them” to preach. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia - the province across the Aegean Sea to the west, begging him “Come help us”. Paul concluded God called them to preach the gospel there – so they got ready and once and sailed west.  **Vs 11-15. The gospel reaches a new continent (Europe) at Philippi through the initiative of God’s people (go to the place of prayer). God grants the salvation of a Gentile woman - Lydia the clothes dealer.**  Paul and company cross the Aegean Sea, landed and walked to Philippi. This was a Roman colony. This was a source of great pride for the people, led to great loyalty to Rome, to Caesar, and identifying themselves as citizens of Rome.  On the Sabbath Paul is in the habit of going to synagogue to pray. Either there were so few Jews in Philippi that they did not have a synagogue and the park by the river was where Jews knew to gather OR this “place of prayer” was the synagogue, Paul took initiative to find Jewish people. At this place Paul met Lydia, a worshipper of God (a Gentile who was sincerely seeking the God of the Jews, like Cornelius). Paul spoke the message of Jesus. The Lord opened her heart to respond in faith to that gospel message. She and her household were immediately baptized (publicly identifying with Jesus the Christ). She invited Paul and company into her home, and they stayed there for their ministry time in Philippi. \*\*One commentator said the man of Macedonia who asked for help was actually a woman. Visions should guide, but not define. Only Word of God defines.  **Vs 16 – 34. The gospel reaches deeper into Philippi (Europe) as demonic spirits are removed, earthquakes open prison doors, and a Roman jailer converts to Jesus.**  *16 – 24 The freeing of a slave girl from a demonic spirit sends Paul and Silas to prison.*  Perhaps Philippi did not have a synagogue because there was instead a “place of prayer” that Jewish people gathering in. When going to pray, Paul and Silas met a girl possess by a spirit that predicted the future. She made bank for her owner. Truth coming from an agent of wickedness creates incongruence and confusion.  When Paul casts out the demon in the name of Jesus he sets the slave girl free – implied is her conversion to Jesus too (though not explicit). But the exorcism also stopped the “god” of money from supplying these slave owners and they rose up violently against Paul and Silas, having them beaten and thrown in prison. Notice it is not Christians who start violence, bit Christians secured freedom and peace for this slave girl.  *25-34. Prison witness and conversion of the Philippians jailer and his family.*  Paul and Silas demonstrate amazing resilience as they sing hymns while being chained to stocks in the inner cells of this prison. God sends an earthquake that miraculously loosens chains and opens prison doors. But this is not a jail break – this is a miracle to bring conversion. All the prisoners stayed in place, demonstrating again that Christians are not instigating violence or breaking of civil laws. Paul and Silas now have an amazing platform to testify about their God and His salvation. They instruct the jailer on how to be saved – simply “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”  The jailer believes, shows hospitality, cares for their wounds, and he and all his believing household were saved. The church in Philippi already has a wealthy woman clothes dealer and her family, a slave girl, a Roman jailer and his family. God is on the move to the nations.  Principles from Acts 16: A church for the nations:   * God leads His people to those unreached with the gospel. * God leads through His Spirit – restraining and leading. God leads through dreams and visions. We must seek God’s truth in and through these “subjective revelation” events, seeking confirmation with God’s Word and His past and current direction. * God brings salvation through the initiative of His witnesses – looking for the place of prayer they found Lydia, met the slave girl, singing hymns in prison. * Being witnesses for Christ involves confrontation of wickedness (the demon in the slave girl) and the idols of the age (the oppression and greed of the slave owners). As God’s people confront with courage, God works in hearts and arranges circumstances for His good purposes (slave girl set free, Paul and Silas in prison to minister to the jailer) * Ambassadors for King Jesus do not try to stir up social conflict, but are often caught in the middle of it by confronting idols. * Salvation is demonstrated through belief, baptism, sharing Jesus with family, and a heart of hospitality towards believers. |
| **GOSPEL** | How does this sermon bring people to the Gospel?  Not enough to be God-fearing… you need to respond in faith to the message of Jesus Christ.  God can set you free from power of Satan (slave girl)  God can set you free from false gods and fear (Philippians jailer) |
| **NEXT**STEPS | Begin | Connect | Engage | Grow | Disciple  GROW to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit  DISCIPLE – take initiative to be bold witness for Jesus no matter what physical, ethnic, religious lines God calls you to cross. Witness with bold love! |