

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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ACTS 15-16

Every year we hold a pastors conference for Calvary Chapels in the Deep South. Pastors come and bring leaders from their church. It gives us all an opportunity to catch up, brief each other on the work that’s going on... ask questions... and *eat lots of barbecue*... It’s a vital time together! Well, in Acts 15 we follow Paul to a pastors’ conference.

Chapter 15 opens 20 years after the Day of Pentecost. When the Spirit was poured out on the disciples in the upper room it was like a rock splashing into a lake. Ripples of Christian faith went out in all directions. The Gospel spread... *Judea... Samaria... North Africa... Damascus...* Then a breakthrough... In Caesarea God saved a Roman soldier and his household – *full blooded Gentiles*. Soon a church was established in Antioch that actually targeted Gentiles as candidates for the Gospel. In Acts 13-14 Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas on a mission to reach Gentiles.

Which brings us to chapter 15... “And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” When you think of *villains*, the following words come to mind: “Nazis,” “Al Qaida,” “Crips,” “Hell’s Angels.” But add another name to the list, “**Judaizers.**” They were *theological thugs!* The Judaizers picked on believers to rob them of their faith and joy.

When Philip brought the Gospel to the Samaritans I’m sure there were Jews who raised an eyebrow... When Peter preached to Romans at Cornelius’ house Orthodox Jews began to talk... But when Paul traveled to Galatia, and deliberately targeted the Gentiles for salvation, the Jewish legalists went ballistic... The Jews had spent 1500 years trying to keep the Law of Moses, how dare Paul offer salvation to the Gentiles by faith alone? *These Judaizers were party poopers.* Where was the blood, sweat, and tears? How could faith in Jesus accomplish what rigorous obedience could never do? These Judaizers wanted to sentence the Gentiles to the same hard labor they had to serve. They wanted to add some elbow grease to the blood of Jesus.

And these prideful Jews came to Antioch to correct Paul. They put more confidence in the *blood of goats* than in *the blood of Christ* – in their *own righteousness* than *Christ’s righteousness* – in *their works* than *God’s grace*. They scoffed at the all-sufficiency of Jesus.

The Judaizers preached a “**Christ plus**” theology. It was OK to put faith in Jesus as long as you added elements of the Jewish Law. It was *Christ plus* Sabbath keeping - kosher laws – sacrifices - and above all *circumcision*. Circumcision was the insignia of Judaism – the logo of legalism. The Judaizers expected the Gentile believers to go under the knife. How could you possibly be saved if you neglected such an important Jewish tradition?

But Paul fought back! Verse 2, “Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.” Luke skips over in one sentence what Paul takes almost a whole chapter in Galatians to describe. In Galatians 2:5 Paul remembers, “To whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” When these legalists arrived in Antioch they even intimidated Peter. The Apostle Peter had been schooled in grace, but he treated the Gentiles as second class Christians. Paul went toe-to-toe with Pete. He rebuked him. The Gospel is *grace* for every *race*. Jews and Gentiles are saved one way – by faith in Christ! God’s righteousness comes apart from the Law. Paul stood up for those Jesus died to save. *He won the argument in Antioch*, but the Judaizers are moving the confrontation to their own turf, Jerusalem.

“So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.” A person who lives out the grace of God brings joy *wherever he goes* – a legalist brings joy *whenever he goes*. “And when

they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses." Here was the debate in a nutshell... *did a Gentile have to become a Jew before he could be saved?* In his letter to the Galatians Paul said not only did he and Barnabas go to Jerusalem, but they brought a convert, an uncircumcised Gentile, named Titus. The Judaizers were outraged, and tried to put Titus under the knife. Paul refused to budge. *Circumcision won't cut it – it's faith in Christ!*

Verse 6. "Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter." This was the first of many Church councils. Throughout history church leaders have gathered to settle disputes and hammer out doctrine. In the first 700 years of Christianity there were 8 major Church councils. Perhaps the most strategic council was in 325 AD in the town of Nicaea. The church *put down* the Arian heresy, and *nailed down* the deity of Jesus. But this was also a crucial conference. If the requirements for salvation had not been clarified there may've been no need for future councils. If the Judaizers had prevailed, Christianity might've been reduced to a Jewish sect and the spread of the Gospel among Gentiles permanently stunted.

"And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up *and* said to them: "Men *and* brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe." He's talking about his experience 10 years earlier in Acts 10. The Spirit fell on the household of Cornelius before Peter finished his sermon. Without clipping a single circumcision God saved the Gentiles.

"So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." *How do you argue with God?* God required no more from the Gentiles than He had from the Jews on the Day of Pentecost... God *purified the heart of the Gentiles and poured out His Spirit on them* for no other reason than faith. It was all about Jesus!

Here were Gentiles... they went to movies on Friday night and football games on the Sabbath, and smoked cigars, and chewed tobacco, and ate pork BBQ, and listened to rock and roll, and wore shorts to church... They were ignorant of Jewish customs. They thought Moses was a retired basketball player. They hadn't kept the Law a day in their lives - yet God accepted, and forgave, and sealed, and filled the Gentiles "*by faith!*"

Peter says in verse 10, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" The Jews had failed to keep their own Law. They tried, but it was too comprehensive. Certain standards slipped through the cracks. The Jews worked hard to be *good*, but they were never *good enough*. Despite all the effort Jews were sinners just like the Gentiles. *Religious sinners, well-groomed sinners, sanitary sinners, healthier sinners, but sinners nonetheless*. All their legalism only made the Jews proud and self-righteous. Judaism was a treadmill – *always doing, but going nowhere*. So why expect the Gentiles to keep a standard that alluded the Jews?

Peter confesses, "But we (the Jews) believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." Neither Jews or Gentiles are made right with God by their own good works. We all approach God the same way – *by grace through faith*. "Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles." They discussed the results of their recent endeavor. God had blinded a sorcerer. He'd healed a lame man. God had worked miracles in the midst of the Gentiles. It was all proof of His acceptance.

Verse 13, "And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me." This is James the brother of our Lord. John 7:5 tells us James didn't believe in Jesus until He was resurrected. Yet afterwards, he quickly rose to prominence in the Jerusalem Church. James had several nicknames that characterized his nature. He was called "*The Just*" due to his impeccable character - and "*Ole camel-knees*" because his knees were calloused from the much time he spent in prayer.

Yet it's interesting, in Galatians 2:12 when Paul mentions the Judaizers who had come to Antioch he calls them, "*certain men came from James*." We learn here that James believed in salvation by faith through grace, but from the letter he wrote we know that James had strong convictions on the significance of good works. According to James "*we're saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone*." Real faith always leaves behind tracks. These

Judaizers misinterpreted James - *while claiming to represent him*. This was one of the reasons James spoke up at the council. He wanted to set the record straight. He stood with Paul and Peter in their defense of the Gospel... It helps to recall Acts 15 when you study the book of James.

James continues in verse 14, "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:" He quotes Amos 9:11. 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does all these things.'" James quotes a verse that won't be fulfilled until Jesus returns. The OT predicted Messiah will sit on the throne of David, and the Gentile nations will flock to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. He adds, "Known to God from eternity are all His works."

Here's James' point... the Scripture teaches God's love for the Gentiles and His desire to save all men. What was happening *at the time, in the Church, among the Gentiles* was in harmony with God's eternal plan. Peter recalled the past. Paul recounted the present. James read the prophecy. When *God's Word* and *God's works* line-up - when the *past, present, and prophecy* all align - you can be sure you're witnessing the hand of the Lord. [What bothered the Judaizers - was no bother to God.](#)

Peter and Paul wanted to *shut the mouth* of the Judaizers, but James hoped to *open their eyes*. He wasn't just trying to win an argument his goal was to win a brother - and this is the motivation behind what happens next. Yes, we're reconciled to God by faith, but the Gospel also seeks to reconcile us to our fellow man. Jews and Gentiles should be one in Christ. James had empathy for the Jews and their loyalty toward the Law. He refers to the Law 10 times in his epistle. He knew firsthand how difficult it was for an Orthodox Jew to transition from a legalistic life to grace.

Remember, this was before the books of Romans, and Galatians, and Hebrews had been written. Relating to God by grace was new to the Jews. It was clear to James and the council in Jerusalem that God was forging ahead in a new direction. But James wanted to take his Jewish brethren with him, rather than leave them behind, so he makes a suggestion...

Verse 19, "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, *from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood*. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." James wants to ease the Jews into grace. He insists that the Gentiles maintain their freedom from the Law, but why offend their Jewish brothers unnecessarily. He offers a suggestion... *Ask the Gentiles to limit their freedom for a time until the Jews can catch up.*

Dwight Eisenhower once called *the art of compromise* "the ability to employ all of the usable surface." He said, "the extremes, right or left, are in the gutters." If James had sided with the legalistic Jews with no truth for the Gentiles he'd been in *the right hand gutter*. If he'd sided with the Gentiles without any sensitivity toward the Jews he'd been in *the left hand gutter*. Instead, James stands for truth and love for both groups. He finds usable surface where he can both support the Gentiles, and encourage the Jews. The Code of Moses consisted of 613 laws, James whittles it down to four prohibitions of particular importance to Jews - he forbids *meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, meat not properly prepared, and drinking blood*. Later in the NT, once the Jews have had an opportunity to grow in grace, Paul will even remove these last four sanctions. Of course, sexual immorality is never permissible, but not because of law - because of love.

Verse 22, "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren*." Here's an irony. The name "*Barsabas*" means "son of the Sabbath." The Son of the Sabbath goes with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to free the Gentiles from the burden of Sabbath rules. "They wrote this, *letter* by them: the apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings." How sweet the sound - Jews calling Gentiles "*brethren*." Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must be circumcised and keep the law*" - to whom we gave no *such* commandment - it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth." Here's the verdict...

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” This was the official document that came out of the first Church Council. Leaders in Jerusalem recognized that in Christ God frees us from the demands of the Law, and by showing some sensitivity they hoped as many Jews as possible would follow the Gentiles into the liberty paid for by Jesus.

Once a millionaire was explaining his financial success to a young protégé. "Son, I started out by buying an apple for a nickel. I took that apple home and shined it until it was brilliant red. The next day I sold it for a dime. I took that dime and bought two apples - shined them and sold them for 20 cents. I took the 20 cents and bought four apples. I turned the four apples into eight, and the eight into 16, and the sixteen into 32 – or \$3.20. At that point my father-in-law died - and left me \$10 million." As a child of God we've been blessed with tremendous spiritual blessings, but our windfall has nothing to do with our buying, and shining, and polishing. It's not our cleverness that procures God's blessing. *We're rich because someone died!* Jesus paid for God's incredible mercies and as *the Gentiles learned* and *the Church confirmed* - we receive it all by faith.

Verse 30, “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed *there* for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.” Antioch was a cool church and Silas just wanted to hang out for awhile.

“Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see how they are doing.*” Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. The word translated “*determined*” is a Greek word “*to keep on insisting.*” Barnabas was adamant. Mark's presence on the trip was non-negotiable.

“But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.” Remember when Paul and Barnabas left Cyprus and sailed northward toward the Turkish coast Mark bailed. He proved *chicken* to go to *Turkey*. Now Barnabas, *the son of consolation*, wants to console and encourage and give his young nephew a second chance. Paul, on the other hand, sees the work as too important to take a chance on a boy who had proven he was not up to the challenge. When you're in battle you've got to be able to trust the men in your platoon... and Paul no longer trusted John Mark.

“Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another.” And we gasp! These men were apostles, founders. Yet they argued so violently they split ranks. It happened even in the early Church... “And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Here are two men of spiritual stature – who've just solved a major crisis in the Church at large. They've averted a colossal bust-up between Jew and Gentile - but just a few days later, they get so mad at each other they decide they can no longer work together and go their separate ways. It proves that even apostles are subject to anger, and pride, and friction. Mark may've been a *chicken*, but both Paul and Barnabas were *turkeys*. They should've gotten along, but they didn't. Yet, here's an amazing truth... They were human and sinful and stubborn, but God still used them. Warren Wiersbe states the obvious, “If God had to depend on perfect people to accomplish His work, He would never ever get anything done.”

God actually used *man's obstinacy* for *His glory*. Instead of one team doing missions there were now two teams! The division doubled the effort. It's amazing that years later, Paul will write to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:11), “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” Paul's attitude toward Mark changed. Perhaps his time with Barnabas helped him grow. Though Acts tracks only Paul and Silas, it seems God blessed both teams. He continued to bless Paul as we see in chapter 16...

Verse 1 “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra.” On Paul's first missionary mission he sailed to Galatia. This time he and Silas come overland. “And

behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.*” Remember the woman’s name? “Eunice.” And Timothy had a grandma named “Lois.” 2 Timothy 3:10 describes the impact Paul had on Timothy while in Lystra. “*You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Lystra.*” Six times in the NT Paul calls Timothy, “*my son in the faith.*” I believe every believer needs to be someone’s Paul, *and* someone’s Timothy. We need to be mentored by an older, wiser Christian - and we need to take a younger believer under our wing and invest in their life. *Who is your Paul? Who is your Timothy?* There needs to be one of both.

Verse 2, “*He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.*” Now wait a minute! Paul just fought tooth and nail in Jerusalem to keep the Gentiles from being circumcised. *Why is he now clipping Timothy?* Remember Paul’s strategy. When he entered a city he went first to the local Jewish synagogue, then to the Gentiles. If Timothy wasn’t circumcised he wouldn’t be able to accompany Paul into the synagogue. This had nothing to do with *righteousness*, but with his *effectiveness* for ministry. Often in ministry we have to forego a freedom for love’s sake. We don’t want someone to stumble... As a Christian I’m free to smoke a big, fat cigar while I teach, but it would probably come across a bit awkward. Hey, I’m happy to forego that liberty. This is the maturity needed in a leader. He or she is willing to put their own freedoms on the shelf to spread the Gospel.

Verse 4, “*And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily. Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.*” Jesus said go *into all the world*, but the Holy Spirit tells us *where in the world to go*. Paul is traveling west. He turns south to Asia and the Spirit says “*no.*” He turns north to Bithynia and the Spirit says “*no.*” We need to be as quick to obey the “*no’s*” as we are the “*go’s*.” When the Spirit puts a check in our hearts it’s best to wait or move in another direction. Don’t try to knock down a door God’s Spirit has closed.

How the Spirit spoke to Paul we’re not sure. Some Bible teachers believe it was through his thorn in the flesh - his physical infirmity. Either his eye-disease or migraines flared up and pushed him west to a dryer climate. It’s interesting how the Spirit sometimes guides us through an illness. After HS I wanted to play college basketball. But that summer I came down with mononucleosis. It sapped my strength and ended my career. At the time it was a bummer, but now I thank God for the setback. He used it to redirect my life towards ministry... Today, I could be a retired NBA millionaire, instead of your pastor. Hey, I’d much rather be your pastor.

“*So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.*” A port on the Aegean Sea - the last stop west before crossing over onto the continent of Europe. “*And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’*” Macedonia included the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. When Paul obeys this vision, for the first time the Gospel will come to Europe.

“*Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.*” Remember, God doesn’t close one door unless He opens another. We have to wait, and shake off our desires to tune into His vision. Notice also the change of pronoun in verse 10. Suddenly Luke starts writing in the first person. He says “*we sought to go to Macedonia.*” Apparently, Doctor Luke joined Paul and his pals in Troas – perhaps to treat Paul’s illness. He accompanied him to Macedonia. Some Bible students believe Luke was the man from Macedonia in Paul’s vision.

“*Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis...*” which was 150 miles NW of Troas. “*And from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.*” Philippi was 10 miles inland from Neapolis. Some people believe Philippi was Luke’s hometown because of the glowing terms he uses to describe the city. Again verse 12, “*the foremost city of that part of Macedonia...*”

“*And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.*” Apparently there was no Jewish synagogue. The few Jews who lived there went to the river to pray and read Scripture on the Sabbath. And

remember it was a man in his vision, yet when he arrives all he finds is women. The rabbis taught, and I'm sure Paul once believed, "It is better that the words of the Lord be burned than be delivered to a woman." Yet Paul has put aside his Jewish chauvinism. He knows in Christ we're all one.

"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." Lydia was a successful businesswoman. She was the Mary Kay of Philippi. She was an importer of purple cloth. And she holds the distinction of being the first Christian convert in Europe.

"And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us. Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling." She told fortunes and made a fortune. Divining for dollars she padded her owner's pockets. Yet no one cared about the girl trapped and controlled by demons.

"This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days." What the girl said about Paul was true, but what minister of the Gospel wants publicity from a demoniac? The message was right, but the *medium* was wrong. "But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour." She was instantly delivered. You'd think her masters would be rejoicing for her, *but...* "When her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities."

"And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." It's amazing how tolerant folks are toward the Gospel until it starts cutting into their profits. All too often persecution rises because of an economic incentive. "Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods." This was justice Southeast Asian style. Imagine, a caning with bamboo rods. Jewish justice was tempered with mercy. The Jews limited beatings to 39 lashes. But a Roman scourging was brutal. There were no restrictions. The severity of the whipping was left up to the judge and his torturers.

Verse 23, "And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks." Prisons at the time were usually in the jailor's basement. They were cold, and dark, and damp, and rat infested. The stocks stretched the victim's arms and legs. It was a form of torture. Imagine Paul and Silas – *their backs a crisscross of cuts and oozing tissue - their limbs dislocated, pulled out of their sockets - their lacerated back bumping up against the cold dirt wall - the prison rats nibbling at a set of fresh toes - unrelenting pain is ricocheting throughout their bodies...* I'd be having a New Year's Eve size pity party, but not Paul and Silas...

Verse 25, "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." In the worst pain they praise! Rather than sulk they sing - rather than whine they worship. Spurgeon wrote, "Any fool can sing in the day. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skillful singer is he who can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by... Songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of men." God is the reason Paul sings!

And "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 chains were loosed." Praise is powerful - it shakes stuff up. Paul was so in touch with his spiritual blessings and his joy in Jesus – he refused to let his physical circumstances depress him. *What an example...*

"And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself." Suicide would've been a kinder fate for a jailer who allowed his whole prison population to escape. "But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." *All accounted for...* "Then he (the jailer) called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The earthquake had obviously shaken up the jailer.

“So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Some folks draw the wrong conclusion from this verse. They teach “household salvation.” If a man is saved, then everyone under his authority is also saved. But they need to read verse 31 in context. Notice verse 32... “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.” If the jailor's salvation included all his family why did Paul make a house call and share the Gospel with each person? A father influences his family, but faith is always a personal decision. Verse 33, “And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized.” This is great! The jailer washes and nurses Paul's wounds. Paul baptizes the jailer. They wash each other. The jailer shows the mark of true repentance – he's willing to care for the wounds that you inflicted.

“Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.” Notice, the jailer believed not *for his house*, but “*with his household*.” They all had faith. “And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, “Let those men go.” So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.” You would think this would be welcomed news to Paul, *but...* “Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, *and* have thrown *us* into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.” Paul had a Roman passport. He was a Roman citizen, and citizens were suppose to get a fair trial. Now the authorities want to save face and sneak Paul out of town. He doesn't want people thinking he's guilty of a crime.

“And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. Then they came and pleaded with them and brought *them* out, and asked *them* to depart from the city.” Paul will leave town, but not before he encourages the church. He was always thinking about the welfare and care of the churches he planted. “So they went out of the prison and entered *the house of Lydia*; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.” Later, Paul writes a letter to this believers – the book of Philippians.