

Turn The World Upside Down (Acts 16:6-34)

(2011 Congregational Theme: Daily Disciples: Personal Evangelism)

A. Not too long ago the world rejoiced to see 33 Chilean miners rescued from a collapsed mine.

1. It is a joyful thing to see people saved from almost certain death.
2. We feel that way when we see a person baptized into Christ.
3. It is a joy to see their faith & to know that God is taking away their sins.
4. Over the past few weeks we have been learning what we can do to help people who are outside of Christ & in their sins.
5. Because daily disciples of Christ, wants to daily love the lost as much as He does.

6. Thankfully, God has given us many good examples in Scripture of how to teach the gospel to others.

B. For example in Acts 16 Paul & his fellow workers took the gospel to Philippi.

1. Those who witnessed the effects of the gospel in that city stated that it had “*turned the world upside down*” (17:6).
 - a. The gospel caused a disturbance.
 - b. But among those who received it, the gospel *turned them right-side up*; it enable them to stand upright again.

[How did Paul & his companions have such a powerful impact on a great city like Philippi? How did they turn some people right-side up?

The answer began 600 miles away on the other side of the Aegean Sea (Acts16:6-34).]

I. TURNING PEOPLE RIGHT-SIDE UP

A. **A Desire To Spread The Gospel:** Paul was anxious to preach the gospel to anyone who would listen (16:6-10).

1. But the Holy Spirit commanded Paul NOT to go to certain places he wanted to go.

2. Instead, the Spirit gave Paul a vision telling him that he was needed in Macedonia.

3. But to do that would involve, as Jesus taught, going the extra mile.

a. There would be much added expense, the unforeseen dangers of sea & land travel, a shift of culture & even some prison time.

b. **Lesson:** To effectively spread the gospel we too must be willing to go the extra mile & take a risk (frightening thought).

4. But WE can take comfort in the fact that God is working ahead of us. Example...

a. To help Paul in his work, the Lord was behind the scene preparing some people in Macedonia to receive the gospel.

b. He had opened the doors of opportunity for His word to go forth through Paul (Acts 8:26, 29; Col 4:2-3; 1 Cor 16:9; Rev 3:8).

c. **Lesson:** He will do the same for us; we just need to view the people around us as souls prepared by God for our message.

d. You may say, “Well I haven’t left the convenience of my home like Paul did. The Lord wouldn’t use me in that way.”

e. You may want to rethink: How many of you ever thought (20 years ago, 2 years ago) that you would end up in San Angelo? Has the Lord opened a door for you here?

B. **A Desire To Spread The Gospel To Different People:** A second reason the gospel turned some people right-side up is because Paul was willing to preach to different people.

1. He didn't just speak to those people of a certain racial or economic profile.
2. The CHURCH IN PHILIPPI started with people from very different walks of life.
 - a. A **religious** woman named Lydia: She ran a business. She took time to pray with others. She cared for a household. She owned a large home (16:11-15).
 - b. An unnamed **slave** Girl: She was entirely under Satan's control. What wealth she made went to her masters. She was being exploited by unprincipled men. She was the kind of person from whom we would turn away if we saw her on the street (16:16-24).

i. We can't help but wonder if she didn't eventually become a part of the church in Philippi, but we just don't know.

c. A **military man** who was a Jailer: He was a man hardened by the duties of his occupation. He probably had a part in "laying many stripes" on Paul & Silas. Yet, he felt a sense of hopelessness about his future, to the point of taking his own life if necessary (16:25-34).

3. But isn't it interesting that the Lord was working behind the scene with these two or three very different people (& their families) to form the nucleus of the church in Philippi?
 - a. They may have been very different people, but Paul knew there was one thing they had in common: *their spiritual need for the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

b. **Lesson:** If we're ever going to turn people right-side up, then we must start teaching the gospel to all kinds of people: people who are religious but uninformed, people who are slaves to cults & vices, & people who cover up their hopelessness by their occupational activities.

C. **A Desire To Spread The Gospel To Different People In Different Ways.** A third reason the gospel turned people right-side up is because Paul didn't use the same approach w/ everyone.

1. To Lydia Paul spoke the Word to her after praying with her (16:13-14).

a. He could do that because there was a common ground between them: a belief in God through the Scriptures, & a desire to worship God.

b. **Lesson:** We will meet people like that, & we can take the same approach w/ them.

2. To the slave girl Paul performed an act of mercy (16:16-18).

a. On the surface this seems to be a mistake; Paul destroyed a walking billboard.

b. But in reality, Paul (God) was separating Satan from the true work of Christ.

c. Satan has his hands all over what we might call "Christianity" & the church.

d. Many are deceived by false teachers & teaching relating to Jesus Christ.

e. John said "the whole [secular/religious] world lies under the sway of the wicked one".

f. **Lesson:** There will be people who by a simple act of mercy & kindness can be led out of their slavery to spiritual sin.

3. To the Jailer Paul *spoke* a word of hope (16:28, 31-32).

a. The Jailer was asleep while “*Paul & Silas were praying & singing hymns to God*”.

b. Did that mean that he had no interest in his soul? Perhaps.

c. But a moment a crisis revealed the emptiness & hopelessness of his life.

d. And as he was ready to end it all, Paul spoke a word of hope, “*Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.*”

e. Well those words opened a floodgate of emotion, & sparked within the Jailer a genuine interest in his soul.

f. That’s when Paul was able to “*speak the word of the Lord to him.*”

g. **Lesson:** From time to time we will encounter people like this Jailer, people facing a crisis in their lives. It is at that point we should speak a word of hope to them that might generate an opportunity to preach Christ.

[Again, it is interesting that even though these people were different & even though the methods used to reach them with the gospel were different,

THE RESULTS – for two of them – WERE THE SAME.]

D. **A Desire To Spread The Gospel To Different People In Different Ways Can Produce The Same Result.**

1. Lydia & the Jailer believed & headed the gospel the moment they heard it (16:14, 32).

2. They repented immediately upon hearing the Word of God (16:15b, 33a).

3. They were baptized in the same hour they were introduced to Christ (16:15a, 33b).
4. The Jailer rejoiced over new status (16:34).
5. Lydia opened her home to this brand new body of Christ in Philippi (16:40).

[That little congregation would grow & appoint elders & deacons, & continue to do the work of the Lord for many years.

Paul wrote a letter from prison to this church, because he found them to be extremely encouraging & supportive of his labor.

Question: If the continuance of this congregation & its work for the Lord were in your hands, would it continue for many years, growing & working?]

CLOSING

- A. There are some people mentioned in this chapter who could have learned about Christ, but they missed Him.
1. The owners of the slave girl missed Him because they were more concerned about their livelihoods (16:19).
 2. The magistrates missed Him because they just interested in keeping their positions (16:38-39).
 3. The crowd missed Him because they would not get over their hatred of Jews (16:20-22).
 4. Money, Power & Prejudice will keep one out of the Kingdom of God.
 5. What is hindering you today from doing exactly what Lydia & the Jailer did in response to the gospel of Christ?