Acts 16:1-24
Blessed are the Flexible

I. Introduction

II. Acts 16:1-5 Timothy is added to the mission team.

A. 16:1-3 Ministry calls for sacrifices.
1. Paul delivers the message of the council (Acts 15) to the churches he and Barnabas planted five years earlier.
2. Timothy joins Paul on his journey to revisit the churches.
   a) Timothy was probably led to the Lord on Paul’s first visit.
   b) Timothy will go on to become one of Paul’s dearest collaborators.

Philippians 2:20 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.

3. Timothy is circumcised for the sake of avoiding conflict.
   a) Paul wasn’t making a statement of approval on circumcision for justification, but rather to provide no stumbling block for those that he and Timothy would be ministering to.
   b) Paul knew that the Jews they would be ministering to would be offended by a man who had a Jewish mother and yet was not circumcised.
   c) This was not a salvation matter but rather a ministry matter.
d) Paul was willing to allow his freedoms to be set aside for the sake of ministry.

e) When we approach ministry with the attitude of “Well, if they don’t like it, then it is their problem,” we are not going to get very far in ministry.

(1) This isn’t to say that we sacrifice conviction and principle.

(2) Jesus, when it came time to pay the temple tax, instructed Peter to pay it.

MATTHEW 17:24-27 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?” 25 He said, “Yes.” And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?” 26 Peter said to Him, “From strangers.” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. 27 "Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

(3) Paul also taught on not offending in order that we might have opportunity to serve.

1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

4. So blessed are the flexible in ministry; they will not be broken.

a) We need to go beyond the minimum requirements in order to help our audience receive our testimony.

b) What personal sacrifices would you be willing to make for the sake of the Gospel?

B. 16:4-5 Churches are strengthened and increase.

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. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

1. We know that at least a portion of the message that was being delivered was the message of grace.
a) Paul and Timothy were letting people know that they are saved by grace alone and not by works of the flesh, i.e. circumcision.

2. Strengthening in the faith happens as the Word of God is taught.

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- The Word of God will make a Body of believers healthy, wise, and strong.
- When the Word of God is neglected, the Body is left open to the attacks of the enemy.
- I am a firm believer in the verse-by-verse teaching method.

Nehemiah 8:8 So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

- There seems to be no limit to the ways by which men are seeking to strengthen the body of Christ.
  
  (1) Extreme emotionalism
  
  (2) Entertainment
  
  (3) Non-kingdom issues

3. I think that the readiness to turn from the Word to other means stems from the fact that people do not understand the purpose for the Church.

- The role of the church is to equip you to do the ministry.

- If I begin to try to make your church experience an event-oriented meeting, I head down a path that has no end to it.

- Church is one small portion of the believer’s walk. The portion of the walk that church is to fulfill is to provide teaching, worship, and fellowship.
(1) If I see church as the sum total of your walk, then I might be tempted to make it experience-oriented. Church is the tip of the iceberg.

C. Now that the churches were being strengthened they began to grow.

1. True growth of a church comes by way of strengthened believers.

2. There are ways to provide artificial growth aid just like a body-builder can provided other means to get big.

3. But artificial growth in a church, as in our bodies, is not without side effects.


A. 16:6a They complete what they planned.
   
   6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia,…

   1. Paul had the plan to revisit churches they had planted some years earlier, and now they had completed that part of the mission.

   2. What we will see in the rest of the verse is that God does not always tell us the whole plan in our planning meetings.

B. 16:6b The door closes in Bithynia.
   
   6 … they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

   1. Many Bible teachers agree in their opinion that the Spirit directed them through the ill health of Paul.

      a) It is fully possible that the Lord can direct you through limiting you physically.

      b) Limitations work to bring a greater reliance on our part upon the Holy Spirit.

   2. Whatever the means, Paul discerned that the Lord did not desire them to go and minister in Asia.
a) This closed door didn’t dampen (or hamper) the zeal of Paul; it simply meant that Paul and Timothy would go elsewhere.

b) Again we are brought to the question as to whether or not God has permission in your life to change your plans.

c) Changed plans are not a setback. Every closed door we meet in our lives simply means that the Lord has another door in mind for us.

(1) In this case, the open door was ministry into Europe to plant the first Church.

d) The thing that I must be very careful of in my life is to not to force an issue and make use of other resources to finish what isn’t part of God’s plan.

e) Let me encourage you to keep a light touch on your plans and decisions.

C. 16:7-9 A door opens in Macedonia.

7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 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."

1. With every closed door we face in ministry or in our lives, we can be certain that the Lord is opening another door for us to walk through and fulfill that which the Lord has planned for His Kingdom.

2. The Lord wanted the gospel to expand westward, and so Paul gave him a vision of a man asking for help in Macedonia.

3. We should be very sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, who may want to redirect our steps.

Proverbs 16:9 9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

4. Blessed are the flexible in planning, for we will not be broken.
**D. 16:10-12 Immediate obedience**

10 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. 11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, 12 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.

1. I like the word “immediate.” They didn’t let what-abouts deter them.

2. Luke joins the travels, and so begin the “we” sections of Acts.
   a) The pronoun changes from “they” to “we.”
   b) It is at this point that Paul and Luke meet each other.
      
      *(I) Luke was a physician (Col 4:14), so possibly the reason for their meeting was a direct result of Paul needing a physician, if indeed Paul did become ill as is believed.*
   c) When Paul and Silas leave Philippi, the “we section” ends.
   d) There are three “we” sections in the book of Acts, which would seem to indicate the joining of Luke with Paul in ministry.
      

3. 16:12 Philippi was called a miniature Rome.
   a) This city was populated with military personnel by Caesar Augustus. Augustus planted this city as a military town in order to help keep the peace in this newly conquered territory.

**IV. Acts 16:13-24 Ministry in Philippi**

A. 16:13-15 Salvation on the riverside

13 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. 14 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. 15 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.

1. If there weren’t at least ten men, a synagogue would not be established.
   a) In such cases it was traditional to gather by the rivers for prayer.

2. Of course Paul was aware of this, and as was his custom (Acts 17:1-2), he looked to preach Jesus the Christ to the Jews first.

3. Lydia comes to faith along with the rest of her household.
   a) Not only does she acknowledge and believe with her whole heart that Jesus is the Christ, but so do the others who lived in her house.

   b) Children and her husband as well as servants who helped this businesswoman all became saved.

4. After this, they were baptized as a public profession of their faith.
   a) We saw this with the house in Acts 10 with the house of Cornelius, and we will see this later on in Acts 16 with the jailer and his household.

   b) Those who subscribe to an infant baptism will use passages like this one to try to build their case that everyone in your house should be baptized even if they are not old enough to make that decision on their own.

   c) Yet Scripture tells us who can and should be baptized, in Acts 8.

Acts 8:35-37 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."
d) Scripture also teaches us that salvation comes through belief and not the will of man.

John 1:12-13 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

5. Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ with all your heart?

B. 16:16-18 Bad press is silenced.

16 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. 17 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." 18 And this she did for many days. 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.

1. Paul didn’t want his recommendations to come from those who were known to be aligned with evil spirits.

2. Paul wasn’t willing to take worldly/Satanic promotion to present the Gospel, lest in some way there be a mistaken association.

   a) There are suitable means for letting people know about the Gospel, and there are unsuitable means too.

   b) If a godless magazine began to be our number one fan, that would be a troubling recommendation.

   c) The Lord can get the word out Himself without our having to resort to ungodly means.

C. 16:19-21 Greed versus the gospel

19 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. 20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

A. 16:19-21 I have never been able to understand the world’s disdain towards those who lives are bettered by following Christ.
a) I have seen parents who would rather have their kids sleeping around, drinking, or taking drugs than seeking the Lord.

b) This speaks only to the sentiments and feelings of the demonic world. Satan can’t stand to see God’s love and grace come upon a person’s life.

**B. 16:22-24 Hardship in the will of God**

22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

1. Although they had followed the Lord perfectly, they still encountered pain and suffering in their bodies.  
   
   2 Timothy 3:12 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

2. If you find yourself in hardship and unplanned difficulty, don’t immediately assume you made a mistake or that God has let you down.

3. Blessed are the flexible in trials who will not be broken.

**V. Conclusions**

**A. We need to be flexible.**

1. In how we minister

2. In where we minister

3. In what we endure in ministry