



# Acts Facts – Part 4

A study in the Book of Acts. We go through Acts from chapter 16 verse 16, to chapter 28 verse 31. We take our study verse by verse.

This e-book is the fourth part of our study, completing our verse by verse lessons in the book of Acts.

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## Verse by Verse Studies in Acts

### —Author's Preface

**I**ntroduction and overview of the verse by verse exposition of Acts of the Apostles.

I have spent hundreds of hours putting together a complete verse by verse study of Acts. In this preface I explain some of the aims and attitudes behind this work, and how you might make the best use of it.

### **1** *The Paraphrase*

The text of Acts appearing in these studies is my own paraphrase. My main aims were to present Luke's text in a straightforward manner, keeping the language simple. I've done such things as (1) broken up long sentences into shorter ones; (2) replaced many pronouns with the nouns they refer to; (3) eliminated most instances of *And* where it starts or joins sentences; (4) Eliminated phrases such as "*it happened that*" which are stylistic but contain no information; (5) replaced some of Luke's terms with more understandable ones such as *commander* instead of his *chiliarch*.

Beyond these measures, I have frequently not reproduced the exact sentence structure and phraseology of Luke, but rather used my own words to express what he meant. That's what a *paraphrase* is. I realise that some *translators* will even take these liberties, but I have not attempted a *translation*. The paraphrase, is intended to be expository—to explain and bring out the meaning of the original text.

The symbol ¶ appears before each section of my paraphrase, to remind the student that I am not quoting from any translation but using my own words.

The paraphrase appears in discrete sections, but is also repeated in fragments with the comments. Sometimes the paraphrase will differ slightly in the fragment compared to the sectional reading. This is intentional.

My paraphrase loses much of the elegant style of Luke's penmanship. That's the sacrifice made for the sake of presenting Luke's narrative in a modern style that has a familiar feel to many readers and may be clearer to them. But my purpose is not to replace the many translations that do convey Luke's manner of story telling. Even Luke himself would consider that understanding and believing the story itself is more important than appreciating the skill and culture of the story teller. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive, but my purpose is to help primarily with understanding and belief.

### Chapters and Verses

The paraphrase is presented in natural sections and logical paragraphs. The traditional "chapters and verses" are sometimes arbitrary and clumsy divisions that inappropriately break the flow of the narrative. They weren't part of the original scripture. Nevertheless I have included "chapters and verses" in the natural sections to provide customary reference. However I have made the verse numbers unobtrusive so they don't interfere with the natural flow and structure.

## 2 *The Notes*

Between the sections of the paraphrase, various notes appear. I've not attempted to deal with every matter that might arise. If a detail is merely academic and not necessary to a good understanding of the passage, then the note on that detail will be brief if it occurs at all. In other cases the notes will be thorough because the matter is important. The notes, like the paraphrase, are intended to be expository—to explain and bring out the meaning of the original text.

## 3 *The Maps*

I have some years ago prepared simple maps of the area covered in Acts. The appropriate maps are placed on each lesson so that the student does not have to go looking for them. There is a maps page with all the maps together, but it seemed good to me to place the maps on the lesson pages as well.

## *My Reservations*

I have some reservations about presenting these expository or verse by verse studies. Paraphrasing scripture, and inserting one's own comments between the verses, could be viewed as a great impertinence: adding one's own words to the scripture. However expository teaching, if done honestly and carefully, is a very direct and powerful means of helping people understand, appreciate, and apply the scriptures for themselves. I urge all students to have their own Bibles at hand, and to read the whole passage for themselves, then turn to my paraphrase and notes as distinct from the scripture. I have taken much care with this work, and continue to check and edit it. It is by this care that I justify using the expository method.

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## Acts 16:16-40

### —Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 16:16-40. These verses describe Paul's experiences and work with Silas in Philippi, including the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

### Adventures in Philippi.

#### Acts 16:16-40

¶“<sup>16</sup>As we were going to prayer, it happened that a certain slave girl met us. She was possessed by a spirit of divination. This girl had brought her masters much gain by fortune telling. <sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!' <sup>18</sup>She continued doing this for several days. Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!' The demon came out that very hour. <sup>19</sup>Now when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them to the marketplace to face the rulers.” (Acts 16:16-19).

¶“<sup>20</sup>When the slave girl's masters had brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, they said, 'These men, who are Jews, are confusing our city, <sup>21</sup>proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or to observe'. <sup>22</sup>The crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas, and commanded them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>When they had laid many blows on Paul and Silas, they threw them into prison. They charged the jailer to keep them safely. <sup>24</sup>Having received such a command, the jailer threw Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks.” (Acts 16:20-24).

¶“<sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas, in jail, were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the prison to its foundations. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were loosed. <sup>27</sup>The jailer, roused out of sleep, saw the prison doors open. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, assuming that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Don't harm yourself: we are all here!' ” (Acts 16:25-28).

¶“<sup>29</sup>The jailer called for lights and rushed in to the prison. He fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' <sup>31</sup>They answered, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' <sup>32</sup>They spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. <sup>34</sup>The jailer then brought Paul and Silas up into his house, and set food before them. The jailer rejoiced greatly, with all his household, having believed in God.” (Acts 16:29-34).

¶“<sup>35</sup>When it was day, the magistrates sent the police with this message: 'Release those men!' <sup>36</sup>The jailer reported these words to Paul: 'The magistrates have sent a message for your release; therefore come out now, and go in peace.' <sup>37</sup>But Paul replied with this message for the magistrates: 'They have flogged us publicly, without a trial, men who are Romans, and have cast us into prison. Do they now release us secretly? Most certainly not! Let them come themselves and release us.'” (Acts 16:35-37).

¶“<sup>38</sup>The sergeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. <sup>39</sup>So the magistrates came begging to Paul and Silas. When they had brought them out of the prison, they continued pleading with them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>So Paul and Silas went out of the prison, and entered into Lydia’s house to see and encourage the brethren; then Paul and Silas departed.” (Acts 16:38-40).

## **1** *Slave Girl with a Demon*

### Verses 16-19

¶ "As we were going to prayer, it happened that a certain slave girl met us. She was possessed by a spirit of divination. This girl had brought her masters much gain by fortune telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us a way of salvation!” She continued doing this for several days. Paul, becoming greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” The demon came out that very hour. Now when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them to the marketplace to face the rulers.” (Acts 16:16-19).

- **Going to prayer.** Paul and his companions were probably going back to the riverside where people met for prayer and where Lydia was converted.
- **A spirit of divination.** Paul and his companions were approached by a slave girl. She was possessed by a demon who gave her the power to know and tell things that by her own senses and experiences she would not know. Her masters (those who had purchased her and owned her) were able to turn this supernatural “gift” to profit. One can't help feeling compassion for this girl. Not only is she a slave of unscrupulous men, but her body and mind has been invaded by a filthy spirit.
- **She followed us crying out.** What this evil spirit divined, and caused the girl to cry out, was absolutely true. As James says, "**The demons believe and tremble**" (James 2:19). So the spirit, through the girl, was bearing witness to the credentials of Paul and his companions, and to their message. However Paul did not want his ministry and his message to be associated in the public mind with the powers of darkness. Paul allowed this testimony to continue for several days, then made a public confirmation of the word of Christ by casting out the demon (Mark 16:15-16). This proved to the populace that the Jesus, whom Paul preached, had no fellowship with demons, and was more powerful than the demons.
- **Dragged them to the marketplace.** Paul knew that when he cast the demon out there would be trouble. That's one likely reason why he didn't cast out

the spirit sooner. So Paul and Silas (but not Luke and Timothy) were hauled to the forum for a case to be made against them before the magistrates.

## 2 *Paul and Silas in Prison*

### Verses 20-24

¶ "When the slave girl's masters had brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, they said, "These men, who are Jews, are confusing our city, proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or to observe. The crowd rose up together against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas, and commanded them to be beaten with rods. When they had laid many blows on Paul and Silas, they threw them into prison. They charged the jailer to keep them safely. Having received such a command, the jailer threw Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks." (Acts 16:20-24).

- **The charge against Paul and Silas.** The slave girl's masters concealed from the magistrates the real complaint they had against Paul and Silas. Public sympathy was probably with the slave girl. Instead they played upon public hatred of Jews and made out that these men were Jewish trouble makers preaching against Rome and the Roman ways. That got the crowds in this Roman colony shouting. And that outcry moved the magistrates to forget any kind of proper trial or enquiry. So Paul and Silas were flogged to appease the crowd and thrown into prison and secured until the commotion settled down.

### Verses 25-28

¶ "About midnight Paul and Silas, in jail, were praying and singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the prison to its foundations. Immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were loosed. The jailer, roused out of sleep, saw the prison doors open. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, assuming that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, "Don't harm yourself: we are all here!" " (Acts 16:25-28).

- **Praying and singing.** Paul and Silas would be suffering severe pain from their flogging. Having their feet fastened in the stocks meant that they couldn't sit or lie down comfortably, and couldn't walk a few steps to ease the cramps. It was midnight, pitch dark in the cell, but sleep was impossible. At least Paul and Silas weren't gagged, so they could bravely sing and pray to encourage each other. Whilst Paul and Silas would intend God to be their audience, other prisoners were listening. We are left to wonder what effect this had on those prisoners.
- **A great earthquake.** We are not surprised that the earthquake shook the prison to its foundations. But this quake also opened all the doors and loosed every prisoner's chains. What's more, nobody got hurt. The jailer awoke. As soon as he saw the open doors he was about to fall on his sword to avoid an uglier punishment. But he didn't need to kill himself; his prisoners had not fled. That was a bigger shock.

### 3 The Jailer Converted in Philippi

#### Verses 29-34

¶ "The jailer called for lights and rushed in to the prison. He fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." They spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house. He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. The jailer then brought Paul and Silas up into his house, and set food before them. The jailer rejoiced greatly, with all his household, having believed in God." (Acts 16:29-34).

- **What must I do to be saved?** The jailer evidently had made it his business to find out, from his own sources, who Paul and Silas were and what they'd been doing. He now realised that the message these men preached must be true. This intelligence included the fact that the slave-girl had cried out, "**These men are... proclaiming to us a way of salvation**" (Acts 16:17). The jailer realised that he must take this way of salvation seriously. So he begs to be told what he must do to have that salvation.
- **Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.** The Jailer asked, "What must I do?" He was told to believe. Believing is something we do. It is an act of obedience to the message of Christ. When you hear the gospel of Christ, what must you *do*? You must *believe*. So why all this talk that separates faith from deeds? Faith itself is a deed, a "work". It is the work on which all other works must be predicated. That's why this was the first act the jailer was told to do. It was not the *only* act he was told to do. The next verses says that they spoke the word of God to him, with the result that he was baptized *immediately* (Acts 16:31-34). So the faith by which he was saved, and in which he rejoiced with all his household, was not faith *alone* but faith that was obedient.

#### Verses 35-37

¶ "When it was day, the magistrates sent the police with this message: "Release those men!" The jailer reported these words to Paul: "The magistrates have sent a message for your release; therefore come out now, and go in peace." But Paul replied with this message for the magistrates: "They have flogged us publicly, without a trial, men who are Romans, and have cast us into prison. Do they now release us secretly? Most certainly not! Let them come themselves and release us." " (Acts 16:35-37).

- **Come out now.** It is not clear whether Paul and Silas were still at the jailer's house when the directive for their release was brought by the police. They might have thought it prudent to go back to the prison so that the jailer would not have any explaining to do. The authorities had apparently realized that the slave girl's masters had trumped up their charges and there was no case against Paul and Silas.
- **Certainly not!** Paul had very good reasons for standing on his dignity and forcing the magistrates to come to him personally. He would be leaving behind a little church which would need to be respected and justly treated by the authorities. Furthermore, Paul would want to come back to Philippi recognized as a Roman not

as a Jew. So he lets the magistrates know by return message that they have flogged Romans, an offense punishable by death.

## Verses 38-40

¶ "The sergeants reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. So the magistrates came begging to Paul and Silas. When they had brought them out of the prison, they continued pleading with them to leave the city. So Paul and Silas went out of the prison, and entered into Lydia's house to see and encourage the brethren; then Paul and Silas departed." (Acts 16:38-40).

- **Pleading with them to leave the city.** Now the magistrates were as worried as the jailor had been. They feared for their necks. But when they came begging to Paul, he treated them decently and agreed to leave Philippi. But he would leave with them forever in his debt. Paul didn't leave Philippi immediately, but first visited Lydia and the other new Christians to encourage them and to say goodbye. So Paul and Silas departed from Philippi and headed for Thessalonica. It appears that they took Timothy with them but Luke remained behind in Philippi.

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