

**Steven Dunne**  
**“Song in the Dark”**  
**Acts 16:16-40**  
**Jan 18, 2026**

**Acts 16:16–40 ESV**

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 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 bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

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### **2 Corinthians 6:1–10 ESV**

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says,

"In a favorable time I listened to you,  
and in a day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

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### **Romans 12:21 ESV**

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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### **Philippians 1:6 ESV**

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

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### **C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain***

"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world....No doubt pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of the rebel soul."

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### **Timothy Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, 2012–2013: How the Gospel Changes Lives—Part 2***

"Because Paul lost his freedom, the jailer found his freedom. In that sense Paul was walking in the footsteps of his own Savior, who was confined so we could be liberated, who wasn't just put in prison but was executed so we could be free."

### **Life Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What did God say to you during our Sunday gathering?
2. Paul and Silas praised God at midnight while beaten and imprisoned. What does their response reveal about where true freedom comes from?
3. When have you experienced a dark season where praising God felt impossible, and what would it look like to respond differently in future suffering?
4. Instead of asking, "How do I get out of this suffering?", the sermon suggests asking, "How do you want me to respond when the door closes?" How might this shift in perspective change the way you approach current difficulties or disappointments in your life?
5. The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?", expecting a list of actions, but Paul simply said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." Why is it so difficult for us to accept that salvation is received, not achieved?
6. In what areas of your life are you still trying to earn God's approval rather than resting in what Jesus has already done? What would it look like to rest in the finished work of Christ this week?
7. How can your Life Group help you this week in living out the truths of this text?