



Sermon Discussion Guide

September 6, 2026

Philippians Nerd Day | Acts 16:11-40

Summary

Big Idea: The Philippian Church was born in extraordinary events through ordinary gospel work among unlikely people.

Good Bible readers will note that Acts comes before Philippians, so to begin reading Philippians, the author (God through Paul) expects that you have Acts 16 in mind. Notably, as the title of this series denotes, the theme of Joyful Assurance dominates the book of Philippians. Indeed, Paul tells us that he writes Philippians from prison (1:7, 12-14). In Acts 16, we see Paul in the same situation, imprisoned, and also, experiencing the same joy. Through the gospel, God offers us true, lasting, sure joy – a joy that supersedes whatever difficult temporal circumstance we may find ourselves in. This gospel joy is both powerful and contagious, and in Acts 16 we see it bring life and freedom to the ones who were *really* bound, as ironically, though Paul is the one in chains, he's the one who is truly free, whether in chains or not.

1. What is the difference between these two statements:
 - a. I would be happy, if God would just change (fill in the blank).
 - b. I would be happy, if God would just change me.

Read Acts 16:11-40 and as you do, listen to these 3 encounters (Lydia, slave girl, jailer) for similarities and differences.

2. What are the similarities or repeated words/ideas in these 3 encounters?
 - a. What can we learn from these, about God, mankind, and God's way of salvation?
3. What are the differences between these encounters?
 - a. What can we learn from these about God, mankind, and God's way of salvation?
4. What about these encounters do you find encouraging? Challenging?
5. If Paul would have asserted his earthly, Roman citizenship rights at the beginning, what would have happened to the jailer – or what would have *not* happened to the jailer?
 - a. What does this teach us about nature of evangelism and loving others?
6. At the end, Paul does reveal his Roman citizenship. Why now? Maybe the following quote will help. How do you respond to the quote, "*Acts of ignorance and injustice must not be allowed in a society to be masqueraded as truth and justice in the public eye.*" (Tannehill)
7. Who in your life are you praying for God to open their heart? How can you be faithful to ensure there is good news amply provided to them to open their heart to?
8. When was the last time you prayed for God to open your own heart – to behold more deeply, the wondrous and joyous grace he has bestowed on you through the gospel? Would you pray that the Lord would fill and overflow your heart with a powerfully liberating and contagious joy?



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