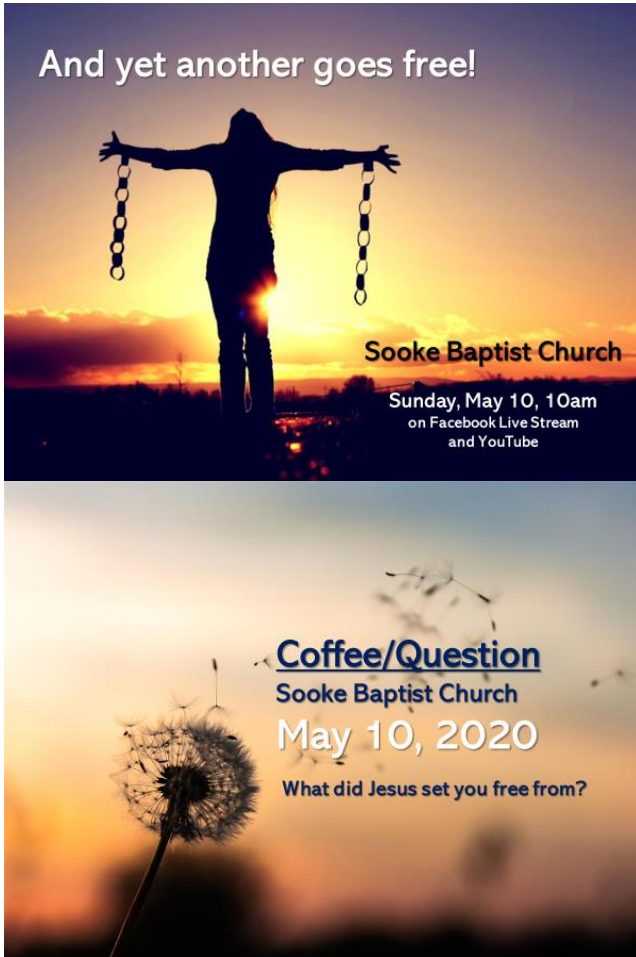


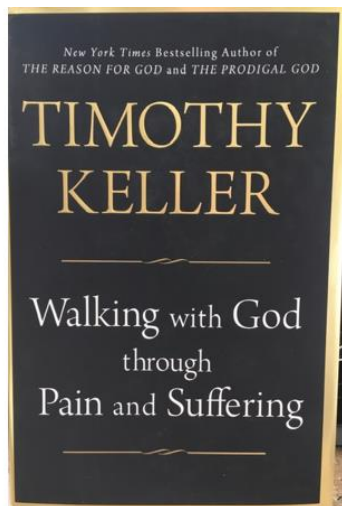
And Yet Another Goes Free

May 10, 2020

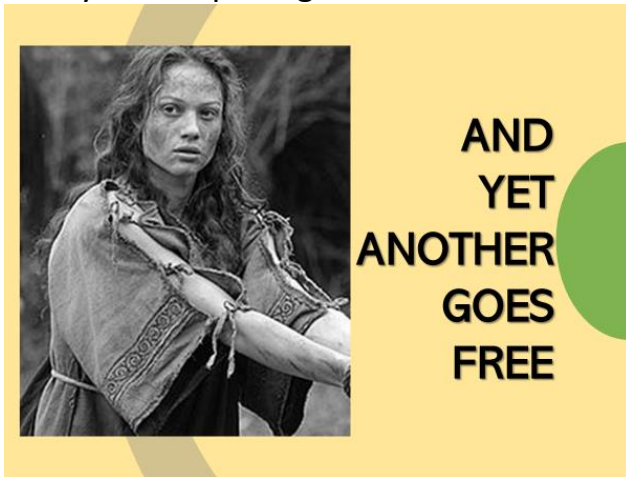
Acts 16:16-22



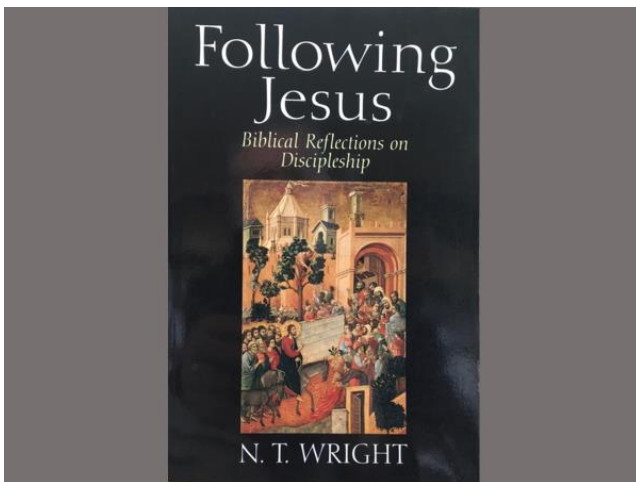
Most books have one title.



Today's bible passage could be named:



But there are some books that have a main title and a sub-title.



As I've read and studied today's bible passage, I believe there could be actually, not one, but three sub-titles.



**AND
YET
ANOTHER
GOES
FREE**



An Unfinished Story

**AND
YET
ANOTHER
GOES
FREE**



The War was Won but it's not Over

With this main title and three sub-titles in mind, let's read today's passage and then begin to unpack it.



Acts 16:16-22



AND
YET
ANOTHER
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FREE

In Acts 16 Dr. Luke tells the story of three individuals... who lived in Philippi... and who each had an encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- The first was a businesswoman named Lydia.
- The second was an unnamed slave girl.
- The third was the warden of the local prison.

Our focus today is on the unnamed slave girl.

What details are we given about her?

- she had a spirit that was in her... and always with her
- she was a fortune-teller
- she belonged to multiple owners
- she earned a great deal of money for her owners
- though she was a slave, she had a measure of freedom – she was able to follow Paul and Silas around for many days



What does Dr. Luke tell us about the spirit that was in her?

v.16 - it was a spirit of divination.

Interestingly enough, when describing this spirit, Dr. Luke used the Greek word “puthon” from which we get our English word “python.”



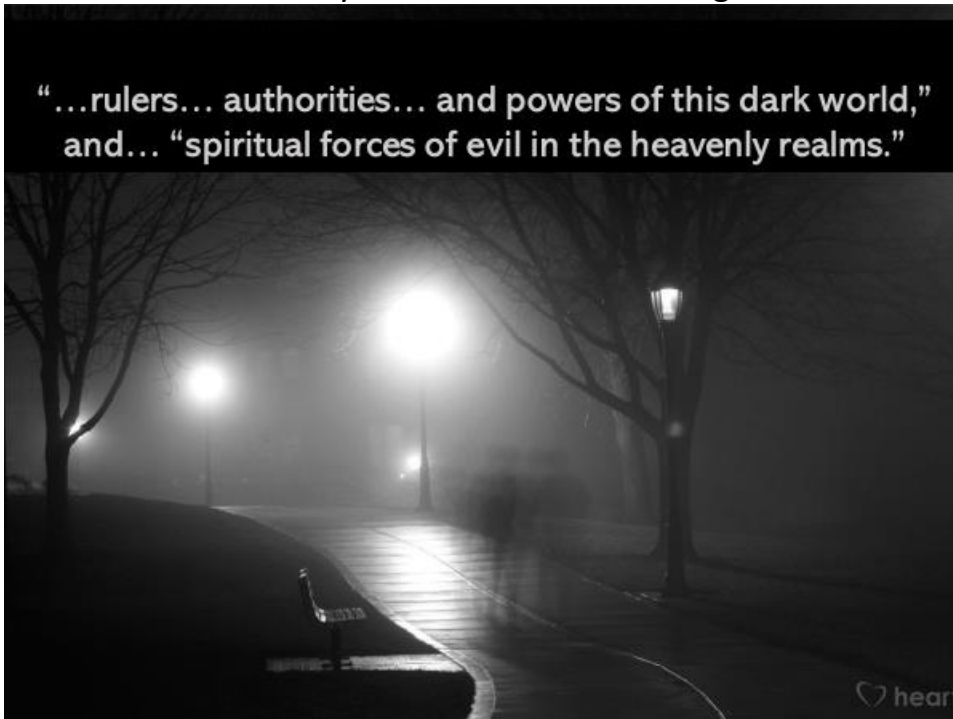
Why did Dr. Luke do this?

Was he alerting his readers to a particular kind of demonic spirit...



... that squeezes life out of individuals as it operates in this world.

Ephesians 6:12 does warn us that we are in a great spiritual struggle; and this verse does identify our adversaries as being....



I've heard some speak of a “Jezebel spirit” or a “Leviathan spirit,” and based on today's passage a “python spirit.”

We need to be careful.

There is a potential rabbit hole here...that the follower of Jesus is not meant to go down.

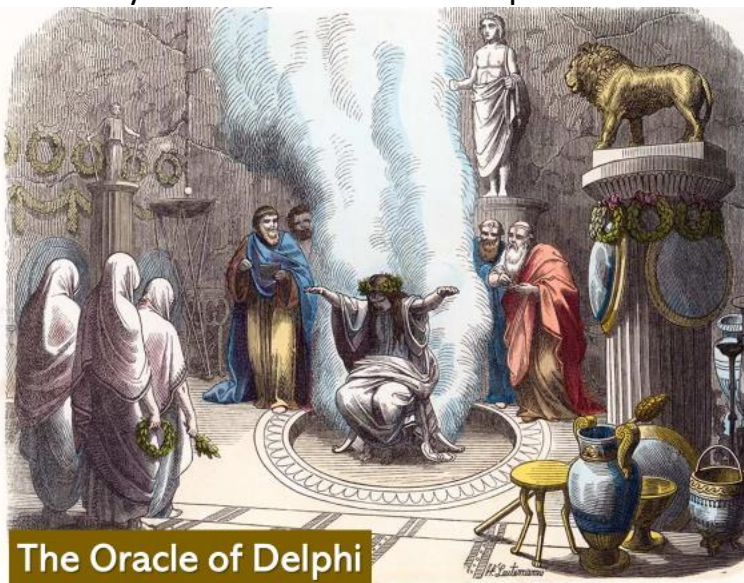
Because the scripture goes no further in defining our spiritual adversaries, that is, providing specific types and names, neither should we.

So why then did Dr. Luke describe the spirit in the slave girl as being a python spirit?

Five hundred kilometers south of Philippi was the city of Delphi.



In that city was a infamous female priestess known as...



According to legend, when the god Apollo slew Python, the son of Gaia, the goddess of the earth, Python's body fell into a fissure at Delphi, and from this fissure fumes arose from his decomposing body.

The oracle would sit above the fissure and fall into a trance as she breathed in the intoxicating fumes, which allowed Apollo to then possess her and speak through her.

When Dr. Luke described the slave girl's "gift of divination" as coming from a python spirit, he is informing his readers that the residents of Philippi believed the slave girl to be possessed by the same spirit that spoke through the oracle at Delphi.

This explains why she was so valuable to her owners.

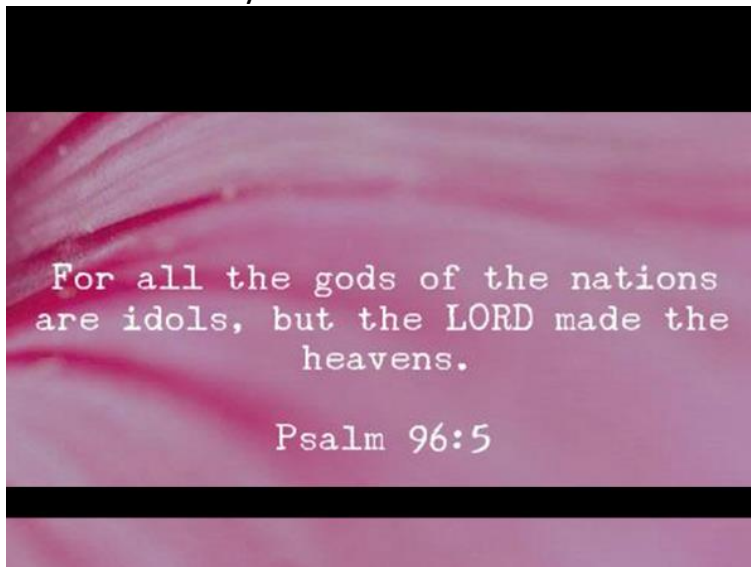
Dr. Luke provided much detail about this girl, but he doesn't write why she started following Paul and Silas, nor why she shouted out the things she did.

"These men are servants (**doulos**) of the "Most High God."

When the follower of Jesus hears that phrase "Most High God," we think...



...who reveals himself to be the One and Only God;
Yahweh who says in Psalm 96:5....

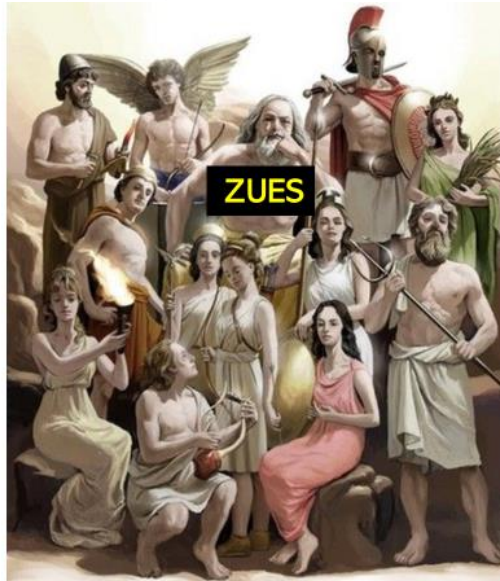


Yahweh who says in Jeremiah 10:5 regarding these idols...

Like a scarecrow in
a cucumber field,
their idols cannot
speak; they must be
carried because they
cannot walk. Do not
fear them; they can
do no harm nor can
they do any good.”
Jeremiah 10:5

However, when the people in Philippi heard that phrase, “Most High God,” do you know who they thought of?

the
greek
pantheon
of
gods



The spirit in the slave girl was deliberately muddying the water, by using a title which the Philippian people would have used to speak of Zeus, who though he was the Most High, was still one of many.

The fallen spirits always endeavor to diminish the glory of God.

“These men are telling you the way to be saved.”

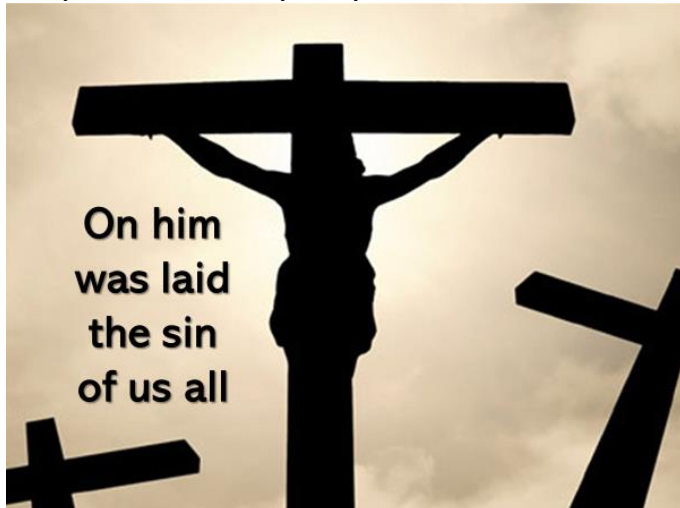
All other faiths apart from Christianity have this in common - they emphasize human effort –in order to know a god; or to be forgiven of sin or to earn favor with a god or to be assured of life after death.

Only in Christianity do you encounter the God who came to mankind...



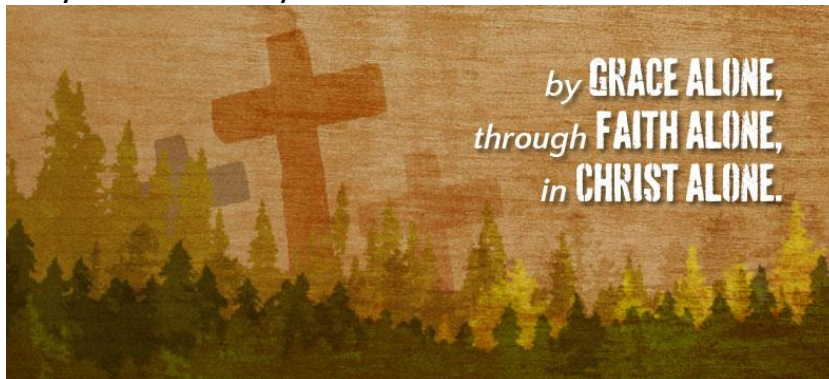
...and who became flesh and lived among us.

Only in Christianity do you meet the Savior, Jesus...



...who willingly had humanity's sin debt placed on him and who died in our place.

Only in Christianity do we hear the news of salvation...



...by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Paul became annoyed, and the word annoyed carries with it the sense of greatly disturbed, because the testimony of the slave girl diminished who Yahweh was, and what he had done for the world of humanity in Jesus Christ.

Paul was disturbed by the spirit, not by the girl.
Do you know why that was?

In spite of her slavery;
in spite of however her bondage to the spirit had happened;
in spite of the fact she was a tool used by an evil spirit to deceive those who inquired of her;
in spite of the nuisance she made of herself by following Paul and Silas and shouting out what she did... she mattered to Jesus.

He loved her.
He gave his life to rescue her.
It was God the Spirit who had arranged for her to “run” into Paul and Silas.
It is the glory of God to rescue sinners.

Paul had great compassion for this slave girl.
We know this because of what he did next.

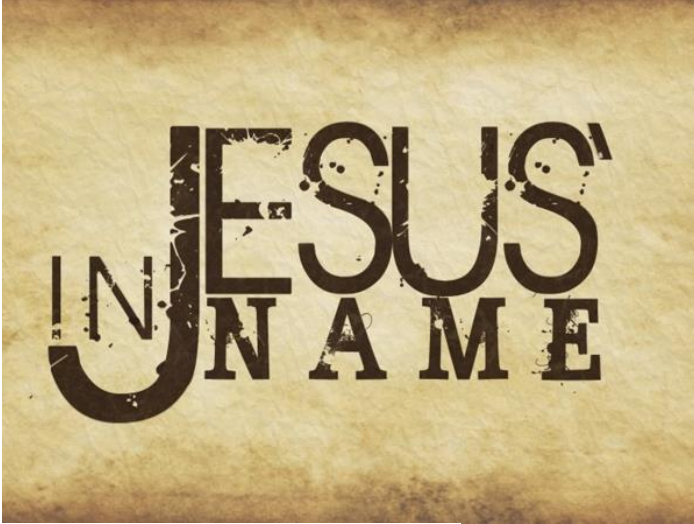
He didn't go to her owners.
He didn't offer to purchase her from them.
Their financial interests were not a factor in what happened.

Interestingly, Luke doesn't tell us if Paul even asked the girl what she wanted. Do you know why?
Because in that moment it was the fallen spirit who was manifesting and speaking through here.

She was as much a prisoner to the spirit as she was to her human owners.

This is why Paul spoke... to the spirit.
He didn't ask it to be quiet.
Nor did he debate with it.
Rather, he commanded the spirit to come out of the girl.

What is most important for you and me to see is the basis on which Paul addressed the spirit – “In the name of Jesus Christ...”



What does that phrase mean?

The name of Jesus refers to who he is, and what he has done and the position he now holds in heaven and earth.

When Ephesians 6 describes the believer’s adversaries as rulers and authorities and powers of this dark world and spiritual forces of evil, they sound intimidating and formidable.

But the Scriptures are crystal clear.

God in the person of Jesus Christ decisively dealt with and vanquished the devil and the fallen angels who are with him.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”
1 John 3:8

Jesus... “shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”

Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus... “has disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”
Colossians 2:15

The Spirit of God spoke through the apostle John and said, **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”** 1 John 3:8

Hebrews 2:14-15 says that Jesus **“shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”**

By his death and his resurrection from the dead, Jesus **“has disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”** Colossians 2:15

In both the seen and unseen realms of the universe, Jesus holds the highest place, his name and person is above every other name, all being are under his authority, and will acknowledge that he is Lord.

When Paul commanded the spirit to come out of the slave girl what happened?

I’ll tell you what didn’t happen!

The spirit didn’t ignore Paul and remain in the girl.

Nor did the spirit command God the Spirit who lived in Paul to leave Paul.

When Paul said, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her,” the spirit left her...**at that moment!**

What happened to that spirit is what happened every time Jesus encountered a demonized person during his public ministry. He said go, and they had to immediately obey him.

The authority of Jesus is without rival.

The girl was still a slave to those who owned her, but at the command of Paul who acted with the authority of Jesus, she was set free from the horror in which she had lived, as her body and person had been occupied by a foul spirit.

In John 8:36 Jesus said



This is the primary emphasis of today's story.

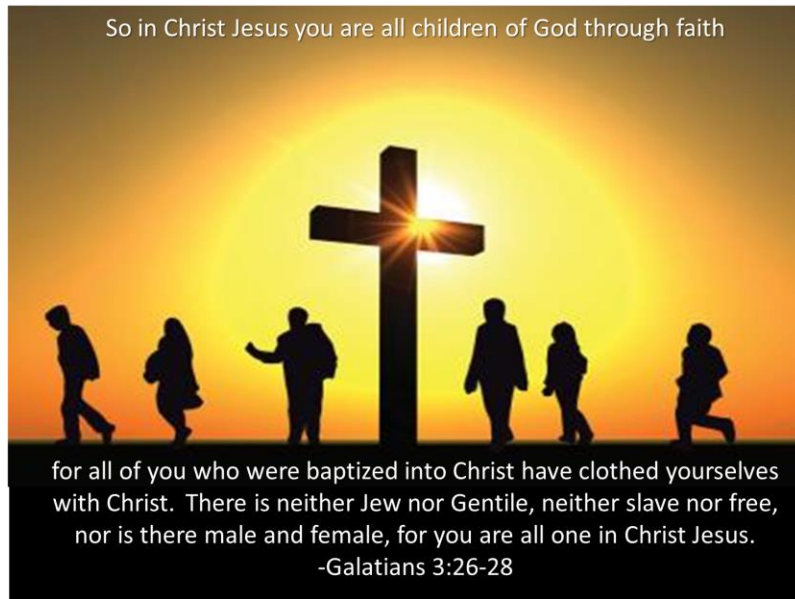
The three subtitles which I mentioned as we began impress upon us particular emphases that allow God's truth to connect to our lives and shape how we live in response to the gospel.

First Sub-title



What we have in common is that by faith in Jesus we have experienced God's grace; our sin has been forgiven; God has adopted us as his sons and daughters.

Hear the word of the Lord, Galatians 3:26-29.



The emphasis of Christianity is not on who we used to be or what we did when we didn't know God, but who we now are in Christ.

Second Sub-title



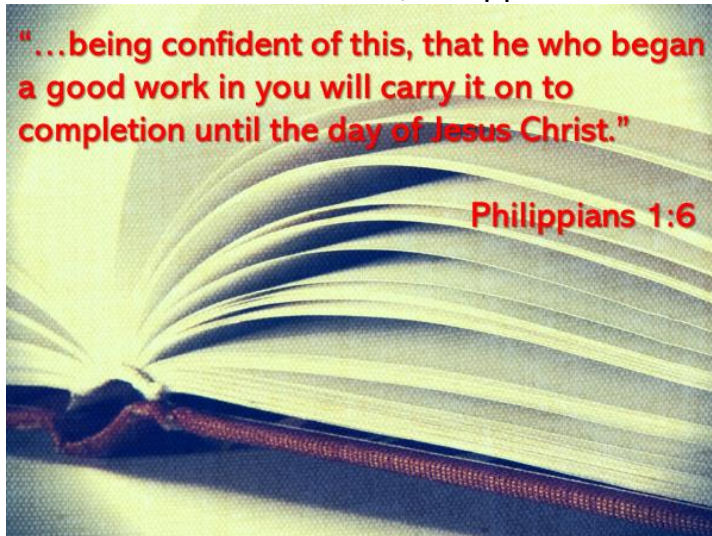
Dr. Luke tells us nothing more of this girl. In this sense, hers is an unfinished story.

Being of no value to her owners, did they put her up for sale as a common slave? We simply don't know.

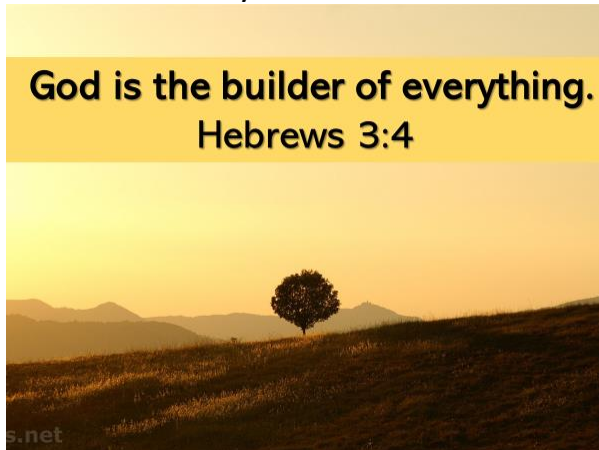
Did Lydia purchase her and bring her into her household? We don't know.

In this sense, her unfinished story reminds us that our story of salvation is also an unfinished story.

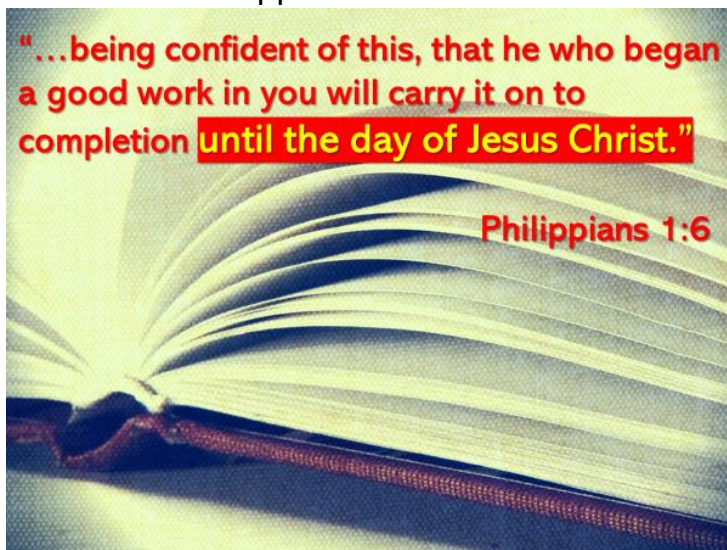
Hear the word of the Lord, Philippians 1:6:



Hebrews 3:4 says:



By his grace God builds the lives of his followers. And he promises to finish in each of us what he by grace began. God's work in you is a long-term project as indicated by the last phrase of the verse in Philippians 1...



Until Jesus returns or we pass from this life into eternity, God is carrying forward to completion the work of grace which he began in us when we put our faith in Jesus.

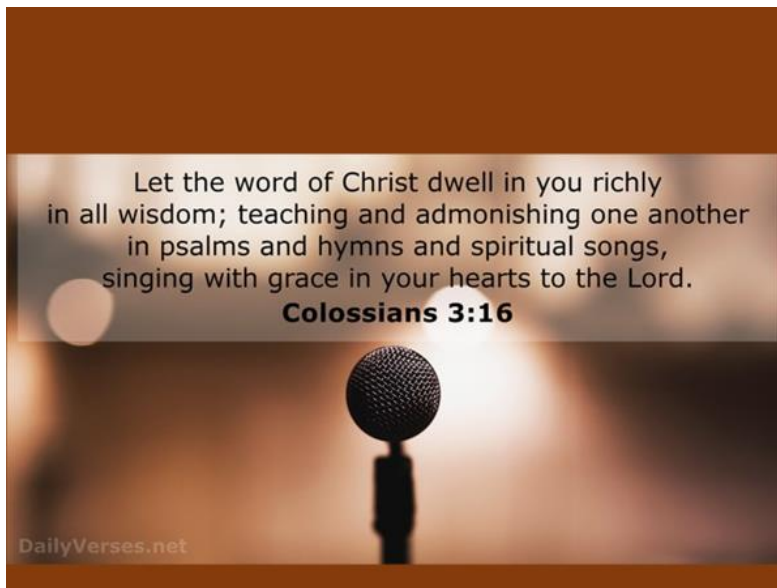
Philippians 2:12-13 is a companion passage that guards the believer from potential error, from thinking we are but passive agents.

Philippians 2:12-13

“...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

The follower of Jesus actively participates in the renovation of their character by God's Spirit.

Romans 12:2 tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. How is our mind renewed?



Our unfinished story is the story of how we are learning to live as those who've been set free... to live in the light as God is in the light... to live as new creations whom God Spirit's is daily transforming.

**AND
YET
ANOTHER
GOES
FREE**



The War was Won but it's not Over

We've already noted that God in the person of Jesus Christ decisively dealt with and vanquished the devil and the fallen angels who are with him.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

1 John 3:8

By his death and his resurrection from the dead, Jesus **"has disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."** Colossians 2:15

So how are we to understand the pushback of v.19-22?

How was it possible that unseen dark forces were able to influence and manipulate the owners, the crowd and the magistrates to attack Paul and Silas?

The war is won but it's not over.

Our understanding of this statement must be Scripture informed.

Let me give you two truth statements.

Truth 1.

Psalm 110:2
Rule in the midst of your enemies.

Hebrews 2:8-9
Yet at present we do not see
everything subject to him.
But we see Jesus,
who was made a little lower than the angels,
now crowned with glory and honor because
he suffered death, so that by the grace of God
he might taste death for everyone.

Jesus at this present time rules in the midst of his enemies, whether we can see it or not.

Even the pushback of our spiritual adversaries is surprisingly turned by our Lord Jesus to position his followers in the places he purposes them to be in order to speak the gospel to people – in the case of today’s story... the slave girl’s owners, the magistrates, the prison warden.

Truth 2.

**For we are not unaware
of Satan’s schemes.**

2 Corinthians 2:11

Through God’s Word, Satan’s schemes are made known to Jesus’ followers. We learn particularly from today’s passage that intimidation is a common one, but as a believer(s) pray and press into God, God fills the follower of Jesus with his Spirit and makes them bold – remember Acts 4:31

Jesus told us that in this world we will experience trouble.
But Jesus promised – “I have overcome the world.”
Jesus holds all authority in heaven and on earth.
There is no One greater than him.

As we wrap up our time together, we are going to sing again, the song Maddi introduced to us.

The song asks these questions:

- What is our hope?
- What is our confidence?
- Who holds our days within his hands?
- Who will keep us to the end?
- What truth calms our troubled souls?
- Where is God's grace and goodness known?
- Who holds our faith when fears arise?
- Who stands above every trial and challenge?

And the answer to every question...
It is Christ alone!

He is our hope in life and death!