

# “FACING THE DARKNESS”

Acts 16:16-24

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

All was going well in Philippi.

- 1) Lydia was saved and so was her “household.”
- 2) Then they were all baptized.
- 3) Next, the apostle and his company were given very comfortable lodging.
- 4) At the same time the fledgling church was given a place to meet.
- 5) Undoubtedly the preaching continued and more came to Christ, including some leading men such as Clement and Epaphroditus (4:3, 18).
- 6) Evangelism continued, at the riverside and likely elsewhere.
- 7) There were very few Jewish people in Philippi, and so Paul and the others were receiving very little opposition.
- 8) In fact, they were beginning to receive praise and flattery even from a very unusual source—the camp of the enemy

It is good when people say nice things about you, isn't it? And when the enemy seems to like you and compliment you, what could be better?

But beware, Satan will “butter you up” only to rip you up later and devour you!

In this passage the preachers of the Gospel have to face two serious problems:

- 1) Confrontation with the emissary of Satan himself (vv. 16-18).
- 2) Confrontation with the angry public and political leaders of Philippi (19-24)

*The result was some of the most severe persecution that Paul had faced yet—public stripping and humiliation, severe beating to a “bloody pulp,” and jail time in a dark, dirty, and smelly dungeon with torture of his feet in the stocks and with the worst of the criminal element as companions.*

### **That can't be so bad, is it?**

Paul and Silas did not let all this destroy their faith; in fact, all this only strengthened their resolve and promoted the Gospel cause.

**When you serve God, you must be willing to accept the bad with the good; the hard with the easy, suffering with joy; and the attack of the enemy along with the applause and love of your friends.**

- I. THE ATTACK FROM OUR “FRIENDLY” ENEMY
  - A. The Slave Girl (16)
  - B. Her Masters (16)
  - C. Her Spirit (16)
  - D. Her Message (17)
    1. Bondservants of God
    2. God is Most High

3. Proclaiming the “way of salvation”
  - E. Her Emancipator (18)
    1. “Greatly annoyed”
    2. Addresses the spirit
    3. Delivers the girl
      - In the name of Jesus Christ
      - Instantaneous response
  - F. Her new Family
- II. THE ATTACK FROM THE MERCENARY PUBLIC (19-24)
- A. “The hope of profit went out”—when the spirit went out!
  - B. Hyped up charges against the emancipators (19b-21)
    1. Malicious treatment (19b)
    2. Mock trial (20-21)
      - Public Chaos—real problem—**Being Jews**
      - Proclaiming strange and illegal customs—us **Being Romans**
    3. Mass Confusion (22-23)
      - The wild crowd (22)
      - The irresponsible praetors—chief magistrates
      - The severe beating
      - The abusive number of blows (23a)
    4. Military Confinement (23b-24)
      - Throw into prison
      - Command for security to the chief jailor
      - Thrown into the inner dungeon (24)
      - Stretched into the stocks (24)

Why did Paul not protest this treatment and claim his rights?

Maybe he did, but it was fruitless; no one was listening and the proceedings were out of control. **But, Paul and Silas were not out of control!** (as we will especially see next week).

## CONCLUSION

We cannot predict our circumstances. God blesses His servants, but He does not promise a “bed of roses.”

We will face these enemies: Expect the attack from the mercenary public; but don’t be caught off guard by the “friendly enemy attack. Satan would rather have us Join him than oppose Him. **He will be glad to promote our cause—as long as we are willing to compromise and confuse our cause.**

**When you serve God, you must be willing to accept the bad with the good; the hard with the easy, suffering with joy; and the attack of the enemy along with the applause and love of your friends.**

But oh how much poorer we would be today if Paul and Silas had not been thrown into that prison!