

WHEN WE STEP OUT, GOD STEPS IN (6)

Read Acts 16

1. Be led by the spirit

- The Spirit normally guides us through Scripture so that we walk in holiness (2 Tim 3:14-17).
- Here the Spirit directed the apostles (6, 7) – through their thoughts? Their spirits? See Rom 8:14, 17; Isaiah 30:21
- He also led them with a vision (9, 10). This was relatively unusual (there are only four recorded examples of visions in Paul's life – Acts 9:12; 16:9; 18:9; 2 Corinthians 12:2).
- Nevertheless, visions may still occur today (Joel 2:28). It is important to be Spirit-filled!

2. Do the obvious

- After the apostles were led by the Spirit, they just did the obvious (11-15)
- God gave us intelligence to be used
- When they did this they met Lydia and 'the Lord opened her heart' (14)
- When we step out, God steps in!

3. Satan will try to stop us serving God

- If you put on the uniform, expect to be attacked! (16-22)
- A girl with a 'python spirit' harassed them (the only reference to such a spirit in the Bible)
- Note how slow Paul was to confront it (cf Jude 9)
- Note how Paul did confront it
- When we see examples of Satanic opposition in our own congregation, this should not surprise us.

4. When trouble comes, praise the Lord

- The apostles praised God and everyone listened (25)
- *'When you're up to your neck in hot water, Be like the kettle and sing!'*
- There is peace and contentment in praise: it is an expression of trust in God.

5. God turns trouble into triumph

- God sent an earthquake (25-28)
- He has a wonderful way of turning trouble into triumph, defeat into victory!
- The result was the conversion of many people (29-34)

6. God honours those who honour him

- See 2 Samuel 2:30: 'Those who honour me I will honour.'
- We don't have to worry about what people think of us or what will happen to us.
- When we step out, God steps in
- The challenge today is to step out for God, no matter what the cost, to be willing to pay the price and to endure hardship for his sake knowing that in the end, he will bring us through in victory.

Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Remember: You don't have to answer all the questions. First do those that seem most helpful to you.

Read Acts 16:6-40

Biblical

1. Paul and Silas were clearly called to make this journey (9, 10). They finished up beaten and in stocks in prison (22-24). What does this tell us about obeying God's will?
2. The slave girl had a 'python spirit' (16) which produced an effect something like ventriloquism. Note that what she said was actually correct (17). So how did Paul know she was demonised? (18, 19).
3. Which of the verses in 1 Thessalonians 5:15-22 did Paul and Silas specifically put into practice at this point? (More than one.)
4. What do you think it was that most impressed or affected the jailer?
5. What does this story tell us about the nature of conversion and the practice of baptism? (27-34).
6. Some people use this story as evidence for infant baptism because the whole household was baptised. How do we know that all of those baptised were in fact believers? (32, 34).

Personal and practical

7. Although Paul suffered without protest, the next day he did speak out (37). Why didn't he protest the night before and save himself from prison? Any ideas?
8. Imagine you were one of the apostles. You are called to go on a mission, you cast out a demon and now you are in the stocks in prison at midnight. What might you be thinking? What questions might you be asking?
9. What is the value of praising God when we are in trouble?
10. Recall examples from your own life when you have tried to obey God and things have gone wrong. How did you react? Could you have reacted differently? If so, how?
11. Is God calling you to take a step of faith now? What is holding you back?

Memorise 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Hint for memorising: You can do this as a group by repeating phrase by phrase aloud together until you can say the whole text in one hit. Don't forget to learn the reference as well.

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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