

The Church of the Holy Apostles;
A Bible Study on the Book of Acts
Based upon the Homilies of St John Chrysostom (SJC)
Study Guide – November 4, 2015, Acts 16.11-24 - Homily 35

Prayer before reading of the Holy Scriptures: Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having conquered sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things which are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good and life giving Spirit, always now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Chapter 16 v. 11-15 *Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.*

There were certain places where the Jews had designated for prayer since there was no synagogue. The places were often outside the city where they could pray without the distraction of the city.

Lydia was a woman of low social stature but high mind. God honored her by calling her to join the Church.

SJC "Having learned these things, let us also be ashamed of no man. Peter abides with a tanner Acts 9:43: (Paul) with a woman who was a seller of purple, and a foreigner. Where is pride? Whose heart the Lord opened?"

Lydia's great faith softened Paul's heart and convinced them to stay. SJC "Who would not have been softened by these words? She did not request (or claim) did not entreat simply: but she left them to decide, and yet exceedingly forced them."

Chapter 16 v. 16-24 *Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

Demon wished to give himself credibility by speaking "in this case" the truth about the Apostles, but Paul ignores the demon.

Paul does the teaching and performs the miracles, but Silas shares the blame – UNITY

The greed of the masters was so great, they preferred for the girl to remain demon possessed so they could continue to make money.

The masters invented the charge of treason so their greed would not be revealed.

SJC "They made a charge of treason of it (εις καθοσίωσιν ἡγαγον). (e) Why did they not say, Because they cast out the demon, they were guilty of impiety against God? For this was a defeat to them: but instead of that, they have recourse to a charge of treason (ἐπὶ καθοσίωσιν): like the Jews when they said, We have no king but Cæsar: whoso makes himself a king speaks against Cæsar."

Paul and Silas are placed in the inner prison to make the miracle of their release (Acts 16.25-34) even greater

Teaching on "Sloth" – (see Homily 35)

1. Don't complain that you suffer when you are lazy compared to the Apostles

What tears do not these things call for! (Think) what they suffer, while we (live) in luxury, we in theatres, we perishing and drowning (in dissolute living), seeking always idle amusement, not enduring to suffer pain for

Christ, not even as far as words, not even as far as talk. These things I beseech you let us ever call to mind, what things they suffered, what things they endured, how undismayed they were, how unoffended. They were doing God's work, and suffered these things! They did not say, Why do we preach this, and God does not take our part?

2. Nothing is more worthless than an idle and luxurious man

For nothing can be more worthless than a man who passes all his time in idleness and luxury. For the man untried, as the saying is, is also unapproved; unapproved not only in the contests, but also in everything else. Idleness is a useless thing, and in luxury itself nothing is so unsuited to the end proposed as the leading a luxurious life.

3. Some people care more about their pets learning than their soul learning

How many are careful about their dogs, that they may not be filled with more than the proper food, that so they may be keen and fit for hunting, being set on by famine and hunger: but for themselves they have no care to avoid luxury: and the brute creatures indeed they teach to exercise philosophy, while they let themselves sink down into the savageness of the brutes.

4. Idle objects are useless; a well-worked soul is polished

Which is the useful horse, the pampered or the exercised? Which the serviceable ship, that which sails, or that which lies idle? Which the best water, the running or the stagnant? Which the best iron, that which is much used, or that which does no work? Does not the one shine bright as silver, while the other becomes all over rusty, useless, and even losing some of its own substance? The like happens also to the soul as the consequence of idleness: a kind of rust spreads over it, and corrodes both its brightness and everything else.

5. The soul's nature is to be always moving

For the soul, as its nature is to be always on the move, cannot endure to be at rest. God has made it a creature of action: to work is of its very nature; to be idle is against its nature..

Life Application Challenge – (Homily 34, p 218) Avoid inaction AND poor actions!

But as inaction is an evil, so is activity in things that ought to be let alone. For just as it is with the teeth, if one eats not, one receives hurt to them, and if one eats things unfitting, it jars them, and sets them on edge: so it is here; both if the soul be inactive, and if inactive in wrong things, it loses its proper force. Then let us eschew both alike; both inaction, and the activity which is worse than inaction. And what may that be? Covetousness, anger, envyings, and the other passions. As regards these, let us make it our object to be inactive, in order that we may obtain the good things promised to us, through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, with Whom to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, might, honor, now and ever, world without end. Amen.