

## On Interpreting Narrative...

- Introduction on the difficulties of interpreting narrative:
  - does it affirm what happened, condemn what happened, or merely describe what happened?
  - should Paul's ministry in Philippi be seen as **an example**, **a programme**, or as **historical detail**?
- Considerations:
  - what does the big sweep of the book tell us, the purpose statements, etc?
  - how does the rest of Scripture interpret what is here?
  - what would we lose if this was not here - eg, in this case, loads of background to the letter to the Philippians that allows us to more clearly see Paul's teaching there...
  - and is there a clear thread running through, that resonates with meaning as we read a passage?
- Its that latter that I think I want to concentrate on this evening:
  - and the thread is **freedom!**

## Freedom from Sin

- Lydia (v.11-15)
  - this the fundamental freedom
  - mustn't underplay this because its what we expect, because it isn't dramatic!
- What was "Paul's message" to which her heart was opened?
  - (1) *When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. (2) For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (3) I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. (4) My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, (5) so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Cor 2:1-5)*
- The **cross**:
  - Jesus paying a ransom, thus setting us free
  - free from sin's consequences, its punishment, free from judgement, free from death's sting

## Freedom from evil spirits

- Phone call this afternoon from Julian!!
  - God was able to overpower that evil in the slave girl (v.16-18)
  - though modern medical science has done much, we should be very wary of explaining all such manifestations as mental illness - dismissive of the supernatural

## Freedom from fear

- Paul and Silas were free from fear of the consequences of following Christ (v.19-26)
  - free of fear of prison, of torture, execution, incarceration
  - do you hear their singing in the middle of the night, the effect it had on others!

## Not yet free from fear and from sin

- **Huge** contrast with the jailer! (v.27-34)
  - not free from fear - about to kill himself
  - not free from sin - what must I do to be saved?

## Freedom from human control

- Who is in charge in the last section? (v.35ff)
  - the magistrates wanting to cover things up, move things on
  - these were powerful people!
  - yet Paul & Silas were, by the Spirit at work within them, free to chart God's course...
  - (probably there was an importance in claiming their rights here, as it might affect how other Christian missionaries might be treated, and how they might be treated at the next city - it was about ensuring freedom for the gospel's proclamation...)

## God brings freedom

- God brings freedom:
  - this is the story of Acts 16!!
- Are we free:
  - from sin and all its consequences? : **Start!**; come to Christ
  - from the power of evil spirits? : **come and pray**
  - from fear, of others, from human control? : ???