

58. The Lord Saved a Roman Soldier and His Household

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that the Lord is able to work through every situation to accomplish His purpose. We said that the Lord allowed Paul and Silas to experience a severe beating in order to give an entire family the opportunity to hear how to become Christians and follow Christ. We will learn more about that family in our topic today.

How would you feel and what would you do if you had been severely beaten and then had your feet placed in stocks so that you could not get comfortable? Paul and Silas were in that situation. Acts 16:25-27 says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.” Instead of complaining and groaning about their suffering, Paul and Silas chose to express their praise to God.

We see that Paul and Silas were doing two things as they suffered from the severe beating that they had received and could not get comfortable, because their feet were in stocks. The word translated “stocks” means *a log or board in which the feet and hands were placed and fastened*. First, we see that they were praying. Second, we see that they were singing hymns to God. A key thing to notice here is that hymns are songs of praise that are sung to God. In the middle of their suffering, Paul and Silas were singing praise to God. However, God was not the only One that was listening as they sang praises to God. We see that the other prisoners were also listening to them. They were even using this opportunity to witness to the other prisoners by prayer and praise to God.

We also see that God chose to show His power. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake. This earthquake did several things. First, it caused the foundations of the prison to be shaken. Second, it caused all of the doors of the prison to open. Third, it caused the chains of all of the prisoners to be loosed. All of the prisoners were actually free to leave the prison, because there was nothing holding them any longer. However, the other prisoners had been listening to Paul and Silas and we see that none of them left the prison. The Lord was working in their hearts as well.

Meanwhile, the earthquake had also awakened the jailor. He saw the doors of the prison and immediately thought that the prisoners had fled. He knew the consequences if prisoners were allowed to escape. Acts 16:29 says, “But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there*.” The jailor knew that he would be put to death if the prisoners escaped. Since he thought they had probably already escaped, the jailor drew out his sword and was ready to commit suicide.

Acts 16:28-31 says, “But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are

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all here.’ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’” Here, we see that Paul quickly called to the jailor before he had time to commit suicide. Paul called with a loud voice to make sure that the jailor heard him since Paul was in the inner prison. Paul told the jailor not to harm himself. Then, he told him that the prisoners were still all in the prison.

The jailor immediately called for a light and he ran into the prison as quickly as he could. He was still filled with fear. As a result, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. The word translated “trembling” means *to be terrified or to shake*. It is the word that was used to describe Moses when he saw the burning bush and heard God call to him from heaven. Acts 7:31-32 says, “When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, *saying*, “I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses trembled and dared not look.” The jailor had this same kind of fear as he fell down in front of Paul and Silas.

Then, we see that in addition to the prisoners, the jailor had also been listening as Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God. Through their prayers and singing the jailor knew that he needed to be saved. The first thing that the jailor did was to bring Paul and Silas out of the prison. Then, the jailor asked them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The word translated “Sirs” is used seven hundred and forty-eight times in the New Testament. Of those, six hundred sixty-seven times the word is translated “Lord” and talks about God or Christ. Slaves would also use this title to address their master and then a dozen times it is translated “sir”. As a result, we realize that the jailor had learned many things that night from the prayers that Paul and Silas prayed and the hymns that they sang to God.

The jailor wanted to know how to be saved. The word translated “saved” is usually used to talk about salvation. The first time that this word was used in the New Testament was when an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph in Matthew 1:21 and said, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” In both of these verses, we see that the primary use of the word is in relation to salvation from the penalty for sin.

Paul and Silas answered his question with the statement, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” The word translated “believe” is used two hundred and sixty-four times in the New Testament and means *to be persuaded of and to place confidence in*. This was a favorite word of John as he wrote the Gospel of John and his final use in that Gospel is John 20:30-31 where we read, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” Here, Paul and Silas also promised the jailor that his whole household would also be saved if they believed.

We see the results of that statement in Acts 16:32-34, where we read, “Then they spoke the word

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of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.” After a major earthquake, no one is ready to sleep. Instead, people are thinking about the issues of life and death. Then, Paul and Silas shared the word of the Lord with the jailor and with all of the people who were in his house. This probably included slaves and guests who may have been visiting the jailor and his family. The jailor also took the time to wash the wounds of Paul and Silas from the severe beating that they had received.

We see that the jailor, as well as all of the others that were in the house with his family, were saved and baptized that night. Paul and Silas took the time that night to clearly present the Gospel to those in the house of the jailor so that there was clear understanding by all even though most of those present in the house that night may have had no background of the Old Testament. Romans 1:19-20 says, “Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” Here, we see that God reveals Himself through His creation. Although the creation does not help people to understand the message of salvation, creation does show that there is a God who has eternal power and shows His divine nature. This causes people to recognize the need to know God and caused this household to listen and understand as Paul and Silas explained the message of the death and resurrection of Christ that night.

After the jailor brought Paul and Silas into his house, he had a meal prepared for them. We also see one of the immediate results of salvation. We see that the jailor rejoiced. Happiness depends on what is happening around you and that happiness can change in a moment if what is happening around you suddenly changes. In contrast, joy is the result of what is happening within your life. Peter explained the greatness of this joy as he talked about the great joy that we can experience as Christians as we wait for the coming of the Lord. 1 Peter 1:8-9 says, “Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of *your* souls.” The jailor and his entire household could be filled with joy, because they no longer had to fear death. Instead, they could look forward to the coming of the Lord.

We see that the jailor and his entire household all believed and placed their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ that very night. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to entire families how they can have forgiveness of sin and receive the gift of eternal life. That means that we want to help our children learn to explain the Gospel very simply and clearly so that each person who hears will be able to understand the meaning of repentance from the sin of unbelief and what it means to place our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain clearly the message of salvation.