

Topic: What does Salvation look like?

Acts 16:14- 34 (NASB)

First Convert in Europe

¹⁴A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

¹⁶It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

¹⁹But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, ²⁰and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

Paul and Silas Imprisoned

²²The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The Jailer Converted

³¹They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. ³⁴And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

I. Paul and Silas were innocent, falsely accused and badly mistreated

- Why didn't Paul and Silas plead their Roman citizenship? (see Acts 22:25-29; 25:11-12) Perhaps there was not time, or perhaps Paul was saving that weapon for better use later on.
- He and Silas were stripped and beaten (see 2 Cor. 11:23, 25) and put in the city prison. It looked like the end of their witness in Philippi, but God had other plans.
Instead of complaining or calling on God to judge their enemies, the two men prayed and praised God. When you are in pain, the midnight hour is not the easiest time for a sacred concert, but God gives "songs in the night" (Job 35:10; also see Ps. 42:8).

Job 35:9 - 10 (NLT)

⁹ "People cry out when they are oppressed. They groan beneath the power of the mighty.

¹⁰ Yet they don't ask, 'Where is God my Creator, the one who gives songs in the night?'

Psa 42:8 (NLT)

⁸ But each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

- Prayer and praise are powerful weapons (2 Chron. 20:1-22; Acts 4:23-37). God responded by shaking the foundations of the prison, opening all the doors, and loosening the prisoners' bonds.
- They could have fled to freedom, but instead they remained right where they were. The prisoners must have realized that there was something very special about those two Jewish preachers!
- Paul's attention was fixed on the jailer, the man he really wanted to win to Christ. It was a Roman law that if a guard lost a prisoner, he was given the same punishment the prisoner would have received;
- A hard-hearted person seeking vengeance would have let the cruel jailer kill himself, but Paul was not that kind of a man (see Matt. 5:10-12, 43-48).
- It was the jailer who was the prisoner, not Paul; and Paul not only saved the man's life, but pointed him to eternal life in Christ.

ACTS 16:22

A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. (NLT)

- The twisting of the truth by these accusers was effective enough to motivate a *mob* to assemble *quickly*. This only gave credence to the accusation that Paul and Silas were "throwing the city into an uproar" (16:20).
- Wanting to keep the peace, the *city officials ordered* Paul and Silas to be *stripped and beaten with wooden rods*. Rods were wooden poles bound together and carried by these magistrates. The rods were used to beat offenders.
- This was not the only time that such had happened (or would happen) to Paul. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:25 that it happened three times—at least three up until the writing of that letter to Corinth.

ACTS 16:23-24

After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (NRSV)

- After the *severe flogging*, Paul and Silas were thrown in prison, and the jailer imposed his version of maximum security—taking them to the heart of his prison (*the innermost cell*) and there fastening *their feet in the stocks*.
- “Stocks” were made of two boards joined with iron clamps, leaving holes just big enough for the ankles. The prisoner’s legs were placed across the lower board, and then the upper board was closed over them. Sometimes both wrists and ankles were placed in stocks.
- Paul and Silas, who had committed no crime and were peaceful men, were put in stocks designed for holding the most dangerous prisoners in absolute security.

ACTS 16:25

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.
(NLT)

What an incredible scene this must have been! *Paul and Silas* were barely into their first stop on what promised to be a wildly effective Macedonian evangelistic campaign—God had verbally called them there (16:9-10). In short order, however, they found themselves the victims of false and prejudicial charges, locked up in the depths of a Roman jail, in stocks! So what did they do? Moan? Whine? Blame God? Give up? No, their jail term was marked by only two activities: *praying and singing hymns to God*.

The other prisoners were listening as Paul and Silas sang and prayed. The Greek word for “listening” (*epekroonto*) is a strong word implying that the prisoners were listening intently. It is a reminder to all believers that the world is watching when they suffer. There is intrigue, interest, and even openness to believers’ “answers” when they respond so unnaturally—so supernaturally—to difficulties. How believers respond to their troubles can play a major role in how others will respond to the Savior.

Choosing to Worship

Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten, and placed in stocks in the inner cell. Despite this dismal situation, they praised God, praying and singing as the other prisoners listened (16:22-25). Did they “feel” like worshiping? Probably not. They were likely aching, tired, and scared. But they were determined to give glory to God, who they trusted was in control of their situation. They clung to the hard-to-understand truth previously announced by Jesus: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me” (Matthew 5:11 NIV). The radical response to worship was a decision of their will. No matter what our circumstances, we can choose to praise God. Others may even come to Christ because of our example.

ACTS 16:26

Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! (NLT) The answer to the prayers of Paul and Silas came with suddenness and authority in the form of a *great earthquake* (Greek *seismos megas*), shaking the *foundations* of the prison, bursting open doors, and breaking loose the *chains of every prisoner* in the place. Sometimes it pays just to be standing near when God pours his grace from heaven. There’s always so much that it spills over on everybody who is even close by (see Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:17; 1 Timothy 1:14).

Monday Morning Moment

Believers are unbeaten, but not untested!

2 Cor 4:8 – 9, 16 (NASB)

⁸*we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;*

⁹*persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;*

¹⁶*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

2 Cor 4:8 - 16 (NLT)

⁸*We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.*

⁹*We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed.*

¹⁶*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.*