

CHOOSE YOUR STORY:

A JAILER IN PHILIPPI

Acts 16

BACKGROUND:

As you work your way through the story of the NT you first hear of Saul/Paul when he is the Christ follower's greatest nightmare!

³ Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

Acts 8:3

'Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in you imprisoned and beaten. ²⁰ And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I stood there giving approval and guarding the clothes of those who killed him.'

Acts 22:19-20

- By the time we get to today's text in Acts 16 Paul has made a tremendous change and has become a Believer in Christ!
 - When he became a Christian, **HE WENT ALL IN!**
 - His efforts to spread the Gospel and promote the faith were as vigorous as his efforts had been to squelch the Christian faith!
 - Paul who had persecuted Christians now becomes a persecuted Christian!

²⁴ Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. ²⁶ On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers among false brothers; ²⁷ toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing. ²⁸ Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

2 Corinthians 11:24-29

- Back To Our Immediately Story: Paul's efforts were divided into 3 different missionary journeys
- Traveling throughout Western Asia Minor, and in today's text further west into Macedonia.

- On Paul's 2nd missionary journey he had intended to travel back through Asia Minor and visit the churches he had established on his 1st journey
 - But God had a different plan for Paul/Silas (now with Paul)

⁶ They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia; they had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ Passing by Mysia they went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night Paul had a vision in which a Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰ After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:6-10

- Paul wasted no time making his way to Macedonia

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, a Roman colony and a leading city of the district of Macedonia. We stayed in that city for several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there. ¹⁴ A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵ After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:11-15

- Paul and coworkers lived with Lydia and continued to work in Philippi.

- Adventures of Paul and Silas in Prison

¹⁶ Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ As she followed Paul and us she cried out, "These men, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God." ¹⁸ She

did this for many days. Paul was greatly annoyed. Turning to the spirit, he said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out right away. ¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

Acts 16:16-19

²⁰ Bringing them before the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are seriously disturbing our city. They are Jews ²¹ and are promoting customs that are not legal for us as Romans to adopt or practice." ²² The crowd joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After they had severely flogged them, they threw them in jail, ordering the jailer to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:20-24

- A Midnight Deliverance

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul called out in a loud voice, "Don't harm yourself, because we're all here!" ²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He escorted them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. ³³ He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had come to believe in God with his entire household.

Acts 16:25-34

REFLECTING ON THE JAILER:

- There are several people we could focus on from this story but for the sake of time I would like to take just a few more minutes to consider the Philippian Jailer's story:
 - Many Bible scholars believe that the Jailer was likely a retired veteran - Roman soldier.
 - Philippi was a major "Roman Colonial City".
 - Old soldiers sought to retire here.
 - The position of Jailer was very suitable for a veteran soldier and would have been the likely choice of the Roman officials.
 - He was a man with a family
 - While not profound it is at the same time telling.
 - Wife, son(s), daughter(s), extended family, and likely would include servants.
 - Not the usual things we even consider when thinking of a hard, tough, heathen, Roman.
 - He was a tough Roman who could be reached with the Gospel of Christ.
 - Just needed to know **the right button to push – point of persuasion!**
 - The results of Paul's efforts in Macedonia seem to be limited to the conversion of Lydia and the jailer.
 - Would it be out of bounds to consider that this whole effort of getting Paul to Philippi, being beaten, cast into prison, put in stocks, singing and praying in spite of the circumstances, earth quake that brings down the prison, etc. **was for the purpose of reaching the Jailer with the Gospel?**
 - To what links will God go to reach someone with the Gospel of Christ?
 - What is God willing to ask you to sacrifice/do/experience in order to work with Him to reach someone with the Gospel?
 - He life's most important question:
 - ? What question(s) are you trying to answer in life right now? Whatever it is it is not worth comparing to this question!

- There's some question what he was asking but no doubt what he came to understand and what he received.
- The most important question.
 - There are a lot of important questions that are asked and answered in life but none as consequential as the question asked by the jailer.
 - All the other questions we ask and answer in our life lose significance when death comes calling!
 - Everything that is important about all the other questions loses its value at the point of death = So what...
 - if I have this, do that, go here, go there, accomplish this, possess that, experience this, etc.
 - What must I do to be saved is the only question that is of absolute worth – eternal value!
- Note the process the jailer followed:
 - He was convicted - while conviction precedes conversion it doesn't always follow conversion.
 - He had remorse - but remorse is not repentance
 - He had fear - but fear is not faith
 - He had the anxiety of danger - but danger is not always an instrument of knowledge.
- These things are useful but they often are, stifled, resisted, and ignored.
 - He remained ignorant of the source of a sinner's hope
 - So while a big change had occurred, it was not conversion.

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Acts 16:30-34

CONCLUDING THOUGHT/APPLICATION:

- Every life is a story - not simply an event.
- We meet the Philippian jailer at a point in time = a point in his life.
 - There are some interesting things that happen in our text that beg for some explanation from his past.
- Like the Jailer we too arrive at this place and time in our lives.
 - I am sure that you would agree that there are some things in your past that could explain where and who you are now.
 - Losses, things you have witnessed, successes, experiences of all kinds that fit into all different categories but all having an impact upon who you are.
- As with the jailer there are a lot of questions to be asked and answered in life.
 - BUT only one is eternally germane:
WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Choose Your Story!

There is no greater consideration than this!