

The Philippian Jailer

INTRODUCTION.

- A. The story of the Philippian Jailer begins with the apostle Paul and Silas being thrown into prison. (Acts 16:16-24)
 - 1. Paul had removed a spirit of divination from a slave girl. The master of the slave girl became angry because he had lost a source of income.
 - 2. The master of the slave girl took Paul and Silas to the authorities. He accused Paul and Silas of troubling the city and of teaching customs that violated Roman law.
 - 3. The magistrates commanded that Paul and Silas be beaten and thrown into Jail. Paul and Silas were thrown into jail and their feet were fastened with stocks.
- B. Now that Paul and Silas are in prison, we will turn our attention to the man given charge over the prisoners. Although we are not given the keeper's name, throughout the years he has come to be known as the Philippian jailer.
- C. Beginning in verse 25, we will take a closer look at the man who went into work one day, not knowing that his life would literally be changed forever.
- D. Read Acts 16:25-34.

I. THE JAILER FOUND HIMSELF WITHOUT HOPE.

- A. The jailer reached a point of no hope. (Acts 16:25-27)
 - 1. At midnight, Paul and Silas began praying to God and singing praises (hymns) to God. The prisoners were listening to Paul and Silas.
 - 2. Suddenly, a great earthquake opened the prison doors and loosened the chains binding the prisoners.
 - 3. When the prison guard awoke, he saw the doors opened and he prepared to kill himself.
 - a. The prison guard knew that if the prisoners had escaped that his life would be taken by his superiors.
 - b. Consider Acts 12:18-19 for an example of where prison guards were put to death because a prisoner had escaped.
 - 4. At this point, the Philippian jailer believed that he had no hope. He believed that nothing could save him.

- B. Paul showed the jailer that there was hope. (Acts 16:28)
 - 1. Just as the jailer was preparing to take his own life, Paul stopped him.
 - 2. Paul told the jailer that all the prisoners were present.
- C. Undoubtedly feeling tremendous relief, the jailer ran and fell down before Paul and Silas. The jailer, how had been on the brink of death, being spared, was trembling. He knew that he had witnessed something greater than himself. (Acts 16:29) Consider what the jailer had seen and heard.
 - 1. There is no doubt that the jailer had heard some of the prayers and songs of Paul and Silas. He would have heard songs and prayers of thanksgiving and glory.
 - 2. The jailer was witness to an earthquake so precise that all the doors to the prison cells were opened.
 - 3. The jailer was witness to the unbelievable scene of prison cells being opened, the prisoners being loosed from their chains, yet all the prisoners remaining in their cells.
- D. The jailer recognized what he had to do next.

II. THE JAILER ASKED THE RIGHT QUESTION.

- A. The jailer brought Paul and Silas out of their cells and asked them the most important question of his life. He asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
 - 1. What did the jailer mean when he asked, “. . . what must I do to be saved?”
 - a. Was he talking about his personal safety? From the evidence, we would have to say not. Since the prisoners had not escaped, his personal safety was no longer in jeopardy.
 - b. Since his personal safety was no longer in jeopardy, the only concern that would have been left would have been his spiritual safety.
 - 2. It is likely that the jailer perceived Paul and Silas to be religious (spiritual) men who followed a powerful God. In addition, it is likely that the jailer began to recognize that he had been an accomplice to the unfair treatment of these religious (spiritual) men.
- B. With all the evidence at hand, the jailer found himself asking these religious men what he had to do to be saved or to be rescued from destruction.

III. THE JAILER LISTENED TO THE MESSAGE AND OBEYED.

- A. In answer to the jailer’s question, Paul and Silas told him, “Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” (Acts 16:31, NKJV)

1. This answer should be viewed as an introductory answer. It is clear from the text that the jailer did not know Jesus Christ. He did not know His teachings. We know this because beginning in verse 32, Paul and Silas introduced the jailer and his household to Jesus Christ.
2. Consider the difference between Paul’s answer to the jailer and Peter’s answer to the multitude on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:37-38.
 - a. On the day of Pentecost, the multitude questioned Peter after he had taught them about Jesus Christ. It was clear from their question that they believed in Jesus enough to ask what was next.
 - b. However, the jailer asked his question prior to learning about Jesus Christ. Therefore it was only logical that Paul responded with the command to believe on Jesus Christ. In order for the jailer to believe on Jesus Christ, it was first necessary that he learn about Jesus Christ.

B. Paul and Silas taught the jailer and his household about Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:32)

1. What did Paul and Silas teach the jailer and his household? The same message commanded by Christ in Mark 16:15-16 and the same message taught by Philip to the eunuch.
 - a. Jesus commanded His apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15,16 - NKJV)
 - b. When Philip taught the eunuch in Acts 8:26-39, he taught the eunuch that which Jesus commanded to be taught. Consider the evidence:
 - (1) In verse 35, we read, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.”
 - (2) In verse 36, we read, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”
 - (3) In verse 37, Philip replied, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”
 - (4) The eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”
 - (5) In verse 38-39, we see the conclusion, “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they

came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.”

- c. Paul and Silas taught the same message command by Jesus in Mark 16:15-16. Again, we must consider the evidence and the out come.
 - (1) In verse 32, we read, “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”
 - (2) In verse 33, we see the response of the family, “And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”
 - (3) In verse 34, we see the conclusion, “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.”
- C. As has already been shown, the jailer and his family obeyed the message of Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:32)
 - 1. After Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer and his family, the jailer and his family believed and was baptized.
 - 2. According to the promise of Jesus Christ, after believing and obeying His command to be baptized, the jailer and his household were saved. (Cf. Mark 16:15-16)

IV. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER.

- A. In the story of the Philippian jailer, we found a man without hope. The jailer was at a point where he saw no other options.
 - 1. Have you reached a point in your life where you feel that you have no hope?
 - a. If you are not yet a Christian, then you are currently without hope without Jesus Christ. (Cf. Ephesians 2:12)
 - b. If you are a Christian, but you have turned away from Jesus Christ, then you are also without hope without Jesus Christ.
 - 2. If are without hope, then take comfort. Just as the Philippian jailer found hope, so can you.
- B. In the story of the Philippian jailer, the jailer turned to those who bore the message of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. If you are without hope, then do as the Philippian jailer and turn to the word of God.

- a. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6, NKJV)
 - b. Jesus sent His apostles to teach all that Jesus had taught. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:26, NKJV)
 - c. One of the many teachings of Jesus relates directly to how you can be saved from your sinful past. Jesus told His apostles to teach, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
2. If you will listen to the gospel of Jesus Christ and act upon the instructions in the gospel, then you will be saved. (Cf. Romans 1:16 - "power of God unto salvation.")
- C. In the story of the Philippian jailer, the jailer and his household listened to the message of Jesus Christ and they believed and obeyed. As a result, they rejoiced.
1. If you are still lost in your sins, without hope, then obey the Gospel's call to salvation. If you do so, then you will be forgiven of all of your past sins and transgression. (Cf. Acts 2:36-38)
 2. When you obey the command of Jesus to believe and be baptized, then you will be baptized into Jesus Christ and will arise to walk in a newness of life. (Cf. Romans 6:3-4)
 3. Just as the jailer rejoiced, so can you rejoice, knowing that all your past sins have been forgiven and that you are now a new person, a child of God.

CONCLUSION.

- A. If you are not a child of God, then, without Jesus, you are without hope.
1. Make the decision today to believe in Jesus Christ, turn from your past sinful life, and obey His command to be baptized.
 2. If you will do so, then Jesus will give you all the hope that you will ever need.
 3. After obeying Jesus' command to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized, all that He expects of you is to live a faithful life, only serving Him. (Cf. Revelation 2:10)
- B. If you are a Christian, but you have turned away from Jesus Christ, then we plead with you to turn back to Him today. If you will repent of your departure and turn back to serving Him, then you will be forgiven. (Cf. I John 1:8 - 2:2)

- C. Let us all follow the example set by the Philippian jailer and follow Jesus Christ today.

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