

~ACTS~

Lesson 50- An Open Triumph in Philippi

Acts 16:32-40

Today we are continuing our study through the book of Acts and last week we left Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi as they were being spitefully treated in this Roman colony as uncondemned Romans. Having been arrested, beaten with rods, and thrown into the inner prison, and having the sentence of death placed on them without any kind of trial. But even in the midst of this persecution, Paul and Silas continued to give praise to God. Singing hymns and praying in the middle of the night as their backs were bloody and their feet were bound in stocks. And as a result of this praise, God showed his power and glory in that prison cell and a great earthquake came and the doors were thrown open and all the chains of the prisoners were loosed. But nobody ran; they all stayed put. And this was the miracle that brought salvation to the Philippian jailor and he fell down at Paul's feet and said, "**What must I do to be saved,**" Acts 16:30. And Paul replied in verse 31... "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your whole household.**"

So this is where we will pick up our study today in verse 32 as this Philippian jailor and his whole household receive the Gospel and are born again.

32) Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

As awesome as that miracle was in the inner prison, miracles and signs and wonders don't save anyone. It is only the power of the Gospel that saves, Romans 1:16. So Luke tells us **they spoke the Word of the Lord to him**. They, being Paul and Silas, spoke the Logos to this man. They spoke Jesus. Paul had just told him how to be saved. He said **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**. Place your trust in Him, rely on Him for your eternal salvation. But how can somebody believe unless they hear the gospel? How can they believe on Jesus unless they learn who this Jesus is? **Romans 10:14-17**. Salvation only comes through the proclamation of the Gospel out from the Word of God to those who have expectant ears to hear.

In verse 32, notice where they are and who is hearing the Gospel. They're no longer in the inner prison. They are in this Philippian jailor's house, which probably is on the premises of this prison, and they are not alone. The jailor's family is there as well listening to the Words of Truth that Paul and Silas are speaking. Then notice the results after they hear the Truth...

33) And he (the jailor) took them (Paul and Silas) the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

This word took is *παραλαμβάνω*, to receive alongside. The Philippian jailor and his entire household not only received the Word of God, but they also received Paul and Silas. This is what Jesus said in **Matthew 10:40-41**. This was God's grace and favor working in Paul and Silas. The jailor receives the Word of God and then received Paul and Silas into his house to wash their wounds from being beaten with rods.

And then, after Paul and Silas are cared for, the jailor and his whole family were baptized. But it wasn't the baptism that saved them. It was their faith in Jesus that gave them everlasting life. The baptism was merely an outward expression of their faith. Then Luke continues describing how this family continues to take care of Paul and Silas. Remember, this is still the middle of the night...

34) 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.

There was great joy in their house that night and it was all because they **believed in God**. Each individual of that household had to believe in order to be saved. Nobody is saved because of association. Salvation is a personal and individual decision of the heart. And their belief, their faith in Jesus Christ brought them salvation. And as a result, they rejoiced and took care of those who proclaimed this good news to them.

There was great freedom and joy in the house that night, the freedom of Salvation that only Jesus can give, but Paul and Silas were still prisoners in this prison and had to return to their stocks in this dungeon the next morning. This was an act of faith. I am sure there was a temptation to run, but if they had escaped, the jailor would have been charged with their death sentence. So notice how God's favor continues to intervene in this situation.

35) And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."

Something seems to have changed in the hearts of these magistrates during the night. Just the day before, they were ordering the violent beatings of Paul and Silas, and now everything is reversed. This word "officers" is *ῥαβδοῦχος*, meaning bearer of the rod. So both the magistrates and those who enforced the beatings on Paul and Silas are now miraculously changing their minds. We don't know exactly what prompted this change. Maybe they found out that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens? It is possible that the jailor had let them know this and put in a good word to the magistrates that helped convince them to let Paul and Silas go. So we don't know exactly what happened to change their minds, but I believe this was another miracle of God's favor working in this situation. I love how Psalm 5 describes God's favor, **Psalm 5:11-12**. So I think this is God's favor working on the magistrates hearts. Now the Philippian jailor hears the news and reports this to Paul and Silas...

36) So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."

Paul and Silas are back in the inner prison, locked in their stocks and the jailor comes back excited to tell them this good news. You would think Paul would be relieved to get out of this dungeon and he would want to do it as fast as possible. But here is an example of Paul's bold character.

37) But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."

That's the Paul we know and love: stubborn, tenacious, bold. Paul fully knows and asserts his rights as a Roman citizen. He knows it was completely illegal and against Roman law to persecute a Roman citizen, so Paul doesn't go out quietly. He wants to expose their wrongdoings. Cicero, a Roman historian who lived from 106-43bc, wrote, "To fetter a Roman citizen is a crime; to scourge him, a scandal; to slay him-patricide (to kill a close relative)." * Paul was a Roman citizen and as Paul traveled throughout the Roman Empire, he used this right to aid him in preaching the Gospel. Remember, Luke is writing this letter back to Theophilus as trial documents for Paul's appeal to Caesar. And only a Roman citizen could make an appeal to Caesar. Paul was such an amazing man... set apart to do the work of the Gospel. A Hebrew of Hebrews who knew the OT. He grew up with the Hellenistic community so he knew Greek. And he was a Roman citizen. And he used this Roman right on more than one occasion, **Acts 22:22-29**. There is nothing wrong with standing on the rights we have in the country we live in. God has given us this great USA to live in. We have freedoms that many other Christians do not. Let's not take them for granted. And while we have these rights, because we all see these rights slipping away, but while we still have these rights, we should use them for His glory.

There is a similar example in the 14th century about 200 years before the Reformation of the 16th century when John Wycliffe stood for Truth. He was born in 1324 in a village in England called Wiclif, from which he received his family name. He was a learned man, who helped shape the English language as we know it. He was known in history as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." Contrary to Catholic decree, in 1380 he translated the Bible into his common language, making this the first complete Bible to be translated into English. But this was an illegal act punishable by death because before this, the Catholic

* Lenski- Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, pg. 687

church had made the Bible illegal to own or read. The Catholic church began to rise up against Wycliffe, but Wycliffe had the favor of God and the Council of London, along with the King of England and was protected by the attacks of the Catholic church. Wycliffe was able to proclaim the Gospel and he was a smart man who knew his rights as an Englishman. In a defiant act against the Catholic church and their heresies, Wycliffe continued preaching the Gospel and handing out Biblical tracts in English proclaiming Truth until finally the Catholic church summoned him to the ecclesiastical court. By this time the pressure had become so strong that his friends had abandoned him, and Wycliffe stood alone defending the Truth. But he was not alone, the Holy Spirit was with him. By this time the Catholic church had written five papal bulls claiming Wycliffe to be a heretic, but as a true Reformer, he would not retract. In fact, he stood bold for the Truth and plead his cause. Blackford Condit wrote this about Wycliffe in his book, *The History of the English Bible*, 1896, “His pleading inspired with such confidence of right, with such clear insight of truth, and with such force of native genius, that his defense extorts (draws) from his adversaries nothing but praise.” Wycliffe was never convicted by the Catholic church and surprisingly never martyred but died a peaceful death in 1384. And it was this bold stance for Truth, God’s miraculous favor, and his defense for the Gospel that the English Bible first came to the common people. And it was this bold stance that began shaping the Reformation which would allow us to eventually have our Bible today in our English language.

So here, the Apostle Paul is standing for Truth, but I don’t think this is Paul acting out of his flesh. I believe this is the boldness of the Holy Spirit coming out through the Apostle Paul. And just like Wycliffe inspired other believers, I believe Paul’s stance inspired these new Philippian believers as well. Paul’s boldness continually gave other believers the confidence to stand for Truth. Paul refers to this in his letter back to the Philippian church after his first imprisonment in Rome, **Philippians 1:12-14**. I believe this is why Paul takes this stance against the magistrates. To make it known and to be a courageous example.

Another reason the Holy Spirit gave Paul this confidence was because God was using this opportunity to show His glory and make an open show of His enemies. Paul says, **“They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.”** This word beaten is *δέρω*. It is a strong word in the Greek that comes from the word “to flay, or skin.” As in skinning an animal. Paul and Silas were beaten so badly, their backs were flayed like an animal. And the magistrates did this publicly to Paul and Silas, being Roman citizens without a trial, and now Paul has them right where he wants them. The magistrates had publicly treated them as guilty, but now Paul demands that they publicly declare them as innocent. And he tells them, **Let them come themselves and get us out.** This word “get us out” is *ἐξάγω*- to lead out. Paul wants them to lead them out of the city in front of everyone, declaring that they are innocent. Talk about rubbing their nose in it. This reminds me of what God did with Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther, **Esther 6:6-12**. Jesus also did this when He went to hell and proclaimed victory over the enemy, **Col 2:14-15**.

The Philippian jailer seems to be the mediator between Paul and the rod bearers. So he goes back and tells them Paul’s stance, and the rod bearers then tell the magistrates...

38) And the officers (the *ῥαβδούχος*, rod bearers) **told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.**

Notice how God has turned the tables. Just the day before the magistrates thought they were in control, but now they are on their heels and God is in charge. This is very similar to when Peter and the Apostles stood boldly for the Truth in Acts chapter 4 and 5 and the Sanhedrin were caught off guard, Acts 4:13-21; 5:17-29. The same thing is happening with the magistrates. They hear that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens and now they are afraid.

Beating a Roman citizen without a trial was a major offence to the Roman Empire. One that could cost the magistrates their lives. So they want to keep this quiet, but Paul is forcing them to announce this publicly and make an open show of them.

39) Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.

The magistrates brought them out, ἐξάγω, leading them through the city and pleading with them to depart. Notice now they are completely different. Fearful for their lives, they're not rough or rude. They don't throw them out of the city, but rather ask them timidly to depart. Such a major change of events from the night before. God displays an open triumph in Philippi to His glory.

And notice that Paul and Silas are in complete control because they don't go directly out of the city, but instead they take the time to visit Lydia and say goodbye to the brethren.

40) So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke had been staying at Lydia's house for the last couple of months. And here we find that during this time, the Lord has been adding to His Church because there are other brethren there as well. Luke gives us the details of the first and last convert in Philippi during their 2nd missionary journey, but the journey was fruitful in Philippi, producing the brethren of the church in Philippi.

As a result of this success, Luke decides to stay in Philippi, while the others travel on to Thessalonica. And we can infer this from the first verse in chapter 17 when Luke refers to them in the third person saying, "*and they came to Thessalonica.*" The next time we see Luke join the company is six years later in chapter 20 on Paul's 3rd journey when he includes himself in Paul's travels and says, "*We sailed from Philippi,*" Acts 20:6. Many scholars suggest that Timothy also stayed with Luke in Philippi and then later caught up with Paul in Berea, Acts 17:14. But I disagree with this because it seems clear that Timothy was well acquainted with the Thessalonian church from their previous visit, 1 Thess 3:1-2.

The Philippian church was always a faithful church. And in Paul's epistles he mentions the generosity of this faithful church in supporting his ministry, **Phil 4:15-16**; 2 Cor 11:7-9. And now their work is complete in Philippi, at least for the time being. Paul will eventually travel there again on his 3rd journey and then write a letter to them afterward from prison. But from this point, the Holy Spirit moves them west to Thessalonica where they will again be faced major persecution as they continue to preach the Gospel.