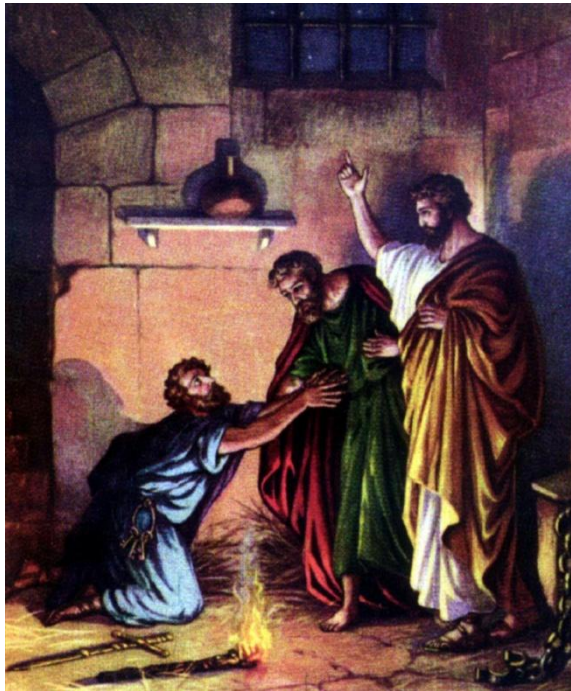


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 7



A NIGHT IN A PHILIPPIAN JAIL

Scripture Text: Acts 16:25-34

Last week's lesson left Paul and Silas in prison, with backs beaten and feet in stocks. At night in prison and in pain, Paul and Silas prayed and sang. God freed them by an earthquake. The jailer was about to commit suicide, but by the power of conviction of the Holy Spirit, he asked how to be saved. The Apostles taught him to believe in Jesus Christ. The jailer and his family believed and were baptized. They all enjoyed a meal and fellowship. The rulers released Paul and Silas from jail.

In this is shown the power promised to be given with the coming of the Holy Spirit. This power was in their hearts. The natural, human disposition under such circumstances would be anger, bitterness at the injustice, complaint, despair, and giving up. Their joy, hope, praise, and loyalty to God and His work came from an inside work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The same is our privilege too.

MEMORY VERSE: *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*
—Acts 16:31

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Romans 8:16-28 Suffering compared with glory.
Tue.—Hebrews 11:23-40 Reproach of Christ great riches.
Wed.—James 5:1-12 The patience of the saints.
Thu.—Matthew 5:1-16 Suffering lets our light shine.
Fri.—1 Peter 5:1-11 Christian life in God's care.

Devotional Reading: I Peter 2:11-25 Christ our great example.

Praises Bring an Earthquake

Acts 16:25-26 At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises. In pain, unjustly imprisoned, the future uncertain, they praised God. It was from that within, not without. The prisoners heard. It must have sounded very strange in that dark, damp, musty prison to hear praises to God. But God heard also. He sent a sudden earthquake. The foundations shook, and all locks were broken—doors, stocks, chains, and whatever. It was His answer to their prayer. This did not just happen. It was brought to pass by God. Why? Because these men were prepared to glorify God through obedient, holy lives. By keeping alert to the Spirit's voice, they made themselves available to God. They prayed, and God sent the results. It was God's work. They did not produce the earthquake or persuade the jailer. It was the power of the Holy Spirit. They were only yielded tools. They just relaxed and watched God work.

The Great Question

Acts 16:27-30 The sleeping jailer heard it and awoke in fear. Jailers were put to death for allowing their prisoners to escape (Acts 12:19). He was about to commit suicide when Paul's voice startled him. **Do thyself no**

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harm: for we are all here. The rare action of prisoners staying when free to go showed a supernatural power. Perhaps this, with something Paul had said, and the nearness he had come to death unprepared to meet God, caused conviction—a sense of his sin—to take hold of him. Urgently, he **called for a light, and sprang in . . . trembling . . . fell down.** He **brought them out.** Then—**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?** Nothing else mattered now.

The Gospel Message Is the Answer

Acts 16:31-32 Paul and Silas had the only answer. **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**—cast yourself upon Him, trust Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Believe He is the One Who can and will. They opened **the word of the Lord**, not to the jailer only, but **to all that were in his house.**

The instruction to **believe** included all that always goes with real belief—(1) repentance of sin, (2) a turning from sin, (3) receiving of Christ as Savior, (4) obedience to God in holy living, (5) baptism as a symbol of one's change, and (6) restitution for past wrongs.

In the midst of turmoil in his life, Paul never forgot the essential purpose of his calling from God. It was to bear Christ's name and to be His witness unto all men. He was always ready to teach one or many how to be saved. His teaching was plain and unmixed with nonessentials. **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.** This is still the message of the church. Keep it foremost, out in front of all activities and programs.

The Keeper Shows Sign of Change

Acts 16:33-34 He took Paul and Silas **the same hour of the night**—no waiting. He showed zeal. **Washed their stripes**—this was love. This was the fruit of repentance. He wanted to do all possible to right wrongs. Even though he may not have done the beating, he wanted to do whatever he could to make amends and ease the pain. Then he **was baptized . . . and all his.** They all believed on Christ, so all were baptized. The family was not saved by the jailer's believing, but by their own, as all must be. **Straightway**—without waiting even for the morning. Then he **brought them into his house**—suggesting they had been out where there was water for immersion. In his house, **he set meat (food) before them.** They finished the night eating and having fellowship together. Paul and Silas rejoiced with the jailer and his family in their new lives.

Conversion makes a change in the heart which shows on the outside. The jailer showed his conviction by his urgency and his trembling, which revealed a strong stirring of need. We see signs of repentance in his sincere actions toward the Apostles. This was something a man of his social position would never do. Another indication of his new birth is his willingness and desire to be baptized immediately. Another is his joy. Salvation always brings joy. The Spirit-filled person has joy, thanksgiving, and praise in his heart in spite of outward trouble. Inward salvation is indicated by a change in one's outward life. Our message is that Jesus saves all who believe in Him. The Spirit-filled person is only a channel through which God can move, a tool which He can use to do His work. God will use us if we yield to His leading.

JUST A THOUGHT

Almost everything can be bought at a reduced price except lasting peace and satisfaction.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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