

“Living THE Life”

Acts 16:22-40

October 18, 2015

INTRO: You can learn a lot about a person from their:

Likes... Loves... & Longings-for...

especially in church!

With that said: to quote Jesus...

“What do YOU want?”

If you had it “all,” what would it ALL look like?

If you were “living the life,” what life would you live?

T/S: I pray that today’s text will help you to
ENVISION *(and perhaps RE-Vision)* your
answer, your attitude, and your actions.

BIG IDEA:

Living THE Life... comes at a high price!

**Christianity cost Christ His life...
It will cost you yours too!**

T/S: Once again we are at a place in Acts that I believe God has given us... SO-THAT our expectations can & will be adjusted.

Today's passage is a paradigm calibrator!

PREVIEW:

- A. Warfare**
- B. Witness**
- C. Wow!**
- D. Walk**
- E. Watch-this!**

REVIEW:

Acts 16 is a beautiful, biblical blueprint... “living the life.”

- Paul’s second missionary journey
- Silas, Timothy, & Luke now with Paul...
- Last week/message = “*Discipling Is Disturbing*”
 - *Ambushed*
 - *Addressed*
 - *Accosted*
 - *Affirmed*

T/S: Let’s pick back up where we left off...

Ask yourself as we go...

Is this MY vision

(is it what I want)

OR

Do I need a RE-Vision

I. WARFARE

19But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. **20**And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. **21**They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." **22**The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. **23**And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. **24**Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

- A. **ANSWER the call**
- B. **ATTENTION to detail with ACCURACY**
- C. **ALMIGHTY God shows up** (visibility optional)
- D. **AMBUSHED**
- E. **ADDRESSED**
- F. **ACCOSTED / ATTACKED / ARRESTED**
- G. **AFFIRMED!** (in the eternal end!)

II. WITNESS

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

- Best Acts 1:8 demonstration in practice!

- **WITNESS =**
 - Attitude – “a not-enough necessity”
 - Action – “a not-enough necessity”
 - **Attitude + Action = Authenticity!**

- “...prisoners were listening...”
 - **What in your life speaks.....**
 - What is your lived life saying?
 - **YOU have “prisoners listening!”**

- Power to witness = Power to:
 - PRAY
 - PRAISE
 - PECULIAR
 - Peculiar people of prayer & praise

III. WOW! (Wonder)

26and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. **27**When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. **28**But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." **29**And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

A. God has to show up for anything to work

B. God is ALWAYS in control (never alone!)

C. See the MIRACLES:

- a. **Timing & Location**
- b. **EVERY Door opens**
- c. **ALL shackles unlocked**
- d. **EVERYONE is affected...**

*** NOTE: Jailer is suicidal...

e. Paul cries out (like demonic girl)

1. Don't hurt yourself...
2. We're ALL here

f. **Who stays???**

1. God's listening servants stay!
2. God's selfless servants stay!
3. God's died-once servants stay!

*** NOTE: Jesus stayed, Paul stayed, you?

*** NOTE: Creator God controls ALL...

*** See His power, plan, & purpose...

Some within the sound of my voice, no doubt, are in need of a miraculous, heaven sent earth quake...

IV. WHAT?

*“This may be the most important sermon
I ever preach...” - JDP*

(from Defining Definitive Definitions Series: “Biblical Belief”)

30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” **31** And 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 and to all who were in his house. **33** And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. **34** Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

A. The 5 most important questions in life:

1. What must I do to be saved?

2. How do you define “believe?”

- a. Basic or Biblical?
- b. Webster’s or Worshipper’s
 - i. Head without heart
 - ii. Not all faith = saving faith
 - iii. Sincerity is not enough...
 - iv. Surface vs. Saving faith...
 - v. Full heads & empty hearts

3. Do you have saving faith?

- i. Captured by grace?
- ii. Love the Lord with ALL?
- iii. Holy Spirit filled?

4. How do you know?

- i. 2 Corinthians 13:5
- ii. Parable of the Soils
- iii. Rich Young Ruler
- iv. Matthew 7
 - 1. Surprised evil-doers
 - 2. 2 House-builders

5. Now what?

B. See the sequence:

1. **Wow!** – God initiates
2. **What?** – acknowledge need...
3. **Word** – John 14:6 / “truth-in-love”
4. **Washed** – by blood of the Lamb
5. **Work** – faith without works is dead
6. **Worship** – rejoicing in Jesus!!!

V. WATCH-this...

35But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” **36**And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.” **37**But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” **38**The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. **39**So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. **40**So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

- A. Watch for Paul the Minister
- B. Watch for Paul the Missionary
- C. Watch for Movement & Methodology of God

A. Paul the MINISTER

Paul is protecting the new church...

B. Paul the MISSIONARY

- **Paul goes...**
- **Paul goes back!**
 - **Missionary journeys 1, 2, 3...**
 - **Back in prison!**
 - **Missionaries go where called**
 - **Missionaries trust the Lord!**

C. God's MOVEMENT & METHODOLOGY!

- 1. #1 sinner becomes #1 saint**
- 2. Seek people of Peace...**
- 3. Persecution brings Power**
- 4. Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi...**

5. Acts 1:8 = whole world!

- i. Personal
- ii. Power-filled
- iii. Perpetual!

Matthew 10:16

John 20:21

Luke 10

Philippians 1:27-30

Life Worthy of the Gospel

27Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel **28**without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. **29**For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30**since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Matthew 28:18-20

Ephesians 6:10ff

2 Timothy 2:1-6

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (re: the Philippian church)

1And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. **2**In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. **3**For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, **4**they urgently pleaded with us (they BEGGED us) for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. **5**And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

Let us be a people who truly...

Live the Life of Christ!

Let's Pray!

Turning Persecution into Production

[\(Acts 16:19-40\)](#)

But 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, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." And the 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. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and 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. And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent

their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, come out and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."

And the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed. ([16:19-40](#))

A very reassuring aspect of God's sovereign rule over the universe is His ability to bring good results out of bad circumstances. That is especially true when His people undergo persecution. God "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" ([Rom. 8:28](#)), often by making "the wrath of man... praise [Him]" ([Ps. 76:10](#)).

Sold into slavery in Egypt by his jealous brothers, Joseph rose to prominence in Pharaoh's court. In that exalted position he was able to provide for his father and brothers during the ensuing famine:

And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt... And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. ([Gen. 45:5-8](#); [50:20](#))

God used Joseph to preserve the ancestors of the nation of Israel.

Israel's apostasy led to her captivity at the hands of cruel foreign nations. But from the trauma and tragedy of that period emerged such shining lights as Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

The most heinous crime ever committed was the murder of God's Son, yet out of that evil act God brought salvation. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared:

Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know — this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. ([Acts 2:22-24](#); cf. [Heb. 2:10](#))

Acts [chapters 4, 5, 7, 8,](#) and [12](#) record the persecution of the early church. Yet all those instances only resulted in the strengthening of the church and an increase in its numbers ([4:4](#)). [Verse 1](#) of [chapter 8](#) notes that "on that day [of Stephen's martyrdom] a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." [Acts 11:19-21](#) describes the results of that persecution:

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

The [sixteenth chapter](#) of Acts records yet another illustration of God's turning bad circumstances into spiritual victory. Falsely accused, savagely beaten, and unjustly imprisoned, Paul and Silas saw God use those circumstances to bring salvation to an entire household.

This section moves to the results of Paul's miraculous deliverance of the demon-possessed girl ([vv. 16-18](#)). Paul's ministry had made its first beachhead in Europe at the important city of Philippi. Along with his fellow missionaries (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) he evangelized a group of women, both Jews and proselytes. One of the proselytes, Lydia, was converted along with her household ([vv. 14-15](#)), and the Philippian church was born.

Satan was quick to react, first attempting to infiltrate the young fellowship with a demon-possessed medium. When Paul's miraculous power thwarted that attempt, Satan tried to destroy the church through persecution. Those are always his two avenues of attack: infiltration—attacking the church from within; and persecution, attacking it from without. [Verses 19-40](#) record the failure of Satan's attack through persecution, as God used that persecution to expand the Philippian church. God's marvelous turning of persecution into triumph unfolds in five sequential stages: persecution, praise, preaching, provision, and protection.

Persecution

But 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, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans." And the 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. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.
([16:19-24](#))

The reaction of the demon-possessed girl's **masters** reveals the inhumane cruelty of the institution of slavery. Instead of rejoicing in her deliverance, they became enraged when they **saw that their hope of profit was gone**. Their attitude is reminiscent of the Gerasenes in [Mark 5](#). Instead of rejoicing over Jesus' deliverance of the demon-possessed maniac, they were angered over the loss of a herd of swine ([v. 16](#)). So upset were they that they "began to entreat [Jesus] to depart from their region" ([v. 17](#)). Later, in Ephesus, the craftsmen who made shrines of the goddess Artemis became violently hostile to Christianity. They feared the spread of the gospel would put them out of business, and the uproar was immense ([Acts 19:23ff.](#)).

Such reactions illustrate a sad spiritual reality: love of money blurs spiritual perception. "Those who want to get rich," Paul wrote to Timothy, "fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction" ([1 Tim. 6:9](#)). That is true because "the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang" ([v. 10](#)).

Enraged at the loss of the income she provided, the girl's masters **seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities**. That was an interesting turn of events for Paul, who before his conversion had made a career of "dragging off men and women" to "put them in prison" ([Acts 8:3](#)). The *agora* (**market place**) was the central public square. It functioned not only as a marketplace, but also as the social center of the city. Here the unemployed waited for suitable work, the sick were healed, and the magistrates judged court cases. In

those days, a plaintiff could drag a defendant into court and ask the judge to pass a verdict ([James 2:6](#)). The owners of the slave girl were acting according to Roman law when they laid their hands on Paul and Silas and put their grievance before the city authorities. (Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Acts* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 595)

Luke further describes the **authorities** as **the chief magistrates** (*stratēgos; praetor* in Latin). Every Roman colony was governed by two of these men, as was the case at Philippi.

Having dragged Paul and Silas before these authorities, their accusers opened the proceedings by declaring, "**These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews.**" Anti-Semitism is not a modern phenomenon but has its origins in antiquity. At about this time, Emperor Claudius issued an order expelling the Jews from Rome ([Acts 18:2](#)). This anti-Semitism may explain why only Paul and Silas were apprehended, since Luke was a Gentile and Timothy a half-Gentile.

The charge that Paul and Silas were **proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans** was technically true. There was a law forbidding Roman citizens to practice any foreign religion that had not been sanctioned by the state, although this law was rarely enforced. But the charge that the missionaries were creating mass confusion in the city was false. It had its basis not in fact but in anger over lost profits.

The charges against Paul and Silas, although false, were enough to manipulate a reaction and stir up the **crowd** in the marketplace. Mob mentality took over, and the crowd mindlessly **rose up together against** the two missionaries. Caught up in the mob's anti-Semitic frenzy, the **chief magistrates** failed miserably to uphold the highly prized standards of Roman justice. They did not bother to investigate the charges, conduct a proper hearing, or give Paul and Silas a chance to defend themselves (which would have revealed, first of all, that they were Roman citizens). Instead, **the chief magistrates tore their robes off**

them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten (illegally, cf. [v. 37](#)) **with rods**. Any semblance of just legal procedure was nonexistent. The beating was administered by the lictors (the "policemen" of [vv. 35, 38](#)), who were under the command of the magistrates ([v. 35](#)). Each lictor carried a bundle of rods tied together--ironically, as a symbol of Roman law and justice. With those rods they brutally beat the men, a punishment Paul endured three times ([2 Cor. 11:25](#)).

After Paul and Silas had received **many blows** from the lictors' rods, the magistrates ordered them to be thrown **into prison**. To the illegal beating they added an unjust imprisonment. They ordered Paul and Silas to be placed in maximum security, **commanding the jailer to guard them securely**. **He, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks**. Taking no chances with such important prisoners, the jailer threw the two battered and bleeding men into the **inner**, most secure, part of the prison. He then took the further precaution of fastening **their feet in the stocks**. All those safeguards were to prove futile, however. Like Herod ([Acts 12:6-11](#)) and the Sanhedrin ([Acts 5:19-25](#)) before them, the authorities at Philippi were to learn that no prison can hold those whom God wants released.

Nor did this satanically inspired persecution intimidate Paul and Silas; it encouraged them to even further boldness. Writing of this incident to the Thessalonians, Paul said, "After we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition" ([1 Thess. 2:2](#)). Paul's indomitable spirit, and joyous anticipation of being with Christ in heaven, gave him an almost reckless boldness in proclaiming the gospel. No amount of opposition could keep him from fulfilling his calling. Writing to the Philippians from prison in Rome, Paul rejoiced that his "circumstances [had] turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" ([Phil. 1:12](#)). Far from ending his ministry, that imprisonment saw it spread even to "those of Caesar's household" ([Phil. 4:22](#)). Paul could accept whatever suffering resulted from his ministry because he viewed

himself as expendable. To the Philippians he wrote, "But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all" ([Phil. 2:17](#)). Paul and Silas manifested that same attitude of joy amid suffering while in prison at Philippi, turning persecution into praise.

Praise

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and 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. And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!" And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, ([16:25-29](#))

Paul and Barnabas were understandably unable to sleep due to their appalling circumstances. After having been severely beaten, they found themselves in a filthy dungeon. Their feet were fastened in stocks designed to induce painful cramping by spreading their legs as wide as possible. In spite of it all, they maintained a joyful attitude. As **midnight** arrived, **Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.** Their attitude astounded **the other prisoners, who were listening to them,** and provided a powerful testimony of God's transforming grace.

How could the two missionaries praise God under such conditions? They understood what many Christians seem to forget—praising God does not depend on circumstances. "Rejoice in the Lord *always*," wrote

Paul to the Philippian church ([Phil. 4:4](#); cf. [1 Thess. 5:16, 18](#)). Christians do not rejoice in their *circumstances*; not even Paul did that. He knew what it was to experience affliction so severe that he was "burdened excessively" and "despaired even of life" ([2 Cor. 1:8](#)). Christians rejoice in the glorious truth that the sovereign God controls every circumstance of life. They "know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" ([Rom. 8:28](#)). When trials come, believers can take comfort in the truth expressed by Peter in [1 Peter 5:10](#): "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." Like Paul in [2 Corinthians 4:16-17](#) they can say:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

He adds in [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#):

He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

The key to having joy in every circumstance of life is to be filled with the Spirit. Joy is a part of the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22](#)), and yielding to His control produces songs of joy ([Eph. 5:18-19](#)). The problem with sad, miserable Christians is not their circumstances but the lack of living a Spirit-controlled life.

Paul and Silas's reaction underscores another vitally important truth in living the Christian life: How Christians live is directly related to their

concept of God. No one expressed that truth more clearly than A. W. Tozer:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God...

Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man...

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God. (*The Knowledge of the Holy* [New York: Harper & Row, 1975], 9, 10)

Paul and Silas did not base their theology on their circumstances. Instead, they evaluated those circumstances in light of what they knew to be true about God. Their songs expressed confident trust that God would use their circumstances for their good and His glory. They did not have long to wait until He did.

Suddenly the chorus of praises was interrupted by **a great earthquake**, as God intervened on behalf of his saints. So powerful was the earthquake **that the foundations of the prison house were shaken;**

and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened from the walls. God had sent an angel to release Peter from prison ([Acts 12:7ff.](#)); here He used the natural means of an earthquake. Both the supernatural and the natural realms are under His sovereign control.

The earthquake also rocked the jailer's house, probably located next to the prison. Having been **roused out of his sleep, and** seeing that **the prison doors had been opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself**, naturally **supposing that the prisoners had escaped**. He knew all too well that a Roman soldier who allowed a prisoner to escape, no matter what the cause, paid with his own life (cf. [Acts 12:19; 27:42](#)). Rather than anticipate facing the humiliating and painful execution that would surely follow, the jailer chose **to kill himself** immediately.

Before he could do that, a voice out of the darkness stopped him. From inside the prison, **Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"** Not only Paul and Silas, but all the rest of the prisoners also had remained (they were probably all in the same dungeon). Why the other prisoners did not attempt to escape is not noted. Perhaps they were still stunned by the earthquake and fearful of aftershocks. Possibly they feared the consequences if they tried to escape and were recaptured. Or it may have been that their respect for Paul and Silas allowed the two missionaries to restrain them. In any case, they remained inside the prison.

Astonished at this unbelievable turn of events, the jailer **called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas**. The tables were turned, and the jailer fell to his knees before his prisoners. He was no doubt aware of the message Paul and Silas had preached, and he regarded the earthquake as supernatural confirmation that they spoke the truth. That supernatural confirmation of the preachers and their message led the jailer to view them as speaking divine truth and to seek the salvation they offered. As in the case of Paul (cf. [Acts](#)

[9:1ff.](#)), it took a striking manifestation of God's power to bring the jailer to his knees. His defenses had been stripped away, and his heart was now opened to respond to the preaching of the gospel.

Preaching

and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ([16:30-32](#))

No doubt having first made sure the other prisoners were secure, the jailer **brought** Paul and Silas **out** into the courtyard. There he asked the question that was burning in his heart, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" Some have interpreted his question in terms of being saved from punishment, but that is not the case. Since no prisoners had escaped, he faced no punishment from his superiors. And why ask two prisoners such a question? The jailer's question expressed the deep longing of his heart to be right with God. Having undoubtedly heard the testimony of the demon-possessed girl ([v. 17](#)), either in person or from others, he believed Paul and Silas had the answer.

To the jailer's simple and direct question the missionaries gave an equally simple and direct answer: "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.**" Unlike the rich young ruler ([Luke 18:18-23](#)), his heart was ready; nothing stood in his way.

The truth that salvation is wholly by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ permeates the Scriptures. "There is salvation in no one else," according to [Acts 4:12](#), "for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." That glorious truth was at the heart of apostolic preaching (see also [Acts 2:38-39](#); [5:14](#); [8:12](#); [10:43](#); [11:17](#), [21](#); [13:12](#), [38-39](#), [48](#); [14:1](#); [15:11](#); [17:12](#); [18:8](#)). Jesus Himself declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one

comes to the Father, but through Me" ([John 14:6](#)). It is also the constant theme of the epistles (cf. [Rom. 3:20-25](#); [5:1](#); [1 Cor. 6:11](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:24](#); [Eph. 2:8-9](#); [2 Tim. 3:15](#); [Titus 3:7](#)).

To **believe in the Lord Jesus** means first to believe He is who He claimed to be. The apostle John wrote, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" ([John 20:31](#)). Second, it means to believe in what He did. Paul succinctly summarized the work of Christ in [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#):

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

To the Romans he wrote:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ([Rom. 10:9-10](#))

The message of salvation was preached not to the jailer alone but also to the rest of his **household**. Accordingly, the two missionaries **spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house**. His family, servants, and perhaps relatives or guests who were staying with him all heard the gospel (cf. [v. 15](#); [Acts 11:14](#); [18:8](#)). That the others in the jailer's household individually believed the gospel becomes clear in [v. 34](#) (cf. [Acts 10:44](#)).

Provision

And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought

them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. ([16:33-34](#))

When the gospel is preached to hearts prepared by God, results are inevitable. The jailer and each member of his household were saved. That his salvation was genuine is evident from four considerations. First, he expressed genuine love for Paul and Silas when **he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds**. Jesus said in [John 13:35](#), "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Second, **immediately he was baptized, he and all his household**. By that act they publicly identified themselves with Jesus Christ. Though the hour was late, other people were no doubt still outdoors because of the earthquake. Even if there were no others to witness the baptisms, word of them would surely get around. Third, he showed hospitality, as had Lydia before him ([v. 15](#)), by bringing Paul and Silas into the **house** and setting **food before them**. [James 2:14-17](#) shows the importance of hospitality in relation to faith. Finally, he **rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household**. A short time earlier he was ready to commit suicide. Now he radiated the joy that comes from knowing one's sins are forgiven (cf. [Ps. 32:1](#); [Rom. 4:7](#)). Only the grace of God could effect such an instantaneous transformation.

Protection

Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, come out and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring

us out." And the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. And they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed. ([16:35-40](#))

Ever the faithful shepherd concerned for his flock, Paul knew he had to take steps to protect the newborn Philippian church from official government harassment. The opportunity presented itself **when day came, and the chief magistrates sent their policemen** (the same individuals who had beaten Paul and Silas), **saying, "Release those men."** They no doubt hoped that the chastened missionaries would quietly limp out of town. Paul, however, had other ideas.

No doubt pleased at the good news he brought, **the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, come out and go in peace."** But Paul refused to be disposed of so flippantly. He did not seek revenge, but He did not want his and Silas's ill-treatment to become a precedent for the mistreatment of other Christians. For Paul and Silas to have departed quietly could have set a dangerous precedent for the future treatment of missionaries and exposed the believers to arbitrary and abusive action from the magistrates.

The magistrates had made a serious error, as Paul pointed out: **"They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison."** To inflict corporal punishment on a citizen was a grave violation of Roman law, all the more so since it had been done **without trial**. The consequences, both for the magistrates and for the city, were potentially very serious. The magistrates could have been removed from office, and the emperor could have rescinded Philippi's privileges as a Roman colony.

Paul refused to allow the magistrates to compound their injustice by **sending** him and Silas **away secretly**. "**No indeed!**" he responded, "**but let them come themselves and bring us out.**" If the magistrates want us to leave, Paul declares, let them show us the respect due to Roman citizens.

When **the policemen reported Paul's words to the chief magistrates** the latter **were afraid when they heard that** the two men were **Romans**. They knew the consequences of their actions could be devastating for them and their city. Trying to defuse the situation and placate Paul and Silas, the magistrates **came** in person to the prison in a conciliatory manner **and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out**, as Paul had demanded, **they kept begging them to leave the city**. The magistrates were in an awkward position. On the one hand, they had no legal grounds for expelling two Roman citizens who were guilty of no crime. On the other hand, Paul and Silas's continued presence in Philippi could have provoked further violence. Their self-exaltation of the day before suitably deflated, the humbled magistrates could only resort to **begging** Paul and Silas to **leave the city**. This they did, but on their own terms. First **they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia**, where they **saw the brethren and encouraged them and only then departed**.

Once again Satan's plans were frustrated and overruled by God's sovereign control of events. The persecution Satan unleashed to destroy the Philippian church merely added another household to it and gained it protection from the city's rulers. For those who boldly preach the gospel and praise Him no matter what the circumstances, God stands ready to turn persecution into production.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts 13-28.

[16:19](#) That was not the only thing to vanish. With the spirit the owners' prospects for further profit also exited. Luke probably intended the wordplay. He used the same verb (*exēlthen*) for the demon's coming out in v. [18](#) as for the money's going in v. [19](#). The latter created the problem. Healing a possessed girl was one thing; but when that involved considerable economic loss, that was a wholly different matter. The scene was reminiscent of the Gerasene pigs incident ([Mark 5:16–17](#)). The profit motive was a frequent obstacle to the gospel in Acts. It was certainly the downfall of Simon Magus ([8:19f.](#)). It would lead Demetrius and his fellow Ephesian silversmiths to violently oppose Paul ([19:24–28](#)). Here the greed of the slave girl's owners was in marked contrast to the generosity of Lydia, who shared her house with the missionaries and the Philippian Christians. One's relationship to material goods marks a major distinction between believers and nonbelievers in Acts. (Note how "believer" and "stay at my house" are closely linked in v. [15](#).)

The first-person narrative stops at v. [17](#) and does not reappear in Acts until Paul's return to Philippi in [20:6](#). Some scholars have seen this as an indication that Luke remained behind to minister in Philippi and did not rejoin Paul in his travel until this return visit at the end of his third mission. This is placing a great deal of faith in a basically stylistic matter, assuming that Luke always took pains to distinguish his presence by the use of the first person. What does seem to be indicated in the present context is that Luke and Timothy dropped out of the picture at this point. Only Paul and Silas got the brunt of the owners' ire and were dragged before the magistrates (v. [19](#)). The scene is filled with local color and very much fits what is known from elsewhere about Philippi. The apostles were dragged into the marketplace (agora). In the excavations at Philippi, this agora, or forum, has been uncovered. On its northwest side stood a raised podium with stairs on two sides. This would have been the city tribunal where civil cases were tried. The city prison was located immediately adjacent to the agora. Although these ruins date from the second century A.D., it is likely that they were built on the same sites as the agora and prison where Paul and Silas were tried and incarcerated.

16:20–21 The officials mentioned in vv. [20](#), [35](#) correspond to the pattern of authority for Roman colonies. The “magistrates” (*stratēgoi*) of v. [20](#), who probably were the same as the “authorities” of v. [19](#), would be the two men (known in Latin as the *duuviri*) who tried civil cases and were generally responsible for maintaining law and order. The “officers” mentioned in vv. [35](#), [38](#) (*rhabdouchoi*) were designated *lictors* in Latin and were responsible to the magistrates. They were the enforcement officers. Their symbol of office was a bundle of rods with an axe protruding from the middle, tied together with a red band called the *fascēs*. (This symbol was revived in modern times by Mussolini for his “fascist” movement.) The rods were not mere decorations but were used in scourgings. The lictors in Philippi would have used them in the beating of Paul and Silas (v. [22](#)). In fact, the word used for “beating” (*rhabdizein*) means literally *to beat with rods*, the customary manner of Roman scourgings.

The owners of the slave girl were careful in their charges to avoid the real issue of her healing and their resulting loss of profit. Basically their charges were threefold. The first was calculated to awaken latent prejudices in the crowd: “These men are Jews.” The second was extremely nebulous but would have evoked the attention of the magistrates who were responsible for “law and order”: They “are throwing our city into an uproar.” The last charge seems to be the only one with any substance: They are “advocating customs unlawful for us Romans.” This is generally interpreted as illegal proselytizing for Judaism, but the evidence is that Jews were not forbidden to proselytize until the time of Hadrian, well into the second century.

16:22–24 None of the charges were valid, but they had their effect. The appeal to anti-Jewish sentiments and to nationalistic Roman pride won over the crowd (v. [22](#)). The insinuation of a threat to civil order evidently won over the magistrates (v. [23](#)). The magistrates had Paul and Silas stripped for scourging, and the lictors applied their rods. This probably was one of the three instances Paul mentioned in [2 Cor 11:25](#) when he received the Roman punishment of a flogging with rods.

Finally, they were thrown into prison and placed under the tightest security. The prison keeper placed them in the innermost cell of the prison, the dungeon, we would say. Their feet were placed in wooden stocks, which were likely fastened to the wall. Often such stocks were used as instruments of torture; they had a number of holes for the legs, which allowed for severe stretching of the torso and thus created excruciating pain. Luke did not indicate that any torture was involved this time. The entire emphasis is on the tight security in which the two were held. This makes the miracle of their subsequent deliverance all the more remarkable.

(3) Converting a Jailer's Household

16:25–34

The reader of Acts is not surprised to find Paul and Silas miraculously delivered from their confinement. It had happened before: to the apostles in [5:19–26](#) and to Peter in [12:5–19](#). The present narrative perhaps has more in common with the apostles' deliverance, since in both these instances the primary emphasis is not on the rescue as such but on the divine power manifested in bringing about their freedom, which provides a stronger base for witness. In chap. [5](#) the apostles did not run away but willingly returned to the Sanhedrin for their scheduled trial. The miracle considerably strengthened their position before the Sanhedrin, however, and paved the way for Gamaliel's counsel ([5:38f.](#)). In the present narrative the same holds true. Though freed, Paul and Silas did not attempt to escape. The miracle served not to deliver them but rather to deliver the jailer. It served as the basis for Paul and Silas's witness to him and for his conversion. The story thus falls into two divisions, the first relating Paul and Silas's deliverance (vv. [25–28](#)) and the second the conversion of the jailer and his household (vv. [29–34](#)).

THE DELIVERANCE ([16:25–28](#)). **[16:25–28](#)** It was the middle of the night. Paul and Silas were singing hymns of praise to God. In Acts, Christians are always full of hope. Peter slept peacefully the night before his trial ([12:6](#)); Paul and Silas sang. Their praise and good cheer was in itself a

witness to God, and the other prisoners listened intently. The area around Philippi often experiences earthquakes and tremors, but this one happened at just the right time. The prison doors probably were locked by bars; these flew up, and the doors opened. Everyone's chains came loose. The chains may have been attached to the walls and wrenched loose by the violence of the quake. The jailer was aroused by the earthquake and spotted the open doors. Supposing that the prisoners had already escaped, he drew his sword to kill himself, preferring death by his own hand than by Roman justice. Jailers and guards were personally responsible for their prisoners and in some instances were executed for allowing them to escape (cf. [12:19](#)). The jailer's prisoners had not escaped; and when Paul looked up in the open doorway and saw what he was about to do, he shouted for him to stop, assuring him they were all still in the cell. To this point the reader would have expected the story of Paul and Silas's escape. It was not to be so. The miraculous release did not lead to their escape but to the far more significant event of the jailer's conversion.

THE WITNESS ([16:29–34](#)). [16:29–34](#) Calling for lamps or torches, the jailer rushed in and fell at the feet of Paul and Silas. It may have been a gesture of worship, but Paul did not object, as at Lystra ([14:15](#)). It was certainly an expression of subservience. Paul had saved his life, and Paul's God, who had reduced in an instant all his efforts at prison security, was obviously one to be respected. It has often been argued that his question ("What must I do to be saved?") was intended in the secular sense of the word "salvation," that he was asking how his life should be spared. But his life had already been spared. No one had escaped. More likely he asked about his salvation in the full religious sense. Perhaps he had heard the servant girl's proclamation that Paul spoke of the way of salvation (v. [17](#)). Perhaps he had heard Paul's preaching or reports of his preaching but had not fully understood. Perhaps he had fallen asleep to the sound of Paul and Silas's hymns to God. Now he was ready for understanding. The miracle of the earthquake and the prisoners who wouldn't flee arrested his attention and prepared his heart to receive Paul's message. His question is a classic expression that has lived

through the centuries and must be asked by everyone who comes to faith. Paul's answer is equally classic. It cannot be put any simpler: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your whole household" (cf. [11:14](#)).

At some point the jailer's household entered the scene. Luke did not specify when. Perhaps the mention of the household triggered the jailer's awareness that Paul and Silas were about to share something his whole family should hear. In any event, all were present when Paul and Silas shared the words of the Lord. Here Luke made explicit what was implicit in the Lydia story: the whole household heard the gospel proclaimed. There was no "proxy" faith. The whole family came to faith *in God* (v. [34](#)). Coming from a pagan background as they did, their newfound faith had a double dimension—faith in Jesus as Savior and faith in God as the one true God.

The witness to Christ was primary and took precedence over everything else. Now the jailer became aware of the two prisoners' suffering and bathed the wounds from their beating. Perhaps this took place in the courtyard where the household water supply would be located.

Throughout Luke's story he focused attention on the various signs evidencing conversion (i.e., speaking in tongues, expressions of joy, and hospitality). Here the evidence of conversion is the jailer's washing of the apostles' wounds. There then took place an even more significant "washing," when the jailer's family was baptized. Then the jailer treated Paul and Silas in a most unusual fashion for prisoners. He took them into his house and fed them at his own table. They were no longer prisoners in his eyes; they were brothers in Christ.

(4) Humbling the City Magistrates

[16:35–40](#)

[16:35–36](#) Luke did not tell us why the magistrates changed their minds and decided to release the two prisoners. Perhaps they were more interested in having them outside of the city limits than keeping them in

further incarceration. However that may be, they sent the “officers” to instruct the jailer to release them. These officers were the lictors (*rhabdouchoi*), the “rod-bearers,” who had earlier given Paul and Silas the flogging (v. [23](#)). The jailer was all too glad to inform the two that they had been released and to send them off with the Christian greeting of “peace.”

[16:37](#) Paul, however, would not go and insisted that the magistrates come to jail in person and request their departure. He had the upper hand in the matter. He was a Roman citizen; evidently Silas was also (cf. v. [37](#)). The magistrates had had them publicly flogged and thrown in prison, and all that without a trial. It was strictly an illegal procedure. Evidently local magistrates did have the right to mete out minor punishments like flogging of noncitizens, even without a hearing. They seem in Paul’s day to have had this authority even for offending Roman citizens— but not without a trial. They had scourged and imprisoned two Roman citizens with no formal condemnation, and that was beyond their authority. In this case the magistrates were unaware that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. Evidently in the hubbub of the original “hearing,” the slave owners did all the talking and the crowd all the shouting; and the two missionaries were unable to communicate the fact.

[16:38](#) The “alarm” of the magistrates was understandable (v. [38](#)). Abuse of the rights of a Roman citizen was a serious offense. Magistrates could be removed from office for such; a municipality could have its rights reduced. For instance, the emperor could deprive Philippi of all the privileges of its colony status for such an offense.

[16:39–40](#) The situation was ironic. Paul and Silas had been treated as criminals but were innocent. The magistrates who condemned them now found themselves genuine lawbreakers. They lost no time in getting to the jail and requesting the departure of the citizens. Evidently they were still concerned about all the commotion Paul and Silas had stirred up among the citizenry and requested that they leave town also. The two missionaries complied, but they were in no rush— nor did they really

have to be. The magistrates would give them no trouble now. So before departing they once again visited the Christians of the city. The church had grown; Lydia, not surprisingly, made her home available as a house church (v. [40](#)). Satisfied that all was in good order, the two missionaries left for the next city.

Paul may have seemed a bit huffy in his demand for a formal apology from the magistrates, but that is not the point. It was essential that the young Christian community have a good reputation among the authorities if its witness was to flourish. Christians broke none of the Roman laws. Luke was at pains to show this. It would continue to be a major emphasis in Acts. In this instance Paul and Silas were totally innocent of any wrongdoing. It was important that the magistrates acknowledge their innocence and set the record straight. This was why Paul made such a major point of it.

New American Commentary - New American Commentary - Volume 26: Acts.

The Accusing and Abusing of Paul and Silas for It, Their Imprisonment, and the Indignities Done Them

[16:19-24](#)

III. The masters of the damsel that was dispossessed caused them to be taken notice of, by bringing them before the magistrates for doing it, and laying it to their charge as their crime. The preachers of the gospel

would never have had an opportunity of speaking to the magistrates if they had not been brought before them as evil doers. Observe here,

1. That which provoked them was, that, the damsel being restored to herself, her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, [v. 19](#). See here what evil the love of money is the root of! If the preaching of the gospel ruin the craft of the silversmiths (ch. [19:24](#)), much more the craft of the soothsayers; and therefore here is a great outcry raised, when Satan's power to deceive is broken: the priests hated the gospel because it turned men from the blind service of dumb idols, and so the hope of their gains was gone. The power of Christ, which appeared in dispossessing the woman, and the great kindness done to her in delivering her out of Satan's hand, made no impression upon them when they apprehended that they should hereby lose money.

2. The course they took with them was to incense the higher powers against them, as men fit to be punished: They caught them as they went along, and, with the utmost fury and violence, dragged them into the marketplace, where public justice was administered.

(1.) They brought them to the rulers, their justices of peace, to do by them as men taken into the hands of the law, the *duumviri*.

(2.) From them they hurried them to the magistrates, the praetors or governors of the city, *tois stratēgois*-the officers of the army, so the word signifies; but it is taken in general for the judges or chief rulers: to them they brought their complaint.

3. The charge they exhibited against them was that they were the troublers of the land, [v. 20](#). They take it for granted that these men are Jews, a nation at this time as much an abomination to the Romans as they had long ago been to the Egyptians. Piteous was the case of the apostles, when it was turned to their reproach that they were Jews, and yet the Jews were their most violent persecutors!

(1.) The general charge against them is that they troubled the city, sowed discord, and disturbed the public peace, and occasioned riots and tumults, than which nothing could be more false and unjust, as was Ahab's character of Elijah ([1 Kings](#)

[18:17](#)): Art thou he that troubleth Israel? If they troubled the city, it was but like the angel's troubling the water of Bethesda's pool, in order to healing-shaking, in order to a happy settlement. Thus those that rouse the sluggards are exclaimed against for troubling them.

(2.) The proof of this charge is their teaching customs not proper to be admitted by a Roman colony, [v. 21](#). The Romans were always very jealous of innovations in religion. Right or wrong, they would adhere to that, how vain soever, which they had received by tradition from their fathers. No foreign nor upstart deity must be allowed, without the approbation of the senate; the gods of their country must be their gods, true or false. This was one of the laws of the twelve tables. Hath a nation changed their gods? It incensed them against the apostles that they taught a religion destructive of polytheism and idolatry, and preached to them to turn from those vanities. This the Romans could not bear: "If this grow upon us, in a little while we shall lose our religion."

IV. The magistrates, by their proceedings against them, caused them to be taken notice of.

1. By countenancing the persecution they raised the mob upon them ([v. 22](#)): The multitude rose up together against them, and were ready to pull them to pieces. It has been the artifice of Satan to make God's ministers and people odious to the commonalty, by representing them as dangerous men, who aimed at the destruction of the constitution and the changing of the customs, when really there has been no ground for such an imputation.

2. By going on to an execution they further represented them as the vilest malefactors: They rent off their clothes, with rage and fury, not having patience till they were taken off, in order to their being scourged. This the apostle refers to when he speaks of their being treated at Philippi, [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#). The magistrates commanded that they should be whipped as vagabonds, by the

lictors or beadles who attended the praetors, and carried rods with them for that purpose; this was one of those three times that Paul was beaten with rods, according to the Roman usage, which was not under the compassionate limitation of the number of stripes not to exceed forty, which was provided by the Jewish law. It is here said that they laid many stripes upon them ([v. 23](#)), without counting how many, because they seemed vile unto them, [Deu. 25:3](#). Now, one would think, this might have satiated their cruelty; if they must be whipped, surely they must be discharged. No, they are imprisoned, and it is probable the present purpose was to try them for their lives, and put them to death; else why should there be such care taken to prevent their escape?

(1.) The judges made their commitment very strict: They charged the jailer to keep them safely, and have a very watchful eye upon them, as if they were dangerous men, that either would venture to break prison themselves or were in confederacy with those that would attempt to rescue them. Thus they endeavoured to render them odious, that they might justify themselves in the base usage they had given them.

(2.) The jailer made their confinement very severe ([v. 24](#)): Having received such a charge, though he might have kept them safely enough in the outer prison, yet he thrust them into the inner prison. He was sensible that the magistrates had a great indignation against these men, and were inclined to be severe with them, and therefore he thought to ingratiate himself with them, by exerting his power likewise against them to the uttermost. When magistrates are cruel, it is no wonder that the officers under them are so too. He put them into the inner prison, the dungeon, into which none were usually put but condemned malefactors, dark at noon-day, damp and cold, dirty, it is likely, and every way offensive, like that into which Jeremiah was let down ([Jeremiah 38:6](#)); and, as if this were not enough, he made their feet fast in the stocks. Perhaps, having heard a report of the escape of the preachers of the gospel out of prison, when the doors were fast barred ([ch. 5:19](#); [12:9](#)), he thought he would be wiser than other

jailers had been, and therefore would effectually secure them by fastening them in the stocks; and they were not the first of God's messengers that had their feet in the stocks; Jeremiah was so treated, and publicly too, in the high-gate of Benjamin ([Jeremiah 20:2](#)); Joseph had his feet hurt with fetters, [Psa. 105:18](#). Oh what hard usage have God's servants met with, as in the former days, so in the latter times! Witness the Book of Martyrs, martyrs in queen Mary's time.

The Miraculous Conversion of the Jailer to the Faith of Christ

[16:25-34](#)

We have here the designs of the persecutors of Paul and Silas baffled and broken.

I. The persecutors designed to dishearten and discourage the preachers of the gospel, and to make them sick of the cause and weary of their work; but here we find them both hearty and heartened.

1. They were themselves hearty, wonderfully hearty; never were poor prisoners so truly cheerful, nor so far from laying their hard usage to heart. Let us consider what their case was. The praetors among the Romans had rods carried before them, and axes bound upon them, the fasces and secures. Now they had felt the smart of the rods, the ploughers had ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows. The many stripes they had laid upon them were very sore, and one might have expected to hear them complaining of them, of the rawness and soreness of their backs and shoulders. Yet this was not all; they had reason to fear the axes next. Their master was first scourged and then crucified; and they might expect the same. In the mean time they were in the inner prison, their feet in the stocks, which, some think, not only held them, but hurt them; and yet, at midnight, when they should have been trying, if possible, to get a little rest, they prayed and sang praises to God.

(1.) They prayed together, prayed to God to support them and comfort them in their afflictions, to visit them, as he did Joseph in the prison, and to be with them,-prayed that their consolations in Christ might abound, as their afflictions for him did,-prayed that even their bonds and stripes might turn to the furtherance of the gospel,-prayed for their persecutors, that God would forgive them and turn their hearts. This was not at an hour of prayer, but at midnight; it was not in a house of prayer, but in a dungeon; yet it was seasonable to pray, and the prayer was acceptable. As in the dark, so out of the depths, we may cry unto God. No place, no time, amiss for prayer, if the heart be lifted up to God. Those that are companions in suffering should join in prayer. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. No trouble, how grievous soever, should indispose us for prayer.

(2.) They sang praises to God. They praised God; for we must in every thing give thanks. We never want matter for praise, if we do not want a heart. And what should put the heart of a child of God out of tune for this duty if a dungeon and a pair of stocks will not do it? They praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and that they were so wonderfully supported and borne up under their sufferings, and felt divine consolations so sweet, so strong, in their souls. Nay, they not only praised God, but they sang praises to him, in some psalm, or hymn, or spiritual song, either one of David's, or some modern composition, or one of their own, as the Spirit gave them utterance. As our rule is that the afflicted should pray, and therefore, being in affliction, they prayed; so our rule is that the merry should sing psalms ([James 5:13](#)), and therefore, being merry in their affliction, merry after a godly sort, they sang psalms. This proves that the singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance, and ought to be used by all good Christians; and that it is instituted, not only for the expressing of their joys in a day of triumph, but for the balancing and relieving of their sorrows in a day of trouble. It was at midnight that they sang psalms, according to the example of the sweet psalmist of

Israel ([Psa. 119:62](#)): At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee.

(3.) Notice is here taken of the circumstance that the prisoners heard them. If the prisoners did not hear them pray, yet they heard them sing praises.

[1.] It intimates how hearty they were in singing praises to God; they sang so loud that, though they were in the dungeon, they were heard all the prison over; nay, so loud that they woke the prisoners: for we may suppose, being at midnight, they were all asleep. We should sing psalms with all our heart. The saints are called upon to sing aloud upon their beds, [Psa. 149:5](#). But gospel grace carries the matter further, and gives us an example of those that sang aloud in the prison, in the stocks.

[2.] Though they knew the prisoners would hear them, yet they sang aloud, as those that were not ashamed of their Master, nor of his service. Shall those that would sing psalms in their families plead, in excuse for their omission of the duty, that they are afraid their neighbours should hear them, when those that sing profane songs roar them out, and care not who hears them?

[3.] The prisoners were made to hear the prison-songs of Paul and Silas, that they might be prepared for the miraculous favour shown to them all for the sake of Paul and Silas, when the prison-doors were thrown open. By this extraordinary comfort with which they were filled it was published that he whom they preached was the consolation of Israel. Let the prisoners that mean to oppose him hear and tremble before him; let those that are faithful to him hear and triumph, and take of the comfort that is spoken to the prisoners of hope, [Zechariah 9:12](#).

2. God heartened them wonderfully by his signal appearances for them, [v. 26](#).

(1.) There was immediately a great earthquake; how far it extended we are not told, but it was such a violent shock in this place that the very foundations of the prison were shaken. While

the prisoners were hearkening to the midnight devotions of Paul and Silas, and perhaps laughing at them and making a jest of them, this earthquake would strike a terror upon them, and convince them that those men were the favourites of Heaven, and such as God owned. We had the house of prayer shaken, in answer to prayer, and as a token of God's acceptance of it, [ch. 4:31](#). Here the prison shaken. The Lord was in these earthquakes, to show his resentment of the indignities done to his servants, to testify to those whose confidence is in the earth the weakness and instability of that which they confide, and to teach people that, though the earth be moved, yet they need not fear.

(2.) The prison-doors were thrown open, and the prisoners' fetters were knocked off: Every man's bands were loosed. Perhaps the prisoners, when they heard Paul and Silas pray and sing psalms, admired them, and spoke honourably of them, and said what the damsel had said of them, Surely, these men are the servants of the living God. To recompense them for, and confirm them in, their good opinion of them, they share in the miracle, and have their bands loosed; as afterwards God gave to Paul all those that were in the ship with him ([ch. 27:24](#)), so now he gave him all those that were in the prison with him. God hereby signified to these prisoners, as Grotius observes, that the apostles, in preaching the gospel, were public blessings to mankind, as they proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison-doors to those that were bound, [Isaiah 61:1](#). Et per eos solvi animorum vincula-and as by them the bonds of souls were unloosed.

II. The persecutors designed to stop the progress of the gospel, that no more might embrace it; thus they hoped to ruin the meeting by the river side, that no more hearts should be opened there; but here we find converts made in the prison, that house turned into a meeting, the trophies of the gospel's victories erected there, and the jailer, their own servant, become a servant of Christ. It is probable that some of the prisoners, if not all, were converted; surely the miracle wrought on their

bodies, in loosing their bands, was wrought on their souls too. See [Job 36:8-10](#); [Psa. 107:14, 15](#). But it is only the conversion of the jailer that is recorded.

1. He is afraid he shall lose his life, and Paul makes him easy as to this care, [v. 27,28](#).

(1.) He awoke out of his sleep. It is probable that the shock of the earthquake woke him, and the opening of the prison-doors, and the prisoners' expressions of joy and amazement, when in the dark they found their bands loosed, and called to tell one another what they felt: this was enough to awaken the jailer, whose place required that he should not be hard to wake. This waking him out of his sleep signified the awakening of his conscience out of its spiritual slumber. The call of the gospel is, Awake, thou that sleepest ([Ephesians 5:14](#)), like that of JoNahum [1:6](#).

(2.) He saw the prison-doors open, and supposed, as well he might, that the prisoners had fled; and then what would become of him? He knew the Roman law in that case, and it was executed not long ago upon the keepers out of whose hands Peter escaped, [ch. 12:19](#). It was according to that of the prophet, [1 Kings 20:39, 42](#), Keep this man; if he be missing, thy life shall go for his life. The Roman lawyers after this, in their readings upon the law, De custodia reorum-The custody of criminals (which appoints that the keeper should undergo the same punishment that should have been inflicted on the prisoner if he let him escape), take care to except an escape by miracle.

(3.) In his fright he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself, to prevent a more terrible death, and expected one, a pompous ignominious death, which he knew he was liable to for letting his prisoners escape and not looking better to them; and the extraordinarily strict charge which the magistrates gave him concerning Paul and Silas made him conclude they would be very severe upon him if they were gone. The philosophers generally allowed self-murder. Seneca prescribes it as the last remedy which those that are in distress may have recourse to. The Stoics,

notwithstanding their pretended conquest of the passions, yielded thus far to them. And the Epicureans, who indulged the pleasures of sense, to avoid its pains chose rather to put an end to it. This jailer thought there was no harm in anticipating his own death; but Christianity proves itself to be of God by this, that it keeps us to the law of our creation-revives, enforces, and establishes it, obliges us to be just to our own lives, and teaches us cheerfully to resign them to our graces, but courageously to hold them out against our corruptions.

(4.) Paul stopped him from his proceeding against himself ([v. 28](#)): He cried with a loud voice, not only to make him hear, but to make him heed, saying, Do not practise any evil to thyself; Do thyself no harm. All the cautions of the word of God against sin, and all appearances of it and approaches to it, have this tendency, "Do thyself no harm. Man, woman, do not wrong thyself, nor ruin thyself; hurt not thyself, and then none else can hurt thee; do not sin, for nothing else can hurt thee." Even as to the body, we are cautioned against those sins which do harm to it, and are taught to hate our own flesh, but to nourish and cherish it. The jailer needs not fear being called to an account for the escape of his prisoners, for they are all here. It was strange that some of them did not slip away, when the prison-doors were opened, and they were loosed from their bands; but their amazement held them fast, and, being sensible it was by the prayers of Paul and Silas that they were loosed, they would not stir unless they stirred; and God showed his power in binding their spirits, as much as in loosing their feet.

2. He is afraid he shall lose his soul, and Paul makes him easy as to this care too. One concern leads him to another, and a much greater; and, being hindered from hastening himself out of this world, he begins to think, if he had pursued his intention, whither death would have brought him, and what would have become of him on the other side death-a very proper thought for such as have been snatched as a brand out of the fire, when there was but a step between them and death. Perhaps the heinousness of the sin he was running into helped to alarm him.

(1.) Whatever was the cause, he was put into a great consternation. The Spirit of God, that was sent to convince, in order to his being a Comforter, struck a terror upon him, and startled him. Whether he took care to shut the prison-doors again we are not told. Perhaps he forgot this as the woman of Samaria, when Christ had impressed convictions on her conscience, left her water-pot and forgot her errand to the well; for he called for a light with all speed, and sprang in to the inner prison, and came trembling to Paul and Silas. Those that have sin set in order before them, and are made to know their abominations, cannot but tremble at the apprehension of their misery and danger. This jailer, when he was thus made to tremble, could not apply to a more proper person than to Paul, for it had once been his own case; he had been once a persecutor of good men, as this jailer was had cast them into prison, as he kept them-and when, like him, he was made sensible of it, he trembled, and was astonished; and therefore he was able to speak the more feelingly to the jailer.

(2.) In this consternation, he applied to Paul and Silas for relief. Observe,

[1.] How reverent and respectful his address to them is: He called for a light, because they were in the dark, and that they might see what a fright he was in; he fell down before them, as one amazed at the badness of his own condition, and ready to sink under the load of his terror because of it; he fell down before them, as one that had upon his spirit an awe of them, and of the image of God upon them, and of their commission from God. It is probable that he had heard what the damsel said of them, that they were the servants of the living God, who showed to them the way of salvation, and as such he thus expressed his veneration for them. He fell down before them, to beg their pardon, as a penitent, for the indignities he had done them, and to beg their advice, as a supplicant, what he should do. He gave them a title of respect, *Sirs, kyrioi*-lords, masters; just now it was, Rogues and villains, and he was their master; but now, *Sirs, lords*, and they are his masters.

Converting grace changes people's language of and to good people and good ministers; and, to such as are thoroughly convinced of sin, the very feet of those that bring tidings of Christ are beautiful; yea, though they are disgracefully fastened in the stocks.

[2.] How serious his enquiry is: What must I do to be saved? First, His salvation is now his great concern, and lies nearest his heart, which before was the furthest thing from his thoughts. Not, What shall I do to be preferred, to be rich and great in the world? but, What shall I do to be saved? Secondly, He does not enquire concerning others, what they must do; but concerning himself, "What must I do?" It is his own precious soul that he is in care about: "Let others do as they please; tell me what I must do, what course I must take." Thirdly, He is convinced that something must be done, and done by him too, in order to his salvation: that it is not a thing of course, a thing that will do itself, but a thing about which we must strive, wrestle, and take pains. He asks not, "What may be done for me?" but, "What shall I do, that, being now in fear and trembling, I may work out my salvation?" as Paul speaks in his epistle to the church at Philippi, of which this jailer was, perhaps with respect to his trembling enquiry here, intimating that he must not only ask after salvation (as he had done), but work out his salvation with a holy trembling, [Philippians 2:12](#). Fourthly, He is willing to do any thing: "Tell me what I must do, and I am here ready to do it. Sirs, put me into any way, if it be but the right way, and a sure way; though narrow, and thorny, and uphill, yet I will walk in it." Note, Those who are thoroughly convinced of sin, and truly concerned about their salvation, will surrender at discretion to Jesus Christ, will give him a blank to write what he pleases, will be glad to have Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. Fifthly, He is inquisitive what he should do, is desirous to know what he should do, and asks those that were likely to tell him. If you will enquire, enquire ye, [Isaiah 21:12](#). Those that set their faces

Zionward must ask the way thither, [Jeremiah 50:5](#). We cannot know it of ourselves, but God has made it known to us by his word, has appointed his ministers to assist us in consulting the scriptures, and has promised to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him, to be their guide in the way of salvation. Sixthly, He brought them out, to put this question to them, that their answer might not be by duress or compulsion, but that they might prescribe to him, though he was their keeper, with the same liberty as they did to others. He brings them out of the dungeon, in hopes they will bring him out of a much worse.

(3.) They very readily directed him what he must do, [v. 31](#). They were always ready to answer such enquiries; though they are cold, and sore, and sleepy, they do not adjourn this cause to a more convenient time and place, do not bid him come to them the next sabbath at their meeting-place by the river side, and they will tell him, but they strike while the iron is hot, take him now when he is in a good mind, lest the conviction should wear off. Now that God begins to work, it is time for them to set in as workers together with God. They do not upbraid him with his rude and ill carriage towards them, and his going beyond his warrant; all this is forgiven and forgotten, and they are as glad to show him the way to heaven as the best friend they have. They did not triumph over him, though he trembled; they gave him the same directions they did to others, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. One would think they should have said, "Repent of thy abusing us, in the first place." No, that is overlooked and easily passed by, if he will but believe in Christ. This is an example to ministers to encourage penitents, to meet those that are coming to Christ and take them by the hand, not to be hard upon any for unkindness done to them, but to seek Christ's honour more than their own. Here is the sum of the whole gospel, the covenant of grace in a few words: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Here is,

[1.] The happiness promised: "Thou shalt be saved; not only rescued from eternal ruin, but brought to eternal life and

blessedness. Though thou art a poor man, an under-jailer or turnkey, mean and of low condition in the world, yet this shall be no bar to thy salvation. Though a great sinner, though a persecutor, yet thy heinous transgressions shall be all forgiven through the merits of Christ; and thy hard embittered heart shall be softened and sweetened by the grace of Christ, and thus thou shalt neither die for thy crime nor die of thy disease."

[2.] The condition required: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We must admit the record that God hath given in his gospel concerning his Son, and assent to it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation. We must approve the method God has taken of reconciling the world to himself by a Mediator; and accept of Christ as he is offered to us, and give up ourselves to be ruled and taught and saved by him. This is the only way and a sure way to salvation. No other way of salvation than by Christ, and no other way of our being saved by Christ than by believing in him; and no danger of coming short if we take this way, for it is the way that God has appointed, and he is faithful that has promised. It is the gospel that is to be preached to every creature, He that believes shall be saved.

[3.] The extension of this to his family: Thou shalt be saved, and thy house; that is, "God will be in Christ a God to thee and to thy seed, as he was to Abraham. Believe, and salvation shall come to thy house, as [Luke 19:9](#). Those of thy house that are infants shall be admitted into the visible church with thee, and thereby put into a fair way for salvation; those that are grown up shall have the means of salvation brought to them, and, be they ever so many, let them believe in Jesus Christ and they shall be saved; they are all welcome to Christ upon the same terms."

(4.) They proceeded to instruct him and his family in the doctrine of Christ ([v. 32](#)): They spoke unto him the word of the Lord. He was, for aught that appears, an utter stranger to Christ, and therefore it is requisite he should be told who this Jesus is, that he may believe in him, [John 9:36](#). And, the substance of the

matter lying in a little compass, they soon told him enough to make his being baptized a reasonable service. Christ's ministers should have the word of the Lord so ready to them, and so richly dwelling in them, as to be able to give instructions offhand to any that desire to hear and receive them, for their direction in the way of salvation. They spoke the word not only to him, but to all that were in his house. Masters of families should take care that all under their charge partake of the means of knowledge and grace, and that the word of the Lord be spoken to them; for the souls of the poorest servants are as precious as those of their masters, and are bought with the same price.

(5.) The jailer and his family were immediately baptized, and thereby took upon them the profession of Christianity, submitted to its laws, and were admitted to its privileges, upon their declaring solemnly, as the eunuch did, that they believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God: He was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Neither he nor any of his family desired time to consider whether they should come into baptismal bonds or no; nor did Paul and Silas desire time to try their sincerity and to consider whether they should baptize them or no. But the Spirit of grace worked such a strong faith in them, all on a sudden, as superseded further debate; and Paul and Silas knew by the Spirit that it was a work of God that was wrought in them: so that there was no occasion for demur. This therefore will not justify such precipitation in ordinary cases.

(6.) The jailer was hereupon very respectful to Paul and Silas, as one that knew not how to make amends for the injury he had done to them, much less for the kindness he had received from them: He took them the same hour of the night, would not let them lie a minute longer in the inner prison; but,

[1.] He washed their stripes, to cool them, and abate the smart of them; to clean them from the blood which the stripes had fetched. It is probable that he bathed them with some healing liquor, as the good Samaritan helped the wounded man by pouring in oil and wine.

[2.] He brought them into his house, bade them welcome to the best room he had, and prepared his best bed for them. Now nothing was thought good enough for them, as before nothing bad enough.

[3.] He set meat before them, such as his house would afford, and they were welcome to it, by which he expressed the welcome which his soul gave to the gospel. They had spoken to him the word of the Lord, had broken the bread of life to him and his family; and he, having reaped so plentifully of their spiritual things, thought it was but reasonable that they should reap of his carnal things, [1 Corinthians 9:11](#). What have we houses and tables for but as we have opportunity to serve God and his people with them?

(7.) The voice of rejoicing with that of salvation was heard in the jailer's house; never was such a truly merry night kept there before: He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house. There was none in his house that refused to be baptized, and so made a jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy. Or it may be read, He, believing in God, rejoiced all the house over; *panoiki*-he went to every apartment, expressing his joy. Observe,

[1.] His believing in Christ is called believing in God, which intimates that Christ is God, and that the design of the gospel is so far from being to draw us from God (saying, Go serve other gods, [Deu. 13:2](#)) that it has a direct tendency to bring us to God.

[2.] His faith produced joy. Those that by faith have given up themselves to God in Christ as theirs have a great deal of reason to rejoice. The eunuch, when he was converted, went on his way rejoicing; and here the jailer rejoiced. The conversion of the nations is spoken of in the Old Testament as their rejoicing, [Psa. 67:4](#); [Psa. 96:11](#). For, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Believing in Christ is rejoicing in Christ.

[3.] He signified his joy to all about him. Out of the abundance of the joy in his heart, his mouth spoke to the glory of God, and their encouragement who believed in God too. Those who have themselves tasted the comforts of religion should do what they can to bring others to the taste of them. One cheerful Christian should make many.

The Honourable Discharge of Paul and Silas by the Magistrates

[16:35-40](#)

In these verses we have,

I. Orders sent for the discharge of Paul and Silas out of prison [v. 35,36](#).

1. The magistrates that had so basely abused them the day before gave the orders; and their doing it so early, as soon as it was day, intimates that either they were sensible the terrific earthquake they felt at midnight was intended to plead the cause of their prisoners, or their consciences had smitten them for what they had done and made them very uneasy. While the persecuted were singing in the stocks, the persecutors were full of tossings to and fro upon their beds, through anguish of mind, complaining more of the lashes of their consciences than the prisoners did of the lashes on their backs, and more in haste to give them a discharge than they were to petition for one. Now God caused his servants to be pitied of those that had carried them captives, [Psa. 106:46](#). The magistrates sent sergeants, *rabdouchous*-those that had the rods, the vergers, the tipstaves, the beadles, those that had been employed in beating them, that they might go and ask them forgiveness. The order was, Let those men go. It is probable that they designed further mischief to them, but God turned their hearts, and, as he had made their wrath hitherto to praise him, so the remainder thereof he did restrain, [Psa. 76:10](#).

2. The jailer brought them the news ([v. 36](#)): The magistrates have sent to let you go. Some think the jailer had betimes transmitted an

account to the magistrates of what had passed in his house that night, and so had obtained this order for the discharge of his prisoners: Now therefore depart. Not that he was desirous to part with them as his guests, but as his prisoners; they shall still be welcome to his house, but he is glad they are at liberty from his stocks. God could by his grace as easily have converted the magistrates as the jailer, and have brought them to faith and baptism; but God hath chosen the poor of this world, [James 2:5](#).

II. Paul's insisting upon the breach of privilege which the magistrates had been guilty of, [v. 37](#). Paul said to the sergeants, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison against all law and justice, and now do they thrust us out privily, and think to make us amends with this for the injury done us? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us our, and own that they have done us wrong." It is probable that the magistrates had some intimation that they were Romans, and were made sensible that their fury had carried them further than the law would bear them out; and that this was the reason why they gave orders for their discharge. Now observe,

1. Paul did not plead this before he was beaten, though it is probable that it might have prevented it, lest he should seem to be afraid of suffering for the truth which he had preached. Tully, in one of his orations, against Verres, tells of one Ganius, who was ordered by Verres to be beaten in Sicily, that all the while he was under the lash he cried out nothing but Civis Romanus sum-I am a citizen of Rome; Paul did not do so; he had nobler things than this to comfort himself with in his affliction.

2. He did plead it afterwards, to put an honour upon his sufferings and upon the cause he suffered for, to let the world know that the preachers of the gospel were not such despicable men as they were commonly looked upon to be, and that they merited better treatment. He did it likewise to mollify the magistrates towards the Christians at Philippi, and to gain better treatment for them, and beget in the people a better opinion of the Christian religion, when

they saw that Paul had a fair advantage against their magistrates, might have brought his action against them and had them called to an account for what they had done, and yet did not take the advantage, which was very much to the honour of that worthy name by which he was called. Now here,

(1.) Paul lets them know how many ways they had run themselves into a premunire, and that he had law enough to know it.

[1.] They had beaten those that were Romans; some think that Silas was a Roman citizen as well as Paul; others that this does not necessarily follow. Paul was a citizen, and Silas was his companion. Now both the *lex Procia* and the *lex Sempronia* did expressly forbid *liberum corpus Romani civis, virgis aut aliis verberibus caedi*-the free body of a Roman citizen to be beaten with rods or otherwise. Roman historians give instances of cities that had their charters taken from them for indignities done to Roman citizens; we shall afterwards find Paul making use of this plea, ch. [22:25,26](#). To tell them they had beaten those who were the messengers of Christ and the favourites of Heaven would have had no influence upon them; but to tell them they have abused Roman citizens will put them into a fright: so common is it for people to be more afraid of Caesar's wrath than of Christ's. He that affronts a Roman, a gentleman, a nobleman, though ignorantly, and through mistake, thinks himself concerned to cry *Peccavi*-I have done wrong, and make his submission; but he that persecutes a Christian because he belongs to Christ stands to it, and thinks he may do it securely, though God hath said, He that toucheth them toucheth the apple of my eye, and Christ has warned us of the danger of offending his little ones.

[2.] They had beaten them uncondemned; *indicta causa*-without a fair hearing, had not calmly examined what was said against them, much less enquired what they had to say for themselves. It is a universal rule of justice, *Causa cognita, possunt multi absolvi, incognita nemo condemnari potest*-

Many may be acquitted in consequence of having had a hearing, while without a hearing no one can be condemned. Christ's servants would not have been abused as they have been if they and their cause might but have had an impartial trial.

[3.] It was an aggravation of this that they had done it openly, which, as it was so much the greater disgrace to the sufferers, so it was the bolder defiance to justice and the law.

[4.] They had cast them into prison, without showing any cause of their commitment, and in an arbitrary manner, by a verbal order.

[5.] They now thrust them out privily; they had not indeed the impudence to stand by what they had done, but yet had not the honesty to own themselves in a fault.

(2.) He insists upon it that they should make them an acknowledgment of their error, and give them a public discharge, to make it the more honourable, as they had done them a public disgrace, which made that the more disgraceful: "Let them come themselves, and fetch us out, and give a testimony to our innocency, and that we have done nothing worthy of stripes or of bonds." It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice, and not to himself so much as to his cause: "Let them come and stop the clamours of the people, by confessing that we are not the troublers of the city."

III. The magistrates' submission, and the reversing of the judgment given against Paul and Silas, [v. 38,39](#).

1. The magistrates were frightened when they were told (though it may be they knew it before) that Paul was a Roman. They feared when they heard it, lest some of his friends should inform the government of what they had done, and they should fare the worse for it. The proceedings of persecutors have often been illegal, even by the law of nations, and often inhuman, against the law of nature, but always sinful, and against God's law.

2. They came and besought them not to take advantage of the law against them, but to overlook the illegality of what they had done and say no more of it: they brought them out of the prison, owning that they were wrongfully put into it, and desired them that they would peaceably and quietly depart out of the city. Thus Pharaoh and his servants, who had set God and Moses at defiance, came to Moses, and bowed down themselves to him, saying, Get thee out, [Exodus 11:8](#). God can make the enemies of his people ashamed of their envy and enmity to them, [Isaiah 26:11](#). Jerusalem is sometimes made a burdensome stone to those that heave at it, which they would gladly get clear of, [Zechariah 12:3](#). Yet, if the repentance of these magistrates had been sincere, they would not have desired them to depart out of their city (as the Gadarenes desired to be rid of Christ), but would have courted their stay, and begged of them to continue in their city, to show them the way of salvation. But many are convinced that Christianity is not to be persecuted who yet are not convinced that it ought to be embraced, or at least are not persuaded to embrace it. They are compelled to do honour to Christ and his servants, to worship before their feet, and to know that he has loved them ([Revelation 3:9](#)), and yet do not go so far as to have benefit by Christ, or to come in for a share in his love.

IV. The departure of Paul and Silas from Philippi, [v. 40](#). They went out of the prison when they were legally discharged, and not till then, though they were illegally committed, and then,

1. They took leave of their friends: they went to the house of Lydia, where probably the disciples had met to pray for them, and there they saw the brethren, or visited them at their respective habitations (which was soon done, they were so few); and they comforted them, by telling them (saith an ancient Greek commentary) what God had done for them, and how he had owned them in the prison. They encouraged them to keep close to Christ, and hold fast the profession of their faith, whatever difficulties they

might meet with, assuring them that all would then end well, everlastingly well. Young converts should have a great deal said to them to comfort them, for the joy of the Lord will be very much their strength.

2. They quitted the town: They departed. I wonder they should do so; for, now that they had had such an honourable discharge from their imprisonment, surely they might have gone on at least for some time in their work without danger; but I suppose they went away upon that principle of their Master's ([Mark 1:38](#)). Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth. Paul and Silas had an extraordinary call to Philippi; and yet, when they have come thither, they see little of the fruit of their labours, and are soon driven thence. Yet they did not come in vain. Though the beginnings here were small, the latter end greatly increased; now they laid the foundation of a church at Philippi, which became very eminent, had its bishops and deacons, and people that were more generous to Paul than any other church, as appears by his epistle to the Philippians, ch. [1:1](#); [4:25](#). Let not ministers be discouraged, though they see not the fruit of their labours presently; the seed sown seems to be lost under the clods, but it shall come up again in a plentiful harvest in due time.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible.