

## ***The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer***

### ***Introduction***

Welcome to this edition of ***“My Thoughts with Dale Van De Bogart.”*** I would like to welcome all of our faithful and new watchers to the broadcast. As a reminder, all notes are in PDF, and located on our website, [vdbm.org](http://vdbm.org). Click on My Thoughts Video Series, scroll down on the page to choose the series, and download our notes.

In this week’s segment, ***“The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer”*** I will discuss these verses as they give us the clearest statement of the grace of God in the New Testament. Open your Bible to the Book of Acts 16:26-34

### **The Adventures of Paul and Silas**

As we start Acts Chapter 16, we see Paul and Silas in Derbe and Lystra, which are located in the Roman province of Galatia now Turkey. They met a disciple named Timothy and they took him to all the regions preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As they continued to preach throughout the region, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia. This is when they all heard the “Macedonia Call” (v. 9) as a gentleman from Macedonia pleaded with them to come and preach. So, off they went to preach the Gospel to his people. They traveled to a few cities and finally landed in Philippi, the foremost city in Macedonia. Named after King Philip II, but his son was more famous than he, Alexander the Great. They met Lydia and they baptized her and the entire household. Then things took a turn for the worse!

A slave girl possessed a demon spirit and kept following Paul and Silas. Paul had enough and commanded the spirit to come out of her in the name of Jesus. Her masters were not pleased as they were making lots of money from her because they used her as a fortune teller. They got mad and reported them to the authorities. They beat them in the marketplace and threw them in jail. Now things took a turn for the good!

### **A Change of Heart**

Today, let us examine the record of one of the most dramatic conversions in the New Testament. The emphasis is not only evangelistic, but it is instructive. In this passage, we have a great deal of basic biblical truth. How thrilling to read of Paul and Silas who, although so cruelly treated, were able to pray and sing praises at midnight, when humanly speaking they were at a very low point in their life.

They were suddenly in the midst of a prayer and praise meeting in their prison cell, with other prisoners listening to them. That is when God stepped in, and another soul was swept into the kingdom. The whole of the jailer’s family was gathered in!

## **Passage Text - Acts 16:26-34**

<sup>26</sup> 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 chains were loosed.

<sup>27</sup> And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

<sup>28</sup> But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

<sup>29</sup> Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

<sup>30</sup> And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

<sup>31</sup> So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

<sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

<sup>33</sup> And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

<sup>34</sup> Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

## **What do We Read about the Jailer?**

### **First - The Shock He Experienced**

The answer to the prayers of Paul and Silas came with suddenness and authority in the form of a great earthquake, shaking the foundations of the prison, bursting open doors, and breaking loose the chains of every prisoner in the place. Sometimes it pays just to be standing near a godly person when God pours his grace from heaven.

The jailer was asleep because he felt confident the prisoners were safe and secure in the inner cell. What a shock he received when the place began to shake, and the prison doors were opened! What a great shock he received when he found Paul and Silas had not tried to escape. What extraordinary prisoners these were!

Guards, in first century, were responsible for their prisoners and would be held accountable for their escape. They would have received the same punishment as the prisoners or were executed. The jailer "drew his sword to kill himself" possibly to avoid the Roman execution or having to live with the shame of his failure.

### **No One Left Behind**

Paul intervened, shouting, ***“We are all here!”*** He was not speaking of just himself and Silas but of all the prisoners. They were all sitting in a wide-open jail without chains. Why would the other prisoners not have fled the moment the doors were open? Perhaps they wanted to stay and learn more about this God who could shake a prison to its foundations. The other prisoners had listened intently to all the praying and singing.

These freshly liberated prisoners were now held captive by something stronger than chains. They wanted to know more about this God who could shake the world.

Every true conversion produces a ***“shock”*** and in a sense, every true conversion is accompanied by a spiritual earthquake. A mighty spiritual shaking of the Holy Spirit. The jailer received not only a physical shock but a spiritual and emotional one, a shock in his conscience.

### **Second - The Question He Asked**

Did he have any concern at all about his salvation when he went to sleep? He certainly felt deeply concerned now. He probably knew of the conversion of Lydia in verses 14-15 and of the Demon Possessed girl in verses 16-18.

What we can be quite sure about is that he suddenly became convinced that he was a lost man, and that his greatest and most urgent need was to be saved. No one asks a question like this unless he realizes his awful peril and danger. It is when we realize:

- God’s wrath is upon us (John 3:36)
- We are perishing (2 Corinthians 2:15)
- We are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1)
- We cry out (Acts 16:30)!

Stunned by the unearthly behavior of Paul and Silas, and terrified by the earthquake and the possible consequences of escaping prisoners, the jailer gave up hope of his life. Then, realizing his true condition and need, he risked everything to find the answer. The problem was he thought he could do something to find deliverance. Have you asked this most important question? Have you asked, ***“What must I do to be saved?”***

### **Third - The Answer He Received**

There is a whole sermon in this sentence and how ready Paul and Silas were to preach it! Some preachers are not ready to preach what Paul and Silas told the Jailer. They become vague and long-winded, but these two men were ready to give in concise and clear terms the answer to the jailer’s question.

This is the profound and important answer to the most profound and important question of the previous verse. The answer to the jailer’s query is ***“Believe.”*** This is not just faith for faith’s sake;

it is faith with a very serious object. It is belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The result is ***“you will be saved.”***

The application of such a message was broader than just the jailer. It was relevant to his whole household. It was also relevant to the whole group of freed prisoners who were surely listening with captivated attention. It was relevant to their households as well.

### **Vital Truths**

Notice in verse 31 several vital truths:

- Justification is by faith alone, plus nothing. We learn this from the word ***“believe.”*** It is not ***“believe and...”*** but simply ***“believe.”***
- The nature of saving faith. We learn this from the word ***“in.”*** The jailer did not have to believe in Jesus only. He had to trust in Him (Romans 10:9-10).
- Jesus is the only Savior. This is made clear in John 14:6 and Acts 4:12.
- Our Lord’s full title. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, indicating His deity, humanity, and Messiahship.
- The assurance of salvation. The jailer could be sure he was saved, ***“you will be.”***
- It is salvation now! We are saved the moment we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ever afterward through faith in Him (John 5:24).
- Salvation is for everyone. The jailer could be saved by believing, and all his household could be saved in the same way, ***“all the others in his house”*** (Romans 10:11-13).

### **Fourth - The Faith He Exercised**

We can imagine the careful and prayerful explanation of the gospel Paul and Silas would give to this household. There is a great need today for what might rightly be described as teaching evangelism!

The jailer received Christ as his Savior. Verse 33 gives evidence of the great change which had taken place in the heart and life of this man. He actually ***“washed their wounds”*** and ***“set a meal before them.”*** A true change of heart will quickly show itself in a change of life.

Look at Luke 19:8 and see Zacchaeus’ change of heart, ***“Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”***

### **Fifth - The Confession He Made**

Undoubtedly the Jailer and his family confessed the Lord with their mouths, which Paul and Silas would have explained to them. Romans 10:9-10, ***“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For***

***with the heart, one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.”***

The term “***immediately***” showed the new convert did not waste any time changing his life or making his public profession of allegiance to Jesus Christ through baptism. Those in his household who became believers were baptized as well.

Afterward, “***he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.***” Who in that household could ever have dreamed that one of their father’s prisoners, bound in chains, would one day bring a message that would set them all free from their sin?

Notice about their baptism:

- There was something urgent about it. Verse 33 tells us that it took place “***immediately***”.
- There was something corporate about it. They were baptized with others – “***he and all his family***”.
- There was much joy in it!

## ***Conclusion***

As you review this segment of “***My Thoughts***”, you can see the work of the Lord progresses through difficulties and challenges. Sometimes workers have problems with each other, and sometimes the problems come from the outside. It is also worth noting that not every sinner comes to Christ in the same manner.

- Timothy was saved partly through the influence of a godly mother and grandmother.
- Lydia was converted through a quiet conversation with Paul at a Jewish prayer meeting.
- The jailer’s conversion was dramatic. One minute he was a potential suicide, and the next minute he was a child of God!

Different people with different experiences, and yet all of them changed by the grace of God. Others just like them are waiting to be told about God’s simple plan of salvation. Will you help them hear by your own witness for Christ? Amen!

**I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God’s Word!**

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