

BELIEF, BAPTISM, BLESSING

NO. 2275

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1892,
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
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“And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”
Acts 16:33, 34.

THE gospel, attended by the Spirit of God, is always victorious, but it is very pleasant to make notes of its victories. The gospel came to Lydia, a devout woman, who was one given to prayer and who worshipped God, although she did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. She was a woman of tender heart and she was soon won. The Lord gently knocked at the door of her heart and it was opened. She heard Paul's plain preaching, she received the truth, was baptized, and became the cornerstone of the church at Philippi. “Well,” says one, “that is an instance of what the gospel does with delicate, tender, gentle natures.” Now, here is an old soldier. He has been in the wars—he has earned distinction and has been appointed to the office of jailor at Philippi, an office of some importance under the Roman Emperor. He is a man who knows the sight of blood—he is of a coarse, though apparently honest, disposition. He keeps prisoners and that is not an office that brings much gentleness with it—and he is under very stern law. He carries out strict discipline in the prison. He is as hard as a bit of the lower millstone. What will the gospel do with him? Brethren, it triumphed as much in the jailor at Philippi as it did in the lady from Thyatira. And while it won its way into the heart of the dealer in purple, it also worked its way into the heart of the dealer in crimson who had often shed precious blood. The victory over the rough Philippian jailor was as illustrious as the victory over the gentle and devout Lydia.

I want especially to call your attention to this point—the Philippian jailor stands before us as one who was converted, baptized, and who brought forth useful fruit all in the compass of an hour or so. “Straightway,” says my text. It also says, “The same hour of the night.” This man was brought from darkness into the marvelous light all of a sudden. He was so distinctly brought that he avowed his conversion, then and there, and went on to prove its reality right then in his own house by entertaining the men whom, a few hours before, he had thrust into the inner prison and whose feet he had made fast in the stocks.

In a great many cases, conversion may be said to be a slow work. I do not think that it really is so, but it appears to be so. There is the early training, there is the awakening of conscience, there is the seeking to find Christ, the struggling, the little light, the dim hope, the faith like a grain of mustard seed, and by-and-by a little confidence—afterwards faith more clear and then, after a long time comes the public avowal of the joy and peace received through believing. We have a great many people round us who are very slow. Why it is, I do not know, for this is not a slow age. People are fast enough about the things of this world. We cannot travel fast enough. Everything must be done at express speed. But in the things of God, there are numbers of persons who are as slow as snails. I have often wondered how the snail got into the ark—he must have started very early to get in. I am thankful that he did get in, however, as certainly as the hare or the gazelle. And many of our crawling friends, I trust, will be found in heaven, and will be really saved, although they are a long while in coming to Christ. It takes a long time to get some of them even a small distance on the road towards a comfortable assurance of salvation.

I have no doubt that the work of grace is very gradual in some people. It is like the sunrise in this country. I am sure that you cannot tell on foggy mornings when the sun rises. I have sometimes questioned whether he ever does rise in England—I have seen very little of him for the last few days. I be-

lieve that the sun has been seen in England—I take it as a matter of trust that that ruddy wafer that I saw the other day really was the sun—although it is a great contrast to the king of day who rules in the sunny South. Who can tell when he begins to shine upon the earth? There is a little gray light, by-and-by a little more, and a little more, and at last you can say that the sun has fairly risen. So it is with some Christians. There is a tiny gleam of light and then a little more light, and then a further ray of light—but it is only after a considerable time that you can say that the full light has really come into their souls. Yet, mark you, there is a moment when the sun’s disc first appears above the horizon. There is a moment when the circle of the sun is really first visible, just an instant, the smallest portion of time and in conversion, there must be a time in which death has gone and life has come—and that must be as sharp a division as the razor’s edge could make. There really cannot be anything between life and death. The man is either dead or alive—and there must be some point at which he ceases to be dead and becomes living. A man cannot be somewhere between condemnation and justification—there is no land in between. The man is either condemned on account of sin or he is justified through the righteousness of Christ. He cannot be between those two states so that, after all, in its essence, salvation must be an instantaneous thing. It may be, it will be, surrounded by a good deal that seems to lead up to it and makes it appear to be gradual. But in reality, if you get to the root of the matter, there is a turning point, well-defined and sharp, and if not clear to you, it is clear to the Great Worker who has worked in the heart that is changed from death to life and from condemnation through sin to justification through Jesus Christ.

I. In this Philippian jailor’s case, everything is sharp, clear, and distinct. In considering it, I will first call your attention to the fact that **HERE IS A PERSON CONVERTED AT ONCE.**

This man’s conversion was worked at once. *There was no previous thought.* There is nothing that I can imagine in his previous life that led up to it. He had not been plied with sermons, instructions, invitations, entreaties. Probably, up to that night he had never even heard the name of Jesus Christ—and what he did hear was that these two men, who had come to Philippi preaching Christ, were to be treated with severity and kept safely. Therefore, he thrust them into the inner dungeon and made their feet fast in the stocks. All his previous education was un-Christian, if not anti-Christian. All his former life, whatever may have been his Roman virtues, was quite clear of anything like Christian virtue. He knew nothing about that. Nothing could be a greater contrast than the ethics of Rome and the teachings of Christ. This jailor was a good Roman, but he was nothing of a Christian when he thrust the apostles into prison. And yet, before the sun again rose, there was not a better Christian anywhere than that man was. He had passed from death unto life. He was resting on the Christian foundation. He was the possessor of Christian graces. Hear this, you who have never thought of Christ—and let any man who came in here tonight a total stranger to true religion, pray that the same may be the case with him—that before the midnight bell shall toll he, too, may find the Savior.

What do you think impressed this man? I think, in part, it may have been *the behavior of Paul and Silas.* They had no curses on their lips when he made their feet fast in the stocks. They used no vulgar language when he thrust them into the innermost cell. They let fall words, I do not doubt, the like of which he had never heard. And their patience, their cheerfulness, their dauntless courage, their holy joy must all have struck him. They belonged to a different order of prisoners from any he had ever seen before. The jail at Philippi had never held the like of these before and the jailor could not make them out. He fell asleep that night with many thoughts of a new character. Who were these men? Who was this Jesus of whom they spoke?

Then, in the middle of the night, *a singular miracle was worked.* The prison is shaken by an earthquake. The keeper rises. The prisoners must have gone, for the doors are open. He had not carelessly left them unbolted—he had fastened them before he went to bed—but they are all open and the prisoners are without chains. They will get away and he will have to suffer for it. He puts the sword to his own breast—he is about to kill himself, when just at that moment he hears a loud voice crying—“Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” What a surprise for him! What a revulsion of feeling those words caused! “We are all here.” He thinks to himself, “Truly there is a God. It must be the God of Paul and Silas who has worked this miracle.” He begins to tremble. He has lived without knowing this God. He has ill-treated the messengers of this God. He brings them out. He respectfully addresses them, “Sirs,” he earnestly cries to them, “What must I do to be saved?” The idea of being lost has come over him. It is not

that he is afraid to die, for he was about to put himself to death—but he is afraid of what is to follow after death. He is a lost man and therefore he asks, “What must I do to be saved?”

Now it is that *he is plainly told the way of salvation*. It was put with great brevity, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Probably he did not understand it when he heard it and so, “They spoke unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house.” His wife, his children, his servants, whoever made up his household, all gathered round the two preachers—and they explained the way of salvation, salvation by faith in Christ, salvation by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, salvation by faith in the precious blood of Christ. Paul and Silas doubtless told the company that whoever believed in Jesus should not perish, but have everlasting life. The jailor believed it, believed every word of it, and he was therefore saved and saved at once. If you have never heard the gospel before and you hear it tonight and believe in Christ, you will be saved at once. If you have been a total stranger to all good things, yet if you now receive the blessed tidings of mercy through the Son of God, pardon through His shed blood, you shall go out of this house justified, saved—saved in an instant—saved by the simple act of faith. It is a happy circumstance that the gospel is so simple. There are certain preachers who seem as if they must mystify it, like the preacher who said, “Brethren, I have read you a chapter and now I will confound it.” No doubt there are many who are always making out the gospel to be a very difficult thing to understand—philosophical, deep and so on—but it was meant for the common people, it was given not merely for the elite, the learned, the instructed, but, “The poor have the gospel preached to them,” and the gospel is suitable to be preached to the poor. This is the gospel, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.” Trust Christ—and if you do, you shall be saved.

II. Secondly, HERE IS A PERSON CONFESSING HIS FAITH AT ONCE. “He was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

Should a person be baptized as soon as he believes? As a rule, yes, but there may be good reasons why he cannot be. There was no good reason for delay in this man’s case, for in the first place, *his conversion was clear as noonday*. Paul had no question about it. The man was really converted. Silas felt sure of it, too, and they did not hesitate to baptize him and his entire household, for they all believed in God. Remember how it was with Philip and the eunuch? That Ethiopian nobleman said, “Look, here is water: what does hinder me to be baptized?” Philip replied, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” That being so, they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him then and there. If the baptizer believes that the professor of faith in Christ is sincere, then he may not hesitate. If he has any doubt about it—if he is afraid that the confession is made in ignorance or made without due thought—then it may be incumbent upon him to wait a while. But otherwise, he must do as Ananias did to Saul of Tarsus—he must baptize him upon profession of his faith, as soon as he applies. The jailor’s conversion, then, was clear.

In his case also, *there was no other reason for delay*. In the case of many young persons, there are reasons for delay. I remember in my own case, my parents not believing in the baptism of believers and I being between 15 and 16 years of age, thought it my duty to consult my father and mother and ask their counsel and advice. I think I did right. I did not expect them to agree with me, but I did expect them to give me their loving concurrence, which they did, and I waited until I had obtained it. Sometimes it will be right on the part of other young people to do the same. There may be reasons, practical reasons for delay, physical, moral, spiritual—I cannot go into them all at this time. A man may be excusable who, though a believer, is not immediately baptized seeing that he intends to be as soon as it would be fitting and right and decorous and in connection with other duties, a right thing. But there was no reason for delay in the jailor’s case. The man was his own master and his children and his servants had no difficulty in gaining his consent to their baptism, seeing that he himself was about to lead the way in confessing Christ in the scriptural fashion.

In this man’s case note also that *he was not hindered by selfish considerations*. Had the jailor been like some people that I know, he would have found plenty of reasons for delaying his baptism. First, he would have said, “Well, it is the middle of the night. Would you have me baptized at this hour?” He would have said that he did not know that there were conveniences for baptism, for it is so easy to find it inconvenient when you do not like it. He might also have said, “I do not know how the magistrates will like it.” He did not care about the magistrates. Perhaps he would lose his employment. He did not take

his employment into consideration. Then what would the soldiers in the Philippian colony say when they heard that the jailor had been baptized into the name of Christ? Oh, the guffaws of the guard room, the jokes that there would be all over Philippi! This brave man did not take those things into consideration. Or if he did, he dismissed them in a moment. It was right for him, now that he believed in Christ, to confess his faith in Christ—and he would do it, and he would do it “straightway.” Ah, dear friends, there are some of you here who have never come out as Christians! You are what I call the rats behind the paneling or the black beetles that come out at night when there is nobody about to get a bit of food and then go back again. You never say what you are—you never come out on Christ’s side. I am not going to condemn you. I wish that you would condemn yourselves, however, for I think that you ought to judge that you are acting a very mean part. The promise of eternal life is not made to a faith which is never declared. Allow me to say that over again. The promise of salvation is not made to a faith which is never declared. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “With the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Our Lord’s own words are, “Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.” And He also said, in connection with this confession, “but whoever shall deny Me” (which must mean, “whoever does not *confess* Me”) “before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.” If you have not faith enough in Christ to say that you believe in Him, I do not think that you have faith enough in Christ to take you to heaven, for it is written concerning the place of doom, “the fearful,” (that is, the cowardly), and unbelieving, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.”

The fact was *this man was in downright earnest* and therefore he would not delay his baptism. He had enlisted in the army of Christ and he would wear Christ’s regimentals straightway. I wish that some who profess conversion or who profess to desire to be converted, were as much in earnest as this jailor was. “Well,” says one, “do not be too severe upon us. I hope that I am a Christian, although I have never confessed Christ yet.” Why do you not confess Christ if you belong to Him? I spoke like this to a man who had been, according to his own confession, 20 years a Christian. He had never joined the church. He had never made any open profession of religion. And when I spoke to him, what do you think he said to me? He said, “He that believes shall not make haste.” “Well,” I replied, “if you were to be baptized and to join the church tomorrow morning, I do not think that there would be much haste in it as you have been a believer 20 years. But a much more suitable text for you would be this word of the Psalmist, ‘I made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments.’”

“Well,” says another, “I have put it off a little while”—“A little while!” Is that what you allow your boy to say to you? You say to him, “John, go up into the city for me on an errand.” In about an hour afterwards you see him still at home and you ask why he has not done your bidding, and he says, “Father, I have put it off a little while.” I think it is likely that you would make him recollect that excuse and not repeat it. But if you were to see him still about the house hour after hour and he said to you that he was not disobedient, but he had some little things of his own that he wanted to see to first, I fancy you would teach him what a son’s duty is. A servant of that kind would probably have to find a new master very quickly—and do you call yourself a servant of Christ when you have been putting off confessing him by being baptized, putting it off, and putting it off until, as far as I can see, you are as far off obedience to your Lord’s command as ever you were? This jailor, “the same hour of the night” made confession of his faith, “and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” And soon they were all sitting down with Paul and Silas at a love feast, enjoying happy fellowship with the people of God. Dear friend, if you are converted, do not stand back from confessing Christ. You rob your minister of his wages, for it is his reward to hear that God has blessed your soul. You are also robbing the church. If you have a right to stand out and not confess Christ, everybody else has the same right—and where would there be any confession of Christ, or any visible church, or any ordinances, or any minister? If you have a right not to come to baptism and the Lord’s Supper, every other Christian has a right to neglect these things also. Then why were these ordinances instituted at all? What is Christ in His own house? Is He Master or are you the master? And do you take liberty to do or not do just what you please? Come along and let my text be true of all of you who believe—“He was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

III. Now, thirdly, HERE IS A PERSON USEFUL AT ONCE. Useful? What could he do?

Well, he did all he could. First, *he performed an act of mercy*—“He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.” Dear, good men—they were covered all over with the marks of the Roman rods. They had been beaten black and blue—and their blood had flowed freely. I think I see how tenderly the jailor washed their stripes. It was before he was baptized that he brought forth fruits meet for repentance. The ill-used ministers needed washing—how could their wounds be healed unless they were properly washed? With all the dust and dirt of the street and the grit of the prison in the welts and the wounds, how could they heal? “He washed their stripes.” I like to read these words. I am sure Paul and Silas must have enjoyed to have their stripes washed by one who a little while ago had been so rough with them. I do not know that he could have done anything better to show his sincere repentance.

He washed their stripes and when he had done that and had been baptized, we read that he brought them into his house and set meat before them. Thus, *he exercised hospitality*. He used his hands and his bath in washing the disciples. Now he uses his table, his larder, and his dining room to entertain them. What more could he do? Seeing that it was the middle of the night, I cannot think of anything more that he could do. So now, if you love the Lord, if you have only just believed in Him, begin to do something for Him at once. It is a pity that we have so many Christian people so-called, who do nothing for Christ—literally nothing. They have paid their pew rent perhaps and that is all Christ is to have out of them! He dies for them, redeems them with His precious blood—but they have done nothing for Him in return. “I do not know what I can do,” says one. I know you could do something. This jailor, within the boundaries of his prison can do the most necessary things for Paul and Silas. And you, within the boundaries of this house can do something for Jesus Christ. I would ask you, if you have only tonight believed in Christ, do something for Him tonight, by speaking to your wife, or children, or servants, or neighbors, do something for Christ tonight. There is probably no minister shut up in prison in any part of your house who needs to have his stripes washed. If not, there may be some poor soul somewhere near you that needs a little help. Do an act of charity for Christ’s sake. Or there may be some child of God whose heart you could cheer tonight. Do an act of hospitality for some needy saint and so show your gratitude for what the Lord has done for you. You must do something for Christ if you are a real Christian.

We want to have a church in which all the members do something, in which all do all they can, in which all are always doing all they can—for this is what our Lord deserves to have from a living, loving people bought with His precious blood. If He has saved me, I will serve Him forever and ever. And whatever lies in my power to do for His glory that shall be my delight to do and to do at once. Oh, if some of you get saved tonight when you get home, there will be a difference in your house! Ah, and within a day or two, even your cat will know that there is a change in you! Everybody in the house will know that you are different from what you were. When a man who has been a drinker gets saved, or one who has been accustomed to use bad language, or one who has given way to passion, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a godless, Christless wretch—when he gets converted, it is as if hell were turned into heaven and the devil transformed into an angel. God make it so with any such who are here, by the working of sovereign grace!

I seem, at this moment, to remember that morning when I found the Savior. It was a cold snowy morning and I remember standing before the fire, leaning on the mantel, after I got home, and my mother spoke to me, and I heard her say outside the door, “There is a change come over Charles.” She had not had half-a-dozen words with me, but she saw that I was not what I had been. I had been dull, melancholy, sorrowful, depressed—but when I had looked to Christ, the appearance of my face was changed—I had a smile, a cheerful, happy, contented look at once, and she could see it. And a few words let her know that her melancholy boy had risen out of his despondency and had become bright and cheerful. May some such change as that pass over you!

IV. Here is one thing more to finish with. Fourthly, **HERE IS A PERSON PERFECTLY HAPPY AT ONCE.** When the jailor had brought Paul and Silas into his house, “He set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

Oh, that was a happy, happy time! “He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” *He rejoiced that he was saved.* His heart kept beating, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” As he sat at that table with his two strange guests, he had indeed cause for joy. His sin was forgiven. His nature was changed. He had found a Savior. He had given up his idol gods and he rejoiced, believing in God. He had been

told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He was no Unitarian. He believed Jesus Christ to be God and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his heart.

And then *he rejoiced that all his household were saved*. What a delight it was to see all his household converted! There was his wife. If she had not been converted, it would have been a very awkward thing for him to have asked Paul and Silas in to that midnight meal. She would have said, “I do not want prisoners coming into my best parlor and eating up all the cold meat.” She would not have liked it. As a prudent housewife, she would have objected to it. But there was Mrs. Jailor waiting on them all with a holy happiness, a new kind of cheerfulness. I do not know whether they had any boys or girls. It may be or may not be—but however many there were in his household, children or servants—they all believed, “believing in God with all his house.” They were all baptized, too, the sons and daughters and the servants also, for they were included in the household. I do not like it when you count up your household and leave out Mary Ann, the little servant girl, the last you have hired. You treat her as a drudge, but if she has come into your family, reckon her to be a part of your household. And pray God that they may all be converted—Jane and Mary, your own children—and the other people’s children who have come into your houses to do necessary domestic work for you.

The jailor’s rejoicing was also *a seal of the Spirit upon his fidelity*. Would it not be delightful for him to sit down with the two preachers of the Word in the middle of the night? Those two men must have had good appetites. They had probably had nothing to eat for many hours and they had been lying in their dreadful dungeon with their feet in the stocks, after having been cruelly beaten. So they were prepared to eat, whether it was the middle of the night or the middle of the day. And the rest of the family came and sat down at the table with them—and all rejoiced. Such a night in a prison had never been known before. The jailor “rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

I think I heard a friend over there fetch a deep sigh as I quoted those last words of my text. I know what it meant—it meant that he has not all his house converted. Ah, dear brother, I cannot sympathize with you by experience, for I thank God that I have had all my house brought to Christ, but it must be a great sorrow to have that biggest boy of yours acting as he does, or to have that dear girl, of whom you had such bright hopes, turning aside to crooked ways. Let me ask you a question—Have you had faith about your house? Remember that Paul said to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house*.” May God give you faith about your house! You have had faith about yourself and you are saved—exercise faith about your children. Cry to God to give you faith about them. Pray believingly that they may be led to have faith for themselves and so may be saved.

Oh, that all in this great assembly may meet in heaven! You who have heard the Word these many years, may you tonight believe in Christ and live! You who have never listened to it before, may you also come to Christ and believe in Him, as the jailor did, and like him, you shall be saved! The Lord shall have all the praise and the glory, but oh, that He would work this miracle of mercy tonight! Let us pray for it. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON *ACTS 16:9-34.*

Verse 9. *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.* Our dreams often follow the leading thoughts of the day or if not of the day, yet the chief thoughts that are upon the mind. Paul dreams about mission work, for his heart is in it. I should not wonder if some before me, who are deeply engaged in earnest Christian work, have often dreamt about their Sunday school or their mission station. Where the mind goes when we are awake, it often goes when we are asleep. This vision that appeared to Paul was supernatural and was an indication of what God wanted him to do.

10. *And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.* In the vision, the man prayed, “Come over into Macedonia and help us.” The best help that Paul could render to the Macedonians was “to preach the gospel unto them.” The best help you can give men socially is to help them religiously—and the best religious help is to preach the gospel to them.

11, 12. *Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.* Waiting to know what they were to do. In God's work, we are not to go on in blundering haste. Sometimes, a little waiting may be good for us, and by waiting, we may find out the true path of success.

13. *And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was known to be made.* Some quiet corner, where good people were known to gather by the brook to pray.

13. *And we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted there.* This was probably the first religious meeting of Christians that was ever held in Europe. It is remarkable that it was a prayer meeting—a prayer meeting attended by women, a prayer meeting to which two ministers came and preached the gospel to the women who resorted there. To be able to be present at a prayer meeting ought always to be reckoned a great privilege to all of us who are Christians. In this way the gospel first came to us. In this way the gospel will be best preserved to us. And in this way we may best obtain guidance from God as to how we may carry the gospel to others.

14, 15. *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized.* She seems to have become a believer in Christ and to have been baptized at once.

15. *And her household, she besought us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* Lydia was evidently a woman of some property. The purple which she sold was an expensive article. She seems to have been engaged in business on her own account, and when Paul met with her, she was far off from her workshop and her home. She had a house, therefore, in the place to which she had come to sell her purple, and she “constrained” the men of God to make use of her house and to tarry there. Thus was Christianity brought into Europe, for which we praise the name of the Lord.

16. *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.* She professed to tell fortunes and to speak under inspiration. She was really “possessed” by an evil spirit.

17, 18. *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.* Here was an evil spirit bearing witness to the truth of God—and it grieved Paul. When you hear a bad man ridiculing religion, do not be surprised—what else can you expect from him? But if you heard the devil recommending Christ, then you ought to be grieved, for the Lord Jesus does not need patronage or praise from Satan. Men would begin to suspect that Christ was in league with Satan if Satan began to speak well of Christ. Dread to be spoken well of by ungodly men, for there is great danger in such praise. There may be a motive at the bottom of the flattery which may be full of mischief. Paul, being grieved, silenced the demon and cast him out of the damsel. Like his Lord, he would not allow the devil to testify concerning himself and his mission.

19, 20. *And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates.* They dragged them into the Forum, the place where the courts usually sat, and brought them before the magistrates, “saying”—what?—“These men have cured a demoniac. They have performed a miracle and cast a devil out of a young woman”? Oh no! There would have been no wrong in that, so they must invent a charge. What do they say?

20, 21. *Saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.* They did not know that Paul was a Roman citizen or they surely would not have brought such a charge as that against him.

22. *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.* They beat them first and tried them afterwards. That is often the rule with those who persecute God's people—“Let them be hanged out of the way and then we will inquire what they teach.”

23-25. *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God. Another prayer meeting and a praise meeting, too. There were only two persons at it, but they “prayed and sang praises unto God.”*

26. *And the prisoners heard them.* Paul and Silas were in the lower prison. The sound of their prayer and praise rose up through the different tiers of cells where other prisoners were confined.

26. *And 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 bands were loosed.* This was no common earthquake. An ordinary earthquake might have brought the prison down about their ears—it would not have loosed the bands of the prisoners.

27. *And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.* For the law was that if a jailer lost a prisoner, he was to suffer whatever penalty the prisoner would have suffered. He therefore knew that, in all probability, his own life would be taken and strange to say, to save his life he would kill himself. Suicide is always absurd and unreasonable. The worst that could happen to him would be to die by the sword of justice—and to escape from that, he tries to die by the sword of a suicide.

28. *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here.* Every prisoner was loosed from his shackles, but not one had escaped, nor had any even attempted to escape—which was another miracle—for men who see their bands broken and the prison doors open are pretty sure to run away. These men did not, for a heavenly charm was upon them. They stayed in their cells, so that Paul could cry out to the jailor—“Do yourself no harm: for we are all here.”

29. *Then he called for a light, and ran in, and came trembling.* Conscious of the supernatural, compelled to feel the hand which he had never perceived before, he hastened into the inner prison where he had thrust the servants of Christ.

29. *And fell down before Paul and Silas* Whom he had handled so roughly just now.

30. *And brought them out, and said, Sirs.* What a word to address to those who were still in his charge as prisoners!

30-34. *What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the Word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

May God give to many of us to know the happy experience of that believing, baptized, and blessed household!

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