

The Philippian Jailer.

Acts 16:19-34.

Sunday, April 10, 2011.

I. Arrested. Vs- 19-20.

- A. No sooner did the masters of the slave girl, out of which Paul had cast a demon, realize that the source of their revenue had dried up, or they seize Paul and Silas and they bring them before the authorities.
- B. Striking in their actions is what it reveals about the true nature of their religion. For years perhaps they had used this poor slave girl to foretell the future to the people of Philippi as though they were providing the citizens of Philippi with some valuable service.
But when they were confronted with the loss of their profits, the fact that she had told them about Paul and Silas that they were the servants of the Most High God, who had come to tell them the way of salvation, made absolutely no difference to them. They themselves did not attach any value to her words.
Their true value system was that of their profits; their god was Mammon; riches.

Application:

What are the bottom line values that drive the decision making process of your life? Do you see why the last judgment will be a judgment of our works? It is because our works are the evidence of the bottom line values of our life; the evidence of what animates us and drives us; the evidence of that religious principle that governs us; before which we do our devotions, and which we worship. Profit and worldly advantage ruled these men, and their actions are the proof.

II. Beaten and Imprisoned. Vs. 20-25.

- A. Paul and Silas are brought before the authorities in Philippi, and their accusers immediately point out that they are Jews. The Jews were a despised lot in the eyes of the Romans. The fact that the Jews looked down with disdain on the whole world and thanked God every day that they were not Gentiles may have had something to do with that. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, and people who are made in the image of God tend to do the same thing.
- B. Upon hearing that they were Jews, and that they were troublemakers, the authorities decide to “teach them a lesson” by giving them a beating. The gathered crowd, having learned that they were Jews, demanded as much.
- C. The Romans gave beatings with rods; the Jews with whips. By the time Paul would write his second letter to the Corinthians he had endured five floggings at the hands of the Jews, and three beatings at the hands of the Romans. 2 Cor. 11:24, 25. These were vicious beatings, leaving its victims with massive injuries to the back. Not infrequently such beatings would result in death.
- D. Following the beating they were thrown in prison; their feet fastened in the stocks further immobilizing them. Such a prison would have consisted of the basement of a large home. The keeper, usually a hardened retired army officer, would live upstairs.

Applications:

1. Remember the importance of the grace of humility; remember it before God and man. Both extend grace to the humble, although man not nearly with the perfection of God. Who or what are we anyway, that we should be bragging, and be full of ourselves?
2. Be slow to form opinions and judgments about situations. "He who hastens, sins with his feet." (or with his hands or lips.) Proverbs 19:2. Too often we act with insufficient information. This is what these authorities did.

III. Songs in the night. Vs. 25-34.

- A. About midnight Paul and Barnabas lift up their voices in prayer and praise to God. Sleep would have been hard to come by as they would have been in a great deal of pain. As such they draw near to God in prayer and praise and seek to find shelter under His wings.
- B. The Lord answers the prayers and praises of His servants by sending an earthquake which loosened the prisoners chains and opened the prison's doors. See in Revelation 8:4-6 how the Lord answers from His temple the prayers and praises of His people by shaking the earth and the nations.
- C. The Jailer awakens and sees the prison doors open, and he takes his sword in hand to take his own life, for such was the punishment he faced if he lost any prisoners. Paul calls out to him not to harm himself as they were all still there.
- D. Trembling the jailer asks, "What must I do to be saved?"
What did he mean by that question? Had he heard the testimony of the slave girl, "these men are servants of the most high God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation?" Had he heard Paul speak at an earlier occasion in the city? It is hard to know how much Christian content there was in this question when he asked it.
- E. Paul answered: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." It is no mystery what Paul meant by this. The word believe means to trust and to entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in all the varying circumstances of life. First in reconciling us to God; then in guiding, protecting and teaching us along the way; and finally we may entrust our dying bodies to him in death for safekeeping until the day of resurrection. Paul had an opportunity to enlarge upon these words, both to the jailer and to those of his household.
- F. Like Lydia, the jailer's heart was changed as is manifest by his being baptized; his tending to the wounds of Paul and Silas; and his preparing a meal for them.

Application:

The whole of the gospel is contained in the two statements of Paul. We might receive these two statements as coming from the lips of our Savior Himself: "do yourself no harm..." Great harm comes to us when we go about life our own way; pursuing our own will and desires will sooner or later lead to "piercing ourselves through with many sorrows." 1 Tim. 6:10. We need a Shepherd. The second statement is one of great invitation: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." Do so in all the changing circumstances of life. Do so in matters of time and eternity. Who else can you trust in? We do so at the Lord's table; do yourself no harm but partake and believe!