

## Acts 16:22-40

"These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation." "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or observe, being Romans" (Acts 16:17; 20f). Both these statements were spoken describing the same men and illustrate how men frequently are regarded in different lights, depending upon one's preconceived notions and prejudices. The first, a statement from a young demon-possessed slave girl, was an acknowledgement of the truth Paul and his three companions taught. Frequently, in Jesus' personal ministry, unclean spirits acknowledged him as from God (Mk. 5:7f). The other statement came from the owners of that young woman after Paul had cleansed her of the unclean spirit; stripping them of the profit they had made from her. They lashed back, desiring to inflict injury upon them. For the first time Gentile persecution comes to Paul.

So, Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison, also a first in these journeys of his. He has suffered persecution before, even stoning. But this is the first record of imprisonment. The jailor was charged to keep them safely and he put them in an inner prison, fastening their feet in stocks. The spirits of these men were not dampened but, as earlier days when other apostles faced similar trials, rejoiced that "they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name" (Acts 5:41). The preachers were in an upbeat spirit. They prayed and sang hymns. The other prisoners listened. The jailor slept.

His slumber was about to be broken. About midnight there was a great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and loosed the bonds of all the prisoners. The jailor came suddenly awake and sizing up the situation, supposing the prisoners had escaped; drew his sword and was about to kill himself. Paul, seeing his intent, called with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm, we are all here" (Acts 16:28). The jailor called for a light and sprang in and trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:29f).

What did the jailor know about God? Why did he connect Paul and Silas with the earthquake? Why did he ask what he had to do to be saved? The abbreviated account of the historian does not supply information to answer these questions. We know simply that from details he had earlier heard about the preaches; their demeanor while they were in prison before he fell asleep, their interest in his personal safety: all these factors

led him to suppose that the earthquake was related to them. He was correct in that assessment.

The jailor had "brought them out" into his own house and his family was present. In answer to his question, "What must I do to be saved?", Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). This is a favorite text with Calvinists, who believe, as a recent billboard states, "We are saved by grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone." Such a statement is self-contradictory. Naming three things involved in salvation nullifies the contention that salvation comes from either of them, alone. It is appropriate that attention be given to this statement. Did Paul mean there was nothing essential in salvation other than just believing? What do Calvinists mean when they assert one is saved by faith alone, do they rule out repentance? They do not; they include that in faith. What they mean is that man does not have to be baptized to be saved.

If Paul was saying that one did not have to be baptized to be saved, he contradicted himself in his letter to Romans. "Thanks be to God that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereunto ye were delivered (i.e. baptism, symbolizing the death, burial and resurrection of Christ) and being then (at that time, viz, when you were baptized, jm) made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17f). Paul taught we are saved by faith, but not that man is saved by faith alone.

Nor does his statement to the jailor teach one is saved by faith only. Let the text reveal what the apostle had in mind. He used "believe" as a figure of speech called a synecdoche: "naming one thing when the whole was intended." The record says that he "spake the work of the Lord" (Acts 16:2). He had commanded them to believe in the Lord Jesus and it is only through hearing His word that they could come to believe (Rom. 10:17). Upon hearing the word of the Lord, the jailor immediately took them and washed their stripes, showing his repentance for the prisoners had been beaten uncondemned and if the jailor followed the normal process, he had put salt in their wounds to intensify their suffering. Then the jailor and his family were baptized. Why? They had heard the word of the Lord which commanded baptism for the remission of sins (Mk. 16:15f; Acts 2:38).

Back to our figure of speech, a synecdoche. The jailor had been told to believe, verse 31. Then follows the proclamation of the word to produce faith, repentance and their baptism. After all these things, it is recorded,

"And he brought them up and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God" (Acts 16:33f). What had he done? He had believed, repented and been baptized. He had believed in God. The Holy Spirit includes repentance and baptism as part of "believing" and Calvinists cannot eliminate repentance and baptism from one's faith no matter how sophisticated their arguments nor how strongly they try. Belief in Christ includes water baptism.

Day brought orders from the magistrates for their release. But Paul would have none of that. It is his turn to accuse. "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? Nay verily. Let them come themselves and bring us out" (Acts 16:37). The "table is turned." The magistrates now see that they had done in fact that which they had charged Paul and Silas with! THEY had broken Roman law in their treatment they had inflicted upon them. So, a greatly humbled and contrite group of magistrates eat "humble pie," bring the apostles out of the prison and then ask them to leave the city.

And, so they do, but not before bidding farewell to the brethren in Lydia's house; for when they had seen the brethren and comforted them, they departed (Acts 16:40). What trials lie ahead of them? What joys? If they weighed the future by the past, they knew the road they followed would be an admixture of both.

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