

Unexpected Grace

Text : **Acts 16: 20-34**

INTRODUCTION :

- A. Have you ever experienced a surprising turn of events ? Everyone has.
1. **ILL. – Johnny and I bought a truckload of white face heifers which turned out to be so wild they were almost impossible to round up and load. I wanted to back out of the deal, but Johnny didn't. We were bruised and wounded when we finally got them to the Sale. We feared a loss, but we made a very large profit.**
 2. We've all gone on trips or visits that did not turn out the way we anticipated.
- B. The Apostle Paul and Silas did not go to Philippi planning the result they got.
1. Relate context of Text.
 - a. Visiting churches to encourage and to report on the Jerusalem conference of **Acts 15.**
 - b. Went to church by the river and had some baptisms. (**Lydia**)
 - c. Cast a demon out of a harassing stocker.
 2. The Apostle Paul and Silas were arrested for doing a good deed to the girl.
 - a. She was the business of unscrupulous people.
 - b. They were the equivalent of pimps so the loss of income angered them.
 - * Note : **Fortunetelling is the result of demonic activity.**
 - c. A crowd gathered to oppose Paul and Silas.

TRANSITION :

This is where our text picks up. Paul and Silas are facing the angry mob in court.

I. Exegete the text :

- A. Vs. **20-21** ... Paul and Silas were proclaiming an unpopular message.
1. It was counter to the Philippian culture.
 - a. Very old city which was established 360 years B.C.
 - b. Roman colony ... many retired Roman soldiers.
 2. They were accused of breaking the law. (**violated culture, not law**)
 3. Hostility did not cause them to stop preaching. (**Many today easily give up.**)

B. Vs. 23-23 ... They were beaten and imprisoned for obeying God.

1. The Apostles considered it a privilege to suffer for the cause of Christ.
Acts 5: 40-42 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and *then* released them. ⁴¹ So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
2. All faithful disciples are warned of afflictions to come.
Read ... Matt. 10: 17-18 , 22
3. Faith gives the Christian the courage to face opposition and oppression.
Read ... Matt. 10: 28
4. The Christian's willingness to stand for God in the face of an unwelcome response is a measure of his relationship with God.
Read ... Matt. 10: 32-33

C. Vs. 24 ... They were put into the maximum security section of the prison.

1. "Inner prison" (**No windows, one door, stone walls**)
2. In addition, their feet were put in "stocks." (**Treated as dangerous felons**)
3. Their bad accommodations were accompanied by bad treatment.
* **What would your response be in their circumstances?**

D. Vs. 25 ... The Apostle Paul and Silas had a positive and a spiritual attitude.

1. **Praying** ... They turned it all over to God.
2. **Singing hymns of praise** ... They accepted God's decision.
3. **Midnight** ... It was quiet so all could hear. (**hard to sleep with sore backs**)
4. **The Prisoners were listening** ... They continued evangelizing even in prison.
 - a. There are always people watching our light.
 - b. We choose which way we will react in every circumstance. (**Not "He made me .."**)

E. Vs. 26 ... Why would God send an earthquake ?

1. Not just a coincidence that the earthquake just happened while they were in prison.
2. God could have delivered them any way that he so chose.
Remember : Peter and John were freed by an angel ... Acts 5: 18-20
3. God was rattling the jailor's cage.
 - a. The miracles were for his benefit.
 - b. The prisoners release was a separate miracle. **Nature did not open all the chains.**

F. Vs. 27 ... The Jailor's reaction was what one would expect.

1. Jailors were most commonly aging Roman soldiers.
 - a. Many were active duty soldiers nearing retirement.
 - b. Often they had been wounded or were otherwise limited in battle.
 - c. Such an assignment was a reward for faithful service.
2. Jailors were strong men. (**not like in the movies**)
 - a. They had fought wars and seen death. (**They had killed men in battle.**)
 - b. They were intensely loyal and patriotic men.
 - c. To loose a prisoner was a disgrace and punishable by death.

G. Vs. 28-29 ... The Apostle Paul seized the opportunity to evangelize.

1. He could have easily remained silent.
 - a. Jailors were not typically kind or merciful people.
 - b. Paul and Silas would have borne no responsibility for the jailor's death.
2. If the jailor had died, Paul and Silas would have been free.
 - a. He revealed his Christian character.
 - b. Paul lived his love for lost souls. (**Not looking out for self**)

H. Vs. 30 ... The conduct of Paul and Silas had a positive effect.

1. The jailor realized they were different from the common prisoners.
 - a. The jailor knew they had been imprisoned for preaching.
 - b. He had observed their faith-filled conduct while they were incarcerated.
 - c. The jailor was quick to connect the dots.
2. The jailor's hard heart was melted and transformed.
 - a. Notice he did not go directly to secure the prisoners.
 - b. He realized he was in opposition to God ... **"What must I do ?"**

I. Vs. 31-32 ... The Apostle told him the gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

1. The full text of Paul's message is not recorded.
2. There is no complete sermon recorded anywhere in the bible.
 - a. The Sermon On The Mount is the most complete.
 - b. There are excerpts from many sermons, but not all of any one sermon. **Acts 2, 7, etc.**
* **Points important to the context are recorded, but not even all important points.**

Note : **One does not have the will of God about ANY subject until he has all t he bible reveals about that subject.** (Prooftexting = error)

J. Vs. 33-34 ... Paul's message :

1. He taught enough about Jesus to create faith.
2. His message included the need to be baptized.

Compare : Phillip teaching the Ethiopian Treasurer.

Acts 8: 35 ... Phillip preached Jesus.

36 ... The Treasurer knew he needed to be baptized,

37 ... Phillip's lesson created faith in Jesus as the Christ.

3. Paul's message transformed the jailor's life. (**True faith transforms lives.**)
 - a. He became merciful. (**washed their wounds**)
 - b. He practiced hospitality. (**fed them**)
 - c. His whole household was filled with joy. (**No apprehension or regret**)
4. Paul's message was grace. (**Pure unmerited favor**)
 - a. The jailor had done nothing to deserve or to earn it.
 - b. The jailor was not seeking after it.
 - c. He was an enemy of God, not better than other people.

II. Some challenges from this story.

- A. **May we each one individually seek to personally emulate the conduct and the Christian character of the Apostle and Silas.**
- B. **May we join together in striving to transform this congregation into one that collectively follows the pattern that is herein set forth by the beloved Paul.**
- C. **As we consider the account of this jailor's transformation, from it let us develop a mission statement for the family of God who meets here.**
 (**Explain what a mission statement is and what is the benefit of having one.**)
 1. As a congregation we will be alert for and will seek opportunities to proclaim the saving message of the gospel of Jesus the Christ in such a way that people will joyfully accept it, obey it, and have their lives transformed by it.
 2. We will then draw each new member into a warm, welcoming fellowship of love for God and for one another which will provide for their spiritual needs and cause them to mature into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
 3. We will assist each member find his or her unique function in the body of Christ and help each member to develop his function to the fullest benefit of the body and to the glory of God.

III. Some practical suggestions. To accomplish this mission statement :

Some practical suggestions. To accomplish this mission statement :

- A. We must make it our manor of life, not just a church program.**
- B. We must individually and collectively develop our faith to the point we have the courage to reach out to the lost in this current hostile environment.**
- C. We must each surrender our lives, first to Christ, then to His church, and finally to each other.**
- D. We must keep actively working to strengthen our love for God and for each other until this congregation becomes a haven for each and every member.**
- E. We must develop a sincere love and concern for lost people which motivates us to seek them out and do our best to lead them to salvation regardless of opposition.**

CONCLUSION :

- A. Summarize and challenge the hearers to adopt the missions statement proposed.**
- B. Apply the story of the jailor to lost people in the audience.**

INVITATION :

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