

***Acts 16:25-34. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, 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 the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. <sup>34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.***

### **The Word Brings Peace in the Chaos**

1. The Gospel Saves us from the Punishment that We Deserve
2. The Gospel Brings Us into the Joy of God's Family.

*What just happened?...*

As the dust settles from another shocking week of strange events and turmoil and chaos, questions and uncertainty, we come to God's house and he once again blesses us with the peace that he gives to us through word and Sacrament. Through his Word and the Word connected with water in Baptism, the Lord gives us peace in the chaos. The good news of Jesus Christ places before us the all-important truths that Jesus came to be the Savior that all mankind needed and by faith in him we are saved from the punishment that we sinners deserve. This saving gospel of Jesus brings us into the joy of God's family, which brightens even the darkest moments of our lives. May God refresh us by these truths, once again today.

*What just happened?* The earth shook, the foundations of the prison trembled, shackles fell off to the floor, and the doors flew open. What just happened? One moment the jailer at Philippi had been serenaded to sleep by the soothing hymns of a few unexpectantly pleasant prisoners when suddenly he was jolted awake. As soon as his eyelids flew open the questions started to swirl through his mind as he

raced to see what had happened in the prison. His heart likely pounded, and his gut probably sank when his eyes took in this impossible sight, the prison doors were open. The questions must have then swirled even faster, and his emotions surely raced out of control. What had happened? What would happen to him? What kind of punishment would he face? What would happen to his family? In that dreadful moment, it was as if his whole world was crashing down around him, and his hands almost instinctively reached for his sword as confusion and guilt and fear and rushed upon him.

But then there was a voice, someone crying out with words of compassion. The voice snapped him out of his startled haze, so he rushed in and called for lights. Shaken and confused, unsure of what was going on around him, he was also fearful of what would happen next. And then in the mess of all of this, he saw those men who had been singing and praying to God as he fell asleep, but this was no dream, this was real life, and suddenly he had a big question that surged to the forefront of his mind. ***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*** Perhaps the man had in mind a list of things that he ought to get in order or some drawn-out process of self-reform, or maybe he was simply hoping for a quick fix to avoid punishment from more high-ranking officials or from the divine being who had clearly intervened to set these prisoners free from their chains. The questions and emotions and anxieties swirled with that one question in particularly surging to the forefront of his concerns as it rushed from his lips, ***“what must I do to be saved?”***

The answer that Paul and Silas gave must have hit his ears as unexpected. ***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*** The answer would change his life and would bring peace to the chaos of his present situation, his life, and the life and eternity of those around him. ***Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved you and your household.***

Notice how the pace of things seems to slow so suddenly after these words word spoken. All this frantic activity gave way to a calmer time of teaching, instruction, and conversation that likely stretched into the early morning. An impromptu sermon/bible study was conducted as Paul and Silas ***spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.*** This strange and wonderful message of a Savior from sin was then met with a kind deed as the jailer offered to wash the wounds of these former inmates. The presence of water then picked up the pace of things again, as it provided a teachable moment and an opportunity for the apostles to segue into a wonderful lesson about baptism. And thus, water was used to wash away more than dirt and blood that day. It was connected to the promises and work of Christ Jesus and it brought new life. Water connected with God’s Word washed away sin and fear and guilt and it made new, it brought the blessings of faith to this man and all who were baptized. Suddenly the man who feared for his life now was filled with joy. Suddenly the minds filled with so many questions were blessed with profound clarity.

Certainly, questions would remain, practical issues awaited with the dawn. What would this all mean for his occupation, his life moving forward? But this all faded to the background as he considered this unexpected and gracious news that he had received. This man was a child of God, saved from eternal punishment, through faith in Jesus Christ, his Savior. After a hectic and frightening series of events, this man, this jailer, had the peace that goes beyond understanding, through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he knew, by faith, that no matter what the future held for him he had peace and joy in Jesus. And so at this strange hour of the early morning, the jailer and his family sat and had a family meal, and that meal included Paul and Silas who were now their brothers in Christ. Despite all that was going on around them, the challenges they would face, they were all filled with joy and peace because they were now members of God's family. God had, in a way, graciously barged into his home with unexpected gifts of forgiveness and grace and faith in Jesus and now the man and his whole household knew the joy and peace that Jesus brings. Whatever happened after this the jailer, Paul and Silas, and all who were baptized knew that each of them was a child of God, claimed by the Almighty and saved through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*What just happened?* The past year has been one of great turmoil and trouble. This past week seemed to reach another startling crescendo. Chaos and turmoil continue, questions and trouble remain, emotions and confusion continue to swirl. The shocking events of the world around us has left us stunned and startled, and perhaps because we have seen it so many times before it has left us numb. Anxiety and trouble and pain and frustration and confusion soar, as we try to wrap our minds around it all. What just happened? What is going to happen next? What does it mean for me and my family? The questions and concerns are numerous, and they fan out in all sorts of different directions. We are concerned about our nation. We are concerned about our physical well-being and our families and our personal livelihoods. We may be concerned for our lives and the lives of loved ones. Add that to an ever-growing list of concerns for our daily lives, the troubles that we face as individuals, questions surrounding our health, the loss of loved ones, the frustrations and trials of life, etc. It all stacks up and swirls around and there are certain moments where it seems to come crashing down. Therefore, it is likely that the events of the last week, along with the events of the last few months, have led more than a few people, including you and me, to think a little bit more often about those big picture questions. Those questions surge to the forefront of our minds and may even stumble from our lips, *What is life in this broken world all about? What is truly important?* At a time like this, we might think a little bit more about family and friends, we pull them in a little tighter, as we talk about the issues of the day. And we likely sense that this life as we know it won't go on forever. Turmoil and pain, sickness, and death, it all surrounds us, and it forces the question, *what's next?* And as that question moves in and hovers over us. We may tremble as we consider our

shortcomings our flaws and failures, our biases, and words and deeds of dishonesty and hate, our many sinful acts of rebellion against God himself. We may consider the things that we have done wrong and the good things that we have failed to do. As sinners our conscience senses that we ought to be punished for all of this, for all the times we have forsaken God's commands and carried out our own personal rebellions against the Almighty. No one is innocent not even one. We all ought to be dealt with and cast aside into the prison house of hell for our misdeeds. In some form or fashion, all of us sinners are personally pressed by the gravity of it all into asking the question "***What must I do to be saved?***"

What a relief and wonderful gift of assurance that hits our ears and touches our hearts and calms our minds to hear that answer so freely given, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." What a joy it is to know that it is God himself who intervenes who comes to saves you and me through Christ! As he does this for the sake of the whole world, he also assures us that he does this for each of us. He pardons and forgives, he restores and renews us personally. Through Baptism he has washed away my sin and made his own dear child who he cares for each and every day! Despite my sin and my failings, despite my inability to control what happens, or make things right in this life or in eternity, God reassures me day after day through his Word and Water that I am his and I am saved! What a joy it is to have that message so personally given! What a privilege and joy it is to share that message of grace with my family and friends and those who are near and dear. No matter what is going on in my life or yours, or in this world around us, we know this to be true: God sent his only begotten Son to save us. Believe in the LORD Jesus and be saved!

With a voice of compassion, our God shouts out into our chaos with his Word of peace, through his messengers of grace, and how blessed are those who hear what he has to say. For he has the answers to our biggest questions and in his abundant goodness he also delivers wonderful gifts of peace and joy through His Word and Sacraments. Gifts that are so precious and powerful that as his people set free by his grace, we proclaim his name in times of abundance and even sing his praise in days of trouble. God in his grace comes to us. Our Savior, who came to carry our sins to the cross, and die and rise for us, now claims us as his own dear child. He comes to us through Word and Sacrament and calms our fears and give us peace and joy as he reminds us of the wonderful privilege that we can go to him with our prayers and concerns and leave our anxieties at his feet, knowing that he is in control and he cares for us. Even when the world seems to be shaking around us, we are safe and secure in his loving embrace. Oh, what joy and peace we have in hearing and knowing and believing that God has claimed us as his own and have given us the truth of his Word and the blessing of Baptism! Oh, what blessed peace and joy is ours in knowing the answer to life's biggest problem, "I am saved because by God's grace, for by the power of the Holy Spirit, I believe in my Lord Jesus Christ!" Amen.