

First Sunday after the Epiphany The Baptism of Our Lord

Sermon Road Map
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Acts 16:25-34
January 10, 2021

Are you as wise as the jailer, Paul, and Silas?

- Do you realize? This jailer & his household: 1st known European Gentile converts
 - ♦ Jesus' first assault to rescue our European ancestors from Satan's darkness
- Christians who know this account, know the jailer's question and their answer.
 - ♦ Question: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*
 - ♦ Answer: *Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved,...*
 - ♦ Sadly many have a shallow understanding of the question and a flawed understanding of the answer. Let's grow together asking....

Are you as wise as the jailer, Paul, and Silas?

❖ Know the terror of the jailer.

- *The jailer ...rushed in, and fell down trembling in front of Paul and Silas.*
- What made this Roman guard tremble?
 - ♦ He felt the foundation of the prison shake from a violent earthquake.
 - Earthquake traumatize people. What seemed solid, isn't any more.
 - *Will there be an aftershocks. Am I safe?* It is very unsettling - terrorizing.
 - ♦ His **greater terror**: facing the Most High God
 - He had strict orders to guard these men securely.
 - If he didn't know why they were there, their worship made it clear.
 - Had he heard what the demon possessed slave girl proclaimed for days?
 - *These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way to be saved.*
 - The jailers best security (inner prison & stocks) was no match for their God.
 - They were friends of the Most High God. The jailer knew he was not!
 - ♦ Terror overcame him: *The prisoners have escaped.* He faced death.
 - The magistrate would have no mercy if Paul and Silas escaped.
 - His family might be spared if he killed himself.
 - While pagans worship their gods - they fear to speak of the Most High God.
 - Even without the Bible consciences convict. Guilt, fear, and shame terrorize.
 - People, especially facing death sense what is spelled out in Hebrews 10
 - ²⁷ *...there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a raging fire that is going to consume the enemies of God.*
 - ³¹ *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*
- What did this jailer fear? What did he want to *be saved from*?
 - ♦ The just wrath and judgment of the Living Most High God.
 - ♦ Saved from being on God's wrong side. Saved from not having him as his God.
- **It is wise** to know this reality. To know I face terror **if God is not my God.**
 - ♦ *Godly fear* respects God as the one and only True and Living God.
 - ♦ Those who lack such respect of God are left with *the fear of God - terror*
 - ♦ **The wise** want to know how to avoid the terrors of God's eternal wrath in hell.
 - God's just rejection and punishment of those who **reject him as their Lord.**
 - ♦ **It's wise** to always use this terror to deal with our arrogant sinful nature.

Thanks be to God! He didn't leave this jailer in terror or us. Here's how God saves us.

Are you as wise as the jailer, Paul, and Silas?

❖ Rely on the Rescuer - the Lord Jesus

- ***Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.***
- Examine the jailer's questions again. ***Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***
 - ♦ ***Be saved*** reveals he knew he could not save himself. - It's passive.
 - ♦ Yet, he wanted to know what he had to do to get a Savior - a Rescuer.
 - ♦ People assume they have to do something to start the process, file the request.
- The answer: **You can't do anything!** Rely on the One who does it all for you!
 - ♦ God's sent you a Savior. He revealed him at the Jordan. Jesus is the Christ!
 - ♦ Jesus lived a sinless life for you. Jesus died to blot out all your guilt. Finished.
 - ♦ Jesus defeated death and crushed Satan's power to liberate you from his reign.
 - ♦ Jesus reigns now to protect his people, daily rescuing them until safe with him
 - ♦ ***Believe = rely on Jesus alone. He did it all. He continues to rescue you.***
 - Rely- rest on - depend on him. Treat him as your Lord and Savior.
 - Knowing he is Lord of all and he is favored by the Father, all fear flees!
- **The wise** want to hear all about the Lord Jesus - the reliable evidence.
 - ♦ The jailer gathered his household - children, servants, slaves
 - ♦ The gospel worked its wonders, rescued from fear, created living trust in him
 - ♦ They were baptized, God's personal seal: washed away sins, raised to new life
 - ♦ The answer included his household suggests he was seeking to save them.
 - ♦ The gospel and baptism is for all - Gentiles, men, women, children, slaves
- The **faith God gives** through this answer **is a living active thing.**
 - ♦ Jesus hadn't abandoned Paul and Silas when they were beaten & imprisoned.
 - ♦ Faith in the Lord Jesus - knows he is Lord - in charge and all knowing
 - ♦ Their faith sprang into action: Proclaiming his person, power, and promises
 - Such proclamation speaks to each other, the other prisoners, and to self.
 - Holding God's promise out in front brought light to the darkness - crushed fear, doubt, and self-pity - producing patient endurance, tested character, hope, peace, joy and rejoicing.
- **Will you learn the wisdom** of Paul and Silas?
 - ♦ What songs, hymns, psalms, Bible passages, Catechism, prayers do you know?
 - ♦ Your dark dungeon may not be in a prison. A hospital bed? A dark time?
 - ♦ The songs you can sing by heart at a karaoke party or wedding celebration are mood manipulators at best. Shallow and helpless in your darkest hour.
 - ♦ Jackie Schulz freely shared Dale's witness - his help in his dark hours
 - Terrorized by vivid nightmares from the narcotics taken for pain or dealing with the severe pain of bone thinned and broken by cancer, Dale would break into hymns, Bible passages, and Catechism he knew by heart. This exercised and focussed his faith - finding rest in the Lord Jesus and all his promises.
 - ♦ The lack of hymn singing & memorizing is very unwise. Truly impoverished!
 - Don't choose hymns you find fun. Choose hymns that lead you to rely on Jesus.

Are you as wise as the jailer, Paul, and Silas?

Be sobered by the terror of falling into the hands of the Most High God saying you are not one of my children. Live knowing and wanting Jesus to be your Lord, relying on him to rescue you and bring you home to live with him forever. That's wise! That's real!