

"The Philippian Jailer"

A preacher was suddenly called out of town and he asked the new youth minister to conduct services on Sunday. When he returned, he asked his wife how the young man had done. "Not so well," she reported. "It was the poorest sermon I had ever heard--nothing to it at all." Meeting the youth minister later, the preacher asked him how he had managed. "Pretty good, I guess," replied the young man. "As I did not have time to prepare anything myself, I just used one of your sermons."

And I guess the point of the story is that as preachers we always need to make time to be prepared. The apostle Paul was probably one of the finest preachers we find within the Bible. And in **Acts 16** we find him about to go on another mission trip to preach to the Gentiles. **Acts 16:12** "One time, Paul and Silas went on a mission trip to Philippi."

Now Philippi was a Roman colony which basically means that they lived like Romans, dressed like Romans, ate like Romans and obeyed the Roman laws. In fact if you didn't know better you would think you were in Rome.

Acts 16:16 "As they travelled the countryside, they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she could predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners by fortune telling". **Acts 16:17** "She followed Paul and Silas shouting, "These men are the servants of the most high God and are telling the way to be saved!"

I was watching the film **Total Recall** the other day and there is a scene where **Arnold Schwarzenegger** finally makes it to **Mars** and he is approached by a little mutant girl who asks him if she could tell him his future. **Arnold** because he's in a hurry and has lost his memory asks her, 'what about the past?'

Now the fortune telling we find here in Biblical times is nothing like the so called fortune telling of today. People having been claiming these things for centuries loved ones, but as Christians we need to make sure we don't get involved with their schemes and dealings.

In **Isaiah 40-48** the Lord sets Himself apart from the idols of the people by affirming that He alone will tell them what will happen before it happens, so that when the event takes place they can know that He is God. And so God goes ahead and challenges these so called fortune-tellers.

Isaiah 41:22+23 "Come here and predict what will happen, so that we will know it when it takes place. Explain to the court the events of the past, and tell us what they mean. Tell us what the future holds--- then we will know that you are gods! Do something good or bring some disaster; fill us with fear and awe!"

In other words the whole point is that the ability to know the future is restricted to God. It makes sense that if God is the only one with the ability to know the future, then only those with God's help could foretell it.

Have you ever wondered why God wants Christians to stay clear of people like psychics or astrologers, and fortune-tellers? The answer is quite simple loved ones; the Lord hates these people because they encourage people to place their confidence in someone or something other than God and His will for their lives.

So the next time someone comes up to you claiming they can predict the future just ask what **Arnold Schwarzenegger** asked. 'What about the past?' And if they ask you **what do you mean**, just get them to read **Deuteronomy 18:10-13** "Don't sacrifice your children in the fires on your altars; and don't let your people practice divination or look for omens or use spells or charms, and don't let them consult the spirits of the dead. The Lord your God hates people who do these disgusting

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things, and that is why he is driving those nations out of the land as you advance. Be completely faithful to the Lord."

Anyway this young slave girl continues to follow Paul and Silas around. Acts 16:18 "She kept this up for many days until finally Paul become so troubled by it that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!"

Now you guys as young as you are need to be aware what people are claiming in the world today. Now some people claim they are possessed by some spirit and so they go along to some religious group asking for the spirit to be removed.

I was watching a so-called exorcist on u-tube the other week; this man claimed he was possessed by a spirit which made him gay. And so the so called faith healers did an exorcism on him to drive out this spirit which made him gay. Well you can watch the whole thing on u-tube and after being pushed and pulled around the exorcism lasted around 40 minutes.

Now compare that time with the real power of God. Acts 16:18 "At that very moment the spirit left her". Guys you need to be aware that many people claim many things but the only way to measure something to see if it's true is by comparing similar events we have recorded in the Bible.

When Paul wanted to rid this spirit from this young girl, he did it in Jesus Name and at that very moment the spirit left her. How would you feel if you were that young girl? How would you feel if you owned that slave girl and she is free from this spirit at long last? Now you would think that the slave girl's owners would be happy that she is free of this spirit wouldn't you?

Acts 16:19 "When the owners of the girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and took them to face the authorities". Acts 16:20 "They went before the magistrates and said, "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews! They are teaching things that are against Roman customs." Acts 16:22 "The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas and the city officials ordered them to be stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison."

Now notice the slave girl's owners weren't happy about her being healed because they lost a valuable source of income from her. But this just shows how some people don't really care about other people; all they care about is money.

But also notice that the owners of the slave girl didn't tell the courts the truth, they claimed that Paul and Silas were teaching against Roman customs. And so Paul and Silas were thrown in jail.

Acts 16:23 "The Jailer was commanded to make sure that they did not escape, so he clamped their feet in stocks". Acts 16:24 "After making sure that Paul and Silas could not escape, the jailer sat down to rest".

So Paul and Silas are pretty much tied up in stocks and secure and the jailer is taking a well earned nap. Acts 16:25+26 "About midnight, Paul and Silas began to pray and sing. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake and the prison doors opened." Acts 16:27 "The jailer woke up to see the doors wide open and he was terrified because he thought that all the prisoners had escaped".

This poor jailer got the fright of his life when he woke up because he thought all the prisoners had escaped. Now to you and I that may not be a big deal but to this jailer, it was big deal because under Roman law if prisoners escaped whilst they were under your care, you were dealt with the penalty which they were supposed to have.

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Acts 16:27+28 "He took out his sword and was about to kill himself when he heard Paul shout, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

That's why he was about to kill himself, he would rather die than be disgraced by being sentenced to jail. But as we just read Paul stopped him from killing himself. Acts 16:29 "Trembling with fear, the jailer called for the lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down before Paul and Silas". Acts 16:30 "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" he asked".

So this poor Philippian jailer is shaking with fear and asks the question, 'what must I do to be saved?' Now here's the question, 'what must I do to be saved from what?' Saved from all the cockroaches which are running around because suddenly the lights went on! Saved from being sentenced to prison because he failed in his job! Saved from being murdered by these Christians because he locked them up in stocks! Saved from some of the children here at Great Barr!

Saved from what? The only answer you can give is saved from his sins. After listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing in the cell, after the way they were freed but didn't run away, he must have come to the conclusion that their God was very real and very powerful.

And when you're faced with a God like that, you have no choice but to recognise Romans 3:23+24 "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free."

He wanted to be saved from his sins and he asks Paul how he can do that and so Paul answers him. Acts 16:31+32 "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with your entire household," they answered. Then they shared the Word of the Lord with all who lived in his household".

The jailer has just gone from having no reason to live to having a reason to live. And that's what Jesus does for a person loved ones, He gives us a purpose to live, He gives us a reason to live.

Now we're studying how to become a Christian with the older kids at the moment and one of the fundamental things we have to establish first before we can move on is believing. And this is what Paul is trying to establish with the jailer and his household.

The jailer and his household believed what the Bible said but that didn't make them Christians. What made them Christians is what they did next. Acts 16:33 "Then the jailer and all in his household were baptized"!

Now what's wrong with this picture? Sprinkling is not Biblical baptism; sprinkling is having a small shower on your head. You see baptism involves a death and whenever there is a death there is a funeral which usually involves being buried. If my dog Oscar died and I dug a small hole in the back garden and just threw some dirt over him would he be buried? No! He's not buried; I would have to dig a whole big enough so that I could lay him in it and completely cover him in dirt.

Now look at this picture. Acts 16:33 "Then the jailer and all in his household were baptized." This picture makes sense now doesn't it, here we see a guy being buried in the waters of baptism.

In fact what we see in this picture is Romans 6:3+4 "For surely you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life."

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In this picture we can see that Romans passage illustrated. Here we see a death and a burial and a resurrection. So the jailer and his household died to self in the waters of baptism and their reaction was much the same as most people I know straight after their baptism.

Acts 16:34 "The jailer was filled with great joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole family"! It's always a joyous moment when someone is baptised for the forgiveness of their sins isn't it? Not only for the saints here on earth but also for the angels in heaven. Luke 15:10 "In the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents."

In the film *Pirates of the Caribbean* we see the quest of Captain Jack Sparrow, a savvy pirate, and Will Turner, a resourceful blacksmith, as they search for Elizabeth Swann. Elizabeth, the daughter of the governor and the love of Will's life, has been kidnapped by the feared Captain Barbosa. Little do they know, but the fierce and clever Barbosa has been cursed. He, along with his large crew, are under an ancient curse, doomed for eternity to neither live, nor die. That is, unless a blood sacrifice is made.

You see guys in many ways the whole of humanity is under a curse because of our sin and the only way for us to be freed from that curse is to accept the blood sacrifice which Christ made on the cross for us. Today, people are still asking the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

And loved ones, the answer is still the same, "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved!"