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**A0914 – April 5, 2009 – Acts 16:25-34 – The Evangelical Wake-Up
Call**

Alright, open your Bible to Acts 16. We've been studying the invasion of the gospel into Europe and we have said this is one of the greatest moments of western history. Of course, from the humanist point of view this is not considered great but regardless of what they think the freedoms they enjoy come from Christianity. Christianity has done more to shape western culture than any other single factor.ⁱ

Now, when Paul and his staff first arrived in Europe they were first met with success in Acts 16:11-15. The lady singled out is Lydia, a woman of the upper class; she sold purple fabrics which was the equivalent today of selling Mercedes-Benz, it was high dollar stuff and she ran with the high crowd. And she responded to Paul's message because the Lord opened her heart to believe the gospel. But very soon after Paul was met with opposition. The opposition in Acts 16:16-24 was in the area of business and economics. Here we have a demon possessed girl run by the crime syndicate. And the demon she had was a ventriloquist demon which used the art of necromancy (calling up the dead) and so he would throw his voice and mimic the so-called person they were calling up and reveal the future trade market value or something. But in this case the gospel destroyed wealth by destroying the product altogether. The gospel literally shuts down production in verse 16; it drives certain men in the ranks of the criminal syndicate out of business, men who were making a lot of money. But because of the gospel infiltration they no longer have a product to market and so we see that the gospel changes the supply of certain products when it moves into an area. Of course, to compensate, Christianity brings in other products to stimulate the market in other areas, godly areas.

Another route the gospel affects economics as we'll see in Acts 19 at Ephesus is that people's valuation of products changes. They look at some object one day and "Oh, that's so valuable, I'll pay \$100 for that." Three weeks later after sound Bible teaching, "I don't need that, that's a waste of money." It shows you that Bible doctrine affects the market because by changing value of a product suddenly people won't pay that price anymore. The argument, of course, that we're making here is for capitalism over and against socialism. So now we've had success with the upper class, Lydia, the low class, this demon possessed girl, and now we turn to the middle class, the Philippian jailer, Acts 16:25. Last week we ended with Paul and Silas' receiving their standing ovation. Everybody was so happy to have Paul in Europe. "Welcome to Europe Paul, how about some time in the stocks." So these two men have been cast into a suffering situation, they're facing a crisis. We want to see how they handle the crisis. Then we'll see another man facing a crisis and we want to contrast how he handles his crisis with how Paul and Silas handle theirs.

In verse 25 the scene is set. Remember, Paul and Silas in the dungeon with feet fastened in the stocks. **But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*. ³⁴And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.**

So, the episode is one that clearly involves a crisis. People who are used to reading their Bibles, of course, read this passage and they key in on verse 31 and they forget everything else. Well, yes, theologically that's important, but don't forget everything else. Surely as we read the text you saw that you have on one side a man that is suicidal, he is responding to a crisis situation in his life in a pagan way, he's ready to take his own life, he sees no other solution to his problem. On the other hand we have Paul and Silas, and they too face a crisis situation, they're stuck in prison, and so we're going to study, why, when they face a crisis they react the way they do.

So to see the difference let's start with the Philippian jailer. Here he is in the midst of a crisis situation, the earthquake has shaken his prison, the doors are open. It's a situation of chaos. Everything has gone wrong and as he responds to the chaos he makes certain unfounded assumptions and he begins to act on those, which leads to greater chaos. As is so often the case when a crisis situation comes and we respond, our response causes more damage and chaos. Take, for example, the scenario that he had in fact killed himself? Would that have solved the problem? He himself would no longer be in that situation. But now he's got a bigger situation to face, eternity in hell. So what does suicide solve? And further his family would be left without a provider and the prisoners are still escaped. So has anything been solved? Has the problem been lessened? The problem has gotten worse. Such is the nature of pagan problem solving techniques. In response to crisis one creates a greater crisis two and so forth.

On the other hand Paul and Silas are in a crisis situation being locked in prison. In v 25 we're told it's **midnight** and that little time marker is significant because it hints at why they were singing and praying. You say at midnight - I thought they'd be sleeping. Well, the answer is they can't sleep because they're in a situation involving tremendous pain. Remember these men have been beaten, they have been beaten by a group of men called the *lictors*; *lictors* carried these rods all bundled up with an axe. This is the symbol of Mussolini's fascist party; the reason for the name fascism is because these were called *fascies*. They are a symbol for corporal and capital punishment of the government. The government has the power. And so the government had beaten Paul and Silas so badly; they are in pain, they can't sleep. That's why they're awake at midnight. Their feet are in the stocks, they may well be sitting in their own feces, and so they are in tremendous

discomfort. That's their crisis. Now they have a choice, they could face this situation as the jailer and go to pieces or they could face the situation with biblical wisdom and solve the problem.

Let's look at this from the standpoint of the Philippian jailer and ask ourselves, "What assets does the jailer have to cope with his crisis?" Because you can't use what you don't have we just want to focus on the pagan man and what tools he has to solve his problems. I am a pagan all I have is me, and from that perspective I have to solve the problem. That's the mentality of the flesh. And here I am, I'm surrounded by chaos, my prisoners have escaped and what's the first thing that starts to happen? I start to worry, there's a tremendous emotional buildup that occurs in a matter of seconds. All of a sudden the whole world has fallen around me. And so I begin to respond the only way I can, in the flesh, which is the emotions. One of the emotions with prisoners escaped is this man is afraid, this man is desperately afraid and the adrenaline is churning. Ten seconds ago he was asleep now he sees the door and he's in utter terror. This is how fast it can happen and I warn you of that because the kind of training you need to not emote out of the flesh is serious Bible doctrine training, years and years of training. We're going to see that the only way to resolve crisis situation is the biblical way. But it's too late to train when a crisis occurs, if you've been fooling around, and not taking it seriously. It'll never happen to me mentality, then you're going to emote just like a pagan when a crisis hits. Now, in the jailer's situation, operating only on the basis of his flesh he has two options. Option one is the legalistic route: this is where I'm going to solve my problem by restoring order. I'm going to run out and capture all the prisoners or something. But that's never going to work, it's pitch black outside, the prisoners are running every which direction over the hills, I can't solve my problem that way so I choose option two. I go licentious, which is I try to escape the situation. I could run away and go underground, but then eventually I'm still going to get caught; the Roman authorities are everywhere. Even if I stay underground for awhile I may run into some of the escaped convicts, they'll kill me or do worse. So I do the only thing I know to escape the situation, I commit suicide. You can see that on a pagan basis, with only the flesh as an asset to cope with a crisis situation, how a person could very quickly move to a decision to kill themselves. When people feel like they have no escape. We've seen criminals like this: they're driven to the point where they see no way out and they don't want to live with the

consequences, they just turn the gun to their head and bang, pull the trigger. In the flesh they see no other way out. That's the jailer's mentality. He sees no way out. So what has happened to the jailer? How could we classify what's happened to him? He's been enveloped by the situation, the situation has just flat overwhelmed him. And we've all had this happen to us where the pressure was just so great that we crumbled under the stress.

Now let's look at the crisis Paul and Silas face and ask ourselves the same question we asked the jailer, "What assets do they have to cope with their crisis?" How is it that they do not get enveloped by the situation? How is it that they in fact envelop the situation and solve the problem both for themselves and the jailer? Well, the first thing is they have the word of God. And therefore they are not left solely to themselves and their flesh to solve the problem. They could choose that route and go down the paths of licentiousness in which case they could get angry; we came all the way over to Europe, we've had two converts in three weeks, now we get thrown in the slammer, this just isn't working, and fall into depression. Or they could swing the legalistic route and try to escape; we're going to manhandle this prison situation. The problem there is they're all beat up, they haven't had any food, they're feet are locked in the stocks; escape isn't looking too good right now. But there's a third option these men have that the Philippian jailer didn't have. And that is that I know God is there and I know who God is. I know the character of God. So the biblical response to a crisis starts with the character of God. What are some of His attributes that we can tap into in a crisis situation? The first one is sovereignty. God controls whatsoever comes to pass. Does that help? Of course it does. What does that do? In a crisis situation what tends to happen to our problem? It gets inflated in our mind. Suddenly our problem, which may be quite small, balloons into a massive unconquerable crisis. What does the sovereignty of God do in that kind of situation? It brings the problem down to size. Now I can say God's sovereignty is bigger than my problem. What else do I know from God's character that might help? That He's omniscient. He knows all things actual and possible. Does He know my situation here in this dark dungeon? Does He know I'm sitting here in my own crud? Of course He does. In fact, I know He planned it. And that's big, because now I'm thinking in terms of there really is a plan for history, that history is personal and it's not all chance, chance doesn't reign, God reigns and if God reigns over the big plan for history then what else do I know but that God reigns over the details of my life. Now we're

getting someplace because if I know all that then I know there's a meaning and purpose for me being in this crisis. So knowing that He has a purpose, what's something else that I might add in the mix at this point? God is loving. So if God loves me, I may not feel it right now, but I'm not focusing on self, I'm focusing on Him and I know He loves me, He sent His own Son into history to die for me. So as I'm thinking about His attributes, I'm thinking about what He's done in history, what's happening to my problem? See what's happening? It's shrinking. Rather than the situation enveloping me, the word of God is enveloping the situation. It's exactly the reverse of the world's way of handling a crisis.

So let's see what Paul and Silas did in v 25. As you read v 25 where clearly is their focus? Is it on their problem? Is it on the feces? Is it on the pain of the stocks? Is it the fact they can't sleep? Is it the fact that there's been a misallocation of justice here? No, it's on God. They're focusing on who God is. See how they enveloped their circumstances? Now they can worship God; which is exactly what's going on here. One of the ways that our heart is strengthened in this envelopment process is through worship. Worship is proper concentration upon Him and that's what they're doing.

Alright, now that we've sketched the two different ways of handling a crisis; the pagan way and the biblical way, let's go into the details starting in v 25 and see how problems are solved. **But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.** This is how they handled their crisis, they didn't go legalistic, they didn't go licentious, they went biblical, they prayed and sang hymns, and technically the present middle participle with the imperfect active indicative verb means while **praying** they were **singing hymns**, in other words it was simultaneous, they mixed singing with praying, so they'd sing then they'd pray and they sing then they'd pray, back and forth, back and forth. And notice the direction of their prayer and praise, **to God**, so their focus is on Him, their concentrating upon Him. They're not focusing on look at the jam we're in, what we can do, or any of that, but who God is and what He can do.

Now we don't know what **hymns** they were singing but we can guess that they were Psalms of David which he composed in a crisis situation; when he was on the run from King Saul and King Saul was doing everything he could

to kill David and during that time David wrote several Psalms related to trusting the Lord in a dire situation, relying on the Lord for protection, the faithfulness of God and so forth. And the second thing they were mixing in was **praying**. The prayers will be answered in the next verse in a very dramatic way. But as they sang we're told **the prisoners were listening to them**. In other words, there wasn't any other entertainment going on, this was the best thing going and apparently from the verb we know they were enjoying it, Paul and Silas were a dynamic duo, the Jews were trained to sing, they were cultured from little babies to sing the Psalms and here they sing the great truths of God.

In verse 26, their prayers are answered, **and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened**. So the earthquake comes. By the way, the picture here isn't some stone jail. The picture is this jail is carved out of solid rock in the side of a hill and they've put these rods through the rock in the floor and the ceiling of this jail so when this rock gets shaken by an earthquake and shifts the bars fall out. And the stocks, they're all into the rock layer in the wall and they drop out. And that's what's mentioned in the last part of verse 26, **the prison house was shaken...all the doors were opened**, that's talking about the bars dropped out of their sockets, **and everyone's chains were unfastened.**"

Now what more physically concrete picture can you have of the omnipotence of God at work in answer to prayer? And at this point we've finished Paul and Silas' response to their crisis. They handled it magnificently, they enveloped the problem and God solved their problem.

Now verse 27, we come to the jailer's crisis and we observe the opposite response, it's all in the flesh, it's all a pagan response. Let's watch how he handles it. **When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened**, perfect tense, having been opened with the effect they were just standing wide open, and almost immediately, I want you to see how fast the flesh operates. He tries to solve his problem and his solution; suicide, brilliant solution. Actually, he's probably already reasoned out what he would do if his prisoners escaped. He already knew the penalty of Rome, its execution. You can take your prisoners to the moon, just be sure that when the magistrates

call you to bring your prisoners you show up with them. So you can just see him there hour after hour, nothing to do but sit in front of that cell and he probably conjured up all kinds of scenarios. What if I lose my prisoners? I can try to catch the prisoners. But in this case that won't work, no way will that work. I can try to run, that won't work either, Rome will catch up to me. So all I can do is kill myself; a marvelous set of options; only the third one he doesn't think about and that is God's solution to the problem.

And **so he drew his sword**, the *makaira*, which was a short double-edged sword the Romans invented, sort of like a long dagger. And suddenly, Paul enters the scene **with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"** Now Paul's down in the dungeon, its pitch black in the dungeon, the jailer can't see anything down there, he just assumes the prisoners escaped, he doesn't know, he's assumed. And this is another action of the flesh when it gets in a jam, it starts making assumptions about the problem, and before you know the problem has ballooned into something larger than it really is, and he's reacting out of the flesh, it's the worst case scenario. He's played it over and over in his mind, "Has he even checked the evidence?" No, and so Paul intervenes **with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"** Now, what has Paul just done for this man? This man is operating on the basis of the flesh; he's flown out of control. What has Paul brought to the situation? Paul has brought control into the situation. "Everything's under control, don't kill yourself." So he takes this problem that everything's out of control in the jailers mind and he cuts it down to size. See, **we're all here.** He brings the problem back into perspective. And by saying that he's not only calmed him down but he's saying, "Hey bud, come take a look at the data." Every time these Roman jailers woke up in the morning or they changed shift they'd do what any jailer would do which is take a head count, make sure nobody slipped out during the shift change or the last shift. It's standard operating procedure. Well, all he's saying to the jailer is hey, you might want to take a head count, find out if anyone's missing. Try it, you might be surprised. So he asks the guy to calm down and look at the facts of the case. So, that's the second thing in verse 28. Now you might wonder why these guys didn't escape. It truly is incredible that they would not try to escape. We're not told, we can only speculate. Robertson suggests the earthquake scared them so they didn't think to escape. Ha, ha. I'm already dead in prison; I might as well take my chances. Bruce suggests Paul and Silas restrained them. Yeah right.

Fruchtenbaum suggests the prisoners liked the singing. Well they may have, but I don't care how good the song is, if I'm a prisoner I'm leaving, I can listen to music later. Let me suggest that these people had responded to the gospel, that Paul and Silas had been praying and singing for several hours and in the midst of it all they believed the gospel and that's why they stayed. We're never told, it's speculation, but I think a valid one.

Verse 29, and this is where we really get into the psychology of this guy, this is the real crisis. You thought the prisoners escape was a crisis, which was nothing compared to what we find here. And we know this is a second crisis because Paul's essentially solved the first crisis. The prisoners are all there, the man is no longer trying to commit suicide, but something is still wrong. **And he called for lights, and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.** Now, I want you to think of this man. This man is a Roman citizen; most of the Roman jailers were ex-military. So he's probably had a full career as a Roman soldier, now he holds this post. So this is no little wimp on the outside. If you've ever met a jailer these are guys that know how to take care of business, you don't want to tangle with them. So you can imagine this is a guy with a lot of meat on his bones. But look at the guy, he gets his torch, he rushes in and he's shaking in his boots. What's going on here? What's going on is what goes on with a lot of the tough guys. The big guys that are too tough for the gospel and Jesus Christ. "Oh, I don't need Jesus, Jesus is for the little kiddos, and I'm a big man!" The God is a crutch type and I can take care of myself and I can solve all my problems. It's all a big front. And we know very well from the word of God it's a big front. But they'll never admit it. You can talk to these guys for hours and hours and they'll never let you in. It's all, "I'm tough and I can take care of myself, I don't need religion." It's what we call the façade that people put on. This is why some of the big tough guys are the biggest idiots when it comes to women. They'll abuse women verbally and physically just because they're afraid the woman might have a brain in her head and figure out that he's a wimp inside and isn't really all that, at heart he's insecure and really he's afraid of her, he's afraid she might find out who he really is underneath the facade." So he puts on the tough guy facade. The jailer is that kind of a guy. But now look, it's all coming out, he's **trembling**, the façade has come down, it's fractured. So that's the one thing his first problem showed him, "You can't take care of all your problems," and thus it all starts coming out, this big, tough Roman soldier has a big problem. Crisis number two this man was

facing was the fact that deep inside he was spiritually bankrupt. And it took a crisis of immense proportions to tear down the façade so this man could face up to his spiritual need. Sometimes this is the only way to break through the façade and this is one reason God sends crises into people's lives, to show them, "You can't handle it, the pressures of life are too great and you alone cannot tackle it, it will just swamp you." The little things, most people can handle those for awhile, it's when the big whammer happens, your son falls off a cliff, you get terminal cancer or something, and when that happens you fall apart. It's just too big and that's where God is saying, "Alright, I'm giving you your big shot here. Will you respond to Me? Mr Bigshot, now who controls the universe?" This is the Evangelistic Wake-Up Call. And for this man ever to come to salvation, a crisis had to occur in proportions that led him to the brink of suicide. Now think just how low that is. Many of us get angry or depressed, but this man is to the depths of suicide, the depths of destroying his whole existence. That's what it took to break through his façade. Paul probably could have held Bible study year after year in that jail cell and the man would just stand there, "Oh, I don't need that Jesus Christ, I don't need salvation, I've got it all together." But with this crisis he couldn't go that way anymore. And now that Paul's solved his physical crisis, the man is broken and he's literally on his knees asking if Paul can solve his spiritual crisis. See, he'd heard Paul and Silas singing and praying for hours, he got some of that message. So he knows they have something else to offer. So v 30, he asks, **Sirs, what must I do to be saved?** That is a tacit admission that he can't save himself; **saved** in the passive voice. He realizes salvation has to come from the outside. His question is what's the human condition I must meet to be saved? What must I do? And there is a human condition. And then the famous answer, v 31, **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.** Now he did not say, ask Jesus into your heart. Maybe that's the way someone shared with you. But that's not in the NT. And since it's not in the NT, not even in Rev 3:20, why would we share the gospel that way? Why would we re-direct a person from Jesus at the right hand of the Father to Jesus in the heart? That's a major shift, that's a shift from my subjective heart to the objective throne of the Father. It may seem like only a slight shift but the problem is what happens when my heart has a bad day? What if I don't feel good on Saturday? Is Jesus still in my heart? Is Jesus on a little throne in my heart? I don't feel like it, I'm over in the tulle. So it's a subtle shift but with major implications. As one commentator asked, "How do you tell Christ in the heart from heartburn?" See, it's not how I feel;

it's who Jesus Christ is as an objective person who accomplished an objective work on a cross outside of my heart in space and time. That's what we're interested in: Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father on high. And so the apostle Paul very simply gives an objective response, **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.** A very simple answer. Paul was the kind of guy, if you asked a simple question he'd give you a simple answer. Faith or believe in the Lord Jesus. Lord, is a title of deity, it means "master" because He's in charge of the universe. **Jesus** is his name and it means "the Lord is salvation." He's the object a person must believe in. To believe simply means to agree with certain statements. So if I agree in my mind with certain statements regarding the Lord Jesus then I am saved. And those statements include who He is and what He did; His person and His work. He is God and man in one person and what He did was He died on the cross for our sin and was raised from the dead.

Now I don't think he understood all that at this point. But that's coming in the next verse. For now, simple question, simple answer. And then he says; **you and your household**, which does not mean that if the jailer believed then his whole household would get in on his coat tails. What this means is that the same condition is applied to your household, if they believe they will be saved. In Roman society, the father had *pater familias* which meant that what the father decided the family would generally follow. Of course, that could be good or bad depending on what the father did. And so in v 32 Paul goes into his house we think was above the prison, **And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.** So he's evangelizing the whole house, he's explaining everything I just told you, who the Lord Jesus is and what He did; His person and His work. If anyone in his household believed in Him then they would be saved.

Now, what happens as the word is preached? At some point this man and his household believed in the Lord Jesus. We don't know all that was said but we do know from elsewhere (Paul's gospel, 1 Cor 15), that it centers on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In my estimation there are four indispensable things a person must believe to be saved. They must believe that Jesus is God and Jesus is man and that He died on the cross for our sins and was raised on the third day. If you believe those four things then you are saved. If you don't believe those four things, you just believe two or three, you are not saved.

Verse 33, here's the outworking of his salvation, **And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds**, which by the way means they were given a bath. They didn't just give him a washcloth, that would have been the word *nipito*, but he uses a word *louo* which means "to bathe," he's trying to help them cope with their pain, and so probably out in the prison courtyard Paul and Silas had their **wounds** bathed, a nice Christian gesture. It shows you incidentally the mode of baptism used in the early church was immersion, it was more like a bath than a sprinkling. **and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household**, so they had all believed in the Lord Jesus and there was no reason to prohibit them from being water baptized. But notice, first they were instructed, verse 32, and then they were baptized.ⁱⁱ In passing, note there are no tongues on this occasion, no stupendous manifestation of the Spirit, no commitment of life, no walking an aisle, no praying a special prayer, it's just faith alone in Christ alone. Paul and Silas obviously accepted them as full Christians apart from all those other things. Salvation is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Verse 34, **And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household**. And you immediately notice the change in this man, he's a big tough guy, big tough jailer, an ex Roman soldier, but now that he's had his true crisis resolved, he can relax, he invites the guys up for Christian fellowship over dinner.

Summarizing, what have we said? We've looked at two crises and the way these two crises were handled. There's a pagan way of handling a crisis in which you only have the flesh as a base of operation, the sin nature. And the sin nature can go one of two ways; it can go legalistic in which case it tries to solve the problem by making everyone conform, erecting new standards, making new laws, self-help and all the rest of it. Or the flesh can go licentious in which it just goes crazy, drugs, alcohol, musical ecstasy, sex, suicide, all the licentious route because the flesh sees no other way. The biblical way of handling a crisis has to first start by focusing on who God is. If God is there then God is in control, God is sovereign. That cuts my problem down to size. Hey, this can be solved. God has always known about this problem. So obviously He planned it. In a fallen world there is evil and suffering, it's

inescapable, it's just that with God's attributes the evil and suffering are cut down to size. And God is there and He is capable of handling the problem. So I rely upon Him. Eventually there's a crisis that comes in all of our lives that is too big to handle. And what that crisis will do is it will break the façade. And in this man's life God broke the façade down and the real spiritual crisis was laid bare. Who was going to solve his problem? Was Rome going to solve his problem? Obviously not, Rome was a part of the problem.

But I want you to notice the disruption that occurred in the lives of the jailer and his family. It was a momentous change of course in the direction of history. Had Paul not said, "stop, don't hurt yourself," the jailer would have committed suicide. Then what would his family have been doing? Mourning all night. As it is Paul did speak up and his whole family was saved that night, they rejoiced greatly and had fellowship. What am I getting at? What I'm getting at is salvation is a disruption in the normal course of life. God interferes in your life with suffering for a purpose. Is God interfering in your life right now? Are you facing a suffering situation and the façade is crumbling away. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Those of you who are believers, you never know all that God is up to, but you do know who God is. Paul and Silas didn't know what God was up to with their suffering. The Philippian jailer knew less. They all found out, in part, what God was up to. God uses suffering circumstances in our lives to evangelize unbelievers. Are you responding in suffering situations as Paul and Silas?

Was it worth it? Does God have a good purpose for the evil we have to endure? Sometimes the question is asked, "Are we really to give thanks for all things?" What about the really bad things in life? Turn to Eph 5. Verse 15 sets the context, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, ¹⁶making the most of your time, because the days are evil." By the way, where is Paul when he wrote Ephesians? He's in prison again. So he says, are you in prison, make the most of your time, don't waste time, preach the word in prison, "¹⁷So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Which will is described in v 18, "¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit," By the way, in principle, the phrase do not get drunk with wine applies to all anesthetics, it applies to drugs and other escapisms, that's not the will of God for the believer. The will of God is to be filled by means of the Spirit, which is to be

filled by the word of God, verse 19, and here comes the participles, this is what it looks like to be filled by the Spirit, to have the word of God dwelling richly within you, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;” Now, if that is not a carbon copy of what Paul and Silas did in that prison I don’t know what is. Now I ask you, did Paul mean to say give thanks for all things or just the good things? Paul was giving thanks right there in the dungeon strapped into the stocks. Am I to give thanks for a miscarriage? Am I to give thanks for my son who’s run off into drugs and all the rest of it? According to the word of God the answer is yes. How can that be? Because God works all things together for good. That means somehow in a miscarriage God is going to pull it off for the good. That means in a debilitating disease somehow God is going to turn it out for the good. Just like Joseph being sold off into slavery by his own brothers. Did that turn out for good? What you meant for evil, God meant for good. That’s the conclusion of the matter. And Paul believed that and he lived that and that’s why this situation happened in the Philippian prison. Because despite all the crap he had to go through, the beating, the stocks he praised God, singing hymns right in the middle of it all. God turned around and used it for good. People got shocked over this stuff, “Hey, maybe there really is something to this Christ.” You better believe there is.

And the most pre-eminent example of all of this is the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. The man is arrested for no reason, the court trial was a farce, He’d done nothing wrong, he was beaten, spit on and mocked. It’s a shocking moment of history, the Savior of the world who is the Lord of Glory permitting Himself to be nailed to a cross. Did He give thanks for that? You better believe it. It was up to Him and Him alone to provide salvation for the world. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

¹ In the area of the 1st Divine Institution: Responsible Labor or Dominion it is the basis of a strong work ethic in the west, an ethic we are losing as we lose our biblical base, but it is the base which built western civilization. As John Robbins says in his book *Christ and Civilization*, “The Reformation caused a revolution in thought about the dignity of work, and work became a calling; good works became those tasks done in the pursuit of one’s vocation...The result was a spurt of

economic activity that transformed Protestant countries, making them the most prosperous, inventive, and powerful nations on Earth.” You don’t have the rise of the east until the gospel is spread to the east in the 19th century, now we see the rise of the east, but not until the gospel infiltrated. So the story continues. In terms of the 2nd Divine Institution: Marriage, think of the situation you would be in ladies were it not for the life and teachings of Jesus Christ brought by Paul to European soil. In Roman law the father had *patria potestas*, absolute power over all his family. He had absolute power over his children even after they were married. He could legally have you put to death. He could legally come in and initiate a divorce if he didn’t like your husband. Women did not have equal rights, women were inferior to men. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ brought to the west the concept of the husband and wife being one flesh. The concept that the husband was the head of the wife and he was to love her, cherish her and nourish her. The wife was to submit to her husband and together they were to be partners where the two belonged to one another and created a new family unit. Now, for all the cries of the feminists, they got the rights to cry from the Bible. They never had that in Rome. And so the gospel invading Europe has brought tremendous freedom and prosperity to the west. Yet today the powers that be are trampling them underfoot as we race back to an oppressive humanism.

ⁱⁱ Chrysostom notes the reciprocity here, “He washed them, and he was washed; he washed them from their stripes, he himself was washed from his sins.” Figuratively of course, for the sins are not forgiven in water baptism but in the dry Spirit baptism.

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