***Be Like the Jailer DATE—07/06/14***

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*Introduction:*

1. It is a place where the worst criminals go. It is a place of punishment for committing unlawful deeds. It is a place where no one wants to go. I’m referring to prison. However, for one man it was a place that changed his life. In Acts 16, we find the story of a man who once beat prisoners for preaching the gospel to a man who eventually obeyed the gospel. The story of the Philippian jailer is one that is often told about the character of Paul and Silas and how they worshipped God while in prison. While there is a lot to learn from these men, tonight I want to take a different perspective.

2. Before we get to these points, we need to know the background of this story. Are you familiar with the story? This is a relatively popular story, one that we all need to hear, even if we have heard it a lot.

a. This story is about the Philippian jailer. We don’t know his name, but we know what happened.

b. Paul and Silas had been preaching the gospel, **Acts 16:16.**

c. Paul cast out a demon in a girl, **Acts 16:16-18**. As a result, the people in the city were not happy.

d. Paul and Silas were thrown into prison and beaten.

f. Around midnight, a strange thing happened: an earthquake took place, **Acts 16:25-27.**

g. The Philippian jailer thought that all the prisoners had escaped, and that would mean death for him, **Acts 16:27.** Paul would speak to him, tell him everybody was there, and then the jailer would ask the most important question anyone could ask, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Do you know the answer to this question? Maybe you do, but can you explain this to others? Do you really appreciate the gift of salvation? These are questions that hopefully you will be able to answer by the end of this lesson as we study the story of the Philippian jailer.

3. By the end of this story this man was saved. But what did he do? What he did is what we must do.

*The Lesson:*

1. **He listened**
   1. The jailer was willing to listen to what Paul and Silas had to say concerning salvation.
      1. This earthquake had shaken him. It had scared him because he was very close to dying. This man knew that there was something special with Paul and Silas. He had most likely heard about them. These men were preaching and performing miracles. He heard them singing in the middle of the night.
      2. What was he hearing? **Acts 16:11-15.** Paul had been preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The Philippian jailer heard this, and he knew that Paul and Silas knew about salvation because of what they were teaching.
      3. The Philippian jailer was afraid of death, because he knew he had not yet obtained salvation. He knew after having a near death experience that he had to find out about what Paul and Silas were talking about. The Philippian jailer was willing to honestly listen to what the word of God says.
   2. We also need to be willing to listen what the Bible has to say.
      1. Often times when someone is trying to tell us to listen, we don’t really listen. That doesn’t benefit us, and it even wastes the time of the person that’s trying to talk to us. Sometimes we say that we’re listening, but all we’re doing is hearing what they’re saying with no intent of applying the message to our lives.
      2. But why must we listen? **John 8:31-32**. There’s something worth listening to: the truth. Our freedom is at stake. Listening with a sincere heart is an essential step in salvation. **Romans 10: 17.** This verse says that hearing God’s word is an essential step to an important building step to salvation: faith.
      3. The Philippian jailer listened to God’s word, but there was something else he needed to do.
2. **He believed.**
   1. This man changed from a jailer who beat Paul and Silas for preaching the gospel, to a man who washed their stripes.
      1. After the jailer heard what was necessary for salvation, he humbled himself and tended the wounds and bruises that Paul and Silas received from their beatings. He took them into his house and fed them. **Acts 16:31-33**
      2. What caused him to change so drastically? It was the message that Paul preached. Again, Paul was preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. **Acts 13:46-47.**  Throughout the Bible we see stories of people being pricked to the heart by the gospel. This man was no different. He changed because he knew the condition he was in wasn’t how he needed to be in order to get to heaven
   2. We must be willing to change as well, no matter how drastic the difference.
      1. It is not enough to just listen, the word of God is designed to create change in the hearts of men. A sinner can sit in these pews every Sunday and Wednesday and listen to every sermon, but if he does not have a change of heart and repent of his sins, there is no way he can be saved.
      2. Many men have written inspirational books that have changed the hearts of men. While there is certainly nothing wrong with reading those books, none of them can live up to the change one can, and must, have in his heart when he reads the Word of God. Nothing else can save you, and the jailer realized this. We must recognize the saving power the Bible has if we want a shot at salvation.
      3. While turning your heart towards to Word of God is certainly an important and drastic step, we cannot stop there. And neither did the jailer.
3. **He was baptized.**
   1. The jailer completed two huge steps into becoming one of the Lord’s children. However, there was still one more step that he must take if he wanted to be a child of God.
      1. It’s amazing that God can turn a seemingly hopeless situation into one of the more inspiring conversion stories in all the Bible. Despite all the odds of the gospel finding its way into a jail cell, it did.
      2. It was fascinating that he listened; it was amazing that he changed; but if he would’ve stopped there, his soul still would’ve been lost. He provided a great example for us to follow by the actions he did, but the fact that he was baptized provided an even better example.
   2. There are two lessons we can learn from this fact.
      1. There are people in the world, just like the jailer, that will seem like an unlikely person to receive the gospel. We will never know how the individual will receive it unless we deliver it. Jesus certainly was not one to shy away from strangers. What excuse will you give the Lord on the judgment day?
      2. The other lesson that we can learn from this is that God’s word should compel us to obey. The Philippian jailer did something that anyone can do, many people don’t and everyone needs. He obeyed God’s word. This story of the Philippian jailer portrays a man who took action after discovering God’s will for him. The three things he did, are the three things we must do as well. Baptism can sometimes be overlooked, but it is the most important thing you can do in your life. **I Peter 3:21**

*Conclusion:*

1. The story of the Philippian jailer is certainly one we can learn from. He went from suicidal to saved. It is a passage we can turn to and find encouragement from. But every day we are writing our own story. A story that will be read by many people around us. What will they find in your story?

2. Maybe you haven’t been baptized yet for the remission of your sins. **Acts 22:16** says, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Or maybe you have been baptized and you haven’t been walking with the Lord as of late. Why not ask God to forgive you? If you have need, please come forward while we stand and sing.