

#1693
Cf. #845 #989 #1254

Acts 16:16-34^[1]
The Baptism of
the Jailer at Philippi
Epistle for the Baptism of our LORD
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Supplementary Lectionary Series “B,”
Epistles, adapted

Pastor A. J. Kunde
Grace WELS Durand MI
Church Council & Elders
Pioneers
January 15, 2012

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a demonic spirit. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by divination. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are telling you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the demonic spirit, “In the Name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the demonic spirit left her.

¹⁹ When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by proclaiming customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³ After they had been severely beaten, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying (worshipping) and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Do not harm yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ They replied, “Believe in the LORD Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the Word of the LORD to him and to all the others in his household. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ 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.

^[1] *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

THE JAILER IS BROUGHT TO FAITH
I. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN THE WORD
II. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN BAPTISM

In the Name of Jesus, whose Gospel we have heard, received and believed, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

The Apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey. This time Silas, who had not been with Paul on the first missionary journey, accompanied Paul. In addition, along the way, they picked up a young believer to travel with them; his name was Timothy – he was probably in his later teen years. Also at some point, the Evangelist and Physician Luke joined them – he is the writer of both the Gospel and this Book of Acts.

This group of missionaries had worked themselves up into the northwestern section of Asia Minor – today's Turkey. In a vision, Paul had seen a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come to Macedonia with the Gospel (cf. Acts 16:6-10). The group boarded a ship and traveled across the Aegean Sea and entered the Macedonian town of Philippi.

Paul and the others proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus in Philippi, and a woman named Lydia was brought to faith in Jesus. Lydia persuaded Paul and his companions to stay with her. From that residence, they carried on their mission work. Many days, perhaps even several months passed.

As you heard in the previous reading of the text, at some point, Paul and his companions were being followed around by a slave girl, who was possessed by a demonic spirit. She made a good deal of money for her owners by her divinations through this demonic spirit. "This girl followed Paul and the rest of [the group], shouting, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are telling you the way of salvation'" (16:17). Paul became agitated and troubled by this proclamation of the demonic spirit that possessed the girl. As you heard, this slave girl "kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the demonic spirit, 'In the Name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the demonic spirit left her" (16:18). This brought trouble.

The owners of the slave girl realized that they could not longer make money from their slave girl, for the demonic spirit by which she had practiced divination had been cast out. This loss of income motivated these men to seize Paul and Silas and drag them into the Agora – public market place. Essentially, these men charged Paul and Silas with treason against the Roman Empire. The crowd was incited against them. The magistrates ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped and beaten. They were thrown into prison with strict orders given to the jailer to guard them securely (cf. 16:18-23).

The jailer complied with this order. He placed Paul and Silas in the inner cell – probably similar to a dungeon for torture; and, he locked their feet in stocks so that they could not escape (cf. 16:24). How Paul and Silas reacted is marvelous!

Paul and Silas did not react with depression, gloom or anger. They did not call curses down upon the citizens of Philippi nor upon this jailer. They did not ask God to take revenge on their behalf. Rather they react with prayer, worship – for prayer is an act of worship – and with the singing of hymns (cf. 16:25a). You heard then what followed.

Around midnight, there was a violent earthquake. The foundations of the prison were shaken. The doors flew open. The chains of all the prisoners, including Paul and Silas, were released (cf. 16:25,26). When the jailer realized this, he was about to kill himself thinking that the prisoners had escaped, for if they escaped, then his own life would be forfeit. “But Paul shouted [to the jailer], ‘Do not harm yourself! We are all here!’” (16:28).

The jailer then called for lights to be brought in. He bowed down before Paul and Silas and asked the most important question that a person can ask in his life time: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30b). What prompted this question?

Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others had been in Philippi for some time – perhaps several months. During that time, they had been proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus. In addition, rather than calling upon God for vengeance when they were thrown into prison, Paul and Silas prayed, worshipped (for prayer is an act of worship) and sang hymns – spiritual songs. These prayers, worship and hymns focused on Jesus and his saving work. Undoubtedly, the jailer previously had heard about this Gospel being proclaimed in Philippi, for Paul and the others had been doing mission work in Philippi for quite some time. Undoubtedly also, the jailer heard the prayers, worship and hymns of Paul and Silas while they were in chains in his prison. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30b).

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30b). As we examine this text we see that THE JAILER IS BROUGHT TO FAITH. THE JAILER IS BROUGHT TO FAITH ... I. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN THE WORD; and, II. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN BAPTISM.

THE JAILER IS BROUGHT TO FAITH I. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN THE WORD

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were on a missionary journey to Macedonia – southeastern Europe. They came to the town of Philippi. They proclaimed God’s Word there. A number of people were brought to faith in Jesus, one of whom was Lydia. Lydia invited them to stay in her home, while they continued to proclaim the Word of God.

Paul and the others proclaimed the Word of God. They focused on the Gospel of Jesus. That Gospel they were speaking revealed all that Jesus had done to take away the sins of the world and to give people eternal life in heaven. Now the demonic spirit in the slave girl recognized this and proclaimed it: "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are telling you the way of salvation" (16:17b). But, St. Paul rebuked this demonic spirit in the Name of Jesus Christ and cast the spirit out of this slave girl. Why?

We recall that Jesus had done the same thing during the time of his earthly public ministry. Mark tells us in his Gospel that Jesus "drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was" (Mark 1:34b). Whenever the demons pointed to Jesus as the Christ, there was always an ulterior, hidden and wicked motive. The same was true here. The proclamation of the demonic spirit, who possessed the slave girl, was disrupting the orderly carrying out of Paul's mission work. Moreover, it was not Paul that was being opposed, but the Gospel that brought people to faith. The demonic spirit called attention to Paul and the others – not to Jesus.

Paul and the others testified about Jesus. Paul and the others proclaimed the Gospel. Even in prison, Paul and Silas proclaimed this Gospel in prayer, worship and hymns. It was through this Gospel in the Word that the Jailer of Philippi, as well as his household, were brought to faith in Jesus.

APPLICATION

Well, if you were put in prison, how would you react? Ask another question first: If you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you and put you in prison? Is it not sad that we have to hang our heads in shame and humiliation because we have not testified to others the Gospel of our Savior Jesus, let alone living our lives and behaving in the Light of that Gospel? Too often, we have failed to live godly and upright lives in thankfulness to God for the Gospel of his Son. Too often, we have failed to tell others this Gospel. Now, we might try to excuse ourselves by saying, "Well, I am not sure what to say." Let us look at Paul and Silas as examples.

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying (worshipping) and singing hymns to God" (16:25a). Their prayers were spoken prayers. We, along with Paul and Silas, can speak prayers giving thanks to God for our creation, preservation, protection and provision. God gives us our daily bread – everything we need to support our body and life. Our prayers of thanksgiving are testimony to others concerning our gracious God. In addition, our prayers include thanks to our LORD Jesus for our redemption.

By his mercy, Jesus came down from heaven, lived a perfect life and died on the cross as the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29b,36b; 1 John 2:1b,2). Jesus' perfect life and the punishment he endured on the cross have

been substituted for us. Surely, our prayers will reflect thanksgiving for this. Our prayers of thanks will also include thanks to the Holy Spirit.

By his grace, the Holy Spirit called us to faith through the Gospel and keeps us in faith through the Gospel. We will also thank the Holy Spirit for calling, gathering and enlightening the whole Christian Church on earth and keeping it with Jesus Christ. By the faith in Jesus that the Holy Spirit creates in our hearts, we also give thanks for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation we have by God's grace through faith in Jesus. Then, we also call upon God – this Only True Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – to help and deliver us from harm and danger if it is his will. All of these things were probably included in the prayers and worship of Paul and Silas. Such things are to be included in our prayers, worship, and witnessing also. Then, we are also told that Paul and Silas were “singing hymns to God” (16:25).

Paul and Silas were singing hymns. We also can use hymns not only for the assurance of our own faith but also as a witness to others. What hymns?

Perhaps you can remember:

1)
Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

2)
Jesus loves me! He who died,
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He has washed away my sin;
Let His little child come in.

3)
Easter is a time of joy –
Joy for every girl and boy!
Joyfully today we sing:
Jesus is our Risen King!

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so!

Or, perhaps you can remember (CW: 432) ...

1)
I am Jesus Little Lamb;
Ever glad at heart I am.
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my needs and well provides me,
Love me every day the same,

2)
Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my staff and stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst he bids me go

Even calls me by my name.

Where the quiet waters flow.

3)
Who so happy as I am,
Even now the Shepherd's Lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By his angel hosts attended,
He shall fold me to his breast,
There within his arms to rest.

Or, then, there is (CW: 382) ...

1)
My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and
righteousness;
I dare to make no other claim
But wholly lean on Jesus' Name

3)
His oath, his covenant and blood
Support me in the raging flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He still is all my hope and stay.

2)
When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.

4
When he shall come with trumpet
sound,
Oh, may I then in him be found,
Clothed in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before his throne.

Refrain

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Then, there is (CW: 358) ...

1)
How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes our sorrows,
 heals our wounds
And drives away all fear.

2)
It makes the wounded spirit whole
And calms the heart's unrest;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul
And to the weary, rest.

3)
Dear Name! The Rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace.

Or, perhaps you can remember (CW: 384) ...

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless
My soul believe and doubt it not!

And, surely, you remember (CW: 379) ...

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound –
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

We do not know what hymns Paul and Silas were singing in prison. But our text does tell us that “the other prisoners were listening to them” (16:25b). We too can use “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3:16b) in our statements of faith and proclamation of the Gospel to others. Moreover, this Gospel, in Word and song, is powerful.

The Apostle Paul states in the First Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16a). The Gospel is powerful. The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel of Jesus to create and sustain faith in Jesus in the heart. We too can use that powerful Gospel and trust that the Holy Spirit will create and sustain faith in those whom he has chosen from eternity to be believers in Jesus.

Paul and Silas were using the Gospel in worship and prayer and the singing of hymns. They also used another aspect of the Gospel; for,

THE JAILER IS BROUGHT TO FAITH II. THROUGH THE GOSPEL IN BAPTISM

Around midnight an earthquake takes place. The foundations of the prison are shaken. The doors fly open. The chains of the prisoners are loosened. The jailer is terrified (cf. 16:25-29).

When the jailer sees that the doors of the prison are open and that the chains of the prisoners have been loosed, he is about to commit suicide. If the prisoners under his care have escaped, then the jailer will be executed (cf. Acts 12:1-19). “But Paul shouted [to the jailer], ‘Do not harm yourself! We are all here!’” (16:28). Then the jailer called for lights, rushed in to Paul and Silas and asked that most important question: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30b).

“What must I do to be saved?” Paul and Silas give the answer: “Believe in the LORD Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (16:31b). And, Paul and

Silas follow up on that statement, for “they spoke the Word of the LORD to him and to all the others in his household” (16:32).

Paul and Silas spoke the Word of God to the jailer and to his household – which may have included wife, children, servants, and fellow-guards of the prison. “Then immediately he and all his family [household] were baptized” (16:33b).

The jailer and his family, household, servants, fellow-guards – were baptized. This was in accord with Jesus’ command to his disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20). Moreover, St. Paul’s Epistle to Titus tells us about the power of Baptism.

Paul writes,

⁴ But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying
(Titus 3:4-8a).

And the Apostle Peter states, “Baptism ... now saves you also” (1 Peter 3:21a). And so, the jailer “was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family [household ...] (16:34b).

These new believers in Jesus were filled with joy – and love and faith. They reveal this faith quickly as they wash the wounds of Paul and Silas and as they set a meal before them to eat. The Gospel in Word and Sacrament has brought them to faith in Jesus.

APPROPRIATION

The same Gospel in Word and Sacrament has brought you and your little ones to faith in Jesus. Paul writes concerning Baptism in his Epistle to the Ephesians that Jesus loved the Church and made her holy “by the washing with water through the Word” (Ephesians 5:26b). This has been done for you. This has been done for your children and babies. What grace God the Holy Spirit works through Baptism, that he brings even our little children into his Kingdom through that miracle of Baptism – “the washing with water through the Word!”

The Gospel in Baptism connects us with Christ and brings us into God’s family. Since, through Baptism, we and our children and grandchildren are members of God’s

family, then we are all heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ of the Kingdom of heaven.

CONCLUSION

It is through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament that the jailer and his entire household were brought to faith. Through that same Gospel in Word and Sacrament, you too have been brought to faith in Jesus for eternal life. Amen.