

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity, October 16, 2022**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 383, 14:5, 395, 400, 377:10.

Lessons: 1 Kings 21:17-25, Ephesians 6:1-9, Luke 19:1-10.

Sermon Text: Acts 16:16-34.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs.

Fellow Redeemed in Christ,

When our Lord ascended into heaven, he told his followers: ***“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** Acts 1:8 (NIV) Paul was not among these followers of Christ when this command was given. He was still known as Saul and was persecuting the believers. He was trying to do away with Christianity. But he was brought to faith in Christ and became one of the chief witnesses for Christ. At the time of his conversion the Lord said of him: ***“This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.”*** Acts 9:15-16 (NIV) At the same time, before Paul ever began his work of preaching the Gospel, the Lord also said of him: ***“I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”*** Acts 9:15-16 (NIV)

The Bible tells us much less about Silas. He is identified in the book of Acts as among those who were ***“leaders among the brothers,”*** Acts 15:22 (NIV). He was one of the men chosen by the church to do mission work with Paul and one who was specifically chosen by Paul to go with him on his second missionary journey. The incident recorded in our text took place on this journey. Since all believers in Christ are commanded by Christ to be his witnesses, we all can learn from our text what the work of witnesses for Christ is and what we can expect to suffer for the sake of Christ in doing this work. Let us, therefore, center our attention on this theme:

**PAUL AND SILAS, WITNESSES FOR CHRIST AT PHILIPPI.**

- 1. Suffering innocently and gladly for the sake of Christ;**
- 2. Preaching the Gospel to a terrified sinner with blessed results.**

The second missionary journey of Paul together with Silas was very fruitful. It was on this journey that Paul found Timothy whom he learned to love as a son and who was very useful to him in his ministry. On this journey when the Lord called them to Macedonia and the city of Philippi, a woman named Lydia was brought to faith in Jesus. After her conversion she invited the missionaries to stay at her home during their stay at Philippi. The Bible also tells us about this second missionary journey: ***“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.”*** Acts 16:5. (NIV)

It was at Philippi, we are told, as Luke has written in our text: ***“Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.”*** By the power of Satan she could foretell certain future events. She followed Paul and Silas for several days and shouted: ***“These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.”*** What she said was true, but the Lord does not want evil spirits to be his messengers of the truth. For this reason and also because this slave girl was terribly afflicted by Satan, the Lord gave Paul the power to cast out the evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ, and the girl was healed.

This made her masters very angry for their slick way of making money was gone. They forced Paul and Silas into the marketplace before the magistrates of the city. They told the authorities: ***“These men are Jews, and***

*are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.*” Because Paul and Silas were despised Jews and preached the Gospel in contrast to heathen customs and religions, they were punished. Their clothes were torn off and they were severely beaten, and then put in prison. The jailer was commanded to hold them in an inner cell with their feet fastened in the stocks.

Think of what Paul and Silas suffered innocently. Their backs were bleeding and raw. The wooden stocks in which their feet were tightly clamped cut off blood circulation and caused severe muscle cramps. In comparison what have we as witnesses for Christ ever suffered? Oh yes, we have suffered persecution because of our strict stand in defense of the truth of God’s Word. But it is really nothing compared to what the apostles suffered in their lives. And it can in no way be compared with what Jesus suffered for us that we might be redeemed from our sins. **“He humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross,”** Philippians 2:8 (NIV)

Something that really warms our hearts is to hear how Paul and Silas praised the Lord in their suffering: **“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”** How easily we complain and grumble at our lot in life as believers when the world shows its hatred because of our beliefs! But should we not always gladly suffer whatever the discerning hand of God sends to us, for he is our loving Father who only does that which is for our spiritual welfare. We also need to remember these words of Jesus: **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you,”** Matthew 5:11-12 (NIV). Should we not also sing praises to God and say with the psalmist: **“I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever,”** Psalm 145:1 (NIV)?

In the midst of the apostles’ suffering, and as they were singing God’s praise, the Lord came to their deliverance. We want to learn how they were privileged to **preach the Gospel to a terrified sinner with blessed results.**

## 2.

We are told: **“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. 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.”** He was responsible for the prisoners and if they escaped he would pay with his life, and he thought of committing suicide.

**“But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’”** That’s when the jailer, filled with terror and emotion, fell down before the apostles and asked: **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** The Lord had brought this man to his knees as a terrified sinner who was now concerned about being saved. The Lord today too can bring about terrifying circumstances in people’s lives to wake them up. Blessed are they if they are then led to hear God’s Word. Those who have been ignoring God’s Word need to hear the Law of God so they can learn that God is absolutely holy and he hates every sin. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: **“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect,”** Matthew 5:48 (NIV). They need to hear: **“The wages of sin is death,”** Romans 6:23 (NIV). Everlasting death in hell! That’s really something to fear! But our loving and compassionate God has sent his one and only Son into this sinful world to be the sinners’ Substitute. As Isaiah wrote, **“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed,”** Isaiah 53:5 (NIV).

What did Paul and Silas say to the terrified jailer? What should he do to be saved? Did they suggest that he try to make amends for his sins, to fast, to do penance, to be kind to his fellowman, and do works of charity? Oh no! That’s not the way of salvation taught in the Bible. Yet the false religions of this world, like the Muslim religion, all teach salvation by works. What the apostles told the jailer has nothing to do with works that man does, but everything to do with what Christ did for us. They said: **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.”** That is the saving word of salvation which terrified sinners need to hear. The Gospel teaches that in Christ **“we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace,”** Ephesians 1:7 (NIV). John writes: **“If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the**

**Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world,”** 1 John 2:1-2 (NIV). This is the message that is to be believed, for **“whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life,”** John 3:16 (NIV). And this simple message of the Gospel is the means by which we can come to faith in Jesus and be saved. That’s why Paul said: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes,”** Romans 1:16 (NIV).

This is the message that was preached to the jailer and his family. By the grace of God it had very blessed results: **“At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and the whole family was filled with joy, because they had come to believe in God.”** They were happy. They had the joy of salvation, the joy we ask God to restore to us as we sing the Offertory after the sermon each Sunday. The jailer and his family also believed the promise of the Gospel: **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved,”** Mark 16:16 (NIV). By the washing of Holy Baptism God’s covenant of grace in Christ was sealed to them. The jailer also gave evidence of his faith in Jesus by his good works that were a fruit of his faith: he washed the wounds of the apostles and fed them. Such were the blessings resulting from the preaching of the Gospel.

As we hear of these blessings, may we be encouraged to be faithful witnesses for Christ among those with whom we live in this sinful world. The opportunities are endless, for there are so many people who never go to a church where the true Gospel of Christ is preached. So many people do not go to any church! Are we satisfied to leave them in their sad condition and do nothing?

*“Hark! The voice of Jesus crying,  
Who will go and work today?  
Fields are white and harvests waiting,  
Who will bear the sheaves away?’  
Loud and long the Master calleth,  
Rich reward He offers thee;  
Who will answer, gladly saying,  
‘Here am I, send me, send me’?” Amen*  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 496:1)

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