

Corrections Officer Set Free

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-5 LH/AL: Calv Kids. **Blood. REAL. Register.**
- B. Slide6 Children @ Risk: next Sunday. [Pauls/Jeff, Charlotte]
- C. Slide7 Sun Night Prayer: tomorrow night 6:30-7:30. *Quote!*
- D. Slide8 Wed Night Identity Series: Andrew L, *A Bondservant.* [who we are *in Christ*]

II. Slide9 **Intro: Corrections Officer Set Free**

- A. Did you know that there's 1 Quadrillion, or 1 million-billion ants in the world?
 - 1. **And I think most live at my house.** But at least they stay outside. **Until yesterday.** **But** at least they have good taste. I followed their line long the kitchen counter and they went into 1 box, my **Golden Crisp** (Sugar Bear).
 - 2. **Me and Ants, are always after the same thing...sugar.**
God & the devil are always after the same thing...man's soul!
- B. We've been talking about *how outstanding Christianity is* in how **God** uses such a **variety of methods** in dealing with *each individual person*. [soft heart. blinded heart]
 - 1. **He** takes us **as we are**, works with our **individual temperaments** and uses all the **circumstances** around us...to lead us to **Himself**.
- C. Here we have a great story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. *corrections officer*
 - 1. We'll look at: *How do I live out my faith through suffering? How do I live out my faith through love? How do I live out my faith thru a changed life? How do I live a life for more than myself?*

III. Slide10a **HOW DO I LIVE OUT MY FAITH THROUGH SUFFERING? (25,26)**

- A. **The Philippian Jailer** - a rugged Roman soldier, prison guard, corrections officer working the jail system, with a hard heart. [hard job always w/the corrupt of society]
 - 1. 1st recorded episode of an *out-and-out pagan* becoming a believer in **Jesus** (no exposure to Judaism). [*actual pictures from the Philippian jail*]

- B. (25) In spite of **persecution** & **pain**, these Christian prisoners whipped out their **Slide10b double-barreled Worship Weapon**...they **prayed** & **praised**.
1. **What a time/midnight**. **What a place/prison**. **What an audience/prisoners were listening**. *Strange time and place for church service...or is it?*
 - a) I remember once doing a **hospital visit** to someone I didn't know. He really didn't want us there. **Then** a voice on the other side of the curtain...
 2. Lord teach me to **praise** instead of **complain**.
- C. What a contrast in the gospels where **king Herod frets** while sitting on his throne. **While here**...**prisoners rejoice** because their minds are at ease.
1. Spurgeon, *A crust of bread from one heart brings a song, from another a thousand acres of ripening grain can produce no thanksgiving*.
- D. When you **hurt**, ask God to give you *songs in the night*. Job 35:10
- E. (26) It shook the foundations, opened door, & loosened the chains, w/a **heaven-quake**
- F. All I know is *I'd be out of there*, remembering what **God** did for **Peter**.
1. I'd be singin, *Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty I'm free at last*.
 2. **Slide10c Wait!** Oh, it wasn't to set them free, **but** to set another free.
- G. *How do I live out of my faith through **Suffering?** by **praying**, **singing** & **sharing**.

IV. Slide11a **HOW DO I LIVE OUT MY FAITH THROUGH LOVE?** (27-32)

- A. (28) Had Paul not **called out** we'd have *a man dying...slipping off to hell*.
- B. **A Jailer** - A Roman. Blue-color guy. Who was **indifferent** to the Gospel (unconcerned /apathetic). *Not opposed to it, not for it*.
1. What God uses to get the jailers attention, **and** to bring him to faith in **Jesus...was Miracles** (earthquake/no prisoner fled) & **Examples** (Paul/Silas).
- C. (29) **Trembling** – the Jailer knew something was **very wrong**. **His life was not right**.
1. **Slide11b His post** was in danger, **but** more importantly...**his soul**.
 2. Maybe he remembered unnecessary cruel treatment of Paul & Silas?

a) (24) **Feet in stocks** – (Greek/ξύλον/soo-lon) *wood, stocks*. A Roman Instrument of torture w/more than 2 holes for the legs so that they could be forced widely apart unto a position which soon became intolerably painful.¹

D. **Slide11c** (30) The greatest question for all mankind... **What must I do to be saved?**

1. **Now maybe he meant** (being pagan) *what must I do to be rescued?* **Or, Please tell me how I can get out of this mess?** [Paul takes it to a deeper level]

E. **Saved** – always in contrast with **lost**.

1. Similar contrast to **Lost** (sheep, coin, son) with **found**.

2. So salvation is the opposite of **being lost**, **it's being found**; it's the opposite of being in danger, **it's being safe**.

F. **Slide11d** What about *the 2nd most important question*, **What must I do to be lost?**

1. **Nothing!** No elaborate answer, for it consist of *just one word*... **nothing**.

2. **Slide11e** Jn.3:18 *There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for **not believing in God's one and only Son**.*

G. (32) At sometime his household enters the scene *because* they heard & received also. (nothing magical about *& your household*)

H. ***How do I live out of my faith through Love?** by **not running** (by staying put till God moves you). By caring about **their abusive prison guard** (stocks). By caring about **his soul**.

V. **Slide12a HOW DO I LIVE OUT MY FAITH?...THRU A CHANGED LIFE (33,34)**

A. (33) I love that he not only **felt bad** for the beatings, **but did** something about it.

1. **He washed their wounds, then washed his sins away.**

B. The **1st recorded episode** of an **out-and-out pagan**, becoming a believer in Jesus Christ. (*i.e.* no prior exposure to Judaism)

1. **Slide12b Steps he took:** Need felt. Desire expressed. Willingness shown. Truth accepted. Surrender made. Joy experienced. Reality proved.

¹ Linguistic key to the Greek New Testament, pg.304.

- C. A heart so Hard it needed a **great earthquake** to *crack it open*.
- D. *How do I live out of my faith through *A Changed Life*? by **washing their wounds** (healing). By **bringing them to his house & throwing a midnight party** (hospitality). By **feeding them** (tenderness). By **rejoicing**...in his new found salvation.

VI. Slide13a **HOW DO I LIVE A LIFE FOR MORE THAN MYSELF?** (35-40)

- A. Civil Rights - *the rights of citizens to **political and social** freedom and equality.*
- B. Paul seems to milk the situation for all it's worth. Was Paul right to do this? And does it mean today Christians are always right to use her civic status or rights in the service of the gospel?
 1. I think Paul took it for granted that *the tools God had given him were the tools he should use.*
 2. **However**, this doesn't provide an **easy template** for all Christians to figure out how they should use *their political or civic status* within their Christian location.
 - a) *They seem to vary from time to time, regime to regime, vocation to vocation.*
 - b) I don't think it's as simple as we should always do it **this way** or **that way**.
 - c) One thing to remember is that **God's kingdom** is always #1 **and the kingdom that we live in**...always should take *2nd place to that.*
 3. **Slide13b** We note, Paul did not use his roman citizenship here to protect **himself** from pain (already been beat, imprisoned, in stocks), **but** here he uses it to **protect the new church** (being established in Philippi).
- C. (40) 10 years later when Paul wrote the letter to this church in Philippi, I wonder who got up & read *Paul's most joyous letter?* ^{16x's} [Lydia? the former demon poss lady? the jailer?] Phil.1:3-6 *Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God.4 Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, 5 for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. 6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work w/in you,*

*will continue his work until it is **finally finished** on the day when Christ Jesus returns.*

- D. *How do I live a life *For More Than Myself?* by esteeming others before yourself. By choosing to use your rights to **help others**.
- E. **Communion:** [*forgive us for not living out our faith thru...suffering. love. a changed life. living for more than myself*]