



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 50 Blue Collared Salvation / Pt 3 Liberating Freedom
By Pastor Jody May 09/10/2023

Acts 16:25-34 ESV

The Philippian Jailer Converted

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹And they 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 and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

[READ THE TEXT]

[PRAY]

[INTRODUCTION]

We are in week three of Liberating Freedom in which we will look at three different stories coming out of Philippi, a town of Gentiles, being converted unto new life. Week one was a woman named Lydia, she would be known back then as an Asian, but today in our world she is a southern European. She is wealthy, she is a God fearer, and she **is liberated by public discourse**. The second week we had a slave girl, a woman with no money of her own, a native Greek, tormented by evil spirits, and **liberated by a powerful exorcism**. Which brings us to our final week in operation **Liberating Freedom**, where we will meet a Roman jailer, a blue-collar joe, that is **liberated through powerful**



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miracles and personal testimony. All three are examples of Jesus' Gospel of Emancipation graciously given to people captured by the world in different ways.

As we said week one, make no mistake, when the Gospel comes for people, **it doesn't just propose freedom to people, it delivers!** It gives people an alternative to being enslaved to the world that never offers more than **more slavery** whether it's to an ideology, or a man-made class system, a skin color, a culture, whatever manifestation of a worldly TRIBE that is popular at the moment.

One more time you will see this morning that if one desires to be freed from a prescribed worldly limitation, bondage, and/or entrapment then one must take on another yoke. That is, **"To be freed from the world one must be enslaved to Jesus"**. Absolute freedom, there's no such thing, you are either for the world or against it, you are either for God or against Him, you cannot serve two masters!

Jesus explained it in no little detail to Pilate the night of His death.

John 18:37 ESV

³⁷Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "**You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world**—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

To know Jesus as your King IS The **Liberating Freedom of the Gospel:**

John 8:32 ESV

³²and you will know the **truth**, and the truth will set you **free**."

What is the truth? Truth is that Jesus is a Conquering King, and to be liberated from this world is to become a servant/slave of Christ.

Romans 6:22



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But now that you have been **set free** from sin and have become **slaves** of God,

Now where the church has done a bad job is explaining what exactly Jesus' work as a liberating King has done for you? **When we say God saved me, what does that really mean? What does a full liberation from this world and its' tyranny look like? Does liberation only mean that I get a free pass into the afterlife or is there more to the concept of receiving *Eternal Life*?**

[ILLUSTRATION]

If I were to ask Americans what the benefit of winning WWII was 'OR' what were we being saved from, the stock answer would be Adolf Hitler, and the Fascist Regime of the Nazis. On the front end you are right that is exactly what happened for Americans, the threat of the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan were defeated, and we were delivered from their threat of rule. But while that may be the most pressing need of the war to do away with those existential threats of murderous dictatorships, there was much more in which Americans were being delivered from.

America underwent a massive mobilization effort during WWII which put Americans back to work. Unemployment had reached 25% (current 3.8%) during the Great Depression (1929-1941). It lowered to 14.6 % in 1939 and then dropped to a staggering 1.2% by 1944 as America gained steam as the industrial juggernaut of the world, and our unemployment has never been that low since. Not only were we saved from tyranny we were saved from poverty.¹

The growth and sophistication of military weapons throughout the war created new uses and new fields of science and technology. The Cavity Magnetron was a small palm sized device was used to enhance radar using microwaves which forever changed the way we have cooked and heated our food since the 70s. The same technological advance helped in the field of meteorology where now scientist can predict storms and rainfall, allowing Americans to be able to predict the future when it came to weather. Along

¹ <https://www.history.com/news/post-world-war-ii-boom-economy#>



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with these we gained the use of computers for home and commercial use, blood transfusions, skin grafts, trauma treatment, penicillin, the space race, aeronautics, and atomic power.² Not only were we saved from tyranny, and poverty, we were saved from mediocrity into a new golden age of living, man had never had it so good.

In much the same way when God saves a person, it's not just from the Axis powers of evil: the Devil, Demons, and Death. Yes, He saves us from spiritual tyranny BUT He also saves us from emotional poverty and spiritual mediocrity and bring us into a new Kingdom life, called eternal life, that is yours now, not just when you die. Salvation is a complete and total overhaul of the human being, and it encompasses one's whole life from the point of new spiritual birth in this life going forward.

When God Saves, He Saves Completely

We are born utterly depraved, there is not one thing in us not tainted by sin, and therefore when God saves there is not one part of us, He won't touch! It is in the story of our blue-collar convert that we see the multiple aspects in which **Salvation effects the deliver and the receiver** of the good news. We will see 4 areas today of how God saves: He saves us from futility in our suffering, He saves from the crushing shame of sin, He saves even through disparaging setbacks, and He saves for humble service.

1. God Saves us from Fruitless Suffering.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

² <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/scientific-and-technological-advances-world-war-ii#:~:text=The%20growth%20and%20sophistication%20of,new%20fields%20of%20scientific%20exploration.>



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Suffering doesn't negate the need for praising God, it intensifies it! Not only that but persecution doesn't weaken the church it strengthens it! What better time than this to give God glory? These men had been thrown in jail without a fair trial, they have been beaten with no just provocation, but just like Peter's adventure in jail twice now, these men are starting to see persecution as an open door to evangelism. So, what do they do?

- Our Suffering causes us to pray and praise.
25a "Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,"

Paul and Silas are classically trained Jews. They were brought up in a culture where they would celebrate holidays and traditions that reminded them, they were treated with hostility by the world just because they worshiped the one true God. They were taught to sing the Psalms of which there were a few that would fit this situation.

Deliver Me, O LORD, from Evil Men

140 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men;
preserve me from violent men, | you have covered my head in the day of
battle. |
| 2 who plan evil things in their heart
and stir up wars continually. | 8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
do not further their evil plot, or they will be
exalted! <i>Selah</i> |
| 3 They make their tongue sharp as a serpent's,
and under their lips is the venom of asps.
<i>Selah</i> | 9 As for the head of those who surround me,
let the mischief of their lips overwhelm
them! |
| 4 Guard me, O LORD, from the hands of the
wicked;
preserve me from violent men,
who have planned to trip up my feet. | 10 Let burning coals fall upon them!
Let them be cast into fire,
into miry pits, no more to rise! |
| 5 The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,
and with cords they have spread a net;
beside the way they have set snares for
me. <i>Selah</i> | 11 Let not the slanderer be established in the
land;
let evil hunt down the violent man
speedily! |
| 6 I say to the LORD, You are my God;
give ear to the voice of my pleas for
mercy, O LORD! | 12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause
of the afflicted,
and will execute justice for the needy. |
| 7 O LORD, my Lord, the strength of my
salvation, | 13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your
name;
the upright shall dwell in your presence. |

When God saves a person, He establishes that their suffering is now never meaningless, it always has to do with the fact that you are loved by God and



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other people fear that. God has connected our earthly persecutions to His glory, and the proper response would be to pray against the persecutors, pray for deliverance, and pray that God is glorified in all of it!

- Our Suffering causes others to stop and listen.
^{25b} ..."and the prisoners were listening to them,"

There is nothing that captures the attention of the world as when things get tough God's people get to praying and praising their God. Our world lives with the weight of a poor reflection of this, when things get tough, they abandon ship, they blame those that supported them, and they change up loyalties. It is during our suffering that people will stop and listen to you to see why don't you abandon your God, why not jump ship? This is why the story of Job is still popular, it is why the story of all Martyrs are revered, and it is why Christ is victorious and cherished. People listen to your story when you don't waste your suffering and you praise your God, it is how our God captures the heart in this world, by showing them there is something worthy to be praised!

- Our Suffering causes God to move in His purposes.
²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

So, when we get serious and we focus less on delivery from our suffering and more on praising and praying to Him, when God has gotten you to come to Him in your distress, now the prayers and songs you were speaking publically God will answer. Can you imagine the shock and awe of these men in the jail cell when the things they heard said by Paul and Silas actually happened!? "I say to the LORD, You are my God; give ear to the voice of my pleas for mercy, O LORD!" (Ps. 140:6). Then the ground shakes, the sound of thunder rolls through the cell, and the shackles fall off your body, you talk about a Kodak moment! God does all this because He works in conjunction with your prayers to receive glory, because in that town Salvation had come for the Gentiles, and He wants to use you the same way.



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Don't let your suffering be wasted, don't sit in your misery and think it wasn't given to you for a purpose, God redeems the suffering and persecution of His people, speak up, speak out, and speak loud that God's name be lifted up! Perhaps it is time for you to memorize a Psalm, start at the 140 and read the next few, pick one out, memorize it with your family, pray it out loud, extol it to your people, remind others of who God is, and rejoice because you know His Word never returns void! God saves us from fruitless suffering for His Salvation touches every inch of your life.

2. God Saves us from Crushing Shame.

²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

- God's leads us to our pride's end.

^{27a}"When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open,"

It's never pleasant to find out that what you were known for, that what you had spent your time trying to be identified as, was blown apart in a wink of an eye. Here's this man, most likely a war veteran, and probably a decorated veteran given the fact that he has been tasked the responsibility to be the final line in the law of his town. If he could not keep prisoners locked up and disciplined, then what good is the law? He's the backbone of this community.

I know this guy, he's a May, he views his life through the lens of he can out work anyone, and he has the strength of will to accomplish the most difficult of tasks. Maybe you see yourself in him guys. Do you carry the weight that you are known through your work and how good you do it? What would you do if you showed up at work tomorrow and your life was turned upside down, people had discovered you were a fraud, and your reputation was destroyed, how would that make you feel?

Pride, it's hard not to foster its' growth and its' impossible not to be hurt when it's damaged. But let me tell you something about our God, He cares more



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about your eternal soul than how you look to others, and He will use your biggest failures, your most painful moments, to capture your heart, and to put an end to your pride.

- God views us in our lowest of lows.
27b "...he drew his sword and was about to kill himself,"

As we can see from the text this was quite a blow to this man. He's not even going to try and explain the town's leadership, he will offer his life, and he will end his shame at the same time. I hate to tell you this, but I have seen men this low before, I have seen a man with a gun in his hand and threaten me to take his life. The amount of self-loathing to be like that is hard to fathom, but do you know why it's there. It is because in that man's mind, he knows not just his limitations now, but he knows the decisions that he made were wrong, he knows he should have made better choices in his life.

I wonder if that jailer had heard about Paul and Silas before he put them in the stocks? I wonder if he had heard the gospel that they were preaching at the river side? I wonder if he heard their message to the other prisoners of concern for their fellow men, and praising a God that was looking to liberate people? Perhaps he had a chance to do the right thing in his life and now he is recognizing he failed to do it. All his strength and all his weakness sits on him at that moment, and in the most agonizing and shameful moment in his life he pulls his sword to take his life.

As dark as that is here's what you have to know. That man is still God's child, He had called that man before time to be His, He had witnessed his life of brutality and fake bravado, God still knew all that and He still loved Him in spite of it, because all He saw when He looked at Him was His Son's righteousness. So God loves us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 10:23).

- God intervenes when no one else would or should.
28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

Look how God calls out to His child, Paul quick say something. What a picture, it's dark but set in the moonlight is the silhouette of this man about to fall on his



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sword, and Paul gives the answer for this man's angst, *we are all here....* The Lord had gotten Paul to hold sway over these men gaining their favor that even when the doors fell open, he kept the men with him, possibly knowing what would happen. Would you or I have done that for this guy who put you in stocks? You see suffering also prepares you how to be empathetic towards others and their pain. God saves you with suffering to help with the suffering of others. He then saves people from their shame, saving them from the bankruptcy of their souls.

Who are we calling out to telling them to stop, God loves them, He knows our sins and there is nothing He cannot forgive. Is there someone we need to get that message to today?

3. God Saves us through Disparaging Setbacks.

²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

- Our Setbacks prepare us to hear God's Word.

²⁹ *And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.*

Nobody likes the dark night of the souls, but they are so necessary to see the new dawns. It is going through our darkest moments that it is revealed that they were so dark because Jesus the light was about to come. This man saw in that dark moment a spiritual light, these men, Silas and Paul, they had an answer, they knew something he didn't, he had to discover what it was, so he calls for light and he falls down before them. He's terrified, he knows what he wanted to do, he knows what may happen still, and he most likely knows the supernatural has happened since these guys were involved. God has used this moment to **regenerate** this man, to awaken his soul to the need to be saved.

- Our Setbacks will take out our false spiritual strength.



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³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

There it is. The question we have been waiting for, **what must I do to be saved?** Notice the grammar it is not *how do I save myself* it is more of *what conditions must be met* in order for it to happen. There is no spiritual strength left in him, it's like getting the legs taken out from under you. It is only when you have gotten to the end of your ability to save yourself, thinking you could figure out life on your own, are you in a position then to accept what the Lord is about to ask of you.

I see this a lot in men who finally are coming to realize they have a calling on their life to serve God. Many times, God is patient, and He will orchestrate several things in their lives where the men get scared of what they might be thinking God might be asking them to do. They will go through dark nights, they will go through reflective times, and they can almost all tell you they knew God was asking them are they ready yet, ready for what?

- *Our Setbacks become open doors for Salvation and for family intervention.*
³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

First look at the answer what now does God call you to, Belief in Jesus as Lord, ruler, King, it is to become a **slave of Christ**. And in that, you will be saved, and not just you, but your family.

This last one is incredibly gracious of or God, He makes the offer to not just you but to your family. He will use you dads, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, when you are ready to listen God will make Himself know to your family through your testimony. That is because God's plan is to lead your family to Him through you. **When God captures the leader of the home's heart then He will take hold of the family as well.** God has designed Salvation to come through setbacks in this man's career and pride and in return saved his bankrupt soul, but He was coming to this man's home to change everyone! God saved not just this man from spiritual poverty but the poverty of his family.



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4. God Saves us for Humbled Service.

³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

- We respond by mirroring God's charity.

^{33a} *And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds;*

^{34a} *Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them.*

Lastly, I want us to see what is the appropriate response, not just for this man, but for all who are receiving the gracious gift of God. There is a response of charity/tenderness/concern. God has changed this man's heart to go from cruel to kind, He had changed this man from inside out, he is no longer an antagonist of the soul but now he is a caretaker of the heart. As you can see from last week God is already using this man's heart to set up another bastion of Hospitality, as it is the cornerstone of the 1st century church. His soul is changed, God has replaced his heart of stone with a heart of flesh and now it reflects the care and compassion God had shown towards Him.

- We respond with complete and public obedience.

^{33b} *and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.*

As with any true heart change there is now an opportunity to prove it. To follow Christ, to come up under Him as your Lord, you and I are offered the opportunity to be baptized to show we come under His name. What a privilege this is! We witnessed last week 5 souls, that had already been blessed and we saw them express their public obedience to God which is also a public act of defiance to this world. It is a reward to be able to publically stand out for God and point back to the one that is saving you in multiple ways.

- We respond with joyful public testimony.

^{34b} *And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.*



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Lastly, as we all should be doing, they shared in their joy about the whole experience. It says that the whole household rejoiced that the jailer had believed in God. They recognized that without God working through him none of them would have been offered the Gospel. Kids in this room, do you rejoice with your parents over this church, do you rejoice that your parents as messed up as they are, are saved and loving you the best they can, do you rejoice because you see how God has been so gracious to you by allowing you to grow up in your home? If not, you may want to repent of that.

Last week, we have a joyous occasion hanging out at the Starchers with everyone, we celebrated together the life change and commitment by our people to follow the Lord. All day long I heard testimonies of God's good love, how people loved this church, how God is doing something special. You're absolutely right He is, what you are seeing happening is not normal, God is doing amazing things among His people, and there is more to come.

God is saving us all not just for eternity, but everyday in every aspect of life, that's why we are rejoicing now for **God saves and He saves us completely**. He has defeated the tyrannical oppressors of Hell, He has overcome our dread of suffering, He has broken through our pride and shattered dreams, and He has made in us new hearts of love of joy. Do your part this week family and celebrate Him well, for God is good and He is good all the time.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, .

Go in the name of the Son, .

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, .