

The Plan of Salvation in Operation

Text: Acts 16:13-34

The incarceration of Paul and Silas followed up by the dramatic conversion of the Philippian jailer stands out as the epitome of the Gospel in action. The plan of salvation has been fully established by the counsel at Jerusalem. Salvation is freely given by the grace of a loving, eternal God through faith. We know that salvation is true because of the promise from God Himself in His Word. And as we see the conversion lived out in the Philippian jailkeeper and previously by Lydia, we know it works from experience.

Just before the famous conversion story in the jail, we need to address the first European convert, Lydia.

I. TIMING

Acts 16:13-15

We often get over-concerned and downright worried when things don't go according to our preconceived idea when those things are supposed to take place. God is more interested in timing than time. I appreciate the reminder in Scripture: Psalm 31:15: "My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me." We need not fear what the enemies of the cross can try to do to discourage, dissuade and detour us from the mission at hand. God is always on time. Psalm 118:6: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"

It was no accident that on the sabbath that Paul and Silas took a trip down by the river side. It was there that the ladies were having a meeting at this familiar prayer spot. Lydia is a successful business lady, whom the people respect. She, like Cornelis is hungering and thirsting for the Lord. Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Our Lord promises: John 6:35: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Before Paul opened his mouth, the Lord was dealing with Lydia's heart. Isaiah 45:2: "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Upon hearing the truth of salvation, she followed her Lord in baptism and immediately opened her home up to the disciples.

II. TESTING

Acts 16:16-24

As soon the Lord had begun working in the new mission field, the Devil attempted to counter the good. A certain demon-possessed young woman, highly praised for her occultic powers, begins to follow Paul and Silas, praising their activity for the Lord as though she was part of the team. One of the methods of Satan is that he loves to join the church and her enterprises to disguise, diminish and deceive. Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

See II Corinthians 11:13-15. When Paul became wise to the deceitful ploy of this young lady, he exorcised the demonic stronghold. She brought much money to her handlers by her divinations. Now that she was demon-free and no longer worked for the Devil, the wicked task masters sought vengeance against Paul and Silas. A kangaroo court was held and the servants of the Lord were stripped, beaten and thrown into the deepest part of the prison and bound by the feet in stocks making it humanly impossible to escape.

III. TENACITY

Acts 16:25

- A. The disciples waited patiently. "...at midnight..." (Acts 16:25a). Romans 5:3: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience."
- B. The disciples prayed fervently. "...Paul and Silas prayed..." (Acts 16:25a). James 5:16b: "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
- C. The disciples praised fanatically. "...and sang praises unto God..." (Acts 16: 25c). Psalm 22:3: "But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."

IV. TRIUMPH

Acts 16:25c-34.

- A. The Prisoners (Acts 16:25c). See also Romans 10:17. II Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Acts 16:28: "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." The only way you could keep escaped prisoners at hand is if they received Christ.
- B. The Power (Acts 16:26). Psalm 62:11: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." Psalm 147:5a: "Great is our Lord, and of great power...." It has humorously been said that Paul sang lead, Silas sang tenor, God sang bass and shook the prison doors down!
- C. The Prison Keeper (Acts 16:27-34).
 - 1. He was under a death sentence.
 - 2. He was introduced to the fear of God. Psalm 33:8: "Let all the earth fear the Lord let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him."
 - 3. He believed. Luke 18:17: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."
 - 4. He was baptized. Acts 2:41a: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...."
 - 5. He brought the Good News home. Acts 16:34b: "...and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Conclusion:

The plan of salvation is wonderfully simple and simply wonderful! In this great story there is a great message to all who are not believers. Revelation 22:17: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

-Pastor Pope-