

=CONVERSIONS=

Lesson 10

The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer

SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:9-40

AIM: to teach my pupils that a person may be saved anywhere, and to teach them the facts behind the conversion of the Philippian jailer

POINT OF CONTACT: You might begin the lesson Sunday by asking your class some of the strange, out-of-the-way places where people whom they know were when converted. You might mention some of the places in the Bible where people were when they trusted Christ as Saviour—the Ethiopian eunuch, in a chariot in the desert; Zacchæus, in a sycamore tree; Saul, on the road to Damascus; the thief, on a cross; Jacob, in the wilderness with his head resting on a pile of rocks; the Samaritan lady, at a well when getting water; the wild man of Gadara, at the entrance to the graveyard.

INTRODUCTION: Our lesson centers around a city in Europe called Philippi. Philippi was the chief city of Macedonia and the great Grecian empire. It was named after Philip II of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great, leader of the great Grecian Empire. It was at this city where the decisive battle was fought which gave the rule of Macedonia to the Roman government in 42 B.C. Philippi was the first European city ever to have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to its people. The Scriptures mention several people who resided in Philippi at one time or another:

1. Lydia, the owner of a clothing business and the first European convert, was saved under Paul's preaching in this city, Acts 16:14.
2. Epaphroditus, a loving pastor and friend of Paul who brought gifts from the church in Philippi to Paul in the Roman prison, lived there, Philippians 2:25-30; 4:18.
3. Euodias and Syntyche, two women who were admonished by Paul to get along with each other, lived there, Philippians 4:2.
4. Clement, a pastor who had worked with Paul in Philippi, also lived there.
5. Many other unnamed faithful Christian friends of Paul lived in Philippi, Philippians 1:1; 4:3.

Our lesson for Sunday centers around the jailer in the city of Philippi who was converted in the jailhouse as the result of the faithful soul winning of the Apostle Paul. Let us consider the events leading up to the conversion and the conversion of this man and his family.

- I. THE CALL OF PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS, Acts 16:9, 10. One night while in Troas, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia who asked him to come over and help them. Perhaps it was this Philippian jailer whom Paul saw in the vision, begging him to come and tell them about Jesus. Let us remind our pupils and ourselves that there are hundreds around us who are crying for help just as this man of Macedonia was.
- II. THE CONTENTION OF PAUL AND THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE SOULS OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CITY OF PHILIPPI, Acts 16:16-18. The Devil always fights those who would win others to Christ. Paul finally had to get mean and command the wicked spirit to come out of the young girl who had been harassing him. Often great men of God are accused of being too harsh and mean in their methods. However, when something as important as the souls of men are at stake, one must forget piety and use any means necessary to retrieve a soul from Hell. Let's not forget that we are at war with the Devil and that battles are not won without an all-out fight.
- III. THE CONFINEMENT OF PAUL AND SILAS, Acts 16:20-24. Often those who would serve the Lord are persecuted for the cause of Christ. Notice Paul and Silas were not really beaten and imprisoned for what they believed, but for winning the young girl to Christ. These men of Philippi were hit where it hurt the most, in their pocketbooks, and it was for this reason that they persecuted Paul and Silas. The world and

the Devil do not care what you believe, so long as you don't try to change them. Thus, soul winners can expect persecution.

IV. THE CHEERFUL SPIRIT OF THE MEN OF GOD, Acts 16:25. Unlike most Christians under such circumstances, these beaten, battered soul winners prayed and sang praises to God from the prison dungeon. What a shock this must have been to those in the prison! What a strange breed fired-up, soul-winning men and women are! To those who are unsaved and those who are in a backslidden condition, the attitude and life of a Spirit-filled soul winner is somewhat strange and unnatural.

V. THE CATASTROPHE AT THE PRISON, Acts 16:26. Even the walls of the prison and the earth beneath it were affected by the response of Paul and Silas to adversity. The Lord caused an earthquake which loosed all the prisoners, opened all the doors, and shook the very foundation of the jail. This was the means that the Lord used to bring the jailer face to face with a soul winner. Suppose that Paul and Silas had been self-centered and missed this opportunity to tell this man about Jesus. How often do we miss golden opportunities which the Lord prepares for us as soul winners?

VI. THE CONCERN OF THE JAILER AND OF PAUL AND SILAS, Acts 16:27-29. The jailer had to be brought to a crisis where he recognized his need of the Saviour. The earthquake and the possible escape of the prisoners were exactly the crisis which the jailer needed. Where you have an area with poverty, sickness, crime, loneliness, tragedy, and problems, you will find people at a crisis and in need of a Saviour. Notice, too, that Paul and Silas were concerned about his physical well being as well as his soul. May we like these men of God get a genuine concern for those in need around us.

VII. THE CALL OF THE JAILER, Acts 16:30. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Whether the man was referring to his physical life or his spiritual life, I do not know. However, Paul seized upon this opportunity to tell him how to be saved eternally. Whether men know it or not, they still need to be saved through faith in Jesus Christ, and it is up to you and me to tell them about it. Let us use every circumstance, situation, and conversation to tell people how to be saved and be certain of Heaven.

VIII. THE CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER, Acts 16:32-34. Whether or not it was right inside the jailhouse where he believed is not certain from the Scripture. One thing is certain: he did hear what Paul had to say, and he, along with his family, trusted Christ. Notice that Paul told him at the beginning that if he got saved, his house would, too (verse 31). This is the one reason such an emphasis is put on the men and why the messages and services are made to appeal to men. Here would be a good opportunity to go through the plan of salvation and find out if your class members are all saved. Go through the Romans Road:

1. All are sinners.
2. All deserve Hell.
3. Jesus paid our Hell at Calvary.
4. Simple faith in Him as Saviour saves us from Hell.

IX. THE PUBLIC CONFIRMATION OF THE JAILER'S SALVATION AND HIS SINCERITY, Acts 16:34. Immediately after he and his family believed on Jesus Christ, they were all baptized. May we have as much sense and be as obedient as this family was. They also befriended those whom they had once mistreated and bathed the wounds they had helped to inflict. One can usually tell a person's sincerity and his position spiritually by his disposition.

CONCLUSION: What a strange course of events and what an odd place for the conversion of a sinner! Yet, it is not for us to choose the time or the place, but to be prepared and available all the time. May the Lord help us to look for those who, like the Philippian jailer, are seeking help and need the Lord.