

05.12.21 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “A Night and Day in the Life of the Philippian Jailer”

Scripture Reading: [Acts 16: 16 – 40](#)

Reflection: Rev. Evan Heerema

Recently I had the privilege of reviewing a Crossroad Ministries Bible study. The student reflected on how thankful she was for the fact that she had been arrested and convicted of a drug charge (again). She was grateful because, as she said, “God sat me down in a place where I could not continue my drug habit.” She acknowledged that she was growing in her relationship with Jesus. Her conviction by an earthly judge was saving her physical life; her conviction by the Holy Spirit was saving her spiritual life. It was a gift for me to write her a letter just after hearing Pastor Doug’s sermon on Acts 16: 16 – 40 earlier in the day. I could share some of the thoughts regarding conviction that the Philippian jailer experienced and that I need to experience.

According to dictionary.com, a conviction is a “fixed or firm belief” whereas to convict someone is to declare someone guilty of a crime. In my words, to convict someone then is to announce to them that they are where they deserve to be because of their conviction/belief.

The jailer was a part of the process the night that Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten severely and shamefully, and thrown into jail. He did nothing to stop what was happening. He was a convict of the Roman Empire and its Godless culture. Locking the prison door, he stood convicted of being guilty of rejecting the God of the universe who could do something about his spiritual condition. He went to bed and fell asleep convinced of his innocence. But the Spirit was at work preparing his heart to see his own guilt from which he could be declared innocent through the finished punishment inflicted on Jesus Christ. (During one of my seminary classes students were encouraged to learn some proof texts for different aspects of salvation. To give evidence that salvation was the work of God I learned Acts 16: 14, “The Lord opened her (Lydia) heart to respond to Paul’s message.” I did learn something in seminary.) And the Lord was preparing the jailer’s heart as well to respond to Paul’s message, which he was told to believe – he had a responsibility.

A spiritually guilty jailer and his household heard the message through prayer and evening songs and an earthquake. That woke the jailer up to the reality and power of the God of Paul and Silas and the inability of the Roman gods to stop Him. Guilty (convicted) of failing at his job he considered suicide. But Paul, convicted of God’s mission to and in the world gave him reason for hope and life. The Spirit convicted the jailer of his lifetime of sin against God; the Spirit convicted him of the truth of the God of these “Jews” who preached life in Jesus, and the Spirit led him to humble action. The spiritual chains that held him at Paul’s trial were broken and he was convicted to confess his need of God’s salvation. He allowed himself to be drawn closer to God, he realized the true community of believers, and he was soon to be filled with joy, joy which led him to clean wounds, rather than allow them to fester. He became an immediate participant in the Kingdom, rather than being an enemy to it.

The jailer moved from the darkness of a Roman night to the daylight of Jesus. His morning work shift was enjoyed as his first day in God’s eternal Sabbath. He was convicted alright, convicted of his sin, convicted that his guilt before God was removed by Jesus and convicted to live his life in the service of God first, and also for others. I wonder what his first day on that new job looked like?

No wonder Paul would later write to the church in Philippi, “Greet all God’s people in Christ Jesus . . . especially those who belong to Caesar’s household” ([Philippians 4: 21, 22](#)). I look forward to meeting him and the members of his household.

Prayer:

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,
that I may love the way you love, and do what you would do.
Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until my will is one with yours, to do and to endure.
Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,
but live with you the perfect life for all eternity. AMEN.

Action Item for the Day/Week:

- 1) Contact Crossroads Ministries and find out how you can serve those in prison.
- 2) Pray for someone who you know has been convicted by a civil court that God would open the prison doors of their heart to the gospel of Jesus.
- 3) Pray for prison chaplains.
- 4) Stand outside and sing songs of praise to God for a night – see what happens.

Songs for today:

[Change My Heart O God](#)