

The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer
(The power of knowing God)
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Introduction: Where should one turn when their life falls apart?

- A. What causes a man *to open his heart* to God?
 - 1. Each man *knows within himself* that there is a God! (**Ecc 3:11; Acts 17:24-27**)
 - 2. Sometimes God *allows a man to “crash and burn”* as a step to open a heart.
 - 3. How can one find this God? More importantly *can I trust this God?*
 - 4. There are *many counterfeits* in the world. Satan, the master of deceit, has created many “gods” for man to worship! (**1 Cor 10:20-21**)
 - 5. Satan’s “gods” *dwells on the flesh* and acts like men! (Ex. New Age quotes)
- B. The power to open a heart and then find change *comes from knowing God.*
 - 1. Our God lets us know that He *seeks what we really need.* (**Jn 3:16**)
 - 2. When life is turned upside-down, I need to know *whom I can trust and turn to.*

I. How was Paul able to reach others as he responded to the “Macedonian Call?”

- A. God directly told Paul *to preach in Macedonia.* (**Acts 16:9-10**)
 - 1. What might have Paul *expected to find?* What did he actually find? (**Acts 16:13-14**)
 - 2. *Why* would this opportunity be a priority over others? What doors may God give us?
- B. Paul was then *severely beaten* and then *thrown into prison!* (**Acts 16:22-24**)
 - 1. How *many scars* resulted from this? (**Gal 6:17**)
 - 2. Do you think Paul may have *had some doubts?* ... second thoughts?
 - 3. Even in prison his *wounds are left unattended* and his position *made difficult.*
 - 4. God commonly will put us into difficult and discouraging places *for a purpose!*

II. How God used Paul and Silas to open hearts

- A. How did Paul and Silas *respond to* an unjust trial and a severe beating?
 - 1. There are times in life where one can see what is actually in another’s heart. One can “fake” a speech but in adversity *our real self* can be exposed.
 - 2. There were *other occasions* where God used Paul this way! (**2 Cor 12:9**)
 - 3. Both the jailer and the prisoners could see *exactly how they responded!* (**Acts 16:25**)
 - 4. This is exactly how *any Christian* should respond! (**1 Pt 2:21-23**)
- B. What would be *the content* to the prayers and hymns of these men?
 - 1. How did *Christ think and pray* when He was on the cross? He exalted God and remembered His nature and of His past actions. (**Ps 22:3-5**)
 - 2. Consider some *possible Psalms* they could have sung! (**Ps 109:3-5; 29-31**)
 - 3. How did *the Apostles pray* after being publicly beaten and threaten? (**Acts 4:29; 5:40-42**)

4. Even the corrupt Sanhedrin could see something very different in these men.

These men *knew God and that got the attention* of even hard hearts! (Acts 4:13)

III. Opening the heart of the Philippian Jailer

A. There are occasions in one's life where God *providentially opens hearts*.
(Acts 16:26-27)

1. The earthquake was *a terrifying event* with the jailer. He was abruptly awakened out of sleep. (Ex. Short circuited electric heater)
2. He also was hit with *a far greater fear*. What if the prisoners escaped?
3. Rome had a gruesome practice if a guard let *even one prisoner escape!* They were highly motivated to never let that happen. (Acts 12:19; 27:42-43)
4. Why would a grown rationally thinking man decide to take his life? When one lives without God, they will have *a low view of life* and especially their own.
5. The culture of Satan leaves men bitter, empty and without anyone to care. There is *an alternative view of life!* (Titus 3:3-4; Jn 10:10)

B. The jailer *opens His heart* to Paul and Silas. (Acts 16:27-30)

1. It took the initiative of Paul to show he cared for the jailer and his fears. Those that think little of themselves and are *moved by genuine concern*.
2. Later a Roman centurion would *come to trust Paul* in similar circumstances. (Acts 27:22-25)
3. Did the jailer understand what salvation meant? He soon would! (Acts 16:31-32)
4. The jailer brings his whole family for *this midnight study!*
5. There was *no delay* in his entire household being baptized! The jailer now shows concern for Paul and Silas and washes their stripes. (Acts 16:33)
6. Why was the jailer baptized immediately? He trusted God and wanted to have a relationship with Him. (Acts 16:34; Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38)

IV. What can we learn from this great example?

A. When we know God we will *think and live differently*. (Mt 5:11-16)

1. How we *respond to hatred and false accusations* will show if we yet know and trust God! What does it mean to be a "child of God." (Mt 5:44-45)
2. How much do *I think about God?* This will give me purpose, peace and perspective. We must major in keeping our thoughts here! (Heb 11:6)
3. This is *the essence of Bible study* and the renewing of our minds. (Rom 12:2)

B. Respond *with grace* to those that hurt you. (1 Pt 2:11-12)

1. When someone sees a different kind of heart *they will pause*. (Rom 12:20)
2. I *clearly* saw this as a non-Christian!

C. Let *the certainty of salvation* transform our lives. (Rom 8:18, 24-25)

1. The example of Paul also *opened my heart* as a teenager.
2. When we truly know God, we will constantly be *dwelling our thoughts on Him*. (1 Jn 3:2-3; 1 Pt 1:7-9)
3. We do not know how to live until we *know how to die!*

Conclusion: How will God use us to open hearts?