

May 7, 2024

Daily Reflections

Journeying through Easter



Center for Spiritual Development

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

The crowd in Philippi joined in the attack on Paul and Silas, and the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. When he received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake. About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, there was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted out in a loud voice, "Do no harm to yourself; we are all here." He asked for a light and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved."

Reflection

The Church in Philippi was a favorite of Paul. It was a place of believers faithful to the teaching of the Gospel, and a place of strong community. In addition, over time it had become a consistent source of financial support for Paul's itinerant ministry in the region of Macedonia and beyond. It must have come as a shock to discover that a group of resistant Jews agitated against him and led a number of people to stone him and Silas and throw them into prison. The supportive and sympathetic family suddenly morphed into an ideological mob bent on his destruction. Paul and Silas found themselves chained to a stake in the deepest recesses of the prison.

When the earthquake destroyed both doors and shackles, Paul and Silas had a ready exit at hand. But the well-trained Pharisee in Paul seemed to make him reluctant to run afoul of law-enforcement, and he chose not to escape. What seemed to be a reckless choice of conscience became a point of passage to yet another miraculous encounter and conversion in Paul's multi-cultural journey of evangelization. All of us on our personal paths of faith are met with situations in which we are tempted to step aside, avoiding the *other* out of fear that we might meet with adversity or an uncomfortable moment. Paul provides us with an example of spiritual courage and hope that invites encounter rather than escape. We are not likely to find ourselves shackled in a foreign jail, but we can certainly be trapped by our human uncertainty in a way that prevents the sort of spiritual communion that transforms strangers into friends and companions on the path of God.



"Acts 16 v29 - The Jailer at Philippi comes before Paul asking how to be saved" by fz1844 is marked with Public Domain Mark 1.0. To view the terms, visit <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/>

For Pondering

- Where have you encountered strangers in your life, whom you were tempted to avoid because of cultural stereotypes or religious mistrust?

- Has your upbringing tended to promote an attitude of mistrust over openness toward those who are different?
 - Have you made choices over the years that could have led to difficulty but instead led to a unique and rewarding connection with an *other* in your life?
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