

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Morning

Date 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 Hymns Psalm 18v1-6, t Amazing grace, 467, 440 Read: Acts 16:16-32 Text Acts 16:16-19

Series: Philippians (6) Title: What Paul & Silas witnessed at Philippi (1)

Whenever the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination received salvation by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, her joy was overflowing.

For the first time she knew what it was to be free from sins bondage and sins oppressors.

She became the servant of righteousness, to live unto God, who bless her more than tongue could ever tell.

We know this to true and her experience, because believer this is what the power of the gospel has done in our lives.

We serve Jesus Christ who loved His Church and gave Himself for it.

However, when the light of the gospel exposed this woman's old masters depraved, dark and dangerous dealings, they turned on the preachers of the gospel.

Notice **verse 19** "**they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers.**

The word **caught**, means **to take hold of, to seize upon**. and the word **drew** is a strong word it means **to drag**, the idea is to drag them, to trail along, with a power, a force.

In other words, these wicked masters went for Paul and Silas, **V 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.** God's servants suffered persecution in all its forms, by words, expressions and deeds, which led to jail.

In taking this account, Paul and Silas witnessed at Philippi, a fresh view of God in His work and ways, to bring about His saving

purposes. At times God is pleased to use trials and sufferings to show His Sufficiency and strength.

It is my prayer that as we consider what Paul and Silas witnessed at Philippi in the work and ways of God, so we will witness in our own lives, as individual, families and a church body, may the Lord give us sight of Him today.

## **I FIRST, PAUL AND SILAS WITNESSED THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.**

God's providence is God working out His plans and purposes unseen in order to accomplish them in the lives of both the saved and unsaved.

Christ taught His disciples to pray in **Matthew 5:10** "...*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

This is why we must never think that God is not working, or doing anything. He is daily, continually, fulfilling His will, providently working all things after the counsel of His own will in our lives.

God is providently leading and guiding our lives. He acts with purpose.

He orders all events in our lives. He overrules in very decision. He can bring good out of wrong actions, if He so pleases. That does not excuse backsliding, decisions made from fleshly motives.

However, God is over all. He is supreme, all mighty. Through His providence God controls the universe **Ps 103:19** "***The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.***" All He does is for His own glory and the good of His people.

## **God's Providence brought them to the right Path.**

The path for Paul and Silas but not Timothy or Luke was physical suffering. Notice **verses 22-23** "***and the multitude rose up***

**together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. <sup>23</sup> And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison.**

The word **rent**, or the phrase **rent off their clothes**, means **torn of, ripped of**. *the idea is to take apart, they acted like a pack of hungry wolves.*

Their clothes torn of, then **commanded to beat them**. The word **beat** means **to beat with rods** for that is how it is written in the Greek, also it is in the **continual tense** meaning they **continually or keep on beating** Paul and Silas with rods. They suffered many stripes. They bore the marks of suffering.

Can you imagine how weak and wounded they were, then to be **cast...into prison**.

**It was not that the Jailor opened the gates and they walked in, rather they were taken and cast in. The word cast means to thrust out, to throw with power, force, compulsion.** From the tearing of clothes, to beating, to cast into jail it was hostile. No wonder Paul often spoke about the sufferings of Christ and being a partaker of them.

Consider the path of Christ, as He obeyed the will of God. He suffered in body and Soul. Pilate said in **Luke 23:16** **"I will chastise Him..."** Of this scene, **Ps 129:3** says **"the plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows."**

Some words that we may never fully grasp of path He walked of suffering of soul is recorded in **Isaiah 53:10** **"it pleased to the Lord to bruise Him."** The word **bruise** means **to crush to beat or hammer, as used in Ex 25:31** to beat the gold. It pleased to Lord to **bruise, crush, beat hammer Him**. That's how strong the meaning is. that was the path he walked purchase the salvation of all His people.

**Believer the path God is leading you on may not involve physical beatings, or it may.**

But be assured of one point, along your path you will experience suffering of some sort, sickness, physical, mental emotional, verbal, sorrow, issues of life, family related, personal.

**Acts 14:22** “*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*” Job spoke of the path God called him to walk, in **Job 23:10** “*He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*”

The Hebrew word for **way** means **path, journey, road or distance**. Isn't that wonderful to know. Job didn't know the path ahead. He never expected his children to die as they did, or the sores to cover his body.

He did not know how long the road of suffering would last. He didn't know the distance left to reach the end of this particular trial. **Yet the Lord knew, the way, and distance.**

We must keep reminding ourselves that God is sovereign He is providently leading, God has appointed and ordered our steps, and while we do not fully understand, and while the pain and distress that may be involved can be challenging at times, yet along way He leads **He gives grace for the journey.**

every step you have taken this week, his goodness and mercy have followed you.

Even train, bus & tube delays, longer routes, God uses to accomplish His plan, to protect you from danger, and promote His cause.

dear believer he has known about, every tear that you have shed, he saw it, every pain that you experience, He identifies with your path of suffering. He travel the path before you.

We do well to pray as David, in **Psalm 86:11** “**Teach me thy way, O LORD...**”

Always look to Christ for, they that seek Him shall find Him.

**God's Providence brought them to the right Place.**

**This may seem a simple and silly point to make, yet it is vital, the right place that God lead Paul and Silas was to a prison in Philippi.**

That must not be overlooked, because the magistrates could have issued they be taken to prison in another city.

The rulers could have ordered that the men described in **verse 20** as **men being Jews do exceedingly trouble our city**, be sent back across the water.

However, the in the providence of God, He so ordered the events that they be brought to a prison in Philippi.

**In God's eternal degree he has brought them to the right place at this time.**

Did you notice every time God is leading and directing his servants from the time He called them to leave the place they were in and come across the sea to Europe, into Philippi a chief city of Macedonia, and now to prison, **God has continued to lead them exactly to every place and at every situation, even prison was in the mind of God.**

In **verse 24** **the inner prison**... refers to a cell within the prison. The conditions of prison would have been harsh enough, but the inner prison, would have been a cell, separated from other cells, it would have even been lonelier, colder, and, darker. Such was the treatment these gospel preachers received.

For such a time as this, God providently brought his servants to the right place, even though it was a prison.

Think of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night He was arrested, He was taken prisoner, taken to Herod, and Pilate, He was tried in their courts to be sentence to death by way of crucifixion.

**Matthew 27:15** “...the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.” The choice was between Barabbas or Christ, **Luke 23:21** “they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. **Luke 23:23-24** “And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. <sup>24</sup> And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. **verse 33** “And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him...” **John 19:36** “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled.

Believer, we must learn that when God leads He does so providently, He brings us to the right place at that time, it may not be a literal prison, but He has lead to a certain job, place to live, or that shop to by plantain, holiday, change of location. God leads because God purposes to work.

Think of Philip, in **Acts 8:5** “philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. **verse 8** “There was great joy in that city. Sinners obeyed the word of God and where saved by the Lord, then they followed the Lord in baptism.

Notice these wonderful words in **verse 14** “Samaria had received the word of God,..”

***you would imagine Philip staying there the rest of his days, God was saving sinners.***

***But in verse 26 “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.***

**What! from city life to a desert place.** From a place of comfort, an advancing ministry, from preaching to a large congregation to a barren waste land.

Keep in mind the Lord didn't tell Philip at this stage why he was to go to the desert, only Go, but when Philip obeyed, step 1 then God revealed step 2.

When God fulfilled his purpose with Philip at Samaria he lead him to the desert another place. as He did with Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah and David.

God may led you to a hospital bed, A&E, Job, a particular place at a particular time, yet unknown, or forgotten to realise, God has so directed your path at that stage in your life, He is preparing your life to be a channel of blessing to someone in need.

**Obstacles are always Opportunities to see God at work.**

**God's Providence brought them to the right Person.**

This event might at first glance seem to signal the end of Paul's ministry in Philippi, but in God's providence it would not be so but would lead to another soul He had covenanted to save.

***Having be beaten, cast into jail, the Lord lead their path to this prison to meet the right person. Or as some like to say divine appointments.***

The jailor or prisoner officer at Philippi. He was an unconverted man. However, he was a lost sinner Christ had chosen to save.

God's path for Philip brought him to the right place, the desert to meet the right person, the Ethiopian Eunuch, where he opened to him the scriptures of Isaiah and preached unto Jesus.

Jesus suffering servant, the submissive, sin bearing, substitute of sinners He came to save.

The eunuch said to Philip upon hearing Christ preached in His sinless person and substitutionary death, **Acts 8:37** "***I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*** once he was saved he was baptised, and then **verse 39** "***he went on his way rejoicing.***

Rejoicing his sins were all forgiven. Rejoicing that Christ is his Saviour.

May I take you to Christ Himself. On His way to Galilee, we read in **John 4:4** “**He must needs go through Samaria.**” Literally the words read – “**And it was necessary for Him to pass through Samaria.**” There was a reason and purpose that bound Him to Samaria.

Christ took this route through Samaria not because there was no other way to reach Galilee, for there was another route northwards.

Christ’s compulsion to go through Samaria, was namely His personal quest for the salvation of an ungodly and unrighteous Samaritan woman.

This remind us that Salvation is not sinners seeking Christ, for none seek after Him, but Christ seeking sinners.

Christ did not come to call the righteousness, for they that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. Therefore, Christ came to seek and to save lost sinners, by exposing and then forgiving their sin, to see a life transformed by the grace and power of the gospel.

God never causes sinners to Seek Christ in vain, but that they should be brought into covenant relation with Himself and should enjoy eternal life, this woman was forgiven of all her sin, and then told others about Christ. **verse 38** “**And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.**”

Oh, to see Londoners believe on Christ, testifying of saving grace. Oh to see Londoners receive the word of God. And those who profess Christ as Saviour to grow in grace.



Have you shared the gospel this week, have you invited someone to Church where they can hear preached the person and work of Christ for the saving of the soul and living the gospel. Have you encourage God's people this week.

Maybe the Lord brings someone your path looking for a Bible believing Church, a word of encouragement.

The person or people we meet personally the Lord has laid you to them and them you. He orders every detail in our lives, concerning our path in life, the place we arrive at and the person we meet. All is under His control.

He arranges, and appoints.

George Muller walking down a road he had not been in a while and met a man who gave a gift of £2, for the orphanage, that fed the children the next day, it was the right path, place and person.

Paul and Silas witnessed the providence of God at work in their lives and the lives of those around to accomplish His redemptive purposes at Philippi, in the saving of the jailor.