

Introduction: The exodus of the descendants of Israel out of Egypt and eventually into Canaan is a prototype, or model, of how The Covenant God, Yahweh, always provides for His people. The book of Exodus begins with the Israelites experiencing great suffering due to hundreds of years of oppression. In less than a year, by no fewer than a dozen miracles, the people of Israel found themselves on the other side of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army drowned. This deliverance from slavery into freedom to serve the true God can be summed up: ***Suffering and miracles can produce saving faith.*** *** Because of their lack of faith in God, the succeeding generation suffered forty years in the wilderness before settling into the land Yahweh spoke about to Abraham (Genesis 15:12-16). Then, Yahweh performed numerous miracles for them under their new leader, Joshua. *** The supreme example of this was when The Son of God took on a human body as He was born of a virgin. After three years of showing and telling God's people about God, He suffered greatly on The Cross as He paid the price we could not pay for our sins. This was one miracle. Then, on the third day He rose from the dead to make new life possible for all: the second miracle. Third, after He ascended to His throne in heaven with The Father, They sent The Holy Spirit to live in all who live by continuous faith IN Him. *** For two thousand years, all who have followed Him can testify to deliverance preceded by suffering and a miracle in their own lives. *** Today we see this specifically in the lives of Paul and Silas AND generally in the lives of many who were healed of disease and unclean spirits by Jesus. Now, let's go at our passages.

I. Paul encounters a woman possessed with a python spirit who makes money for her masters, he casts it out, is dragged to court with Silas, they are accused, beaten and thrown into prison. (Acts 16:16-23)

A. On their way to prayer, Paul's team encounters a woman with a python spirit who profited her masters;

Paul expels the spirit and her masters drag Paul and Silas to court. (Verses 16-19)

1. And it was, we going to prayer, certain slave-girl possessing python spirit (came) to meet us, she was bringing much profit to her masters telling fortunes. (Verse 16)

Us: 'We' is Luke, Paul and his mission team. Much of Luke's writing of Acts was as an eye-witness.

Prayer: The early church followed the Jewish practice of praying morning, noon and mid-afternoon.

Python spirit: The 'python spirit' was associated with the world-famous 'oracle at Delphi'.

Masters' profit: The men who owned her exploited her by taking much money from people who hoped to discover what the future held for them. They put 'mammon' above God (Matthew 6:24).

2. The same following Paul and us, was saying, 'These men, servants of The Most High God are being, who are proclaiming to us the way of salvation'; she was doing this many days. (Verses 17-18a)

Message: Her message was correct: Paul and his team proclaimed to all: Jesus (Savior) is The Way.

Many days: Luke makes it clear that she did this as they went to pray day, after day, after day ...

3. But Paul, having been grieved and having turned, said to the spirit, 'I am commanding thee, in The Name of Jesus Christ (Messiah), to come out of her'; and, it came out the same hour. (Verses 18b-c)

Paul grieved: Paul was grieved because the right message was coming from the wrong messenger!

Commanded out: He commanded the spirit to come out of the exploited slave-girl, and it came out of her immediately.

4. But, having seen, her masters, that it was gone, the hope of their profit, having seized Paul and Silas, they dragged them to the marketplace of the rulers. (Verse 19)

Masters drag to court: All business, trading, political decisions, and legal proceedings were done in one common place where all the people of a town assembled. The slave-masters hoped to avenge their lost profit here.

B. The masters complain to the magistrates that Paul's Jewish customs are not Roman, the crowd attacks them, and they laid stripes on Paul and Silas before casting them in prison. (Verses 20-23)

1. Having brought them to the magistrates, they said, 'These men are troubling our city, being Jews'. (Verse 20)

Jews troubling: They accuse Paul and Silas of troubling the city. Then they play their ethnic prejudice card: these men are those dirty, despised 'holier than thou' Jews!

2. Proclaiming customs which not it is being proper to us to receive, nor to do, being Romans. (Verse 21)

Improper customs: Again, they play the ethnic card: Our Roman customs are the best.

We rule the whole Mediterranean region. We won't follow their customs!

3. The multitude joined the attack against them, and the magistrates having torn off their clothes, they were commanding to beat. (Verse 22)

Multitude attacks: The whole city has stripped Paul and Silas naked and is preparing to beat them within an inch of their lives.

4. And, having laid on them many stripes, they cast into prison, having commanded the jailer safely to keep them. (Verse 23)

Beaten and imprisoned: Paul and Silas are now beaten and imprisoned. The magistrates were concerned not for the safety of Paul and Silas, but of the citizens of the city! They must not be exposed to dangerous customs and teachings.

II. Paul and Silas praise God in suffering, an earthquake opens doors; as the guard contemplates suicide, they tell him of salvation in Jesus and he is baptized; Jesus tells of His blessing on people persecuted for Him. (Acts 16:24-34; Luke 6:18-19, 22-23)

A. Paul and Silas pray songs to God while bound and prisoners listen; suddenly an earthquake loosens the bonds and opens doors; the guard considers suicide, but Paul says all are here. (Acts 16:24-28)

1. Who, such command having received, he threw them into the inner prison, and their feet he secured in the stocks. (Verse 24)

Suffering: The suffering they experienced from the beating is now heightened as they are put in the innermost darkness of the prison-cave with their feet in stocks on a cold stone floor.

2. But about midnight, Paul and Silas praying, they were singing hymns to God, but the prisoners were listening to them. (Verse 25)

Praying praise songs: Ignoring their suffering, Paul and Silas are praying to God by continually singing hymns to Him. And, if that is not enough, all the other prisoners are listening.

3. But suddenly a great earthquake happened so as to shake the foundations of the prison, and immediately were opened the doors, and all the bands were loosed. (*Verse 26*)

Miracle: The great earthquake that shook the ground under the prison-cave, opened doors, and broke the stocks binding all prisoners, shows God miraculously caring for His imprisoned apostles in short order. From this, let us realize the suffering of spiritual warfare in Jesus has an expiration date.

4. Having become awake the prison-guard, having seen had been opened the doors of the prison, having drawn the sword, he was intending to kill himself, supposing to have fled, the prisoners. (*Verse 27*)

Desperate guard: It is human nature for the guard, based on what he saw, to assume the prisoners had escaped and he would pay for this with his life, as had happened when Peter was miraculously released from jail some time before this (Acts 12:9-19).

5. But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Nothing thou might be doing to thyself harm, because everyone, we are being in this place'. (*Verse 28*)

Paul speaks up: Aware of Roman laws, Paul quickly speaks up to put the mind of the guard at ease. Despite appearances, all the prisoners are still in the prison.

- B. The guard falls down before Paul and Silas asking how to be saved; they tell him to believe on Jesus, teach The Word, and he is baptized with his family who rejoiced they had believed God. (*Acts 16:29-34*)

1. But, having called for a light, he rushed, and trembling having come, he fell down before Paul and Silas, having led them out. (*Verses 29-30a*)

Guard trembles: The guard is shaken deep within his soul. (Luke used light with theological implications. God is at work!) He is shaking as he falls down before God's messengers.

2. He said, 'Sirs! What it is necessary (for) me to do that I may be saved?' (*Verse 30b*)

Biggest question: He has asked the biggest question any human being can ever ask: Can I be saved?

3. They said, 'Thou must believe upon The Lord Jesus and thou will be saved: thou and thy household. (*Verse 31*)

Believe on Lord Jesus: Faith must be fully IN the person and work of Jesus, The Savior. It must be with all the heart, and all the mind, and all the will of the believer. And it must not be FOR anything, but exclusively IN and ON Jesus alone!

You and yours: Further, Paul and Silas say the household (family and servants) of the guard can be saved by his receiving Jesus as Savior.

4. And they spoke to him The Word of The Lord, with all those in his house. (*Verse 32*)

Speak Word of Lord: This is how they taught them to obey all Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). This tells us we must always be ready to speak words about Jesus whenever He 'opens doors' for us.

5. Having taken them in that hour of the night, he washed the wounds; and he was baptized, he and all of his, immediately. (*Verse 33*)

Tends to wounds: First, he cleansed the wounds of his new brothers in Christ.

Baptized: Having received saving faith IN Jesus, his whole household was baptized. The suffering of God's messengers AND the midnight miracle produced saving faith in the jailer and all that were his.

Suffering and miracles can produce saving faith

6. And so, having brought them into his house, he placed food, and they rejoiced: all his household had believed in God. (*Verse 34*)

Joy of faith: Even when suffering is involved, the miracle that produces salvation (which is itself a miracle) results in great joy for those who know God has saved them IN His Son. **Suffering and miracles can produce saving faith**

- C. After Jesus heals many by His power, He proclaims blessing on those persecuted for Him, telling them to rejoice in their eternal reward. (*Luke 6:18-19, 22-23*)

1. They came to hear Him, and to be healed from their diseases; and, they being vexed from unclean spirits and they were being healed. (*Verse 18*)

Healing: Throughout Jesus' public ministry, people kept coming to Jesus and kept being healed. The healings of both body and spirit were preceded by hearing what Jesus was teaching.

2. And all the crowd was seeking to touch Him because power from Him was going out and He was healing all. (*Verse 19*)

Power brings crowds: People could sense that Divine Power was emanating from Jesus so multitudes were desiring to touch Him and be healed (Luke 8:43-48).

3. 'Blessed y'all are being when men may hate y'all, and when they may separate y'all, and they may reproach, and they may cast out the name of y'all as evil for the sake of The Son of Man. (*Verse 22*)

Blessing: Jesus says those who follow Him in faith can expect four kinds of persecution: hatred, exclusion, reproach and slander. But, He will bless such people.

4. Y'all must be rejoiced in that day, and y'all must leap for joy (as an un-born child); for, behold(!), the reward of y'all (is) great in heaven, because similarly they were doing to the prophets, their fathers'. (*Verse 23*)

Rejoice: Jesus commands them to rejoice in these persecutions because He has promised them a great eternal reward at the Last Day. We must all pray to experience joy in our faith IN Jesus both in our initial faith IN Jesus and in the persecutions our faithful obedience will bring. **Rejoice in persecution for being like Jesus**

Conclusion: Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned for setting a slave-girl free from an evil spirit. Then as they prayed praise songs to The Lord at midnight an earthquake set them physically free. But, they stayed and gave the good Word of Jesus to the guard, who was then saved with his family. All this was previewed by Jesus when He miraculously healed and delivered multitudes who were suffering, giving them the joy of His salvation. **Suffering and miracles can produce saving faith**