

Check Your Beliefs!

"Faith Forward" series- Part 02

Use the next few minutes to connect and fellowship with other members of the group by discussing the following: Thinking outside the subject of God and spirituality, what three things do you believe without any doubt?

Let's get on the same page -

Robert Ingersoll was one of the most famous orators and political speechwriters during the 19th century. Mark Twain, after hearing him speak said this about Ingersoll: *"What an organ is human speech when it is employed by a master!"* Ingersoll was also called the "Great Agnostic" and took a harsh stance against faith in God and spirituality. In one of his books entitled "The Gods" he made the following statement:

For ages, a deadly conflict has been waged between a few brave men and women of thought and genius upon the one side, and the great ignorant religious mass on the other. This is the war between Science and Faith. The few have appealed to reason, to honor, to law, to freedom, to the known, and to happiness here in this world. The many have appealed to prejudice, to fear, to miracle, to slavery, to the unknown, and to misery hereafter. The few have said "Think" The many have said "Believe!"

Discussion:

- What is the first error that jumps out to you in this statement?
- How would you refute that error?
- Are there any truths within the statement? What are they?

Today in our study, we are going to look at a man, known as the Philippian Jailor, and note that he had one set of beliefs at the beginning of the story and another set at the end.

Book: Acts 16:22-34

Acts 16:22 A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods.

Acts 16:23 They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape.

Acts 16:24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

Acts 16:26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!

Acts 16:27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself.

Acts 16:28 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

Acts 16:29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

Acts 16:30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

Acts 16:32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household.

Acts 16:33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized.

Acts 16:34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

Let's get into the Word:

-Before we discuss the Jailor, let's look at the belief system of Paul and Silas. In just a few verses (Acts 16:22-25) what personal beliefs might be reflected by their actions?

-How might Paul and Silas defend or dispute this statement? -*"For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who do not believe, no proof is enough."* -Stuart Chase

-We can assume that the Philippian Jailor was a man who was a trusted and proven jailor. What do his actions in verses 23-28 tell us about his beliefs concerning his occupation?

-What was transpiring in the Jailor's heart, emotions, and mind in verse 29-30?

-Believing that the prisoners had escaped, why did he wish to take his own life?

-Beginning in verse 31, there is a notable change in the Jailor's beliefs. To what do you contribute the change?

-How would you describe the Jailor's life before and after the jailhouse quake?

-Searching verses 30-34, how do the different actions of the Jailor reflect his new heart and beliefs?

-Can you identify with any of his new-found beliefs and give an example how that belief(s) was reflected in new habits, changes, decisions in your life?

-What do you think about the following statement and why: *"True salvation always results in changed lives."*

Let's get real (with self!)

1. How can we impress on lost people the urgency of salvation?
2. Why does God not take into account good works when a person stands before Him? How can you explain this to others?