

Series: Acts

Lesson #65

Title: The Miracle Grace Performs

Scripture: Acts 16: 25-34

Date: April 23, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

My subject tonight is: **The Miracle Grace Performs**

**Acts 16: 25: And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.**

The Lord works his miracles of grace in the most unlikely of places, with the most unlikely people, using what the world considers absolute foolishness. The rulers and the judges were passed by; the multitude who railed on Paul and Silas were passed by; but out by a riverside upon a small group of women, particularly, Lydia a seller of purple God worked a miracle of grace.

In our text, God is now working a miracle of his grace in a dungeon in a prison upon a jailor. The Lord is using a man who once opposed Christ and this gospel and persecuted all who preached it. But now that very gospel comes to one of God's chosen children. And this miracle of God's grace is the beginning of the church at Philippi. I am reminded of this scripture: **I Corinthians 1: 27: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28: And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence.**

I have taken my title: the miracle of God's grace from this great miracle that occurred as Paul and Silas prayed and sang praised unto God.

**Acts 16: 26: And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.**

1. This is an example of what the Hebrew writer said in **Hebrews 2: 3: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*; 4: God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?**

2. Several places in scripture we find the Lord shaking the earth whenever the Spirit of grace works triumphantly in the midst of sinners:

- **Acts 4:31: And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.**
- **Matthew 28:2: And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.**
- In the book of the revelations of Jesus Christ when the Spirit of life again revives the two witnesses of Christ and at last the church of God is called up into heaven, we read in **Revelations 11: 13: And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.**

So tonight in our text, as we find the Lord shaking the earth, it again marks a time when the Spirit of God shall triumph in the hearts of redeemed sinners.

3. But how does this earthquake teach us about how the Lord works in our day?

When God bears witness in the heart of a sinner the Holy Spirit turns everything upside down, just like in an earthquake. The foundations of the prison of sin which holds the sinner captive must be broken up by the glory of the Lord. The doors of our prison must be opened and the bands loosed by the Lord who alone can do so.

**Psalm 146: 7: The LORD looseth the prisoners...v9: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.** Before we can be loosed our way must be turned upside down. When before our eyes, the Lord turns our way upside down, he turns his Way right side up. The glory for performing this work belongs not to you and I but only to the Lord: **Isaiah 42: 6: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7: To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8: I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.**

**Proposition:** We are about to see the miracle of God's grace through the gospel of Christ working irresistibly in the Philippian jailor and those in his household.

**Divisions: I. The Effects the Grace of God Has Upon A Sinner; II. The Good News of the Gospel; III. The Obedience of Faith**

### **I. The Effects the Grace of God Has Upon A Sinner**

**Acts 16: 25: And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26: And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Acts 16: 27: And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28: But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29: Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**

We see 3 things here:

1. Grace awakens the dead sinner.
2. Grace removes all hope of gain by our own doing
3. Grace makes a sinner call upon God.

A. First, grace awakens the dead sinner--27: And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep

Every sinner saved by grace is born into this world dead in trespasses and in sins. But grace quickens the sinner from the sleep of spiritual death. **Ephesians 2: 1: And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;**

B. Secondly, when made alive, grace reveals that the hopes of gain by our doing is vanity. V27:...and seeing the prison doors open,

Notice the jailor's servitude to the judges and rulers. **Acts 16: 23: And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24: Who, having received such a charge.** The jailor *thrust them*--he showed the same contempt for Paul and Silas as his leaders did. He thrust them *into the inner prison*--because his leaders gave him the charge to keep them safely, he put them in solitary confinement, on death-row, the maximum security lock down. Not only this, he went above and beyond, *and made their feet fast in the stocks*

The jailor, like all unregenerate men, is nothing more than a man-pleaser. Like Paul's accusers, like Paul's judges, the jailor did what he did to be seen by those who he thought would most benefit him. In other words, carrying out this charge given him, by treating Paul and Silas with this ill treatment before the eyes of his superiors, we see an example of a man whose hope of promotion rested in receiving honor from those around him. **John 5: 44: How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?**

But notice something else, as the jailor carried out his occupation of keeping others bound in prison, it meant he must stay in prison.

**Illustration:** "I grew up in Angola Penitentiary!"

When we were dead sinners--in all our efforts to save ourselves--we were the keeper of our own imprisonment. In all our efforts to save others, we were the keepers of the prison. And when you are the keeper of the prison it means you must live in the prison

And when grace makes all our works to appear as vain, our first thought is that our life is gone--**27: And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.**

Grace awakens--quickens the sinner.  
Grace makes our works to appear to us as vanity.

C. Then, thirdly, grace causes us to call on God.

When God begins to call, God continues to call. **Acts 16: 28: But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.**

When Christ spoke truth in your heart, the gospel turned your way upside down. For the first time, you beheld the hope of coming to God by your doing was vanity. Now what? That which you thought was life was gone! But God kept calling--through his messenger, through his gospel--God said, "Do thyself no harm. We are all here--God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!"

Look at a few scriptures with me: The Lord said to Nicodemus: **John 3: 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.** (Now turn to Isaiah 49: 8--what makes a man come to the light?) **Isaiah 49: 8: Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; 9: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places. 10: They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11: And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.**

What does the jailor do next? **Acts 16: 29: Then he called for a light...**When Christ calls a sinner "to show yourself," the sinner calls for Christ the Light.

**Acts 16: 29: Then he called for a light and sprang in...**Grace makes a man willing to come to Christ. **Ps 110:3: Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power**

Grace gives a new spirit. **Acts 16: 29: Then he called for a light and sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?** There is an altogether different spirit in this jailor now than when he thrust Paul and Silas into the prison. Christ calling and causing you to willingly call for the Light is what the Spirit does when he creates a true heart that fears the LORD. **Proverbs 9: 10: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 11: For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.**

**Luke 11:9: And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.** You know when a sinner truly seeks the Lord Jesus Christ? When God has sought the sinner! When:

1. Grace quickens the dead sinner.
2. Grace removes all hope of gain by our own doing
3. Then grace makes a sinner willingly call upon God.

That is the effect grace has upon a sinner.

## **II. The Good News of the Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Acts 16: 30: And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32: And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house**

### A. He said what must I do? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

The ultimate opposite of works is faith.

**John 6: 29: Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**

**John 8: 24: I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.**

**I John 5: 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12: He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. 13: These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**

### B. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Do you know WHOM you have believed? Paul said, "**I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**" (2 Tim 1: 12.) Faith is not merely a belief of historical facts about Jesus--that he was the Son of God, the Messiah, that he came in the flesh, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and is now in heaven at the right hand of God, and is coming again to judge both quick and dead. You can believe those things about Christ and not believe ON CHRIST. True faith relies totally upon the person--the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is Lord. You don't make him Lord, he is Lord. Is he your Lord? If Christ is your Lord then you admit that Christ Jesus OWNS YOU--**purchased you with his own blood.** If Christ is your Lord then you confess that he has the power and right to do with you whatsoever he is pleased to do. The power of disposing of all matters in your life is not your own but his. **Proverbs 16:33: The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.** And you are happy that it is so. If Christ is Lord to you then you call him Lord because of the respect and reverence that fills your heart for him.

**Illustration:** President.....; Dr.....; then pray "in Jesus name?" He is LORD of lords and KING of kings!

The Lord Christ is Jesus. That name "Jesus" means he is ALL salvation! His name is Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins (**Mt 1: 21.**) If I believe the Lord Jesus then I confess that God had to send his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh because I had no strength to save myself and he saved his people. **Romans 8: 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**

The Lord Jesus is the Christ. If I believe the Lord Jesus Christ then I confess that he is God's chosen One; that he is God's anointed One; that he is the One in whom God is well-pleased.

Believing the Lord Jesus Christ is to believe that everything I could never do and shall never be able to do, he has done and shall do so that all that remains for me is to cast all my care on him.

### C. And thou shalt be saved.

Do you need to be saved? From what do you need to be saved? What you need to be saved *from* has everything to do with believing on Christ Jesus the Savior.

- Not until you behold the utter deadness of your flesh will cast yourself on Christ the Life
- Not until you behold how exceedingly sinful you are will cast yourself on Christ the Righteous.
- Not until you behold how utterly powerless you are will cast yourself on Christ the Power.
- Not until you behold how deceitful your heart will cast yourself on Christ the Truth.
- Not until you behold that all your ways are the ways of death will cast yourself on Christ the Way! Do you need to be saved? If you haven't trusted Christ the Lord the chief reason is you do not feel that you have any need whatsoever of a Savior.

### D. The first evidence you will show when God begins to work in your heart is this--you will want to know what the Lord says about you and about himself in his word. V32: And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house

How are you going to know WHO the Lord Jesus is so that you might believe ON him? **Romans 10:14: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15: And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**

Listen to this great question : John 9: 35: 35: **Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? 36: He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? 37: And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. 38: And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.**

**Illustration:** Thus saith the Lord. As you grow in grace, you realize that the word of the Lord is the only weapon you have to shut the mouths of the gainsayers. Someone asked a good question after the service last Sunday. My message declared that the believer is in the spirit not in the flesh; our Lord is the GodMan seated in the heavens in glorified flesh and is Spirit; and that the kingdom of our Lord is spiritual. So someone asked, "What would you say to the Gnostics who abuse this teaching, saying such things as, "Christ was not a man but a spirit only?" There is only one way thing to say, only one way God will loose the prisoner--"thus saith the Lord." As we see here with Paul, the only weapon we have is spiritual--it is the word of the Lord which is spirit and life--"thus saith the Lord." But this gospel is **mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.** (2 Cor 10: 4.)

- I. The Effect Grace Has Upon A Sinner is: it quickens, it strips and makes him call out.  
II. The Good News of the Gospel Is That Believing Jesus Christ the Lord is All Your Salvation

### **III. THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.**

**A. First, the Believer Falls in Love With Christ Jesus the Lord. Acts 16: 33: And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes;**

The jailor did this to Christ! I know that the jailor did this to Paul and Silas, but Paul and Silas were the closest the jailor could get, bodily, to Christ Jesus. **Matthew 25:40:** And faith knows in the heart what our King says, **Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.** We see repentance and faith here? He turned from *inflicting stripes* to *washing them*--repentance from rejecting Christ to faith in Christ--we can't have one without the other.

**B. Secondly, the Believer Submits to Christ...and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.**

Here the Holy Spirit declares that he and all his were granted faith and repentance to believe on Christ therefore they submitted to the ordinance of baptism in obedience to Christ.

**Example: Cornelius**--In Acts 11: 13: the angel of the Lord said to Cornelius...**Peter; 14: Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.** Then Peter declared that those in Cornelius' house were baptized, not because Cornelius was somehow baptizing them into a covenant, but because of what God did in their hearts: **Acts 15: 8: And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; 9: And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.**

Only the Holy Spirit can make a sinner obedient to Christ.

**John 1:13: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

**I Corinthians 12: 3: Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.**

Water baptism is the confession to the world that Christ Jesus our Lord is all our hope and that we are his willing bond-servants.

**C. Thirdly, the Believer Falls in Love With Christ's Brethren V34: And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them,**

Here is an example of what we have seen in **Isaiah 11:6: The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.**

**1 John 5:1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.**

**D. Fourthly, the Believer rejoices and continues believing God. V34:...and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.**

**Romans 5:2...rejoice in hope of the glory of God....11:...we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.**

**Application:**

Let this be our prayer for all those in our house and with whom we are able to minister the word of the Lord:  
**Romans 15:13: Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.**