

The Samurai Who met Jesus

Small Group Follow-up Study for Acts 16:19-34

RE-READ

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights 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 will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

RECAP

Canadians are turning to samurai solutions rather than gospel solutions to the problem of shame today.
(vv.19-24)

1. Jesus acceptance overcomes the world's rejection (vv.25)
2. Jesus' freedom allows people to sacrifice this world's freedoms. (vv.26-28)
3. Jesus' salvation really changes people (vv.29-34)
 - A. Reconciliation and service: He "washed their wounds"
 - B. Make your faith public: "He was baptized at once, he and all his family."
 - C. Invite people into your home: "he brought them up into his house and set food before them."
 - D. Rejoice in God: "And he rejoiced ... that he had believed in God."

RESPOND

1. Samurai are famous for their code of honour. They would sacrifice everything for a great name. What are some ways that you feel the temptation to seek honour or acceptance from the world.
2. Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten and humiliated, yet they sang songs to their God. Other Christians who claim to follow the same Saviour, will complain about their loss of freedoms and unfair circumstances. What makes the difference? Where do you think you need to change?
3. The jailer is about to take his life to protect his honour and atone for failing to fulfill his responsibilities, but Paul and Silas sacrifice their freedom to save him. How would you evaluate the way you use your freedom? What are some ways that Christians can sacrifice their freedom, and their free time, in order to serve others or testify to Christ?
4. How did you feel about the statement, "If you've gotten the impression that the Christian life is mostly about doing your duty for God and then living your life however you want, you've missed it completely."
5. The changes evidenced in the jailer's life in vv.33-34 are remarkable. Do you still expect to change and grow as a Christian, or have you become complacent about your walk with God? Which of the areas in these two verses (reconciliation and service, making your faith public, inviting people into your home, rejoicing in God) do you most need to grow in?