

June 2, 2019

## What Does it Mean to be Saved?

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Acts 16:16-34

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### PODCAST START:

Brian: Welcome to the Queer Theology podcast!

Fr. Shay: Where each episode, we take a queer look at the week's lectionary readings. We're the co-founders of QueerTheology.com and the hosts for this podcast. I'm Father Shay Kearns

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B: And I'm Brian G. Murphy.

FS: Welcome back to the Queer Theology lectionary podcasts. This week we are taking a look at the lectionary texts for June 2nd, we're going to look at Acts 16:16-34, this is from the common English Bible. It's a little long but I'm going to go ahead and read it for us anyway.

One day, when we were on the way to the place for prayer, we met a slave woman. She had a spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners through fortune-telling. She began following Paul and us, shouting, "These people are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming a way of salvation to you!" She did this for many days.

This annoyed Paul so much that he finally turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave her!" It left her at that very moment.

Her owners realized that their hope for making money was gone. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the city center. When her owners approached the legal authorities, they said, "These people are causing an uproar in our city. They are Jews who promote customs that we Romans can't accept or practice." The crowd joined in the attacks against Paul and Silas, so the authorities ordered that they be stripped of their clothes and beaten with a rod. When Paul and Silas had been severely beaten, the authorities threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to secure them with great care. When he received these instructions, he threw them into the innermost cell and secured their feet in stocks.

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. All at once there was such a violent earthquake that it shook the prison's foundations. The doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. When the jailer awoke and saw the open doors of the prison, he thought the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul shouted loudly, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

The jailer called for some lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He led them outside and asked, "Honorable masters, what must I do to be rescued?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your entire household." They spoke the Lord's word to him and everyone else in his house. Right

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then, in the middle of the night, the jailer welcomed them and washed their wounds. He and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his home and gave them a meal. He was overjoyed because he and everyone in his household had come to believe in God.

B: This passage is rich!

FS: What do you do with it?

B: There's so much going on here. So, there's three different things that pop out for me this time, which I think are completely different than what we ever talked about. We did this passage five years ago when we talked about the jail part, but so. I'll put a link to that episode on the show notes which you can get at [Queertheology.com/279](http://Queertheology.com/279).

So the first time that jumped out to me is they were like encounter this slave woman and I just think about Jesus saying come to release the prisoners, and freedom for the oppressed, and neither slave nor free elsewhere in the new testament. Then there's sort of like this encounter with this woman who's enslaved and I want to know what their response to her was. All of them to be annoyed at her and how did them casting out this spirit that was making her owner money, affect her life and lively hood. What does freedom for her look like, right?

So my thinking about this unnamed woman who's been enslaved and what does the gospel mean for her? And then later on in this passage thinking about this confrontation with the Roman authorities and how in parts of Christianity there's this anti-semitic: the Jews killed Jesus. Which is a distortion of the gospel, like the Roman's killed Jesus and Jesus was in fact Jewish. This passage makes it clear that even the earliest Christians or the earliest followers of Jesus were still Jewish. Jewishness is the central part of Christian faith. Which is not to say that Christians should start practicing Judaism on our own but we need to learn and respect and learn from Jewish folks cause that's sort of like the well from which our faith springs.

So there's that going on here and then there's this bit at the end, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your entire household." I'm just thinking a lot about what does it mean to be saved and I think like many Christians have this idea that like oh being saved is like "Oh! You get to go to heaven!" That's what being saved is. I want to explore more about the idea of salvation, what about you Shay?

FS: I'm really struck by the fact that the reason that they get thrown in jail in the first place isn't for any spiritual reasons. It's because they were costing these men money, right? And again we have this sense of like, the gospel is about real ramifications in the real world, not just religious things. It's concrete financial, I'm really struck by that and I'm struck by the fact that I'm pretty sure I've heard this passage preached about a bazillion times growing up. The Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns in prison thing was a favorite of the Evangelicals, but I never heard it connected with the economics.

B: Right.

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FS: Right, it was always about they were preaching about Jesus and people didn't like Jesus. It's like this has nothing to do with that, which I find really striking.

B: Yeah I also. It's not like Christian's in jail for having a church in the basement. It's like Paul and Silas in jail because they cost the economic elite money.

FS: Yeah! Which is so striking and so important. I also love that Paul heals this person because he gets annoyed at her. This isn't Paul being like a benevolent and generous of spirit, this is Paul being like would you shut up. Which I never noticed before but makes me laugh and also, like Paul is kind of a dick.

Anyway.

B: Yeah it doesn't help his image.

FS: No. I also was really struck by at least in the translation that we read when the jailer realizes that Paul and Silas are still there, he leads them outside and he says to them "what must I do to be rescued?" I find that word choice really interesting because they respond with "believe in Jesus and you'll be saved." And I feel like that's not the question that the jailer was asking. He was actually asking like "Y'all I'm fucked here because you just caused an earthquake that ruined my jail and people are going to be coming after me. How am I supposed to get out of this?" And they give this kind of religious response.

So that kind of, I don't know what to do with that but it jumped out at me that he's asking a different question and I think that so often religious folks like to give a spiritualized answer to what is a concrete question. Like where am I going to sleep tonight? Where am I going to find food? And there's a sense that often religious folks are like just pray harder or go to church. It's like that's not what I asked, maybe faith can provide some kind of balm but it also needs to provide actual physical salvation and rescue, too.

[outro music plays]

B: The Queer Theology podcast is just one of many things that we do at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com) which provides resources, community, and inspiration for LGBTQ Christians and straight cisgender supporters.

FS: To dive into more of the action, visit us at [QueerTheology.com](http://QueerTheology.com). You can also connect with us online: on Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, and Instagram.

B: We'll see you next week.

**PODCAST END**

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