

## **"You and Your Household"**

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**Intro.** What would you do for your beloved ones?

I heard a dramatic story of a boy who came home one hot afternoon, anxious to take a cool swim in the pond behind his home. He lived in south Florida, so taking a quick dip was a common way to cool off. He was so anxious to get in the water, he didn't even go inside to change clothes. He just raced for the pond, dropping his shoes, shirt, and socks along the way. His mother spotted him diving off the dock and went outside to check on him.

As she watched her son swim toward the middle of the lake, she also spotted an alligator moving from the far shore toward her son! She began screaming the warnings, and the boy stopped in mid-swim. He finally understood the danger and began racing back toward the dock. Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. It was a tug-of-war, a mother's worst nightmare. From the dock, she pulled his arms. From the water, the alligator held his legs. The water was quickly stained with blood. A farmer driving by heard the screams and ran to help. He shot the alligator and helped the mother call for help. The boy survived, and after several weeks of hospitalization, was ready to talk with a news reporter. The reporter asked the child if he could see where the alligator had bitten him. With the typical pride of a boy, he showed off his healing wounds to the interested reporter. "But wait," said the boy, "look at these!" With that,

he showed the reporter the scars on his arms. "I have great scars on my arms too. I have them because my Mom wouldn't let go."

It is hard to let go of someone you love, and if that love comes from God, it is even stronger. When you receive God's love you want the people you love and care about to also receive the great gift of God's presence.

In today's Bible's narrative in the book of Acts, we see another dramatic story of love, rescue, and salvation. According to the experts, the book of Acts is a sequel to the gospel of Luke and continues the narrative account of the early church, the apostles and the first Christians. The book of Acts tells us that when the gospel message began to spread, it included non-Jewish people and communities. The church became predominately Gentile, multi-cultural and increasingly distanced from Pharisaic Judaism. New people from new communities received the gospel. But let's recount this scene, a kind of a chain reaction narrative.

## **2. Bible Context and Theological reflection**

First, an unexpected, shocking thing happened. A sudden earthquake which could potentially bring tragedy or death occurred. Natural disasters are a part of the human experience. We often have no control over what happens in the world and we all are vulnerable to suffering. So, we have an earthquake, and then we have these characters; the jailer and Paul and Silas. The jailer is in shock. Uncertainty invades him. Despair, anguish and death are potential realities for this person. "Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, to really live?" When I was preparing today's message, I was wondering why did the jailer want to kill himself? What was going on in his life? What

was happening with this person? Maybe he was worried because he belonged to an oppressive system that severely punished mistakes and so he was afraid of the consequences. But it is important to remember that God is always in favor of those who are oppressed by the evil powers of this world. Salvation arrives because something happens, God's actions can change the situation.

God's salvation and hope is present, and rescue can come when a simple act of hope is performed or when a word of hope is declared amid despair; when something happens instead of nothing, when someone says, "do no harm to yourself for we are all here!" Dear church, through this dramatic narrative we can see that God provided salvation to the jailer, and he then shared the powerful experience of salvation with his family. The jailer's experience of salvation was shared with his family and they were changed forever!

*Let's take into account that prayers, singing and an earthquake lead not to the rescue of Paul and Silas from prison but rather to the salvation of the jailer and his household.*

### **3. Experiencing the gospel!**

Like the apostles, you can be the person that makes a difference, you can be the first to bring hope to others in despair. Like the jailer, you can be the person that God can use to bring new life to your family, a new hope, a new beginning. It doesn't matter your age, or gender or personal story. What matters is that God can transform any story, any tragedy, any circumstance for good. What matters is that God can use your life for the good of your family, friends, community, country, and world...

The presence of Jesus Christ empowers us and transforms the reality of our existence so that we may experience a new life now and in the future; a life where God will heal our wounds and guide us down the pathway of discipleship. What would you do for your beloved ones?

When the storms of life hit your family or when a tragedy suddenly shocks your existence, God can use your life to bring hope. Many times, painful things happen and we experience fear and despair. But as Jesus' follower's our reactions can be different. We can have hope in God and share the God news of Jesus Christ to other!

Paul and Silas not only saved the jailer's life but Jesus' message brought hope and a new beginning not only to the jailer but also to his family. Do you remember the illustration that I shared at the beginning of my message? We all know that love and care empowered that mother not to let her son go to certain death. The jailer overcomes his fear and despair and accepts the gospel's transformative power with hope and thus brings salvation to his household.

What would you do for your beloved ones? A simple but powerful step toward a new experience with God could be to start to pray for your family. This week, take God's presence home with you. Don't leave God here in this sanctuary, take Jesus home with you! Designate a special place for God in your home. A home altar is a place where you and your family can reflect, pray, sing or meditate on God's word.

During this week and forever, let the presence and salvation of God transform your life and the life of your family! "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Amen!

