

HAPPY “THANKSGIVINGS”

“...YOU HAVE ANOINTED MY HEAD WITH OIL; MY CUP OVERFLOWS.” PSALM 23:5

The journey began with an ordinary day...

Well, as ordinary as a day can be for this certain missionary. No one knows for sure, but it's possible that he started his day with a reading and meditation on a Psalm, maybe it was the 23rd Psalm. Of course, there was also his morning prayer ending with, “Lord, use me today. I just want to know You, your resurrection power, and the fellowship of your sufferings, Jesus. Give me boldness, Lord. Fill me, use me, be glorified in me this day, Thank you, Lord, thank You that I belong to You. My cup overflows! In Jesus’ name, Amen.” He walked out the door that day with no idea what it would hold, only that he would be held in the very hands of the God he served.

GOOD NEWS!

As they arrived in the city, the man and his friend came across a woman who needed Jesus. They told her the Gospel, and immediately she accepted the gift of salvation! But wait, there's more! Her whole household was saved! WOW! What a glorious start to this missionary journey. The man declared aloud, **“Thank You, Lord, my cup overflows!”** Not many days later, they came across a young girl who was possessed by the devil and was being used by some unscrupulous men. The Missionary spoke to the spirit and told it to come out of her. She was freed in that very moment! Just think about how her day began...just like any other, in torment and sadness. Now, freed from slavery, she would never be the same again. The missionary was rejoicing in her freedom and said, **“Thank you, Lord, for your great love. My cup overflows!”**

BAD NEWS? The words had barely left his lips when the unscrupulous men came back and dragged the missionary and his friend away. Thrown into the public square, they were accused of committing crimes against the people. The large crowd was in an uproar and the city officials ordered



the missionaries to be beaten! Then they were shipped off to jail.

GOOD NEWS!

Hands and feet in stocks, beaten, bloody, and in pain, the two missionaries prayed. Maybe it started out as thanksgiving for being counted worthy to suffer for the sake of the Gospel, but at about midnight their prayers gave way to songs of praise. **“Lord, You are great! Worthy to be praised! My cup overflows with your goodness and your grace! Hallelujah!”** As they sang, the other prisoners listened. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake and the foundations of the jail were shaken! All the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. WOW! Can you imagine what that was like?

Naturally, the jailer is in huge trouble if all those prisoners escape. He sees no hope for the future, so he takes up a weapon to kill himself. One of the missionaries said, “No, don't hurt yourself, we are all still here!” The jail wasn't the only thing that was shaken that night, the jailer was trembling with fear as he knelt down and asked the missionaries, “What must I do to be saved?” To which the missionary responded, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.” This Gospel was preached to his household. They all believed and were baptized that very night! Not only that, but the

missionaries got their wounds cleaned, they got a shower, and a home-cooked meal courtesy of the jailer and his family! **(DISCLAIMER: the preceding portrayal of the Missionaries, Paul and Silas, was mixed with conjecture from the author. Please go to the Bible in Acts, Chapter 16 for the actual Biblical text).**

This is one of the many stories, especially of the Apostle Paul's life, where the sequence of events is something like this: good, bad, bad, good, bad, good. As Christians, we are promised that we will always land on a good note. **Romans 8:28 says that God causes ALL things to work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.** So, you see, no matter what is happening around us, whether we're walking through the valley of the shadow of death, or rejoicing on a mountaintop, we are blessed. We can be thankful! Our cup overflows!

For Christians, thanksgiving isn't a day, it's a lifestyle of thanksgivings. **A truly thankful heart is not based on what we have, what we don't have, if we feel good, or if things are going well, whether we can get together with family or if we have an abundance of food.** All these things are certainly welcome, but the real thankfulness comes from the gift of our salvation. In fact, we are dearly loved children of God, and we have eternal life! These truths cannot be affected by outside circumstances: therefore, even if our whole world falls apart, we know that we belong to Him and nothing can separate us from His love. (Romans 8:38)

So, even if it's hard to see goodness and mercy following you around right now, just remember, as disciples of Jesus, we will always land on a good note and ultimately, we will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever! For this we can be thankful every day.

Happy Thanksgivings, everyone!

Shalom, BIG D