**6 5 16** ***"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***"But 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 every one’s fetters were unfastened."***

          This week in the Book of Acts, beloved, we hear of Paul’s and Silas’ imprisonment by the Roman magistrates. They were beaten, inflicted with many blows, thrown into prison and their feet were fastened with stocks. Outwardly and from a human standpoint this seems like a catastrophic event – a total defeat. There appears to be no way out of this dismal set of circumstances. But what was their response? They prayed and sang hymns to God at midnight! They kept vigil, they kept their hope, their joy, and their trust in God in spite of what seemed to be an overwhelming defeat. They prayed, not knowing the outcome of their particular circumstances, but simply knowing that God would take care of them-either in this world or the next.

          This reminds us of the faith of the three holy children in Daniel who responded to Nebudchanezzar’s demand that they worship his statue or face death. He asked them ***"And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"***16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ***"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.18 "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." (Dan 3:15-18 NKJ)***  Just like the three children, so Paul and Silas sang hymns to God with trust and joy in the face of overwhelming odds. And what happened? God’s presence and power became abundantly clear with the presence of the earthquake. The prison was shaken, the doors opened and the chains were broken. The powerless became the powerful, the powerful became powerless, and the prisoners became the liberators. The means of imprisonment was turned into the means of salvation!

           This, beloved, has a deep and most important meaning for us, as believers in God. If we maintain a deep and abiding trust in our God, salvation is ours. This is what St. Paul told the jailer when he asked "what must I do to be saved?" St. Paul’s answer is our answer- "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your whole household." To believe in the Lord Jesus means to trust Him despite our outward circumstances. To believe in the Lord Jesus means to trust Him even if earthly and material salvation is not granted to us by our Lord. To believe in the Lord Jesus means to trust Him by following His commandments.  Finally, to believe in the Lord Jesus means to sing hymns and pray joyfully,  even when everything looks bleak. For as we do this, the presence of God will come to us like an earthquake and free us from our prison. The doors will be opened and the defeated will become victors, and the powerless will become powerful. Amen.