



My Beloved Ones,

Χριστός ἀνέστη!
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

The readings for this Sunday of the Blind Man give us two important examples of the strength that comes from true belief in God.

In the Gospel, the Disciples encounter a blind beggar, for whom Jesus anoints his eyes, telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. After he receives his sight, the blind man's neighbors do not believe, and the Pharisees wish to use his own words against Christ. Though the man is cast out from the synagogue, Jesus approaches him, asking, *"Do you believe in the Son of man?"* He answered, *"And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"* Jesus said to him, *"You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you."* He said, *"Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped*

him. (John 9:35-38)

Let us now look at this Sunday's reading from the Book of Acts. Paul and Silas encounter a slave who performs fortune telling. The demon that gives her this power is greatly disturbed by Paul and Silas, and so, the girl follows them, proclaiming that they are the Lord's Apostles. Troubled, Paul expels the demon, but this infuriates the pagans, who deliver the Apostles to the governor, for punishment and imprisonment. Throughout their torments, Paul and Silas remain faithful, even singing hymns in their jail cell.

The reading then tells us that there is then an earthquake so strong, that the Apostles' bonds are broken, and the doors opened. When the jailer wakes, he assumes that the prisoners escaped, and so he draws his sword to kill himself. Paul, however, stops him. The jailer, asking that light be brought in to see them, falls down before them, afraid, asking, *"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." (Acts 16:30-34)

We could say much about the patience of the Apostles: who remain faithful, even as they are harassed, beaten, and chained—but let us look at the jailer. He is doing his job, and then there is a violent earthquake. He is so terrified at the thought of a prisoner escape, that he is willing to take his own life. Instead, look at what he does when Paul tells him they are still in the jail. We read that, *"...the jailer called for lights..."* (Acts 16:29).

“I am the light of the world,” Jesus says. *“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”* The Fathers of the Church take St. John’s statement that the Blind Man was blind at birth to mean that he was born without eyes. Here, we have two examples of men, one Jewish and pagan, who understood that they were in the presence of something greater than themselves, and so surrendered their lives to Christ.

Hopefully, we too ask ourselves every day what we must do to be saved. And I pray that we also have the strength to do what both these men did: ask for light.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta