

This morning we noted that Paul and Silas ended up in prison because they healed a demon possessed girl that was making money for her owners by fortune-telling. Even though she was stating truth regarding Paul and Silas, Paul was put out with her and cast the evil spirit from her. Her owners were angry because they lost their ability to make money off the girl and seized Paul and Silas and brought them before the authorities claiming they were Jews and advocating customs unlawful for Romans. They were stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison.

Tonight I want to go back to Acts 16 and notice four things that happened and four lessons we can learn from that jail experience.

1. THEY PRAISED GOD WHILE IN PRISON. *Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.* Even though they'd been beaten and thrown in prison with their feet shackled, they sang hymns and prayed. Their praise in such a bad situation caused those around them to take notice and listen to them. There are a couple of lessons seen in this. One, they didn't let their circumstances dictate their attitude. Paul was practicing what he later wrote to these very brethren. *Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.* The word "always" means during the good and the bad. He would also write *Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* While not happy being in prison, he was content and able to sing praises unto God. It seems that he was rejoicing in being able to suffer for the cause of Christ. *1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.* Isn't this exactly what Paul and Silas were doing?

2. THEIR PRAISE NOT ONLY HELPED THEM BUT ALSO THOSE WHO LISTENED. An earthquake shook the prison, and the doors flew open. Everyone's chains came loose. *Acts 16:26 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 bands were loosed. While all could have escaped, for some reason they all stayed right where they were. I want to suggest to you that the reason was the influence of Paul and Silas. Now the story continues with the jailer removing Paul and Silas who then taught the jailer about the Lord. While they were gone, the jail doors were still open and the shackles were loosened, but it seems the prisoners still do not leave. We are not told, but it's possible that some of them too later became Christians.

3 WHAT THEY DIDN'T DO WAS IMPORTANT. Roman law required jailers to take personal responsibility for prisoners. If Paul and Silas and other prisoners had bolted when their chains came loose, the jailer would have possibly been put to death. This is why he placed them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in stocks. By not escaping, they saved the life of the jailer.

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" Acts 16:27-28

4. THEIR EXAMPLE CHANGED LIVES ETERNALLY. Paul and Silas chose to stay in the difficult circumstance they were in (prison) when they could have easily escaped suffering. That example drew the jailer to realize there was something different about them and he wanted whatever they had.

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30.

In an incredible act of discernment, Paul knew they must not run when the chains came loose, and the prison doors swung open. God was working and using the bad situation for something good.

From that event, they replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their

wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household. Acts 16:31-34

HOW TO APPLY THESE LESSONS TO OUR LIVES. There are many lessons to learn from Paul and Silas in prison that are applicable to our Christian lives today.

1. **It's All Good.** When we're suffering in a bad situation, let our praise to God is genuine because we understand doing it knowing He's allowing the suffering for our good; or the good of others. It's easiest to praise God when we get the promotion, proposal, or a long-awaited fulfilled promise. It's much harder when we're suffering. Maybe we're in a situation where we don't see a good ending. We've lost someone we love. Or we're letting go of something we want to keep. Lesson learned is to raise the praise when trouble comes into our lives because it's all good. ***Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.***

2. **Authentic Worship Is Powerful.** Like a supernatural earthquake at just the right time, God moves powerfully in our lives when our worship is authentic. No truer can it be than when we're in pain. We trust Him with every part of our lives; the good and the bad. When we appreciate that maybe our suffering is part of God's plan and we surrender our suffering to Him, then we will find rest in His work. ***1 Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: (13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; ... (16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*** God sets us free from our own prisons. He loosens our feet from shackles even when we're unaware we're bound. He heals what can only be healed by Him.

3. What We Don't Do Can Be Important. Our flesh may desperately want to act, but when we stay still, we may impact someone else's life. Christians are judged by the world. They look to see how we will act and what we'll do when we're in a bad situation. Will we bust out the door and head for the hills when times get tough? Or will we seek God and search for His purpose in the circumstances we find ourselves?

What we don't do can be important to a lost person keeping tabs on Christian behavior. We all make mistakes and sin, but we need to remember we're called to a higher standard than the world and what we don't do is important.

4. A Good Example May Change Lives. Paul and Silas set an incredible example of Christianity by staying in prison when they could have easily escaped their suffering. Their behavior in prison affected other prisoners and the jailer. Consider the example set by Paul and Silas in prison and remember our behavior may also affect other people. What another sees in us in times of trouble can have a deep impact. They may see how we handle a situation and use us as their example to follow. It's been said, "The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek."

Paul didn't plan to go to prison yet he was willing to submit to God, continuing to praise Him even in shackles. *Acts 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.* You would figure that Paul and Silas were also rejoicing in the events of that morning.

His willingness to suffer and yet find joy in the moment is something we all can apply to our lives.