

"The Second Missionary Journey"

Part 5

Acts 15:41-18:22

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we ended as Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in stocks and then placed in the inner prison. All of this happened because they were falsely accused of being insurrectionists who were against the Roman government. The Truth was that Paul cast the demon out of the slave girl and her owners lost the income they were gathering from her as a fortune teller.

Notice Acts 16:16-24

The question now is, "How will they handle what has happened?"

➤ **Saved from the Chains of Bondage**

Notice Acts 16:25

There is so much to consider here. First of all, there was no complaining or grumbling because of what had happened. They did not deserve the beatings nor to be in prison. But neither man complained. Instead, they decided to have a time of praise and prayer. This showed that in their hearts they were content with Jesus Christ regardless of what was happening in their lives.

Application:

How do we handle the times in life when we are treated unfairly? The sin nature wants to retaliate instantly but we are not to follow the sin nature and we are not to seek vengeance.

Romans 12:17-21

¹⁷ Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Notice Acts 16:25 again.

We need to notice that "the prisoners heard them" so the singing reached into the minds and the hearts of the other prisoners.

Application:

Might we always keep in mind that we do not know who is watching and who is listening when we go through times of tribulation. As Christians we are to be different than people of the world and one way that we are different is that we handle tribulation in a different way. This is where a deep knowledge of the Bible helps us. The more we know about God the better we can handle the times of tribulation in our lives. Greater knowledge does not make us exempt from suffering but it does help us to know that God has permitted what we are facing and it also helps us to know that His grace is sufficient in the midst of the pain.

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ *A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.*

Proverbs 19:20-21

²⁰ *Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.*

²¹ *There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*

These verses along with our text in Acts 16 help us to understand that God is in control of our paths and He sometimes permits very difficult times to come upon us. Was it not God who led Paul and the others to Philippi? He placed them in the prison to be a testimony for Him. Why the false accusations? This was the way to get them into the inner prison. To get to the men whom God would have to hear the Gospel they would need to be arrested. To see how Jesus changes lives they would need to suffer persecution and then sing praises to God while the blood was still fresh on their backs. This would have an impact upon the other prisoners in a way that they would never forget. Let me show you another such powerful testimony.

Acts 7:54-60

⁵⁴ *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.*

⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

⁵⁶ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

⁵⁷ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

⁵⁸ And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

⁶⁰ And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

God allowed Stephen to be stoned to death to be a testimony to Saul who would later become Paul. In Acts 16 what we see is the power of Jesus Christ in a life that enables us to overcome bitterness. Notice the words of Whitfield.

"While your salvation depends on Jesus and His finished work, and on that alone, your enjoyment of that salvation depends very much on yourself—on your holy walk with God, on your living a life within the veil—living daily by faith on Him Who loved you and gave Himself for you. Without this you may be a Christian, but you will never be a peaceful, praising, happy Christian."

Notice Acts 16:26

This earthquake set every prisoner free but never collapsed the prison. Why did God cause the earthquake because He could have just released every prisoner? The earthquake served several purposes.

1. It made it clear to Paul and Silas that He heard their prayers and their praise.
2. It served as a testimony to the other prisoners that God answers prayers.
3. It served to get the attention of the jailor.

Application: Let us know that when we pray and when we praise God that He most likely will not cause an earthquake but He will shake up the lives of those we pray for. When we pray for the unsaved, God can shake the foundations of their lives to get their attention. Many times, we get discouraged and we stop praying because we see no results, but what

we do not know is that many times God is shaking the foundations of their lives and we are not aware.

Before we move on there is yet another application here that I want to share. When Paul and Silas prayed and offered praise to the Lord it was then that their "chains" came off. We can be sure that when we find ourselves in situations where we feel imprisoned that it is through praise and prayer that we are set free. I am not saying that God will take us out of the situation or that He will remove the difficult situation but I am saying that the proper attitude will set us free in our hearts and minds. If you are in a situation where others have caused you to feel trapped or imprisoned and you have anger, hatred, and unforgiveness toward those who have brought about the circumstances, then you will have no peace.

Matthew 18:32-35

³² *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:*

³³ *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?*

³⁴ *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

³⁵ *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

What tormentors? The hidden tormentors of anger and bitterness that eat your insides out, the tormentors of frustration and malice that give you ulcers and high blood pressure and migraine headaches and lower back pain, the tormentors that make you lie awake at night on your bed stewing over every rotten thing that happens to you. The tormentors of an unforgiving heart who stalk your trail day and night, who never leave your side, who suck every bit of joy from your life.

Why? BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT FORGIVE FROM THE HEART. It is happening to you just as Jesus said because you refuse to forgive.

The next time you find yourself "trapped" try singing praises to the Lord.

Notice Acts 16:27

The keeper of the prison was ready to take his own life. Why? Because the keeper was responsible for the prisoners and if they escaped it would be done to him as it was to be

done to those who escaped. The keeper determined it was better to fall on his sword than it was to fall into the hands of those who had authority over him. They would run him through a time of torture and then eventually kill him.

Roman law stated that if a guard lost a prisoner, he was given the same punishment the prisoner would have received. It follows that the jailer knew that there were some men in the prison who had committed capital crimes and were being held for execution. The jailer would rather commit suicide than face shame and execution.

We see this carried out when Peter was set free from prison.

Acts 12:6-8, 19

⁶ And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

⁷ And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

⁸ And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

¹⁹ And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

Notice Acts 16:28-30

Here we see who the real prisoner was. It was not Paul or Silas but it was the keeper who was in bondage to sin. He was the one who needed to be set free. This man was exactly why God had Paul and Silas placed in the prison. This man's salvation was more important than the comforts of Paul and Silas. The fact that Paul and Silas did not run but made the choice to stay tells us they were not controlled by circumstances but by love.

1 Corinthians 9:12

¹² If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power: but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Notice Acts 16:31

This verse is so important today. People have distorted the way a person is saved by adding little things that a person must do. The most popular thing is telling people to pray and to ask Jesus to come into their heart. There is no Biblical support of that anywhere in the Bible. This comes from Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:20

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This verse is not talking about salvation but it is about fellowship. It is written to the churches who would be saved people.

Conclusion:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Someone might say, "Well, when I was saved, I prayed to accept the Lord." You may have prayed and that is fine but you were saved because you "BELIEVED" that Jesus Christ was the Saviour. People can sit in a pew and be saved just by hearing the Gospel and believing on Jesus Christ. The problem with telling people they are saved by saying a prayer is that many have said "THE" prayer but it had no meaning, and they were never saved. Today there are many people who walk around in our communities thinking they are saved because they said a prayer, when in reality they are still lost. Paul never told the jailer to say a prayer, he simply told him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage is all about the salvation of the keeper of the prison not the release of Paul and Silas.