

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 11TH–12TH // BOOK OF ACTS

SHAKEN (ACTS 16:25–26)

IMPRISONED

Paul and Silas were imprisoned in the city of Philippi for causing a major disturbance.

- After casting a demon out of a slave girl who could somehow predict the future, the owners of the slave girl brought false charges against the missionaries.
- They were beaten by rods, thrown into the “inner prison,” and their feet were placed in stocks.

WHAT KIND OF MOOD WOULD YOU HAVE BEEN IN?

Their backs were swollen, lacerated, and sticky with blood, and their feet were in wooden stocks.

- This kind of posture would have stretched the torso and added to the pain, as the wounds on their backs would have made it painful to lie down.
- History tells us that in ancient prisons there weren't any toilets, so prisoners would essentially have sat in their own and other prisoners' filth.

“ABOUT MIDNIGHT...”

You can't get any darker, lonelier, or more desolate than midnight in the innermost part of prison with your feet in stocks and your back bloodied, bruised, and cut open.

- To make matters worse, Paul and Silas were there because they had done the right thing and were treated unjustly.
- It was a dark, hopeless, and helpless situation.

They had every right to complain about where they were and how they had been treated—it didn't seem and certainly wasn't fair.

- They had every right to feel hopeless, helpless, and depressed—there seemed to be no way out.
- As these cold, exhausted, hungry, and hurting followers of Jesus sat in their own filth in a damp, dark prison, they began to do something remarkable.

PRAYING AND SINGING HYMNS TO GOD

Over the years I've heard so many people tell me that sometimes they “just don't feel it” when it comes to praying and singing worship to God.

- Some people cite distractions, lack of emotion, frustrations, or even anger or resentment towards God for difficult circumstances for why they won't pray, worship, or turn to God.
- Turning to God in the midnight hour is a choice.

“...AND THE PRISONERS WERE LISTENING...”

Imagine for a moment the other inmates in this prison. What were they there for?

- The inner state of their souls as they awaited their trial, sentencing, or execution was probably despair, shame, anger, resentment, or regret.
- Then they heard singing and prayer. How were these two Christians hopeful and full of joy?
- Hope and joy are rare commodities of the Spirit.

DESPAIR/MISERY VS. HOPE/JOY

We all go through tough times and feel down sometimes, but despair is when we believe the lie that God is not strong enough to deliver us and that His grace, mercy, and love can't help us in our time of suffering.

- Early Church theologians saw this as “grieving the Holy Spirit” and the exact opposite of the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE

God responded by sending an earthquake.

- There is something about earthquakes in the Bible.
- Earthquakes seem to be God's way of communicating to His people that He is bigger, more powerful, and more in control than the present situation on the earth.
- He is not limited by the circumstances of the earth; He's ruling over the entire earth in total control.

DOORS OPENED, CHAINS BROKEN

The earthquake God sent shook the foundation of the jail, opened the doors, and broke the chains (v. 26).

- Impossible situations and hopeless scenarios are no match for the God of the universe!
- Faith chooses to see the sovereignty and power of God over every circumstance, even when we can't understand it. God is able!

WHERE DO YOU TURN IN THE MIDNIGHT HOUR?

There is no shortage of self-pity, despair, discouragement, cynicism, hopelessness, and misery in our world.

- The Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love matter most in the midnight hour.
- Faith believes that God is still God, hope believes that He still can deliver and save, and love trusts Him even when we don't understand.

SALVATION (ACTS 16:27–34)

THE JAILER DREW HIS SWORD (VS. 27–28).

Under Roman law and custom, guards who allowed their prisoners to escape received the penalty of their escaped prisoners.

- Knowing this, Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Don't harm yourself, because we're all here!”
- Paul assured the jailer that no one had escaped.
- This miracle was about more than just a miraculous jailbreak for Paul and Silas.

THE \$1,000,000 QUESTION (VS. 29–30).

- Trembling and overwhelmed, the same jailer who had probably beaten Paul and Silas just a few hours earlier fell at their feet.
- “What must I do to be saved?” he asked.
- The fact that God is real was undeniable.
- This jailer was convinced of his own need to be saved—that in himself he had no shot of saving himself.

Not only that, but he was also aware of the fact that there was a Savior who could and was willing to save him.

- Finally, he was willing to do whatever God required of him to respond to God's offer of salvation.
- The response to his question was “believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”
- A simple message but a life-changing one.

EVERY RELIGION IN THE WORLD TEACHES THAT TO GET TO GOD, WE MUST DO WORKS.

But it is IMPOSSIBLE for us to do enough to make ourselves right before God!

- The gospel teaches that the work is DONE—we must simply place our faith in the Lord Jesus.
- This means we repent of our sins, we stop trusting in our own works, and we trust in Jesus to make us right before God.

“BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED.”

Saving faith in Christ is personal trust in Jesus as a living person who offers forgiveness of sins, eternal life with God, and a life in the Kingdom of God here and now.

- An active trust in the power, promise, and person of Christ for salvation (John 6:37).
- An absolute surrender to the lordship and authority of Christ (Romans 10:9).

As Paul and Silas were brought to the jailer's house, they further explained the gospel to him and all in his house (v. 32).

- Upon receiving the message of the gospel, the first response of everyone who believed in Jesus was to immediately be baptized.
- We complicate the topic of baptism so much, but it's so clear in this passage, and others, that we are to be baptized when we receive Christ.

WASHING WOUNDS AND MAKING DINNER

As everyone in the jailer's house came to faith, Paul and Silas's wounds were washed by the jailer, and he served them a meal.

- What an incredible picture of gospel reconciliation: the same jailer who caused the wounds was the one who now helped heal them.
- What wounds in others are you responsible for? How can you now help heal them?

VINDICATION (ACTS 16:35–40)

The next day, government officials came to release Paul and Silas, indicating that quite possibly they had only intended to keep them in prison overnight and then release them.

- But when Paul told the officers he was a Roman citizen, it changed things dramatically.
- Roman citizens were protected by law to be able to travel freely anywhere in the empire without fear of prosecution.

ROMAN CITIZENS WERE ALSO PROTECTED BY LAW FROM BEING BEATEN AND IMPRISONED WITHOUT A TRIAL.

- So, Paul told the officers that they were staying in jail until the magistrates themselves personally escorted them out (v. 37).
- We are called to be forgiving, gracious, and merciful people, but at the same time, it isn't wrong for Christians to pursue justice legally when we have been unjustly treated.

When the government officials understood their mistake, they made it right and apologized (vs. 38–39).

- But the problem of the angry mob remained a potential threat for the peace of the city, so they requested Paul and Silas leave.
- After leaving prison, they stopped by to visit the church in Philippi (v. 40) and then left the city.

THINK ABOUT THE DIVERSITY OF THIS CHURCH...

- Lydia, a very affluent businesswoman who worked in the fashion industry and her entire household (vs. 14–15).
- A correctional officer from the Philippian jail and his entire household (v. 33).
- Possibly a former pagan, demon-possessed slave girl (vs. 17–18)?
- Yet Jesus had radically saved each of them.

YOU NEED A SAVIOR.

- Everyone on earth is going to die and stand before the same God who gave them life.
- Everyone on earth has sinned against God and broken His righteous and holy laws.
- When you die, if God were to say to you, “Why should I let you into my perfect, holy, and spotless Heaven?”...what would you say?

YOU CAN BE SAVED.

- Jesus, the innocent, righteous, spotless son of God, went to the cross for your sins.
- It doesn't matter if you have lived most of your life in demonic bondage, have been a cruel and abusive tormentor, or have chased after success, affluence, and money—Jesus can save you.
- Have you believed and called on His name?

YOU CAN BE DELIVERED.

- There is no such thing as a hopeless situation for those with faith in Christ.
- We are going to go through tough times, but in Christ, our story ends with deliverance.
- Despair, self-pity, misery, and the victim mentality can become idols for some of us.
- He can deliver, he will deliver, and even if he won't, we will not bow down (Daniel 3:17–18).

YOU CAN BE USED TO HEAL AND SERVE.

- Before Christ, we all walked in accordance with our sinful nature. Many of us wounded, took advantage of, and mistreated others.
- We are not called to atone for our sins (Jesus already paid for them), but we should have hearts for healing, service, and reconciliation.
- We are “ministers of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5). Who might we need to reconcile with?

“NOW THESE THREE REMAIN: FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE...” (1 CORINTHIANS 13:13).

- To despair is to grieve the Holy Spirit.
- Faith believes that God is still God, hope believes that He can still deliver and save, and love trusts Him even when we don't understand.
- *Where do you turn in the midnight hour?*