

INTRO // Welcome to the best night of the week!

We are in our 'Beyond These Walls' series going through the Book of Acts. Learning about the very beginning of the first Christian church and how it applies to our lives today as we follow Jesus. Turn in your Streetlights bibles to page _____.

QUESTION// Have you ever got in trouble for doing the right thing?

ILLUSTRATION // Story about getting in trouble for doing the right thing. Ex: I got threatened by my school security guard and principal with suspension for leading "See You At The Pole" in 8th grade.

TENSION // If we are honest, as a follower of Jesus it can feel this way at times. We follow Gods Word. We attempt to live for Him. And yet we still find ourselves in trouble, dark places, an outcast... wondering if it's truly worth following Him...

Tonight we are going to look at 2 guys who find themselves in this exact situation and how God responded to their actions.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE SCRIPTURE //

- Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel in a city called Philippi.
- A young girl who was demon possessed was following them around as they preached to cause problems and create a distraction.
- Paul cast out the demon in Jesus name and the girl was restored.
- This made her master angry because he could no longer make money off of her. So he and a crowd of people got Paul and Silas arrested.
- They were then stripped, beaten with wooden rods and then thrown into prison.

SCRIPTURE // ACTS 16:25-30

25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

PRAY

KEY 1 // GOD SEES THE POSTURE OF OUR PRAISE

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE // Acts 16:23-25

23 They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. 24 So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening.

A. “severely beaten” - They were broken and bloodied by the very people they had come to share the gospel of Jesus with. They obeyed God by going to this city & preaching to these people & that obedience led to their current pain.

HOW WE RELATE: Have you ever found yourself serving God and loving His people and yet... you are suffering? You thought saying “yes” to Jesus and loving His people would lead to the easy life? If that's what you were told, you were lied to. Nowhere in the Bible does Jesus say “come follow me and live the easy life.” No! In fact, Jesus says “Come follow me and die.” The life of a follower of Jesus will truly live a life like our Lord lived. Jesus experienced suffering... so will we.

HOW JESUS RELATES: Jesus experienced abandonment... so will we. Jesus is known as the “suffering servant.” We serve a God that willingly went through what we will go through. He gets it.

B. “inner dungeon” - This was where the sewage and human waste would all run to and collect as it drained. Their wounds were being infected by all this.

HOW WE RELATE: Have you ever felt so broken and beaten up that the filth from everyone else is getting on and infecting you? “I thought following Jesus was easy?!” Just know Jesus doesn't ask anything of you that He himself didn't go through, or worse. Just as the filth of everyone else was getting on Paul and Silas so did the accumulated filth/sin of this broken world get piled on top of Jesus.

HOW JESUS RELATES: When Jesus is dying on the cross and He looks to heaven and says “Father, why have you forsaken me?” It is because the accumulated sin and filth of this world has piled onto Christ. And a Holy God had to turn his face. So if you have ever felt like you're constantly getting the filth and pain from everyone else around you piled upon you... just know Jesus literally gets it.

C. “clamped their feet in the stocks”- They were immobilized. Physically stuck. No matter how hard they tried, there would be no escape.

HOW WE RELATE: Have you ever felt unable to get out of your current situation? Maybe its a family issue. Maybe its an addiction. Maybe a sin problem. Whatever it is... I bet all of us can identify with Paul and Silas at some point in our lives. They're trying to do the right things and end up in a bad place they cannot escape from.

HOW JESUS RELATES: Jesus allowed Himself to be put on the cross. He allowed the pain, the suffering, the mockery. He could have removed Himself at anytime from His pain, but He stayed... for our salvation and for His glory.

If you feel stuck, know you can praise because Jesus allowed Himself to be stuck suffering on a cross so that you could have freedom from your prison.

D. “midnight” - It was the darkest and quietest time of night. They couldn't see a way out let alone each other. All they could hear was the sound of the rats footsteps, the mocking of the other prisoners, and the slow drip of the raw sewage leaking into their cell.

HOW WE RELATE: Maybe you are here tonight and everything is dark. You can't see your way out of a situation. You don't hear the voice of God. All you here is the filth and pain surrounding you. As Christians we have to make a decision. What are we going to do when we can't see? When we can't see a way out... When we can't see God as work. Will we praise or will we pout?

HOW JESUS RELATES: When Jesus was on the cross, dying a painful death to accomplish the will of the Father, 3/4 gospels tell us the sun became completely black at noon. It was physically dark. You couldn't see. The bible also tells us that on the cross Jesus says “Father why have you forsaken me?”. It was so spiritually dark the Son couldn't see the Father. At that moment Jesus could have gotten off the cross in frustration. He could have quit. But He remained!

In your 'midnight' you have a choice to make. You can quit. You can complain. Or... you can praise! No matter you situation, your posture should be praise!

APPLICATION //

Paul and Silas knew that the posture of their praise could not be based off of the easy of their current reality, because God's worth is not dictated by their reality. God was just as good in the prison as He was when Paul cast the demon out of the little girl.

The posture of our praise should never ever be based off of us. The posture of our praise is based off of Gods unchanging goodness!

The posture of our praise should be as consistent as His goodness!

QUESTION // WHAT IS THE POSTURE OF YOUR PRAISE?

- When you feel beaten and bloody....WILL YOU PRAISE?
- When you feel like the mess of this world is covering you... WILL YOU PRAISE?
- When you feel like you can't break loose of your prison... WILL YOU PRAISE?
- When you feel like its so dark you can't see any hope... WILL YOU PRAISE?

KEY 2 // GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS POWER THROUGH OUR PRAISE

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE // Acts 16:26

26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!

ILLUSTRATION // PRAISE IS LIKE JUMPER CABLES

The power is not in the cables. The power is in the full battery. The cables just act as a conduit of power from the full battery to the dead battery. Your situation may feel dark and dead. But praise transfers what is happening in heaven into your situation!

The place that was meant to hold them broken loose! The place that was meant to silence them made a noise as it rattled! The place that was meant meant to keep them prisoners loosed every captive!

This strong prison couldn't withstand the shaking of the Lord. No matter what strongholds you have in your life, God can shaken their very foundations. Don't stop praising if you feel beaten down by the enemy. God demonstrates His power through our praise!

God even broke the chains off of the guilty prisoners! Thats crazy...

HOW JESUS RELATES: When Jesus died on the cross... the ultimate act of worship. The bible tells us there was also a great earthquake and the veil to the Holy of Holies was ripped down the middle! The thing keeping us captive from His presence had been broken! We didn't deserve access to the freedom found in His presence but it was given to us!

APPLICATION // We need to understand our praise can make a massive impact. God responds to the rightly postured praise... of even a prisoner.

- A. HIS POWER THROUGH OUR PRAISE CAN BREAK STRONGHOLDS.
- B. HIS POWER THROUGH OUR PRAISE CAN SET CAPTIVES FREE!

QUESTION // HAVE YOU MINIMIZED THE IMPACT YOUR PRAISE CAN MAKE?

KEY 3 // GOD FULFILLS HIS PURPOSE THROUGH OUR PRAISE

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE // Acts 16:29-34

29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” 32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. 33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

APPLICATION //

When God demonstrates His power through our praise people will notice. Paul and Silas could have made a run for it. God answered their prayers! This jailer was tasked with punishing them. Why stay and help? He was an enemy.

We as followers of Jesus need to understand something...

According to Jesus, the 2 most important things we can do are:

- 1. Love God with everything we have!***
- 2. Love our neighbors as ourselves.***

Paul and Silas knew they weren't the only one needing to be set free that night. This man was a prisoner to sin, and the only keys to that prison Jesus had taken from Satan when He rose from the grave.

They demonstrated their love for God through their praise in a prison. They demonstrated their love for the jailer by living with purpose.

We don't only praise for our chains to fall, but so that others can experience the freedom that only comes through Jesus.

QUESTION // WHO'S FREEDOM IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR PRAISE?

RESPONSE //

Tonight, it would only make sense for us to respond in praise and worship.

Questions to consider as we worship:

1. Am I an unconditional worshipper?
2. Do I believe that God will demonstrate His power through my praise?
3. Am I too focused on my priorities to see the purpose He wants to full fill through me?