

I Will Praise You In The Storm And You Will Break Every Chain

(Acts 16: 16-34)

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then 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—you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in

his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. ³⁴ 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.

Here we have a story about how God can dramatically change lives through the praise and worship of His people even when they are going through difficult times.

Paul and Silas are still in Philippi at this time and there is a slave girl that had a demon in her. This demon gave her the ability to predict the future. If we were to read the original Greek it says that she had the spirit of pneuma pythonos in her. This literally translates to the spirit of the snake and what did Satan reveal himself as in the Garden? A snake. The snake at that time was also a symbol of the prophetess of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and in some translations this girl is referred to as a prophetess.

We read from the scriptures today that this girl was quite good at predicting the future and made her owners a lot of money. She was very good at pulling the wool over the peoples eyes. Does this sound like anything that is happening in the world today?

In these scriptures Luke, who is believed to have written Acts, describes a demon. This demon properly identifies Paul and Silas as slaves of God. As the scriptures said she followed Paul and cried out “These men are slaves of the Most High God” and who proclaim Him as the only way to salvation.

Now Paul eventually got tired of her stalking them and he told the demon to come out of her and this is when things took a turn for the worse. The owners of the slave girl got mad because now their cash cow didn’t work anymore. The demon that controlled her was gone. They began to accuse Paul and Silas of disturbing the peace and being Jews. The crowd began to riot and beat them within an inch of their lives.

If that wasn’t enough they then threw them into prison. They didn’t put them into general population but rather the deepest darkest cell they could find and put them into the stocks, or chains on the walls, to both their hands and feet.

However, this is where things get really interesting. So, it is midnight, the darkest hour, and you might think that they would be down in the dumps at this point. But what happens next? They began to sing hymns to Jesus so loud that all the prisoners and jailers could hear.

This got me to thinking about Psalm 100: 1-5 where it says;

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. ²Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. ³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

So anyway, there they are at midnight, in the stocks, singing their hearts out when all of a sudden a violent earthquake happens. Now I am talking an earthquake that is so bad that it shook the entire foundation of the prison to the point that every prison door opened. But not only that every prisoners chains were unlocked and they fell off.

The jailer said to himself, I am in deep trouble now, and he was about to fall on his sword. This was because he knew if he didn't the king would have him killed for sure. However, Paul yelled out just in time and said it's ok, we are all still here.

Being completely surprised by that the jailer calls for the lamps to be lit and saw that in fact they all were still there. The jailer then took Paul and Silas outside and then asked them a question. What must I do to be saved? Paul began to witness to him and said believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Not just you but you entire household.

After hearing this the jailer began to clean their wounds and took them into the his house and fed them. Then the jailer and his entire family rejoiced in the fact that they had come to know Jesus as their savior.

So here we have a story of 2 men who are obviously at a low point in their lives. They have been beaten and thrown into the deepest darkest cell in prison and put into chains. But what do they do? They praise and sing out to the Lord. They

praise in in the midst of the storm. They didn't ask God to take them out of there or to take that burden from them. No, they praised Him.

Think about this. Who is really free in this story? Paul and Silas are singing, their shackles fall off, the prison doors open and they don't try to run away. The jailer on the other hand was about to take his life because he didn't want to suffer the shame before the king for letting the prisoners escape. Paul and Silas understood that true freedom could only be found in Jesus. He is the only one that can break every chain.

Guys, let me tell you that I know a lot of rich, powerful, famous people. I myself have made a lot of money from time to time and have experienced a little bit of fame. However, I can assure you that none of these things make you free, give you happiness, or give you a sense of security. You can only get true freedom when you admit you are powerless and turn everything over to the higher power.

The chains that bind you and the doors that get locked before you are more often than not of your own making.

Today's story tells us that if we praise Him in the storm that He will break every chain that binds us. He will unlock those doors and set us free and He will not only transform our lives but the lives of those around us.

Paul and Silas understood this and used their situation as an opportunity to testify and reach the jailer with the good news about Jesus.

So I have to ask you: What are the chains that are holding you? What doors are closed to you?

I was talking to someone the other day that told me he was going through a very tough time in his life. His son had started doing drugs and his daughter tried to commit suicide. He couldn't understand why any of this was happening. He had raised his kids in church and taught them right from wrong. He was sitting next to his daughter in the hospital and began to ask God why. But it was then that his question of why turned to a situation of praise. He told God that even though he didn't understand it he knew that God had a plan.

He began to praise God in the storm. At that moment God gave him a peace that passes all understanding. God set him free from the burden he was feeling and

broke those chains. He told me that he now knows that someday his kids will use these things as a testimony to the power of God.

It is time to cast off those chains and break down those doors and realize that you have been set free by the power of God.

Praise Him in the storm, worship Him in the good times, and trust me He will break every chain that binds you.