

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God's Sovereignty Even in Persecution

Acts 16:24-40

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: We see the third story of the events surrounding Paul and Silas's missionary journey into Europe. Here we see the beating and jailing of these two men and then their release. But in and through all of this is the hand of God working out His perfect, yet mysterious will to save sinners.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 16:24-40.
- B. Paul and Silas are in the city of Philippi.
- C. The gospel always creates problems because it addresses the root problems this world produces.
 - 1. The most common result is persecution.
 - 2. Jesus told us that the world will hate us because it first hated Him. He told us that through many troubles we will ultimately find salvation.

II. Christ Triumphs over Demons.

- A. Praise in the Midst of Persecution (24-27).
 - 1. It is near midnight and sleep was not happening. Not while having untreated, open wounds and legs trapped in stocks.
 - 2. But also not with a crush of other prisoners jammed in with you. For it was common for the jailer to move all prisoners into the inner jail cell at night to make it near impossible for an escape.
 - 3. The environment of a jail is not peaceful.
 - 4. And we find these two men singing and praying. And it is all focused toward God alone.

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- a. Here is a good example of a willful choice to worship in the midst of hardship.
 - b. They were living out the very words of Jesus Christ, *“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.”* (Luke 6:22-23)
 - c. How often have you found people essentially stuck emotionally and mentally because of the wrong focus?
 - d. This was a teaching sort prayer and song.
5. Beloved, if you want to see what a person believes, watch that person in times of unjust suffering and unjust accusation.
- B. Proclaiming in the Midst of Persecution (28-33).
- 1. The miraculous earthquake.
 - a. Though there is evidence of some seismic activity in the history of that area, it is not common. This should best be seen as directly orchestrated by God—in other words, a miracle.
 - b. Note the reasons why:
 - (1) Though the jail is shaken thoroughly there appears to be no destruction and damage.
 - (2) Yet not just some, but all doors open and all chains unfasten.
 - (3) Also, it appears that this earthquake was very localized. Understand that the word used is seismos (σεισμός) and we get seismic from it. But it means shaking and not necessarily of an earthquake as we would understand it.
 - (4) The leaders of the city don't send soldiers to secure the building.
 - 2. But there is a second miracle here as well that is not as obvious to us.

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- a. Though the jail was open and the chains were gone, not one person escaped. All remained there. We ought to see the hand of God in this event.
 - b. If you know even a little about the nature of many who are imprisoned, this is rather amazing.
3. Again, we find another aspect of the sovereignty of God working within events. But we also have a simple illustration of what was about to happen in the hearts of the jailer and his household.
4. The jailer is introduced (27-28).
5. We also see a love for the jailer by Paul.
6. The jailer is now coming face to face with the gospel.
7. Note the difference between the jailer's question and the answer (30-31).
 - a. He wants to know what must he "do." This is the normal reaction by all people. They approach their relationship between themselves and God in terms of "doing."
 - b. But the answer given is to "believe."
 - c. But believe in what or who? And we find in vs 31 that the object is threefold: Lord, Jesus, and Christ.
 - d. All in all, it is a full-throated command to place your love, your hope and your soul into the hands of Jesus.

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e. It is also important to note that there was nothing required for the opposite of being saved

8. Clearly time progresses because the very next verse they are in his house and they were all baptized at the house and the wounds of Paul and Silas were cared for. This takes quite a bit of time.

C. Pardon from Persecution (34-40).

1. Day has now come and we find that the magistrates have made a decision to release them.

2. Vs 37 Paul now chooses to reveal his citizenship?

a. Why then?

b. I think it was now after the fact and he can prevent any more trouble and be free to move on with his true purposes; whereas, if he revealed it earlier then everything would have ground to a halt.

3. Paul then makes demands (37).

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4. Instead of leaving the city, they chose to stay for a short bit at the house of Lydia (now we see that she is hosting this new little church).

III. Conclusion.

- A. If I summed up a key part of this story I would simply say it describes men who stayed the course.
 1. These men knew that the gospel will necessarily bring offense and likely persecution. They were not inviting a beating.
 2. But, more importantly, they were not silenced so that they could avoid a beating.
 3. They entrusted that to the Lord and focused on what their responsibility was, which was to preach the gospel.
- B. This is my charge to you today.
 1. If your conviction and goal is to avoid shame or suffering then you will always avoid sharing the gospel. You will have a peaceful life for the most part, but you also will have no one you can point to who was rescued from sin and death because of you.
 2. But if you are like Paul and Silas, then your conviction instead will be to seek to bring the gospel into play and accept that this will come with a cost.
 3. But it will not matter, because you are sharing the way of salvation and speaking about Jesus Christ, and that is all that ultimately matters.

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and give you peace. Amen.