

Midnight Melodies (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

A. You can open your Bibles to [Acts 16](#). This is Part 2 of what last time I called “Midnight Melodies.”

1. And, though in Part 1 I took us through [vv. 16-25](#),
2. for the sake of context and continuity, I’d really like to begin reading this morning with those verses again—only this time we’ll carry on all the way down to the end of the chapter ([v. 40](#)).
 - a. It’s a lot, I know. But, as I trust you’ll soon see, it’s an amazing story!

¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.

¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.” ³⁷ But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed. (Acts 16:16-40)

Two Kinds of People

- A. Now, before I really get moving for this morning, I need to first at least remind you of the framework I had established for us last time.
- B. You may recall, I said that in this text we see essentially two different kinds of people marking out two different approaches to life.
 - 1. The first type of person is represented by these slave-owners.
 - a. And we see their approach to life is to try to gain all they can in the here and now, even if it means exploiting others. “I don’t care if I have to push you down, so long as it helps me get up in this world.”
 - b. But, as we saw clearly last time, this type of person ends up losing in the end.
 - 2. The second type of person is represented by these missionaries—Paul and Silas in particular. And their approach to life is clearly the opposite.
 - a. They are laying their lives down for Jesus’ sake (cf. [Luke 9:24](#))—willing to love others even at great cost to themselves.
 - b. But here’s the thing: though it sure seems at first like they are the big losers here—seized by these slave-owners, dragged before the magistrates, attacked by the crowd, beaten and thrown into prison . . . we could hardly imagine it going any worse—nevertheless, by the end of the story, it’s clear . . . they have won.
 - i. What at first looks like unimaginable loss by the end is shown to be unimaginable gain!
- C. And we left off last time considering just what it is exactly that these missionaries “gain” here—what you and I would gain if we would, like them, be willing to lose our lives for Jesus’ sake.
- D. I said Luke draws our attention here to four things we gain in particular:
 - 1. We covered the first last time, what I called: (1) Invincible Joy. And though we’ll touch on this one again as we go, I want to move straight on to the next three . . .
 - 2. When we lose our lives for Jesus, we also gain: (2) Fruitful Labor; (3) Spiritual Family; and (4) Ultimate Vindication.

Gain #2: Fruitful Labor

- A. These slave-owners are trying so desperately to make a profit, by whatever means necessary it would seem, but by the end, as we saw, “[their hope of gain was gone](#)” (v. 19). Their labor amounts to nothing. They’re experiencing the vanity of idolatry.
 - 1. It’s what the prophet Haggai is talking about when he says: “[You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill.](#)”

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes” (Hag. 1:6).

- a. You drop the money in . . . and out the money falls: “their hope of gain was gone” (v. 19).
- B. Meanwhile, in a prison cell just down the road, two men—encircled by guards, held behind bars, fastened tight in stocks—are starting to see all kinds of fruit cropping up from their labor.
 1. It’s as Paul says in Phil. 1. Just after famously declaring in v. 21, “[T]o live is Christ, and to die is gain,” he goes on to say in v. 22: “If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.”
 - a. When you put your life in Jesus’ hands, he will see to it that your labor will be fruitful.
 2. In our text, to be specific, this means: people around Paul and Silas are getting saved. People are seeing them and seeing Jesus. There’s fruit.

How Does This Fruit Come About?

- A. And I want to take some time here to look at just how this fruit comes about. Why are people coming to faith? What is it that people see in these missionaries that leads to them seeing Jesus exactly?
 1. Well, I think they see at least two things here . . .

Sighting #1: They See Their Joy . . . Even in Suffering

- A. Last time, as I said, our discussion took us all the way down to v. 25. But, I wonder if you noticed, we only really looked at the first half of it.
- B. I focused in there on the apparent, and startling, joy of Paul and Silas even in the face of horrific suffering. Look at it again: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God”
 1. Midnight melodies are sounding out from a prison cell to the praise and glory of King Jesus. “You can bash my face in, but you can’t steal my song.”
 2. These guys are free before they’re ever set free. Did you notice that?
 - a. They didn’t just start singing for joy when the earthquake came and the doors swung open.
 - b. No. They were singing for joy even when the sky was dark and the doors were shut tight.
 - i. It’s crazy.

- ii. But I'll tell you what it also is: compelling—to anyone around, who's hearing this, seeing this . . .
- C. And here's where we transition with Luke to the latter part of v. 25. Read the verse in its entirety now: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them . . ."
- 1. Paul and Silas' worship here wasn't taking place in their private little prayer closet. Oh no!
 - 2. Although in their hearts they may have been singing to an audience of one, in the space around them they had an audience of men: "...the prisoners were listening to them . . ."
 - a. And you've got to imagine these prisoners were stunned by this joy.
 - b. The jailer—who, no doubt, for a good part of the night at least, was also listening in—would have been stunned by this joy.
 - i. It's crazy . . . but it's compelling. Where does this kind of joy come from? And how do I get it?
- D. I wonder if you realize: the joy you somehow still have in Jesus, even in the hardest of times, is one of the most effective evangelist tools in your belt.
- 1. Anyone can have joy when life is going well,
 - 2. but if you still have joy even when it's all coming down around you . . . "I want to know about that!"
- E. It's interesting, Tim Keller has talked many times about how in the modern West, with our secular materialistic worldview, there has perhaps never been a culture in the history of the world that's so terribly unprepared for and utterly undone by suffering as ours is.
- 1. Here's what he says: "Most cultures—unlike our own—expect suffering as inevitable and see it as a means of strengthening and enriching us. Our secular culture, on the other hand, is perhaps the worst in history at helping its members face suffering. Every other culture says the meaning of life is something beyond this world and life. It may be (a) going to heaven to live with God and your loved ones forever; (b) escaping the cycle of reincarnation in order to enter eternal bliss; (c) escaping the illusion of the world to go into the all-Soul of the universe; (d) living a moral, virtuous, honorable life even in the face of defeat and doom; or (e) living on in your family and descendants. In each case suffering, though painful, can actually help you reach your life goal and complete your life story. But in secular culture the meaning of life is to be free to choose what makes you happy in this life. Suffering destroys that meaning. And so, in the secular view, suffering can have no meaning at all. It can't be a chapter in your life story—it is just the interruption or even the end of your life story."
 - 2. Do you hear what he's saying?
 - a. If this life is all there is, then eat, drink, and be merry—get your fill now while you can. That's the motto of our secular culture.

- b. But what if you can't eat, drink, and be merry—because you just found out you've got cancer and it's stage 4; or your spouse just left you for another woman; or your newborn's got down syndrome; or your boss just gave you notice.
 - i. "I can't eat drink and be merry because I'm suffering. I put all my stock in the here and now and the here and now is crumbling around me."
 - 3. If you find your meaning, your joy, in the stuff of this world—whether it's your job, your looks, your portfolio, your marriage, your friendship, your health—then suffering will always loom large as a threat to that.
 - a. With just a swipe of its shadowy claw, your meaning, your joy, can be taken from you.
- F. This is what so many in our city are dealing with these days.
 - 1. If they're not there now, because it's going well for them at the moment, listen to me: they will be there soon.
 - 2. And they need to know: there's a joy that doesn't go up and down with the stuff of this world because it's tethered to the one who, though once knocked down, is now only up—the one who has conquered Satan, sin, and death for us: namely, Jesus.
 - a. And do you know one of the ways they'll come to see that? By seeing your joy even in your suffering.
- G. It's as Peter says in his first epistle: when you're suffering, *"in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, [and] always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you . . ." (1 Pet. 3:15).*
 - 1. Did you hear that? He expects people to come up and ask. "I see your suffering, but I also see your hope and your joy. Tell me: what is the reason?"
 - a. Have you ever had anyone ask you that? Don't you want people to come asking you that? We've got to tie off our hope onto Jesus and they will.

Sighting #2: They See Their Love . . . Even for the Very Ones Causing the Suffering

A. But there is more . . .

- 1. The people around these missionaries not only see their joy in suffering,
- 2. they also see their love even for the very ones who are causing their suffering.
 - a. To still have joy in the midst of suffering is one thing.
 - b. To deeply love the ones responsible for it? That's something else entirely! We just throw this thing into another gear at this point.

B. You see their self-sacrificial love in this text, don't you—particularly for this jailer, the very one who's been charged by the magistrates to keep them on lockdown.

1. This is what comes out in vv. 26-29 in particular: “²⁶ [A]nd suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

a. This man thought: “My life is over.”

- i. If you were a guard like this at the time it was your life for theirs. If they got free somehow on your watch it was your neck the authorities would come for.
- ii. So, when he realizes the doors are all open and all this, he's ready to kill himself. “I'll do the deed before the magistrates can.”

b. But Paul, filled with compassion and love for this man, calls out: “We're all here.”

- i. Even when they have the chance, they don't run away. Out of concern for this brother, they stay in their cell. They value their captor's life, it would seem, more than their own.
- ii. Even when they could have exacted vengeance in a roundabout way—be skipping town and letting him suffer the consequence—instead, they choose to extend mercy . . . to love.

C. And this kind of love, just like the joy, it's crazy.

1. Let me come at it like this: Which would you say is the greater miracle?

- a. The fact that the earthquake shook in such a way that the prison doors were opened, the bonds were unfastened, and they were free to go?
 - b. Or the fact that the earthquake shook, the prison doors were opened, the bonds were unfastened, and even though they were free to go . . . they still chose to stay . . . in love?!
- i. I tell you the that is the greater miracle by far!

D. And I couldn't help but think of how reminiscent and reflective this is of the very love that kept Jesus, their Savior and ours, up on that cross however many years prior . . .

Do not be fooled. It wasn't the nails that held Jesus to the cross. It was love.

1. When the rabble come for him in Gethsemane and Peter draws his sword in a valiant but vain effort to protect his Lord, what does Jesus say to him? “⁵² Put your sword back into its

place. . . .⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52-53).

- a. In other words: "Peter, thanks, but no thanks. I don't need your help here. It's not like I'm stuck in a corner and can't fight my way out. If I wanted to be free, I could be free right now.
 - b. But I go as it is written of me, to the cross, for you."
2. John's account of this scene accents this for us all the more. Do you remember? When the soldiers and officers come asking for Jesus of Nazareth, and he responds, "I am he" . . . what happens? John 18:6: "When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they [all] drew back and fell to the ground."
 - a. He opens his mouth and they all fall down. As if to say: "Look, I have the authority and the power to do away with you, my captors, right now in an instant.
 - b. But I've not come to use my authority and power to destroy, I've come to use it to save. So go ahead. Tie me up and take me on."
3. Or do you remember later, when those crowds are mocking him as he hung there from the beams, what do they say? "He saved others; he cannot save himself."³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:31-32). Why doesn't he do it?
 - a. Well, again, it's not that he can't. It's that he won't.
 - b. "The irony is if I were to prove I am the Christ by coming down from the cross, I would no longer be the Christ, do you see?
 - c. If I were to prove I am the king of Israel by saving myself I could no longer save you.
 - d. And that's why I've come. That's why I'm here. That's why, even though I could escape from all of this with just a snap of my divine fingers or a word from my royal tongue, I don't, I won't."
 - i. It's love.
- E. It's a love like this world has never known—and it's a love that starts to be reflected, albeit imperfectly, in the lives of Christ's people. When you know his love for you like this, you start to show this love for others as well.
 1. And when others come to see this in your life for them, it's crazy . . .
 2. and, again, it's also, therefore, compelling.
- F. That's what leads this jailer to ask from the dirt there in v. 30: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
 1. "You've been talking about this 'way of salvation' (v. 17).
 2. You've been praying and singing about it (v. 25).
 3. I want it! Sirs, what must I do to get it?"
- G. V. 31: "And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .'" (cf. John 6:28-29).

1. I love that. It's where salvation always starts. The first thing you need to do is believe in what Jesus has already done.
 - a. You don't clean yourself up before you come to Christ, you come to Christ and he cleans you up.
 2. Maybe someone in here is in that space.
 - a. You're trying desperately to clean yourself up, to get yourself ready for God, to pay him back for years of reckless rebellion in sin. "Surely, I've got to do something if I'm going to get saved!"
 - b. Well, yes, but here's what you must do: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . ." Put all your trust, not in your own work for him, but in his work for you . . . on that cross!
- H. Do you realize: there are people in your life who won't see Jesus until they see you suffer for them in love?!
1. I just had some guys we're training up to preach listen to an old sermon from C.J. Mahaney. And in it he points out that, in Mark's Gospel at least,
 - a. all through it you have God the Father identifying Jesus as the Son of God,
 - b. you even have the demons acknowledging Jesus is the Son of God,
 - c. but the first time you have a human being actually comprehending and confessing such a thing is with that Centurion at the very end . . . when he sees the way Jesus dies on that cross: "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'" (Mark 15:39).
 - i. They finally got who he was when they saw how he loved—even through suffering, even to the point of death.
 2. Don't you see? So often God uses self-sacrificial love to break through and reveal himself to others. This is how people come to get it. They see that Jesus is the Christ when they see you suffer in love for them. There's just no getting around it.
 - a. God does not intend for his missionaries to merely bring the message.
 - b. He intends for them to also be the message.
 - c. You don't just talk about the cross,
 - d. you look like it in the way you live . . . and in the way you love.
- I. So you lose your life for Jesus like this, and you gain—fruitful labor, people come to see Jesus in you and get saved by him.
1. And that leads to the third thing we gain . . .

Gain #3: Spiritual Family

“A Hundredfold Now”

- A. On the one hand, it’s true, Paul and Silas are losing relationships, you could say. Because of their association with Jesus, they are rejected and abused and kicked out of places and all this.
- B. But, relationally speaking, it’s not all loss is it?
 - 1. No. In fact, when you look a little closer, do you want to know what you see? Gain. They are gaining a spiritual family—a family not fundamentally established by their own flesh and blood, but by the torn flesh and shed blood of Jesus.
- C. This is what Jesus says to Peter when Peter’s talking about all they’ve left behind to follow him: “²⁹ Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:28-30).
 - 1. You may lose relationships, you may be rejected even by your own flesh and blood, because of your decision to follow Jesus,
 - 2. But you gain back a hundredfold in this life and infinitely more in the age to come.

Baptism and “Brothers”

- A. We see this in our text first with the idea of baptism (v. 33). They take this jailer and those who believed in the gospel from among his family and they baptize them.
 - 1. Well what is baptism all about? In one sense it’s about coming into the family.
 - a. Jesus tells us to do it “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .” (Matt. 28:19). We’re putting the family name on you.
 - i. By faith you come into Jesus and by Jesus you come into the family of God—you take his last name, as it were.
- B. But this whole thing comes out especially clear in the last verse of our text, with Luke’s use of that word “brothers”—v. 40: “So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.”
 - 1. To be clear, Luke isn’t using “brothers” here like we might with our modern slang. “What’s up bro?” “How are you brother?” That’s not what this is.
 - 2. This is a word exploding with theological reality. It’s speaking to the fact that we’ve been adopted into God’s family in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:15, 29; Eph. 1:5).
 - a. And there’s this spiritual family forming there in Philippi, what we call the church. It started with Lydia back in Acts 16:14 and now we see it’s growing to include this jailer and his relatives and others.

Established and Marked

- A. And you can see plainly on the surface of our text that the self-sacrificial love of Jesus that first establishes this family comes to mark this family as well. As he sacrificed in love for them, they start to sacrifice in love for each other.
 - 1. We've seen it with Paul and Silas for this jailer.
 - 2. But now notice how it's clearly set off in this jailer as well. What does he do, when he gets what Jesus has done for him? He loves. He risks himself for Paul and Silas, just like they had risked themselves for him.
 - a. He took them out and "washed their wounds" we're told in v. 33. Remember these guys had been utterly thrashed by rods the day prior. He couldn't care less about their wounds when they first came to him. But now that he's seen their love and Christ's love, it's the first thing he wants to do: "And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds . . ." (v. 33).
 - b. And of course, then it all culminates in a family meal shared around the table in the jailer's home: "Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God" (v. 34).
- B. Listen, you probably don't need me to tell you this, but he could've gotten in a lot of trouble for this.
 - 1. What were his explicit orders from the magistrates? V. 23: "And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely." I'm pretty sure this is not exactly what they had in mind: clean their wounds and make sure they get a nice home-cooked meal.
 - 2. But he didn't care. Paul and Silas did it for me. I can do it for them. Because Jesus has done it for us.

At Mercy Hill

- A. I want you to understand, this is what Jesus is forming in our church here at Mercy Hill: a spiritual family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - 1. And just like this spiritual family in Philippi only worked because of Christ's self-sacrifice spilling over into that of his people, so too it will be for us.
 - a. When Jesus gets in, everyone gets low, everyone lays themselves down for the other.
 - b. It's not one-sided. Because of Christ, we all get in on this, we're all needed in this.
- B. But, of course, it's going to be hard. If I could be blunt: Everyone wants a vibrant and loving community. But few are willing to make the sacrifice required to get there.
 - 1. It doesn't just happen. Don't wait around for it to just happen. Don't wait around for others to come and sacrifice for you.

2. Go to them. As I often say in here: be a catalyst for community.
 - a. I'm so grateful to see so many in our church already doing that. Keep it up!

Gain #4: Ultimate Vindication

A Perplexing Scene

- A. For this, I'm looking in particular at that somewhat perplexing scene that comes to us there in the last verses of our text.
 1. You remember, the next day, the magistrates send the police to come release Paul and Silas, and Paul says, in effect: "No."
 2. Pick it up in v. 37: *"³⁷ But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.' ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens"* (vv. 37-38).
 - a. Because they could get in big trouble. Roman law forbade the binding or beating of Roman citizens without trial.
 - b. So a grave injustice had been committed against the missionaries by these magistrates and it was one that could cost them their jobs.
 3. So, v. 39: *"they came and apologized to them."* And then they let them go.
- B. Now, what do you make of this? What exactly is Paul doing here?
 1. At first read, it sure does seem rather self-centered of him, doesn't it? It feels like he's wanting his offenders come groveling, you know. "I'm not leaving until you give me a proper apology." It feels like it's all about him.
 - a. But we know him better than that by now, don't we? We know this isn't the case, why?
 - i. Because he could have brought up the Roman citizen thing earlier, when he was getting beaten. If he was motivated by self-interest, surely that would have been the point to play that card and get out before you get hurt.
 - ii. But that's not what this is. So he doesn't play it there.
 2. He plays it now, when he realizes these magistrates are going to try to sweep this whole thing under the rug. But why does it matter to him?
 - a. Not because it makes him look bad per se, but because it makes the gospel he's heralding look bad. The people back in town still think he and Silas are a couple of thugs.

- i. They won't give a hearing to the gospel.
 - ii. And beyond that, they won't respect the new little church that's been planted either.
- b. So out of concern for God's name, God's people, and those they're trying yet still to reach in Philippi, he wants it to be publicly made known by these magistrates that they messed this up.
 - i. He wants to be vindicated, in that sense, not for himself, but, interestingly enough, for everyone else.

A Picture of the End

- A. But I do think there's one more thing going on here, even more significant in its import. I believe God in this story is really giving us a picture of the ultimate vindication that's coming for us in Jesus.
 - 1. You see, at first, again, it looks like loss for these brothers. They've lost reputation, they're falsely accused and condemned, and all this.
 - 2. But it ends with the Roman authorities bending to their will, as it were. It's not Paul and Silas who are afraid, but the magistrates. It's not Paul and Silas who are apologizing, but the magistrates. All the tragedy is turned on its head.
 - a. And, again, it provides us with a little preview, a little picture of what we'll gain in Jesus on that last day: what I'm calling "Ultimate Vindication."
- B. You know, stuff in this life, it can get really hard. And maybe you're in a season like that right now.
 - 1. But this text reminds us that a day is coming when the tide will turn, when the script will flip, when the sun will come up, when the prison doors will open, when God will make all the wrong right . . . when all that you've lost for Christ will finally give way to nothing but gain!
- C. And I'm not saying this is going to happen next week, or next month, or next year, or even in this life. That's that point of that word "ultimate"—"Ultimate Vindication."
 - 1. It's coming at the end,
 - 2. but in the middle, on this side of the new heavens and new earth, it's hard.
 - a. There are going to be times where you're tempted to feel like: "He's abandoned me; he's forgotten me; he's not going to rescue or vindicate me; it's on me to do that."
 - b. But, listen, hold on. Because it's coming . . .
- D. I've been reading through Isaiah in my devotions and just the other day I came to [Isa. 40](#), where God's addressing the people who will really struggle through the decades of the Babylonian Exile. And he says this: " ²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God'? [Do you ever feel like that?] ²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" (vv. 27-28).

1. In other words: He's got his eye on you and he's coming to help.
 2. So what's the conclusion? Therefore, [v. 31: "wait for the LORD . . ."](#) Wait for him.
 - a. Hear that word for you if you're in the thick of it now. Wait for him. He's not forgotten you. He's not disregarding you. Ultimate vindication and salvation is coming soon.
- E. I wonder if you realize: this fourth thing we gain, Ultimate Vindication—it's actually this that wraps back around and undergirds the first three.
1. How can you have joy even when stuff gets hard?
 2. How can you love those who are mistreating you?
 3. How can you move towards your spiritual family even at cost to yourself?
 - a. It's this. Ultimate Vindication.
 - b. Because I know how the story ends, I've got power to live radically for Jesus today.
- F. So by now I hope you see it: if you lose your life for Jesus' sake, it's not loss . . . it's gain!