

Prison To Praise

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic
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We never really know how strong our relationship with God is until we face a severe trial. The darkest time - our midnight, is the time when our faith is proven. Paul and Silas experienced their midnight in a dark, filthy dungeon; they were arrested, falsely accused, severely flogged and thrown into prison, for no other reason than for their faithfulness and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. They prayed and sang hymns to God inside the prison; when an earthquake shook the prison, they were suddenly released. Therefore, the power of the midnight praise broke the chains and opened doors (Acts 16:19-26). Standing by our faith in God means praising God even when we are in the middle of our own prison - trials and persecution.

Encounters of Bible Characters:

1. Paul and Silas

1.1. They were always prompted by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit did not permit Paul and Silas to preach the word in Asia. Instead, they were instructed to go to Macedonia. A vision of a man of Macedonia appeared to Paul, who stood and pleaded with them to come and help them. They immediately obeyed the Lord and preached the Word to Macedonia at Philippi on the Sabbath day. They made the first evangelistic contact with Lydia, who was a dealer in purple cloth. This was the beginning of a small group. She and her household gathered together the women in a place of prayer. Her mission was prompted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6-15).

1.2. Expect great things to happen with God's plan.

Paul and Silas were sent by the Lord to Philippi to serve Him but when the Lord started to bless them, the devil began his work to distract and to stop them. A certain slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination met them. She had brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. When Paul commanded the evil spirit out of the slave girl, her masters were furious and dragged them to court. They were beaten and thrown in prison. Silas and Paul find themselves in a place of misery: misery of accusation, arrest and accommodation; but they stood firm, unmoved and unshaken. They had been doing the Lord's work with passion and boldness and yet trouble came to them. They responded by praising and singing hymns to God. This converted the jailer and his whole family to believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:16-31).

1.3. This life will not be free from trouble. We are all born weak and helpless and will live the same short, troubled life (Job 14:1). Jesus told His disciples that trouble was not a possibility but a certainty. However, being united with Him will give them peace (John 16:33).

1.4. God inhabits the praises of His people. God inhabits and dwells in our praises (Ps. 22:3). He is ready to answer as soon as He hears our call. Let us always praise God even amidst our darkest hour. It brings immediate results; praising at times of affliction free those who the devil is using.

2. King Jehoshaphat

2.1. Focus entirely on God rather than yourself.

Jehoshaphat feared a battle against him. Thus, he proclaimed all to fast; he gathered them to ask help from the Lord. His prayer denoted the following:

1. He committed every situation to God.
2. He sought God's favor because his people were God's people.
3. He acknowledged God's sovereignty.
4. He praised God's glory and sought comfort in His promise.
5. He professed complete dependence to God.

2.2. God speaks to us. The spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel and he prophesied what the Lord said, "Do not be afraid nor be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's (2 Chro. 20:14-23). In fact, their enemies were defeated, and they praised the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Everything that breathes should give praise to the One who gave breath.

REFLECTION:

How can you apply what you have just learned to something specific that is happening in your life?

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