

What Can He Make From my Trouble?

Acts 16:16-40

REVIEW

Last time we were in the book of Acts we read about Paul heading out of town again. Paul took Silas to revisit every church that they had previously started.

The Holy Spirit blocked them from entering the cities they planned on visiting. And finally God showed up in a vision and told them to go immediately to Macedonia.

Paul and Silas responded to what God told them and head immediately to Philippi which was the largest city in Macedonia. Paul and Silas won Lydia and her entire family to Christ. They would be one of the founding families of the new church plant in Philippi. And Lydia knew all kinds of people through her business, so she was certain to influence many.

INTRO

Today we join Paul, Silas and Timothy in Philippi. They are going back to the place where they met Lydia. They want to win more people to Christ and teach bible doctrine to those who already know Jesus.

Paul and Silas in Prison

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.

Many people go to fortune tellers. They do not think anything is wrong with this. However, what many do not understand is that people who tell fortunes do so by the power of demons. God thinks of fortune telling and spiritism as cheating on Him because we rely on demons instead of His Holy Spirit to guide our lives.

It is unloving toward God to seek spirits rather than Him. In fact when the nation of Israel began to call on spirits instead of God Israel was given over to total defeat. God gave us life and love and salvation. Not these evil spirits who know a few parlor tricks. Parlor tricks can never take the place of God and eternal life through Jesus Christ. Read Isaiah 47 regarding God's view of fortune telling.

So a slave girl had a demon that helped her tell the future. And this fortune telling demon made a lot of money for those who paid to have their fortune told.

17 (The fortune telling slave girl) 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.

So why is this demonized girl advertising for Paul and Silas? Why would a demon want to get anywhere near Paul and Silas when the demon knows that Paul and Silas are against every demon? The demon also knew the Paul and Silas had authority over him. So why even speak up and take a chance of getting smacked around by Paul and Silas through the power of The Holy Spirit?

First, the demon spoke well of Paul and Silas because this demon wanted to have an important position in Paul and Silas' ministry. The demon wanted to be in the welcoming team for Paul and Silas. Demons are always trying to get involved among God's people so we can be sidetracked.

The demon was trying to get people to work in Satan's timing instead of God's timing. Normally Paul and Silas would perform a miracle such as healing someone. And then in God's timing they would announce that it was Jesus Christ that healed the person. But before God did any miracles to authenticate the words of Paul and Barnabas, this demon announces them. And all people have is the demons word. And that is what the demon wants. He wants people coming to Him to decide who is good and who is bad.

This demon announced things outside of God's timing in order to steal the thunder of God and to control the timing and agenda.

Second, it is quite possible that this demon is trying to set up Paul and Silas. It could be part of a plan to draw Paul and Silas into a fight with a demon. People in Philippi relied heavily upon fortune telling demons. So this could be a way the demon might be able to draw Paul into a fight and then turn the crowds against Paul and Silas.

18 continued...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.

Paul and Silas do not want a demon announcing anything for them. Nothing good can come from a demon. Since this demon persisted in hanging around they cast him out of the girl. But fortune tellers rake in the money. So..

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.”

Paul and Silas have fallen into a trap set by this demon. But God always has the final word. And God will have the final word in Philippi. If you work God's agenda Satan will turn people against you or cause you problems. But GOD will always be with you.

Remember a few weeks ago I explained that the Jewish religion was not an accepted religion in Philippi. The crowd claimed that Paul and Silas were a part of the forbidden Jewish religion. They told the crowds and city officials that Paul and Silas had come from Jerusalem to push Judaism on the city. Everyone knew that Jews were against spiritism. So this accusation made sense in light of Paul casing out the demon. So...

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.

The rods with which Paul and Silas were beaten bruised their organs. And the whips with which they were flogged tore their flesh. Casting the demon out of the slave girl was used by Satan to turn the city against Paul and Silas. Satan was hard at work keeping this city for himself.

Some of us will go through very difficult times. As a result some of us will sink into depression, negative thinking and self pity. When others turn against us or challenge our beliefs or turn against us we could react with fear.

God has provided a way for us to rise above self pity and fear. God has provided a way for us to rise above bitterness! The way to avoid self pity and bitterness and fear is to focus on the love of God.

1 John 4:18

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Why is there no fear in love? Because we know that God paid for our sins and is no longer mad at us. The wrath of God was removed from us. And now we are the unlikely objects of the love of God. If you love someone you will protect them and take care of them and look out for them. If you hate God then you experience fear because you

deserve punishment. But the perfect love of God casts away all fear. And that is why...

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

When you are mistreated, praise Him! Focus on God. When you have worries and fears, praise Him! Focus on God. When people do not go along with your way of thinking or personal convictions, praise Him! When people mistreat you, praise Him and focus on the love of God. When you focus on the love of God your fears will leave.

If we act like helpless victims of circumstances then we do not believe the word of God who says;

Romans 8:31 God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purposes.

I would like to share a clip that demonstrates the love of God and the power of God saving His people from fear and hopelessness.

*****VIDEO** Prisoners In Iran clip

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

1. You are not alone when you suffer

2. God will give you the miracle of joy and endurance when you call on Him
3. Some people have the honor to suffer just like the Lord Jesus Christ suffered
4. But whether you suffer physically or whether God delivers you from your circumstances, God is willing to deliver you from self pity, hopelessness and fear. And God will give you joy as you focus on Him. Keep your eyes focused on the love of God and your fear will be cast out.

So just like these 2 women in prison; Paul and Silas were singing to the Lord and praying. They were walking in the love and joy of God no matter their circumstances.

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.

On this particular occasion it was God's will to break Paul and Silas out of jail. Paul would later be called to lay down his life for the name of Jesus. But this was not his time.

All the armies on earth cannot take you to the grave one day sooner than what God has planned. And if you are called to suffer for His name or take on something difficult for

His name God has your back. He has a plan. He knows what is best. God will deliver you.

God broke Paul and Silas out of jail. He did it in spectacular fashion so everyone would know that it was God who set Paul and Silas free. To God be the glory! The demon in the slave girl wanted to steal the glory and be the one to announce Paul, Silas and God. But God took back His role as the revealer of His own glory!

JAILER IN TROUBLE

Now the jailers in those days were responsible to prevent prisoners from escaping. If a prisoner got away the prison guards would be tortured and killed. Imagine the fear experienced by the jailer when all his prisoners escaped.

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!”

Paul and Silas could have bum-rushed the door and gotten away. But Paul and Silas were more interested in people coming to Christ than they were interested in escaping from jail. Winning people to Christ always came first. So Paul and Silas stayed in prison.

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?”

I don't know about you, but I usually have to work much harder than this to win people to Christ. But then again, I have never been whipped, beaten and jailed for my faith. And you have to be in jail for your faith in order to be broken out of jail by the right hand of God almighty.

God convinced the jailer all by Himself that He needed salvation. He did so through Paul and Silas' miracle of joy seen in their singing. And of course the earthquake and chains falling off the prisoners helped too.

Sometimes we work hard at winning people to Christ. We try to convince them. But sometimes the best thing to do is pray with all your heart that God would show the truth to someone that needs the Lord. God is great at convincing people.

God convinced the jailer and the jailer asked Paul and Silas what he needed to do in order to be saved. Here is what Paul and Silas told the jailer.

31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”

IT'S SO SIMPLE!

The first thing that occurs to me is that the plan of salvation is simple. Paul and Silas present the gospel in a single sentence. Sometimes we make the presentation of the gospel more complicated than it needs to be. We want to wrap up salvation and holy living and all kinds of things into the basic presentation of how a person comes to be saved of their sin and obtains the promise of heaven.

PIPER ON SALVATION

Recently I saw a face book post from John Piper on how to be saved. Allow me to read this for you.

PIPER SALVATION QUOTE

“The unmistakable message all through the New Testament is this: we are saved by believing on Jesus. So rivet your attention on Christ in the gospels - John, Matthew, Mark, Luke - and the whole Bible. Rivet your attention on Christ and say what you see.

Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). And say what you feel about this:

‘I receive him. I love him. He is my God. He is my Lord. He is my treasure.’

Confess that. Let yourself hear yourself saying that. Say it to others. Say it to your wife. Say it to your kids. Say it to your friends.

‘Jesus in my Lord.’

The Bible says ***no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit*** ***(1 Corinthians 12:3).***

So if you say it and mean it, God is at work in your life, you have the Holy Spirit.

...END PIPER QUOTE

....text continued 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Paul explains the gospel and tells the jailers family about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is assumed that all of them responded to the offer of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ.

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

An immediate response to salvation is baptism. Baptism is a ceremonial signal in front of witnesses which says that you are dead to your old life. You are alive in Jesus Christ to the new life. In Paul’s day unbaptized Christians were unheard of. Baptism was performed by submerging the new believers

under water. If there was no body of water available they would pour water over the person being 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.

Look at the joy in this man's life because of coming to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. Now if this jailer ever happened to be thrown in jail for his faith, he would have access to the kind of joy that Paul and Silas had.

35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” 36 The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

Paul hung around till morning because he did not want his friend the jailer in trouble for losing his prisoners. God knew the jailer would be receptive so God is the one that worked it all out to get Paul and Silas in jail. If you are thirsty for God, He will go to any lengths to get you the word of life. His people are willing to suffer for you if necessary to get you the word of life.

37 But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and

threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.” 38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.

Paul could have turned in the local government officials to the Roman government and gotten them into real trouble. No one beats a roman citizen without a trial and gets away free. But Paul did not have revenge on his mind. So he made a point. He had the magistrate escorted them personally from prison so that in the future other Christian may not be carelessly mistreated.

(So the local magistrates and government officials) 39 ... came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. 40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

SUMMARY

Paul and Silas were in the throes of planting a church in Philippi. They were winning people to Christ and organizing a fellowship. Along the way they ran into a slave girl that told fortunes by the power of a demon.

The demon took control of the agenda for Paul and Silas by announcing their ministry when the demon wanted it announced. The demon set up Paul and Silas by annoying them so that Paul cast out the demon. Most of the people in this town used fortune tellers. So when Paul wrecked the fortune telling ability of this girl it was easy to turn the town against him.

It looked like this Satan had outwitted Paul and Silas, but God was working all things together to get Paul and Silas into the jail to win people to Christ. That was God's purpose. Paul and Silas were willing to pay the price to share the gospel with the jailer. They must have known that God was working on a plan.

Even after being beaten and whipped and then thrown in jail Paul and Silas kept their focus on God. They kept their joy. And they focused on winning people to Christ. They did not get caught up in self pity or complaining. They kept their focus on what God was doing. They kept their joy. And they did so by singing praises to God even while in prison. The perfect love of God cast out their fear.

We also saw a couple of girls who went through the same thing as Paul and Silas. Their suffering was used by

God to win people to Christ and bring glory to the name of Jesus.

When all hope seems to be lost, God has a plan. God sent an earthquake. He took back the glory for His own name by announcing Himself through the earthquake. And then a case of God broke out. People came to Christ and the foundation of the church in Philippi was laid. Now you had Lydia and her family as well as the jailer and his family as the core of this new church plant. They both knew a lot of people and had good reputations in the community.

If you are going through difficult times do not give up. Do not give into self pity. Help is on the way. God has a plan. He will bring glory to His name and He will deliver you when the time is right. focus your mind and heart on the love of God. God will show up in the dark circumstances of your life and He will announce His glory and His majesty and the glory of His Son by delivering you from hopefulness to joy. And if it is not your time to enter paradise then no one or nothing will be able to take you out.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are you going through something right now that threatens to steal your joy and drag you into self pity?

2. If so, will you give up the right to self pity and instead focus on God? Will you believe that even in the chaos God has a plan?
3. How might it affect others to see the joy that every believer has no matter our circumstances?
4. Did you realize that the gospel is not really complicated? Do you think you could share what you heard today?
5. Do you want Jesus Christ to be your Lord today? If God is giving you the faith to believe, then will you confess to others; "Jesus Christ is my Lord!" "I believe and I am saved!"