



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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Paul and Silas in Philippi

Lesson Text: Acts 16:16-40

Focus Verses: Acts 16:25; Philippians 4:4 - ²⁵And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. . . . ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Truth About Covenant: Recognizing our covenant with Jesus allows the Spirit to produce joy.

Covenant Context: On Paul's second missionary journey, which is recorded in the Book of Acts, God led him to Europe, a new continent to hear the gospel. He and his companion Silas were persecuted, but God worked a miracle that led to the salvation of a jailor and his household. Even through difficulty, God was opening up a new church and inviting new people into covenant relationship with Him. Paul later wrote a letter to this same church known as the Epistle to the Philippians.

During the night Paul received a vision in which a Macedonian man beckoned him to come to help. God established a church in the home of a prayerful, worshiping woman (Lydia). The vision of the Macedonian man led Paul and his team to a new ministry environment, but its fulfillment was different than they imagined. Paul confronted a girl who was socially and spiritually bound. When Paul spoke the name of Jesus, the power dynamics were reversed and God set the girl free from her oppressive lifestyle. Obeying God's will involves acting in faith on the information we have and seizing surprising opportunities to minister.

Everyone should have been happy for this newly freed young lady, but her deliverance was a disruption and disappointment to the Philippians. The crowd rallied against Paul and Silas in a mass rage where the magistrates stripped them, beat them with "*many stripes*," and imprisoned them (Acts 16:23). Whenever the gospel is pioneered in new territory, we can expect spiritual and social resistance.

Around midnight, in a dark prison in an unfamiliar city, Paul and Silas did not sink into despair. Paul and Silas began singing, a great earthquake shook the city of Philippi, especially the prison, creating a literal shatter zone as foundations shook, doors opened, and chains were loosed. The guard drew his sword to kill himself, but Paul saved his life when he assured him they were all there. Not even one prisoner had escaped—a miracle all by itself. The jailor fell in front of Paul and Silas and asked the pivotal question: "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). God freed the missionaries from their natural bondage and the jailor and his household from their spiritual bondage. And it all started with a song in prison.

As we minister to others, it may seem our witness is poorly received, producing conflict rather than success. However, from a prison cell Paul and Silas's praises resound to remind us we can choose to praise God even when we are misunderstood, insulted, shamed, or abused. Our praise is a witness to everyone who hears us. God will open prison doors and closed hearts, working out our worst moments for our good and His glory.

Paul, in prison again years later, wrote a letter to the Philippian church, encouraging them amid their persecution and the news of his imprisonment for preaching. Imprisonment, which appeared to be a setback, had actually resulted in "*the furtherance of the gospel*" (Philippians 1:12). Paul's trial commanded attention within the palace and beyond, and other Christians were emboldened to preach because of his unwavering faith.

Biblical joy is not a shallow optimism that comes from our understanding or pleasant situations. We rejoice not in ourselves but in the Lord. As people of God, we celebrate the story of salvation and communion with our Savior. Like Paul and the church at Philippi, we can also rejoice in the body of Christ. Appreciating the church community, working toward unity, and celebrating those who serve and sacrifice give us bountiful reasons to rejoice.

Rejoicing is something we all can do, whether we are young or old, musically apt or tone-deaf. Our song may be simple, but the message is profound; every praise belongs to God, and we offer it to Him in every situation. Our choice to rejoice can increase our faith even when we are afraid. Our rejoicing frustrates our enemy and encourages everyone who hears. Ultimately, our rejoicing results in deliverance, for us or through us.