

Joy and Courage at Midnight

Acts 16:19-40

Two reasons that the early church grew, and the gospel spread as it did, was the joy and courage of the disciples. Those are two qualities we would all like more of!

Joy at Midnight

The word 'gospel' means good news. But what is good news for some, is bad for others. In Philippi it was bad news for the slave girls owners, as it is for anyone trading on others' misery. Paul and Silas were dragged to the public square. Jesus never promised an easy life, especially when we challenge the powers of darkness.

In response to their mistreatment, Paul and Silas prayed and sang. When life does not go the way we want, we often react differently: we think God owes us a better life. When that doesn't happen, we think God has failed to keep his side of the deal, and broken the contract. As a result, we can walk away from God and church. That is very different from Paul and Silas who had faith that left them singing in the night.

If you think God has let you down, you see your circumstances, and you move downwards in a negative spiral. Instead, Paul and Silas prayed and sang. They took truth about God, and let it speak to their heart. Doing that allows hope and joy to rise up.

But where can you get the kind of a faith from?

The Courage That Stays

Earthquakes are common in Greece, but this earthquake was not common! Paul and Silas were on the verge of freedom. We may not be in a first century Roman jail, but we can still experience situations that feel like a prison, when we are tempted to make our escape. But Paul and Silas don't run, and neither should we. It is the courage to stay.

But that doesn't mean you should be a doormat. They also stood up against the injustice of the authorities: it is the courage to stand: for truth, against injustice.

Where can we get that kind of joy and courage from?

The Way of Salvation

The jailor wants to know what he must do to be saved. In fact, he doesn't need to do anything: Jesus has done it all. He simply has to believe in Christ. As he does so, he welcomes Paul and Silas into his home and cares for them, and there is rejoicing in his home. Once again, it is joy and courage.

When we understand the gospel, that Jesus suffered unjustly for us, and did not run from us, then it will give us the joy and the courage we need for life. It is the joy and the courage of the good news.