

“The Power of a Worshiping People— Prisons Opened” Acts 16:16-40

Central Thought: When our suffering (and our lives as a whole) is connected to God, that act of worship opens prison doors—our own and others. Godward suffering can become a powerful proclamation.

Observation—what does it say?

- The story has many i_____.
- 16:12-15— Paul, Silas and Luke wanted to make a d_____.
- 16:16— They were ministering in c_____, not as individuals.
- They were falsely a_____, mistreated and unjustly imprisoned.
- Their response was a God-connection, and the p_____ of God was unleashed.
- They did not d_____ themselves, God took up their defense.
- They did not i_____ on their evangelistic plans, the Gospel was advanced in spectacular ways and places that they would never have achieved on their own.
- This is a story of t_____ prisons.

Interpretation—what does it mean?

- Prison represents s_____. There are more prisons than outward ones and greater suffering than our own.
- Paul / Silas chose to connect their suffering to God, not just seek a s_____. This opened their prison and the jailer's.
- The **power** of a worshiping people:
 - Paul and Silas' worship opened the door for u_____ power displays.
- It is not wrong to want to escape suffering; the problem is in making escape the m_____ t_____. 1 Corinthians 10:13
- It's difficult to know how / when e_____ will take place. 1 Peter 3:15
- Godward suffering can be used as a tool of p_____.

Application—what does it mean for me?

- God never w_____ our circumstances but waits for them to be offered to Him.
- Our circumstances (suffering) must be interpreted by more than how they appear or make us f_____.
- God places greater p_____ on spiritual circumstances than on physical ones.

- The Cross: God uses suffering to glorify Himself and accomplish His p_____. He.2:10

Word bank: accused, defend, difference, evangelism, feel, insist, ironies, main, power, priority, proclamation, purposes, solution, suffering, thing, two, unusual, wastes

Some worship disciplines:

- Hymn-singing / listening.
- Quoting / reading Scripture aloud in the marketplace.
- Praying out loud.
- Suffering in community.

Some questions for home groups / meditation

- What is my response to injustice, accusation, abuse, pain and suffering?
- What would be different if my first response was to find the God-connections rather than fix the problem, address the offense or defend my rights?
- Are there some spectacular God-acts that I have missed because I too quickly loof for a way out of my “prisons”?
- Do I believe that this story is an exception (something only for that time), or do I believe that God wants to work in my life in this same way today?
- What is the suffering in my life right now?
- Do I believe that Christians are sometimes called to suffer? Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 2:21
- Read Genesis 50:18-21. How does this passage speak into the present story?
- How can we help one another at ECB to respond to suffering in a way that it becomes proclamation?