

Sermon Date: January 12, 2014
God Steps into the Prison - Acts 16:25-40
Doug McBride

Review Acts 16:16-24 for frame of reference. Read Acts 16:25-40

1. What was Paul and Silas' response to having been beaten and now in prison (v. 25)? What do you make of their ability to respond that way?

2. Doug made the following point: "Paul does not become a victim through his circumstances. There is no self-pity on his part. He's not saying, 'God, have you not noticed the things I have done for You?' Paul assumes there's another force at work in life: 1) There is an arch-enemy; 2) God is present and will reach into this mess that the enemy has created and use it as a means of redemption. Paul views God's love for him as greater than the hardship plaguing him. See Philippians 1-:12-14 for Paul's perspective on this trial in his life.
 - a. See 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and comment.

 - b. Does Paul's response surprise you?

 - c. How do you believe Paul was able to see his situation this way?

 - d. Have you had instances in your life when there was a mess and yet God used it as a means of redemption?

3. Doug mentioned the following: "God's will is not disease or disaster. God does have a perfect plan, as does Satan (although Satan's plan is imperfect). In other words, God does not cause sin or havoc, the enemy does. But God does redeem all things." What do you think he meant by that? Do you agree or disagree? Are there scriptures you can think of that support your thought process?

4. How did God use this difficult situation as a means of redemption (v. 27-30)?

5. How does the prison guard become the oppressor who is now blessing the oppressed (v. 29-34)?
 - a. How is this story a beautiful example of people coming to Jesus?

6. How does Paul's insistence on his and Silas' Roman citizenship help protect the new believers in Philippi?

Thoughts to ponder:

The Apostle Paul, rather than feeling sorry for himself recognizes three important truths:

1. Assumes God has an active enemy.
2. Assumes God will not abandon him.
3. Assumes God will create new life out of death.

Personal Application Points:

Doug pointed out that Paul's ability to worship God in the midst of difficulty isn't something that can be manufactured, it is something he/we had/have to have on the inside.

- How can we have that perspective?
- **It is extremely important** to recognize this is often a very long **process** of mourning, grieving and wrestling to get to the place of having God's perspective when faced with difficult times.
- Is God okay with the process of getting there even if it takes a while to get there?
- Is God okay with it if we engage in a period of self-pity and/or "God, why are you allowing this to happen?" in the process of getting to His perspective during trials?
- See Job 2:11-13. What did Job's friends do at this very moment (v. 12) when they saw the degree of Job's suffering? In particular what did they do in v. 13?
- Job's friends eventually blow it. What did they do throughout rest of the book that God chastised them for (see Job 42:7-8)? What is God's view of Job at the end of the book? Did God allow Job a process?
- Are there some particular Psalms of King David that David is allowed a process to get from experiencing God's distance to a place of praise?