

In Times of Trouble

Acts 16:22-40

3/ 13/ 05

Intro

In Acts 16, unexpected trouble comes to Paul and Silas. They are not alone. Everyone can understand that trouble can come into our lives without warning. It has happened to all of us, though this certainly extreme.

These men become an example for us in this chapter. We learn important insights in heart, character, and faith.

We will face times of trouble again; and we can never know when. But we need to understand how God wants us to face such times. This story is filled with important insights.

These are lessons for times of trouble.

I. **Keep Your Heart Toward God**

A. When darkness comes

- It was midnight; they had been beaten with rods as thick as a man's thumb.
- They were in the inner cell placed in stocks.
- They were innocent.
- It doesn't get much worse than this.

Psalm 18:28, "For You light my lamp; the LORD my God illumines my darkness."

- I think we can all relate to times of darkness. We have all had them.

B. Praising God is better than complaining

- Most people would understand if Paul and Silas started complaining, but they didn't.
- I wonder what they would have been singing.

Illus – Maybe they would have sung, "Great is Thy Faithfulness." These words were written by the prophet Jeremiah in Israel's darkest hour.

Lamentations 3:21-24, "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, therefore I have hope in Him."

Psalm 42:5, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

Psalm 42:8, "The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life."

Psalm 63:6-8, "On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night. Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of Your wings. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me."

C. Others are listening

- The other prisoners were listening while Paul and Silas were singing.
- You never know who might be listening or watching you as you go through trouble.

Illus – I remember saying to a pastor friend whose church was going through a trial, “They are looking at you for clues as to how they should react.”

Illus – I’ve learned this the hard way. I remember golfing and having a bad day. I started muttering to myself. Little did I know that someone was watching me...

Illus – Our children are watching to see how we will react, our co-workers are watching... *Don’t react out of frustration...wait on the Lord ...*

II. God Will Make a Way

A. When there seems to be no way

- Wait on the Lord. Out of frustration, we often react to situations badly. It s much better to wait for the Lord.

Proverbs 20:22, “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil;’ Wait for the Lord, and He will save you.”

- You never know what God might do.

Illus – When Joseph was sold into slavery – he didn’t know what God was going to do.

When Daniel was carried away to Babylon – he didn’t know what God was going to do.

When David was running from Saul... When Daniel’s friends refused to worship a man...When Job lost everything...they didn’t know...but God did.

Psalm 121:1-2, “I lift up my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

B. Strengthen yourself in the Lord

- When they prayed and sang hymns of praise, their souls were strengthened in the Lord.

Isaiah 40:31, “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”

Illus – When David came to one of his darkest hour, even to the point that his men began to speak of stoning him... he strengthened himself in the Lord.

1 Samuel 30:6, “Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.”

Illus – I remember a period of time when I needed God to help in a great way. I decided on a fast for strength.

III. God Brought a Way of Salvation

A. Jesus is the Way

- God brought an earthquake to open the heart of the jailer.
- Now we see that this about the heart of the jailer.
- Jesus was getting his attention with an earthquake and broken chains.

John 14:6, Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

B. Salvation brings change

- There is a distinct difference in this man from before and after his salvation.
- Salvation brought about a change of heart. He is now a man of kindness and grace. (verse 33-34)
- Salvation should change us as well; in fact it must...

II Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Illus –A friend of mine who was a new believer was trying to force someone to come to the Lord, he said the words, but no change came.

Ezekiel 36:26-27, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”

C. God respects the gospel of Christ

- The Roman officials wanted to send these men away secretly and leave disgrace upon them.
- Paul insisted that the gospel be respected and that the Roman officials make a public restoration.

Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

- May you also not be ashamed, but bring respect to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In times of trouble, may we keep our heart toward the Lord and look to Him for the way He will choose to work in the situation. You never know what God will do; but God does. Keep your eyes upon Him.