PRAYER AND PRAISE IN PRISON

Acts 16:25(NASB) But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

Review

Last week we talked about Psalm 100, especially verses 1, 2 &4 Shout for joy to the LORD all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with Joyful singing…Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

And we talked about Zephaniah 3:17(ESV) The LORD your God is in your midst; a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

And we suggested that wanting to shout for joy to the Lord was a response to really believing the He shouts for joy over us, just as we love Him because He first loved us. Today we will continue to talk about experiencing the kind of joy Psalm 100 is talking about.

The Story Begins

In response to a vison from God (Acts 16:9&10), the missionary group has gone to Macedonia (Acts 16:11&12) and have settled in Philippi where an entire family and others (Acts 16:40) have been saved and at least some of them baptized.

Acts 16:16&17 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.”

Acts 16:18&19 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

Acts 16:20-22 They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice. The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be beaten with rods.

Acts 16:23&24 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received

these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fasted their feet in the stocks.

Prayer and Praise in Prison

Acts 16:25(NASB) But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

They were obviously praying and singing out loud because the other prisoners were listening to them. “Singing hymns of praise” translates *“humneo,”* the verb form of *“humnos,”* from which we get our English word hymn and which “denotes a song of praise addressed to God (Vine’s). Matthew 26:30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The hymn the Passover ritual required them to sing (the Hallel) begins with Psalm 113:1-3 Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, you his servants; praise the name of the LORD. Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

Acts 5:40-42 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, the never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Luke 6:22&23 “Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how the ancestors treated the prophets.

God Responds to Prayer and Praise in Prison

Acts 16:26-28 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”

2 Chronicles 20:21&22 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army saying; “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.” As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

2 Chronicles 20:23&24 The Ammonites and Moabites rose up against the men of Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another. When the men of Judah came to the place that overlooks the desert and looked toward the vast army, they saw only dead bodies lying on the ground; no one had escaped.

The Conversion of the Jailer and His Family

Acts 16:29-32 The Jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Acts 16:33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household.

Epilogue

Acts 16:35&36 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with this order: Release those men.” The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”

Acts 16:37&38 But Paul said to the officers: “They have beaten us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.” The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.

Acts 16:39&40 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

Things to Think About

Being filled with joy begins with knowing that we are loved by our Creator with an incredible love and that we bring Him incredible joy.

Jesus said we should “rejoice…and leap for joy” “when people hate you…exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil” because of Jesus.

In Acts 5:44 “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worth of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

After being arrested, falsely convicted, beaten with rods and imprisoned with their feet in stocks, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.

God responded to their praying and praising by sending an earthquake to set them free.

The end result was the conversion of the jailer and his entire household.

Enduring persecution with joy is one of the strongest testimonies to the reality of the Gospel that one can give.

Enduring persecution with a godly attitude can be a source of incredible joy.

Not only did Paul and Silas experience joy, the jailer also was “filled with joy.”