

FRIDAY, MAY 31 | Justice or peace?

Acts 16:20-24 20They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” 22The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. 23After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

How quickly the tune of these men changed. Their livelihoods had been taken away, so now they cry for lawfulness. Isn't that the way? When it's convenient to use the law or religion is when people pull out the rules? These men didn't love the law, they just loved Christianity less and could use this to their advantage to get revenge on Paul and Silas. The law was true but the charge was false. Paul and Silas weren't teaching a new religion by casting out a demon. They would have let Paul and Silas do as they pleased if it hadn't interfered with their money making.

Paul and Silas weren't able to make a case for themselves with the cry of the mob. They were Romans and could have avoided it all. Most say it would have been useless anyway. They allowed the unjust beating to take place without a trial. The tearing of their clothes was further humiliation. The place and way they were put in prison was in the innermost part, no chance of escape and careful guarding, and their feet were fastened in wooden stocks in such a way that they had to lie on the ground, their scourged backs exposed to the cold, damp and filthy ground. It was an uncomfortable situation to say the least and not at all what we've all pictured from our Sunday School lessons!

Paul mentions in other scriptures of being “treated outrageously”, “gave me thirty-nine lashes”, and “been flogged more severely”. These express harsher treatments than others. For the sake of Christ we will experience more (fill in the blank). We cannot cry that it's not fair. There is no comparison when we look at our life and then remember what Christ did for us. Even remember what each of the disciples suffered birthing the Church.

Our reward is not here. Our home is not here. It's a temporary dwelling for the purpose to “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [Jesus] commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20a).

Sometimes we make a stand. Other times we are to be the meek lamb. It is absolutely not weakness. No matter what the world says, we are to follow the bidding of the Holy Spirit. There is always a purpose. Whether we see it at the time or not, He is working in the hearts of those around us. The “stand” we take out of turn will quench the work of the Holy Spirit. When prompted to be meek, regardless of another person's reaction, it is softening their heart for God to do a work in them. I know from God's promises he is using it for your good and for his work. Matthew 5:5, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” You will be blessed.

Be meek, produce peace. Don't let insults move you in the wrong direction. Meekness shows a greatness of soul and will keep you centered on the mind of Christ. Matthew 11:29, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Sounds exactly what I want for my soul. What about you?

Q. Is there a current situation that calls for meekness? Maybe more meekness in general. Seek his guidance.

MEMORY VERSE *Philippians 2:12* – “So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and understanding.”