

Introduction

1. Maybe you're familiar with these popular idioms:
  - a. No good deed goes unpunished—refers to getting punished for doing a good deed
  - b. God works all things together for good—refers to God being able to take even the worst of situations and use them for good
  - c. The chickens have come home to roost—refers to embarrassing or inappropriate behavior which result in problems in the present (in other words, actions have consequences)
2. We see each of these in our passage today:
  - a. In v. 19-24 we see Paul and Silas punished for delivering a young woman from demon possession
  - b. In vs. 25-34 we see God use Paul's and Silas' imprisonment for good
  - c. In vs. 35-40 we see the city officials confronted by the consequences of their unlawful actions

A. Paul and Silas are imprisoned for delivering a young demon possessed woman (16:19-26)

1. In our passage last week, Paul healed a young slave-girl from demon possession (READ 16:16-18)
2. Today, we learn that their reward was to be beaten and thrown into prison (READ 19-24):
  - a. Her masters obviously aren't happy about losing their source of income so they drag them before the city authorities
  - b. They don't have a legitimate claim against Paul and Silas so they make false accusations:
    - 1) They claim Paul and Silas were **“throwing [the] city into confusion”**
    - 2) They claim that, as Jews, they were trying to convince Roman citizens to do things that are against the law
  - c. Without even conducting a trial, the authorities order them to be beaten, thrown into prison and their feet secured in wooden stocks
  - d. For Paul and Silas, the idiom “no good deed goes unpunished” was a reality:
    - 1) How would you respond if you were in their shoes?
    - 2) Would you be upset? Angry? Bitter?
    - 3) Would any of that be aimed at God? Would you question him?
3. Look at how Paul and Silas respond: they pray and praise the Lord (READ 16:25):
  - a. Imagine this for a moment:
    - 1) They had just been repeatedly (**“many blows”**) with rods which means they were bloodied and bruised (v. 33 indicates open wounds that needed to be cleansed)
    - 2) Their feet were secured in wooden stocks on the floor so they were unable to move around or change positions
    - 3) And to top it off, Roman prisons were generally cold, dark, damp, unsanitary (and they probably stunk as well)

- b. So, it's not all that remarkable that we find them praying (we'd probably be praying as well), but what is remarkable is that they were also singing hymns of praise to God, and loud enough so that the other prisoners could listen!
  - 1) We saw something similar in Acts 5 after the Apostles were flogged (READ 5:40-41)
  - 2) Both Paul and Peter address the concept of rejoicing when suffering for Christ:
    - a) Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:24): **"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church."**
    - b) Look at what Peter wrote to his readers (1 Peter 1:6-9 and 4:12-14)
- 4. Takeaway: We can rejoice when we suffer for serving Jesus because our rewards are heavenly and eternal, not earthy and temporal
  - a. Sometimes our good deeds and behavior as Christians get praised or gain us favor with the world around us (we saw this earlier in the book of Acts 2:47)—I think about all of the charitable organizations setup by churches to address poverty, homelessness, etc.
  - b. However, just as often (maybe more so), our good deeds and behavior are rewarded with ridicule, disdain, rejection, and persecution (e.g. no good deed goes unpunished):
    - 1) I think about the coach who loses his job for setting a good example and praying with his athletes, or even praying alone on the sidelines
    - 2) Or the teacher who is disciplined for answering a student's curiosity about her faith or the Bible that sits on her desk
    - 3) Or the college student who is mocked or ridiculed by his professor for expressing his Biblical values in class
    - 4) Or the Biblical counselor threatened with losing her license for helping teenagers overcome homosexual temptation
  - c. When faced with the latter, we are encouraged to rejoice in our suffering as Paul and Silas did, knowing that Jesus will reward our faithfulness (2 Timothy 4:7-8): **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."**

<b>B. God uses Paul's and Silas' imprisonment to save a jailer and his family (16:26-34)</b>
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- 1. What happens next is similar to what we've seen twice before in Acts (READ 26):
  - a. In Acts 5 the Lord sent his angel to rescue the Apostles from prison
  - b. He did the same thing for Peter in Acts 12
  - c. This time, instead of sending an angel, the Lord shakes it up a bit (pardon the pun) and uses a supernatural earthquake to rescue Paul and Silas—the foundation shakes, the doors open, and the prisoners are all released from their chains
  - d. However, no one escapes because the Lord has a different purpose this time
- 2. When the jailer awoke and saw that the prison doors were open, he was about to commit suicide (READ 16:27):
  - a. Roman guards were held accountable for their prisoners and faced harsh penalties, often death, if they escaped (see Acts 12:19)
  - b. Rather than wait to be executed, it was considered more honorable and praiseworthy to kill oneself

- c. So, when the jailer saw that the prison doors were wide open, he assumed the prisoners had escaped and planned to kill himself
3. Fortunately for the jailer, Paul intervened and it saved not only the jailer's physical life but his spiritual life as well (16:28-34):
- a. READ 16:28: It's not clear how Paul knew the jailer was going to kill himself (could he see him? was it a hunch?), but he immediately calls out to the guard to let him know all the prisoners are still there
  - b. In response, the jailer grabs some lights, rushes in, and is obviously shocked at what he finds; Look at his response (READ 16:29-30)
    - 1) He's trembling with fear:
      - a) Earthquakes were relatively common in Philippi, but it's pretty clear he didn't write this off as just another earthquake
      - b) This indicates he recognized that what just happened was a divine act
    - 2) He falls down at the feet of Paul and Silas which means he recognized that the event was directly related to them and their imprisonment
    - 3) He asks what he has to do to be saved—it's not clear what prompted this question because Paul and Silas hadn't shared the Gospel with him yet (that comes next):
      - a) Maybe it was just recognizing the divine and miraculous nature of the event
      - b) Maybe he heard Paul and Silas praying and praising God before he fell asleep
      - c) Whatever it was, he was convicted enough to recognize his spiritual need for salvation

Craig Johnson visiting me in the garage: "You need to tell me something."

- c. God used Paul's and Silas' imprisonment to lead the jailer and his entire household to salvation in Christ (READ 16:31-34)
4. Takeaway: God can use any situation for good—even the worst of the worst
- a. When Joseph was tossed into a pit by his brothers and sold into slavery in Egypt, God used it to save not only his entire family but likely millions of Egyptians
  - b. Joseph could have been angry and bitter at his brothers, but instead he proclaimed that God used his suffering for good; listen to what he said to his brothers (Genesis 50:20): **"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."**
  - c. After cataloging all of the things he suffered as a result of his service to Christ, the Apostle Paul claimed that he was **"well content"** with them because God's power was made manifest through them and he would gladly continue to suffer because it resulted in benefiting others (paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 11-12)
  - d. If God could use all these things for good, then He can certainly use any situation or circumstance we face—no matter how bad—for good as well

C. The city officials are confronted by their unlawful actions (16:35-40)

Seeing Kudzu on our detour to Outer Banks—looked like a green felt blanket over everything; imported from Japan and China in 1876 as part of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and touted

as a great ornamental plant; from 1930s to 50s it was promoted by the Soil Conservation Service as a solution for soil erosion and planted all over the south; it soon became known as the “vine that ate the south” because it began to overtake everything in its path, killing trees, harming insects and plants, and destroying ecosystems. **Whoever thought it was a good idea to import this stuff from Japan and China didn’t think through the consequences of their actions.**

1. Actions have consequences and the city authorities were now confronted by theirs (READ 16:35-40)
2. If you remember, Paul and Silas were never tried and Paul repeats that here; the authorities simply ordered them to be beaten and thrown in prison
  - a. Had the authorities spent even just a little time investigating, let alone conducting a trial, they likely would have learned that Paul and Silas were Romans
  - b. This was a problem because Roman law made it illegal to cane Roman citizens, and Rome didn’t take kindly to breaking its laws
  - c. To make matters worse, they did this all publicly and now wanted to send Paul and Silas away “**in secret**”
3. Paul refused and demanded that the city officials come to him and Silas personally and release them before they are willing to leave:
  - a. The city officials are now afraid
  - b. They come and “**appeal**” to Paul and Silas
  - c. They keep “**begging**” them to leave the city (likely hoping that Paul and Silas would just disappear without reporting their unlawful actions or the Roman authorities catching wind of it)
  - d. My, how the tables have turned!
4. Takeaway: it’s okay to pursue our rights as citizens, including holding governing officials accountable when they violate our rights
  - a. Paul wasn’t afraid to exercise his rights as a Roman citizen (here, when he appealed to Caesar, and in Acts 22:25 to avoid scourging)—nor should we be
  - b. What’s interesting in this instance with Paul and Silas is that they could have pursued charges against the city officials, but they didn’t (though I imagine there was a certain amount of satisfaction in seeing them sweat for a while)
  - c. It seems Paul and Silas were more interested in accountability than revenge, and certainly more interested in getting back to preaching the Gospel
  - d. May that be our attitude as well if and when we find ourselves in similar situations