

SATURDAY, JUNE 1 | Center of attention

Acts 16:25-26 25About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26Suddenly 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.

I'll try not to get ahead of these two verses here. So let's just state some facts: it's around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, the prisoners were listening; there was a violent earthquake, the earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

The midnight hour is usually a time of rest. Maybe they couldn't sleep? I'm sure they were still hurting from their beatings. The other prisoners were awake, too. At the midnight hour it's dark and quiet. For us it might not be so dark and quiet, but for them it was. No electricity, so no noise really unless there were animals or insects making noise. People certainly weren't roaming around at this hour. It could have been a regular hour of prayer, but I can't find anything confirming it.

But they are in prison, and those prisoners wouldn't have been honoring an hour of prayer. Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. The prisoners were listening. I doubt they had heard this in prison before. They were expected to moan and gripe, being beaten and jailed unjustly. No trouble, time or place should keep us from lifting our hearts up in prayer and praise.

In the toughest of times, our own midnight hour, circumstances shouldn't destroy our peace or joy. The world can beat us down and bruise us, but we can be truly happy and send prayers of praise to God nonetheless. I like this: "They may incarcerate the body, but they cannot bind the spirit." Nothing gives us peace like God. Day or night, sick or well, bound or free, our soul has peace from God.

There is a stillness in the middle of the night. It can feel lonely, but we are never alone. The still, quiet time with God is a precious time. It is invaluable and a privilege to be able to access God while we are immersed in the sufferings of this world.

What an impact it no doubt made on the prisoners to hear Paul and Silas praising God in the very center of the prison. Not just in some dark, damp corner, but in the very center of the prison where their praises could be heard by everyone! Then as their praises rang out, the earthquake came and their chains fell off. What an experience. And what a witness for Christ.

Our takeaway from this is pretty simple. We are usually the center of attention in our struggles and trials. Our responses will make an impact on those around us. What kind of impact we have is up to us.

Response: I leave this one up to you. Prayerfully seek how you need to respond today.

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."