

A SONG IN THE NIGHT



(Acts 16)

On his missionary journeys, Paul was confronted with angry Jews, and Gentiles. He was mistreated unfairly several times and sometimes thrown in jail. In one of his letters to the Corinthians he gives a summary of his experiences in his mission field. He wrote: five times I received from [the hands of] the Jews forty [lashes all] but one; three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I have been aboard a ship wrecked at sea; a [whole] night and a day I have sent [adrift] on the deep; many times on journeys, [exposed to perils from rivers, perils from bandits, perils from [my own] nation, perils from the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the desert places, perils in the sea, perils from those posing as believers; in toil and hardship, watching often [through sleepless nights], in hunger and thirst frequently driven to fasting by want, in cold and exposure and lack of clothing (II Cor. 11:23-27). However, Paul arose from it all with a song of victory even in the darkest hours of his life: we are **hedged** in on every side, but

not cramped or crushed; we suffer **embarrassments** and are perplexed and unable to find a way out, **but not driven to despair**; we are **pursued**, but **not deserted**; we are **struck down** to the ground, but **never struck out and destroyed**; always carrying about in the body the liability and exposure to the same putting to death that the Lord YAHSHUA suffered, so that the life of YAHSHUA also may be shown forth by and in our bodies. For we who live are constantly being handed over to death for YAHSHUA'S sake, that the life of YAHSHUA also may be evidenced through our flesh which is liable to death (II Cor. 4:8-11).

Answering the call to Macedonia through a vision, Paul and Silas went there to preach the Gospel. Ancient Macedonia was a kingdom, north of Greece, and according to the Bible, Macedonia was the first part of Europe visited by Paul. Today, Macedonia is the largest and second most populous Greek region According to Bible-History.com ministry. When arrived in Macedonia, Paul and Silas looked for the place of prayer, outside the city, where the women were assembling. While they were on their way to the place of prayer, they met by a slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination and she brought her owners much gain by her fortunetelling. She kept following Paul [and the rest of] them shouting loudly, These men are the servants of the Most High God! They announce to you the way of salvation! (Acts 16:16-17). She continued for many days saying that, until Paul had enough of that spirit, and casting the spirit out of her, he was relieved and the girl was set free. Her owners, however, did not feel the same. They foresaw their means of making profits disappearing and angrily, they caught hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities (16:19). Wait a minute; didn't Paul have a vision to go to Macedonia to help? What were they going to do now? Was jail the place where he was to go to answer the call? Meanwhile, they were put in prison, into the inner prison (the dungeon) and fastened their feet in the stocks. A dungeon was chamber underground to use for torture. Paul and Silas were going nowhere at any time soon, or were they? But a song in the night was going to keep them free in spite of the chains. They prayed and sang hymns of praise to God for all of the prisoners to hear. Suddenly the power of praise broke into an earthquake causing the foundation of that jail to shake, and the prisoners to go unshackled. We realize that the power of Paul's and Silas' praise was of an unmeasurable proportion. Yes, they were going somewhere with their voices, for they were lifted high to heaven and God received them and responded with a great

earthquake, seemly directed to that jail. It was so great that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and at once all the doors were opened and everyone's shackles were unfastened. God had spoken against the forces of the enemy through the power of praise. Nothing in that space of time was going to prevent the call to Macedonia from being fulfilled. No, not even a dungeon. Although everyone in that jail was unfastened as a result, no one escaped because the purpose for that was not for physical freedom, but for spiritual freedom.

The jailer was then in despair. He knew that he was going to pay for it with his own life, and when he was about to commit suicide, Paul prevented him by shouting, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here! (Vs.28). It was without a doubt that the jailer was listening to Paul's and Silas' prayer and singing. He realized that what had happened was supernaturally done by God Himself. He was holding in prison the anointed ones of the Lord and felt compelled to repent. The jailer approached Paul and Silas trembling and terrified, and falling down before them. After having brought Paul and Silas out of the dungeon, he asked the question: Men, what is it necessary for me to do that I may be saved? (vs.29-30). Macedonia call was being answered in the life of the jailer and his family. Paul and Silas obediently submitted themselves to the cause and God showed up and opened the door! His glory was seen and salvation came.

Paul and Silas suffered many blows in the hands of the Romans that time but never question God why. They never doubted for they were costumed to such treatments for the sake of YAHSHUA the Messiah. They lived such a life of faith that nothing, not even blows and imprisonment were going to stop them from spreading the good news of God's love. They did it with a song in the darkest of their night. God had entrusted them with the message, and dead or alive, they were going to pass it on. They believed and considered that the sufferings of this present time were not worth being compared with the glory that was about to be revealed to them (Rom. 8:18). I can imagine the peace that flowed from Paul's and Silas' praises to God into the hearts of those who like them, were shackled in a stinky and moldy dungeon. A place where no one should have been imprisoned no matter the crime committed. I am sure they marveled listening to those hymns of praise to God in that place where darkness abounded. Who there would have a reason to sing? Paul's and Silas' souls were not shackled to those chains; neither were their spirits. They were not victims of circumstances but were victors in Christ Who gave them strength. Paul believed that their momentary affliction was

ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for them an everlasting weight of glory. Their focuses were not on things that were seen but on the things that were unseen; for the things that were visible were temporal, but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting (Ii Cor. 4:17-18). The courage of their obedience, the light of their message were imprinted in the hearts of those people and the jailer together with his family was saved. The Bible does not tell us if more people received their message in that place, so we leave at that. Paul concludes by saying, So for the sake of Christ, I am well pleased and take pleasure in infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities, and distresses; for when I am weak I am strong (II Cor. 12:10).

King Jehoshaphat applied the principle of praise to fight his battle with three kings and was successful. When he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers to sing to the Lord and praise Him in their holy garments as they went out before the army, saying, give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy and loving-kindness endure forever! **And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the men of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir who had come against Judah, and they were slaughtered** (II Chron. 20:21-22).

If you are shackled by circumstances of great proportions, let your praises rise to God. He will fight for you even if you are in the depths of the earth-dungeon, or in the depth of the Sea-Jonah. Your voice will be heard. There is no place on this earth or underneath it, that our God is not. Where could I go from Your spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there, if I take the wings of the morning or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand hold me, if I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me and the night shall be light about me, even the darkness hides nothing from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to you (Psalm 139:7-12). Let your praise to God break through the walls of circumstances that are holding you shackled today!