

Power of Praise

Acts 16:25-31

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (NRSV)

Are we thankful even in this lockdown circumstance?

Of course, our children may enjoy this time because they don't have to go to school and have more time to play games... I am sure the majority of workers and business owners are full of worries because they have to pay bills and make plans for the uncertainty of the future.

In this situation, the world has realized how vulnerable this world is. I am sure our President and leaders thoroughly examine the future of our country and the global economy. Our church also needs to be fully aware of the situation and requires to pray more to prepare how to grow in these unexpected changes. I believe our Lord gave a special commission to our church, which is to share the Gospel of Christ to the community and throughout the world.

At this, I think it is very important to reexamine our faith in Christ.

Do you know Corrie Ten Boom? I mentioned her a few times in the past. She was a well-known writer and a role model of the fully committed Christian. She was survived from the Holocaust. Under Nazi's ruling, she was at death's door many times. She had to go through unbearable suffering and persecutions. Her criminal charge was "Helped Jews and poor people with Christian love." If she wanted, I think, she would be qualified to complain to the Lord about her harsh life.

However, she truly believed the Lord, and He would take care of her in every corner of her life. One early morning, she could not sleep well because of furious gun-fighting between Nazi and the allied force. Then, she heard that her older sister was working in the kitchen. She said to herself, "I rather go and help my sister. I cannot sleep like this under the shooting noise."

After a while, when she returned to her room, she found a sharp piece of grenade fragments in her bed where she was lying down. She screamed at her sister and said, "If I didn't go down and see you, I must be dead by now." Then, her sister replied, "There is no 'if' in God's provision. As we are under His grace, all things do not happen by chance." Corrie Ten Boom remembered and kept her sister's assurance as a great comfort in her life.

Corrie Ten Boom did not know why she had to suffer so much, but she believed in God's provision toward her. Her testimony clearly shows that God is real, and the same God is with us too.

In today's scripture, Paul and Silas did not commit any crime other than casting out an evil spirit from a slave-girl. However, the master of the girl accused and put them into the prison because the girl lost her power of divination so that her master could not earn money anymore.

The master accused them and put them into the prison after a severe flogging. While they were in jail, they could plead for their innocence and complain to the Lord. However, they prayed and praise to the Lord even though they were under great pain and despair. How could they do that? They must believe that God had a special plan to accomplish their mission.

Have you got into this kind of persecution because of Jesus Christ? I am sure, if I were born and lived in one of those communist countries or Islam countries, I would be under great persecution too. Whenever I think of Christians in those countries, I admire their faith. Again, that is also in God's provision.

Even so, let's not be outsmarted.

God's provision doesn't mean that we don't need to do anything because God will do everything. Instead, if we work hard, God will help us to harvest more. If we don't work hard, we will not get much. If there are any exceptions, we believe and trust the Lord as in Romans 8:23, "All things work for good for those who love the Lord." In other words, we need to pray to know God's direction and do our best on whatever we are supposed to do. The result depends on God's provision. Amen!

As Paul and Silas wanted to share the Gospel in Macedonia, God allowed them to be in jail. They had obedient hearts for Christ. That is why they could praise the Lord in the prison. So, what happened when they prayed and praised?

1. God demonstrated freedom from sins through the earthquake. As the place was shaken, all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were released. But, none of the inmates escaped. They were in awe and wanted to follow Paul's direction. Praise the Lord!
2. All the prisoners listened to their prayer and praise to the Lord. As Paul preached, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." I am sure many inmates believed in Jesus even though the Bible does not describe in detail. I am sure they joined the Philippians church because they saw the miracles in the jail. They could experience what freedom feels like when the earthquake released their shackles.
3. God saved the jailer and his household. The jailer was extremely frightened and was going to kill himself because he will be executed for the incident. In those days, the jailer will take over the remaining years if a prisoner escapes. As he saw all the doors were opened, he thought it would be better off killing himself.

At the moment, Paul said, "Do not harm yourself. We are all here." As the jailer saw what's happening, he surrendered to Paul. He fell down before them and cried out, "Sirs, what must I

do to be saved?" The jailer did not say that abruptly because he saw how Paul and Silas were suffered from the unfair accusation and treatment. It made him to respect Paul.

In the end, the entire family of the jailer was saved and baptized. Not only that, but also they became the faithful servants of the church in Philippi. Since God had a plan to build the church to save the people in Macedonia, God called Paul and Silas to preach the Gospel there. They faithfully obeyed and praised the Lord despite of the persecution.

Likewise, we are under the Lord's provision. As we have the assurance of His presence, we can have true joy and peace to overcome any challenges from this world. Do you believe you are in His provision? Let's shout to the Lord, "Yes, Lord! I believe! I believe!"

When the Lord called me to our church as the pastor, I asked the Lord, "Why me?" I prayed and believed that He called me to ensure that all of our church members have the assurance of the love and the salvation in Christ. Unfortunately, not all churches and pastors teach Jesus Christ is the only way to have salvation.

We believe in Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. It is His calling for me to ensure that our members have salvation. In this uncertain and confusing era, having solid faith in Christ is immeasurably important. We cannot overcome the pressure without having solid faith in Christ.

I have been trying to help and train our church members to be spiritual warriors because that is the best way to have unshakeable joy and peace. As I preached before, I pray that all of us to be the first quality warriors. I believe there are no other ways but training. Hard-trained soldiers can more likely win the battle and survive from the battle.

Corrie Ten Boom said, "*You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have.*" How about you and me? Is Christ all we have? Or, Christ is a small piece in our lives? That is what we must decide, all or a piece of our life.