



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Acts 13 – 26 Sermon Series

Supports Session 6: Every Opportunity

Sermon Title: “Contagious Joy” (Acts 16:22-31)

Connection to Session 6

Each believer should strive to live a life that displays the fruit of the spirit, and specifically, joy. This joy goes beyond circumstances; it is something that can be used by God to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every Christian has an opportunity to reach someone with the good news.

Introduction/Opening

Imagine a person waking up late for work because their alarm didn't go off. They rush to get ready, skip breakfast, and head out the door. On their way to work, they get stuck in traffic and end up being late. When they finally arrive, their boss is upset and gives them a warning. Throughout the day, everything just seems to go wrong: they spill coffee on their shirt, their computer crashes, and they miss an important meeting. By the end of the day, they are exhausted, frustrated, and ready to go home. But when they finally get home, they realize they've locked themselves out and have to wait for a locksmith.

Have you ever had one of those days where everything seems to go wrong? How did you react? With joy? Certainly, for many of us, joy would be the last thing on our minds. But for the apostle Paul and for Silas, their imprisonment had no bearing on their countenance.

Today, we have many stresses and worries in our lives. Yet our joy goes beyond circumstances. Today, we're going to look at Paul and Silas, how they reacted, and how God used it for His glory.

Outline

1. Focus on God (Acts 16:22-25)

- a. Despite your circumstances
 - i. When you look at the text of verses 22-24, Paul and Silas were arrested, physically beaten, and humiliated. The prison that they were in was certainly not a wonderful place to be!
 1. John Polhill described the stocks of the time: “Their feet were placed in wooden stocks, which were likely fastened to the wall. Often such stocks were used as instruments of torture; they had a number of holes

for the legs, which allowed for severe stretching of the torso and thus created excruciating pain.”¹

2. In pain and in agony, with their feet bound, Paul and Silas were left in prison.
 - ii. And how did Paul and Silas react? They reacted with joy, a focused joy as they spent their night praising God.
- b. Direct your focus on the one true God.
 - i. Paul and Silas’s joy had nothing to do with their circumstances. Why? They focused everything they had on the one true God.
 - ii. Paul wrote elsewhere:
 1. Philippians 4:4-5
 2. Philippians 4:11
 - iii. The key to maintaining the joy of God is to focus on God Himself. Apart from God, nothing else matters.

2. Rely on God (Acts 16:26-28)

- a. See God’s work with Kingdom eyes.
 - i. In verse 26, the text tells us that there was a great earthquake, shaking the foundations of the prison.
 1. All the doors were opened, and all of the bonds were unfastened.
 2. Paul and Silas could have easily escaped but did not. Instead, they paused. Why?
 - ii. They paused to see God work beyond the immediate. A life was about to be changed—the life of the jailer.
- b. Let God work in the most unexpected of ways.
 - i. The expected reaction to the earthquake would have been to escape from prison.
 - ii. But God is the God of the unexpected.
 1. In verse 27, the jailer was about to kill himself.
 - a. It was likely that if the prisoners had escaped, the jailer himself would have faced execution for losing the prisoners.
 - b. “Jailers and guards were personally responsible for their prisoners and in some instances were executed for allowing them to escape (cf. 12:19).”²
 2. The pause from fleeing by Paul and Silas resulted in the saving of this jailer’s life.
 - iii. There was a connection between Paul and Silas’s praises before the earthquake and how they responded to God’s leading after the earthquake.
 - iv. How we see God at work:
 1. In His Word, prayer, godly people, circumstances (if affirmed by Scripture)
 2. All these pointed to the gospel

¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, Vol. 26, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 353.

² *Ibid*, 355.

3. Trust in God (Acts 16:29-31)

- a. Look for “divine appointments.”
 - i. A divine appointment is exactly what we see here. The jailer was certainly under conviction.
 1. He was about to let them go, but before he did that, he asked a very important question in verse 30: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
 2. What they said in verse 31 was equally as important: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .”
 - ii. You see, Paul and Silas were available as God opened the door to the gospel with yet another person.
- b. Trust in God and let God work.
 - i. Paul and Silas’s focus and reliance on God was contagious. It caused someone around them to ask a life-changing question.
 - ii. Their faith in God caused others around them to take notice and to want what they had.

Conclusion

The lives of the jailer and those in his house were changed for eternity. The impact of Paul and Silas having a focus on praising and glorifying God cannot be underestimated. When they relied on God not just to rescue them but to lead them in an unexpected way, the Lord did an amazing thing. God took a jailer who was about to give up on his life and transformed him to become His child, forever. How is your focus today? Are you relying on God to lead you in the most unexpected ways?

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