

Uprising

Week of May 1

The Holy Spirit alone gives true joy that prevails through any circumstance. It's rare to find someone filled with true joy from the Lord, and that person is probably not problem-free. Often the most joyous people are those who have endured many troubles and learned to lean into God's goodness. Joy cannot be manufactured or mustered up through self-will or positive meditation. True joy – the kind that lasts – comes from heaven and reaches to the heart that surrenders every struggle, challenge, or hardship at the feet of our Savior. Have you experienced true joy?

In Acts, we read about a time when Paul and Silas are imprisoned for healing a slave-girl of demonic possession. Paul and Silas are in Macedonia (Paul's second missionary journey) and they are going to a place of prayer outside the city of Philippi. The demon within the slave-girl continuously shouts: "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." And while the statement was true, the manner in which it was being announced was not of God's Spirit. Paul has had just about enough of the girl's mocking, when he turns and casts the demon out of the girl. Trouble follows, but the mission prevails.

Read Acts 16:16-34

1. Why were the masters' of the slave-girl upset with Paul? (see Acts 16:16:b)

As the slave owners dragged Paul and Silas before the city officials, what tactic did they use in order to eventually incite a mob against them? (see vv19-21)

Refer to the following Scriptures and record three other times a mob was incited against the innocent through deceit? As you read, reflect upon this question: What is different about God's kind of joy – the kind that prevails through false accusation and fierce persecution?

1 Kings 21:1-16

Matthew 26:57-63, 27:20-26

Acts 6:8-15

The accusation and deadly plot against Paul in Philippi was not the first, nor would it be the last time Paul faced persecution (Acts 9:22-25 and Acts 21:27-32). In fact, Paul (formerly Saul) knew from the beginning of his conversion what he had to look forward to. "But the Lord said, 'Go, for Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel. And I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake'" (Acts 9:15-16).

2. After being severely beaten, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. They were locked in an inner dungeon, their feet clamped with stocks. What did they do "around midnight" and how did it capture the attention of the other prisoners, according to v25?

What happened next, according to vv25-26?

What did the jailer wake up to see (v27)?

Only God can make "the chains of every prisoner" fall off! We serve a God who inhabits the praises of His people, who parts waters, and who works the impossible. Because the jailer woke up to see the prison doors open and figured all the prisoners had escaped, he started to kill himself. But just as he drew his sword to end his life, he heard Paul's voice: "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" Notice when Paul, Silas, and even the other prisoners had a chance to flee, they didn't. The Holy Spirit was in the dungeon with them and when the Holy Spirit captivates us there's no escaping – especially when there are precious lives at stake.

3. The jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Read together Paul's and Silas' response:
"Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household."

Paul and Silas then shared the Word of the Lord with the jailer and all who lived in his house. What if out of anger, Paul and Silas would have run their mouth in a negative way? What if out of defeat, Paul and Silas had been silent and kept their worship to themselves? What if out of fear, Paul and Silas would have escaped from their cell when they had a chance?

What situation are you trying to flee, but you know deep in your heart God has you there to share His love and joy—to tell about His grace and power?

Listen to what the apostle Paul would later write to the church in Rome: "We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because He has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love" (Romans 5:3-5).

Later to the church in Corinth Paul says: "You see we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake... our great power is from God, not from ourselves" (2 Corinthians 4:5, 7b). Because Paul knew the calling upon his life, he served the jailor in Philippi by sharing the Gospel message with him and all in his house. In turn, the jailor washed their wounds and set a meal before Paul and Silas. The jailer "and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God" (Acts 16:34b).

4. Is God's Holy Spirit starting to rise up within you giving you joy that you can't explain? If so, write a prayer of thanks to Him in the space below. Share with your Life Group how joy is changing your outlook on your current situation.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

The words of the apostle Paul, 2 Corinthians 4:8-12

One Year Bible Reading

May 1: Judges 13:1-14:20, John 1:29-51, Psalm 102:1-28, Proverbs 14:15-16
May 2: Judges 15:1-16:31, John 2:1-25, Psalm 103:1-22, Proverbs 14:17-19
May 3: Judges 17:1-18:31, John 3:1-21, Psalm 104:1-23, Proverbs 14:20-21
May 4: Judges 19:1-20:48, John 3:22-4:3, Psalm 104:24-35, Proverbs 14:22-24
May 5: Judges 21:1-Ruth 1:22, John 4:4-42, Psalm 105:1-15, Proverbs 14:25
May 6: Ruth 2:1-4:22, John 4:43-54, Psalm 105:16-36, Proverbs 14:26-27
May 7: 1 Samuel 1:1-2:21, John 5:1-23, Psalm 105:37-45, Proverbs 14:28-29

UPRISING

Text: Acts 16:16-34

The Plain Truth:

Joy comes from the _____ and trusting _____.

- 1) Joy comes from the _____.
- 2) Joy is cultivated through _____.
- 3) Your _____ can _____ others to Christ.