

SERMON: HOW TO HANDLE YOUR MIDNIGHTS

Acts 16:25-26

(25) And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (26) And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

Introduction

It is easy to handle the daylight. It is even easier to handle the brightness of the noon day sun. By daylight, I mean when things are going well. The bills are all paid, your health is excellent, and everyone is patting you on the back. By noon day, I mean when things are all but perfect. During the noon day it seems as if you have the Midas touch and everything you rub against turns into gold. The question now presents itself: Can you handle your midnights? By midnight, I mean when things are not going well at all. Midnight is when the bills are due and your health is failing. Midnight is when your friends are so few, you can count them on one hand and still have several fingers left over. Midnight is when your best efforts are misunderstood and it seems as if you are getting hit from all sides. Midnight is when you feel that everything that could go wrong, has already gone wrong.

Let me explain further. There is a chronological midnight that occurs every twenty-four hours. It only lasts for a minute, but an existential midnight can last for months, weeks, and even for years.

Paul encountered a young slave girl with the gift of predicting the future. However, there were several problems. It came from an evil spirit that had possessed her. (All good and perfect gifts come from God.) Her masters misused it and exploited it for their own monetary gain. In fact, the whole town benefited from her demonic soothsaying ability. People came from miles around for her to tell their fortunes. The girl perceived that there was something special about Paul and Silas. She followed them constantly. After being harassed for days, Paul turned to her and addressed the spirit of divination or clairvoyance and commanded the spirit to come out of her. The spirit came out immediately. When the demon exited the slave girl, it created such a mighty stir with her masters and the local town's people because their fortune-telling business had been utterly destroyed. In retaliation, Paul and Silas were brutally beaten and were put in the maximum security ward of the prison.

At midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing songs of praise, an act of divine power occurred. Suddenly there was a gigantic earthquake, so much that the foundation of the prison was shaken. Immediately all of the doors were opened and

everyone's hands were loosed. This act of power was so colossal that the keeper of the prison cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" This act of "midnight faith" by Paul and Silas led to the salvation of the prison guard and his entire family.

Paul and Silas experienced both a chronological and an existential midnight. They handled their midnight well because they had "midnight faith." Let's see what spiritual and practical lessons we can learn from this Biblical narrative.

Exposition

1. Please, Don't Be Surprised By Your Midnights.

(They Will Come-No Matter How Holy You Are, Trouble Will Come.)

2. Remember, What Midnight Really Is.

(It Is A Bridge Between Yesterday And Tomorrow.)

(In Order To Get Out Of Yesterday And Step Into Tomorrow, You Must Pass Through Midnight.)

3. Refuse To Give Satan Entrance During Your Midnights.

(Satan Often Works In The Dark Of Night.)

(Please, Don't Let Your Midnights Keep You From Helping Others.)

(Your Best Ministry May Be At Midnight - Not At High Noon.)

4. Face Your Midnights With Prayer And Praise.

(It Is Good To Have A "Prayer-Praise" Partner.)

(I Will Bless The Lord At All Times - Psalm 34:1.)

(Pray and Faint Not - Luke 18:1.)

5. Expect Providential Intervention.

(An Earthquake Shook The Foundation And Freed Everyone.)

(Before The Earthquake There Was A Mighty "Faithquake" By Paul And Silas.)

Closing Thoughts

An old preacher was asked what he regards as the most comforting verse in the Bible. He answered, "And it came to pass." When told that was just the beginning of a verse, the preacher replied, "Still those are the most comforting words in the Bible to me. You see, a bad thing didn't come to stay-it came to pass, because trouble it don't last always. Have "midnight faith." Your midnight will pass into a glorious morning. Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scripture**Acts 16:14-40****End Note**

Just a note about Acts 16:16. The Greek states the girl received her soothsaying powers because she was possessed by the “python spirit.” In the original language the phrase is *pneuma python*. Python refers to a snake or serpent. Even today it refers to a certain species of snakes. This goes back to the Garden of Eden and the original sin of Adam and Eve and how the snake used its power of persuasion to trick them. In the Greco-Roman world, soothsaying was synonymous to or closely connected to the spirit of snakes and serpents. If you want to go deeper, google Pythia or the Oracle of Delphi

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