



No. 4

LONELINESS IN THE BELIEVER

Acts 16:23-32

And having inflicted many stripes upon them they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to be guarding them safely, who, having received such an order, threw them into the inner prison and made their feet secure in an instrument of torture having five holes, four for the wrists and ankles and one for the neck. Now, about midnight Paul and Silas while they were praying were also singing praises to God, mingling petition with songs of praise, and the prisoners were listening to them, enjoying their singing. And suddenly there was an earthquake, a great one, so that the foundations of the prison were caused to totter. And all the doors were instantly opened, and the bonds of all were loosened. And the jailer, having been roused out of sleep and having seen the doors of the prison opened, having drawn out his sword, was about to be killing himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, saying, Do not begin to do yourself one bit of harm, for we are all here. Then, having asked for a light, he sprang in, and having become terrified, fell down before Paul and Silas, and having brought them outside, said, Sirs, what is it necessary in the nature of the case for me to keep on doing in order that I may be saved? And they said, Put your trust at once and once for all in the Lord Jesus, and as for yourself, you shall be saved, also your household. And they spoke to him the word of God together with all those in his home.

The Apostle Paul's example for us: prayer and praise

This account in the book of Acts shows how Paul and Silas were tortured and thrown into the prison in chains. At midnight they were praying and singing praises to the Lord. They were in pain and chained in a dark, horrible prison and yet they chose to pray and sing songs of praise to God. Did they feel lonely? Forsaken of God? Did they question why this all happened to them while serving God? NO! They chose to magnify God, and God's power created an earthquake and opened the doors of the prison. As a result, the jailer, seeing the supernatural in Paul and Silas asked them to be saved.

We are not tortured or thrown into the prison, but if we are not careful, we will complain and express discontent when things don't go our way or we encounter difficulties. We will only encounter the supernatural when we are ready to sacrifice our lives for the Lord.

The blessing of persecution

My wife and I attended a Christian conference in Germany in 1991. It was after the Berlin wall came down. For the first time in Europe, Christians from the west and from the east, the former communist countries, gathered together.

The Christians from the communist countries had been persecuted, jailed and much more. The caliber of these people was amazing: they were on fire, their faith was extraordinary. They had endured many years of persecution and this strengthened their faith. I could see the difference between the "Western Christians" and the "Eastern Christians".

Expecting persecution

Because of our life in Christ, we will experience persecution in this world. When it happens, we need to be spiritually ready, which means also emotionally ready.

Loneliness in the Christian means lack of identity

Paul and Silas knew who they were, they were not shaken or intimidated by the treatment they received from the Romans, on the contrary, their spirits were stronger than their flesh, they did not feel sorry for themselves, but they rejoiced in the Lord and sang praises unto the Lord. They knew who they were in Christ and this led them to victory.

Loneliness is connected with the sinful nature

Loneliness is connected with the emotions i.e. with the flesh. We might feel lonely, but these emotions are to be under the authority of the NEW CREATION we are in Christ. This was exactly what Paul and Silas did: they did not allow the flesh - even in the midst of horrible circumstances - to take over, they remained in the spirit. The Apostle Paul taught us about this:

Romans 8:5-10

“For those who are habitually dominated by the sinful nature put their minds on the things of the sinful nature, but those who are habitually dominated by the Spirit put their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to have the mind dominated by the sinful nature is death, but to have the mind dominated by the Spirit is life and peace; because the mind dominated by the sinful nature is hostile to God, for it does not marshal itself under the command of the law of God, neither is it able to. Moreover, those who are in the sphere of the sinful nature are not able to please God. But, as for you, you are not in the sphere of the sinful nature but in the sphere of the Spirit, provided that the Spirit of God is in residence in you. But, assuming that a person does not have Christ's Spirit, this one does not belong to Him. But, assuming that Christ is in you, on the one hand the body is dead on account of sin, but on the other hand the [human] spirit is alive on account of righteousness”.

Emotions are real, we are not robots, but being overwhelmed by negative emotions should not be the experience of a believer. Like Paul and Silas, a believer's reality ought to be experiencing the power of God in the midst of difficult circumstances. They were rejoicing in the Lord. Lifewise, God exhorts us to have joy in the midst of trials:

James 1:2-4

Consider it a matter for unadulterated joy [without any admixture of sorrow] whenever you fall into the midst of variegated trials which surround you, knowing experientially that the approving of your faith, that faith having been put to the test for the purpose of being approved, and having met the test, has been approved, [that this approving process] produces a patience which bears up and does not lose heart or courage under trials. But be allowing the aforementioned patience to be having its complete work in order that you may be spiritually mature and complete in every detail, lacking in nothing

Jesus experienced grief, sorrow, sadness, He cried and also agonised at Gethsemane as He anticipated the cross, and yet He was never depressed, never felt lonely, never felt sorry for Himself. We will experience trials and tribulations but when we depend on God He has promised He will work “all things” together for our good.

Romans 8:28

And we know with an absolute knowledge that for those who are loving God, all things are working together resulting in good, for those who are divinely-summoned ones according to His purpose.