

Paul's Second Missionary Journey Pt. 4 Victory through Trials and Tribulation Acts 16:19-40

When Paul told the saints at Lystra that *“through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God”* he voiced a fundamental Christian principle that was eloquently attested to in his life and ministry.

- His call. *“For I must show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My name.”*
- His life. To Corinth he could boast that he *was “far more” in “greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death”* as authentication of His apostolic office.
- His death. In the hour of his death he could say to Timothy, without fear of contradiction, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.”*

Later he would say, *“I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church.”* Col. 1:24. What did he mean and what does that mean for us?

In Phil. 3:10 he says, *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.”* Knowing the power of His resurrection comes from being a part of the new creation. It involves being transferred from one kingdom into another. The kingdoms are at odds and at works. This introduces us to conflict.

In Ro. 8:17 he says we are *“heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”* Jesus taught that to enjoying eternal life involves identification with Him and fellowship with Him in the work of redemption.

1. **God's service involves suffering.** Vv. 19-24. Lest we mistakenly think of the gospel's power in terms devoid of

personal risks Luke records what is normative experience. It comes:

- a. **From the cross purposes and perspective of the world.** V. 19. Luke records a response of outrage by the girl's owners in the face of two wonderful things begun¹. It indicates two things typical² of the world's reaction to the gospel.
 - i. Money is more important than the transformation of other. Let Satan possess her as long as it profits us.
 - ii. Money is more important than personal salvation. **Illustr.** Rich young ruler.
- b. **Through unreasonable reaction and unjust procedures.** Vv. 20-23a. The marketplace would've raised a judgment or bema seat. The charge is false but assented to *prejudicially* and *uncritically*.
 - i. **Prejudicially.** *“These men are Jews!”* The charge is serious. It stems from Roman pride and alleges that Christianity is culturally destabilizing and possibly challenging allegiance to Caesar. Cf. Ro. 13:1-7; 1Pe. 2:13ff.
 - ii. **Uncritically.** They rush to judgment neither seriously considering the charge nor allocating the punishment.
 1. **The Charge.** *“Disturbing our city.”*
The only disturbance was the deliverance of a poor possessed girl and the personal loss they incurred from it.

¹ Two of the most glorious effects of the gospel in the world are here in seed form: the abolition of slavery and the elevation of women.

² The two accounts Luke records of Gentile attacks on Christians stem from the same source, the gospel's threat to property interests. Cf. 19:23-27.

2. **The Punishment.** It would've taken place at the hand of the *lictores*. It would've been a warning beating called the *admonitio*. Had they taken the time to thoroughly investigate they could've discovered they had no legal right to punish as severely as they did.

c. **Without much sympathy on the part of the world.** **Vv. 23b-24.** They were placed in the *stocks* without any further discussion. It was not the jailers business to take any thought for comfort. He was probably a retired soldier and, as Bruce says, "the Roman army developed many fine qualities; these did not include the milk of human kindness." Sympathy for the sense of constraint that leads us to evangelism from the world is not to be expected. **Cf. 1Cor. 9:16.**

2. **God works powerfully through suffering.** **Vv. 25-34.** Here it is important to glory in the deliverance but to look beyond to the outcome. Satan hopes for two ends in persecution: **(1)** to break our spirits and **(2)** to prevent gospel proclamation. Here God prevents both outcomes:

a. **God sustains our spirits in suffering.** **V. 25.** They prayed and sang. Tertullian spoke of this event, "The legs feel nothing when the heart is in heaven." The right posture of the believer in suffering is towards God. He will not disappoint if we'll go to Him.

b. **God causes the gospel to go forth through our sufferings.** **Vv. 26-34.** They thought to stop the progress of the gospel, to break up the river side prayer meetings but God triumphs through their assault. Like the cross, He brings their schemes down upon their heads. **V. 32.**

i. **He makes converts in the jail.** **Vv. 27- 32a.** Matthew Henry thought that the entire jail was converted. "Surely the miracle wrought on their bodies, in loosing their bands, was wrought on their souls too." **Cf. 27:24; Jb. 36:8-10.**

1. The jailer feared first for his life. **Vv. 27-29a.**

2. He then feared for his soul. **Vv. 29b- 31.** He is not pointed immediately to some rite or ritual but bid to **"believe in the Lord Jesus."**

ii. **He opens another house of prayer.** **V. 32b-34.** The attempt to shut down one house resulted in two houses of prayer. Note that it is baptism based on the faith of the head of the household. Note the transformation indicated by the **(1)** new heart **v. 33a.** **(2)** new fellowship **v. 34a.** **(3)** new joy **v. 34b.**

3. **God ultimately vindicates His suffering servants.** **Vv. 35-40.** The magistrate attempts to end the matter by quietly sending Paul and his companions off. Paul will not have it. His response raises questions:

a. **Why would he not accept a quiet release?** **V. 37.** It would've given the impression that the accusations were true. That they were trouble makers and that the followers they would leave behind were too.

b. **What did he wait to reveal his Roman citizenship?** **Vv. 37 – 38.** Possibly two reasons:

i. It might've confused where his loyalty lay. If he wasn't permitted to give a detailed explanation it might've given the impression that his loyalty was to Caesar instead of Christ.

ii. If he used his citizenship to avoid persecution his Philippian brothers would be exposed to, it would violate his solidarity with them.

c. **What did he accomplish by proceeding as he did?** **Vv. 39 -40.** He left behind a testimony that the accusations were unfounded and persecution unjust.

4. **What does the account teach us? Three things:**
 - a. **Difficulty is intended by Satan to break our spirits and stop our mouths.**
 - b. **God will support us and work through our suffering.**
 - c. **We should remember not just ourselves in difficulty but the body of Christ.**