



Acts 16:25,26.

"BUT about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God; and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened; and everyone's bands were loosed."

INTRODUCTION.

This is an arresting and wonderful story, and the more carefully it is considered the more the wonder grows. At first we wonder at the singing. Then we wonder so much at that which inspired the singing, that we should wonder more if they had not sung.

At first we are amazed at the cheerfulness and heroism of these men. Then we observe that for them the singing was not abnormal but normal, not the result of a transient emotion, but the expression of a constant experience of soul.

Let us then

- A. First look at the picture presented.
- B. Secondly, recognize the central Value of the Story.
- C. Finally, consider its particular Teaching

Date	Town	Place
June 18, 1916	London	Westminster Chapel
July 21	Penarth	Bible Conference
23	Storrington	"
Sep 3	Pontmouth	"
17	Sturston	(Husley, Vic Hall)
22	Wigan	Queen's Hall
May 18, 1917	mt Ash	Bishopsgate Ch
Dec 18	London	Baptist Tabernacle.
Nov. 27, 1922	Atlanta Ga.	First Christian Church
Apr. 29, 1923.	Athens	2nd Rep. Ch. (Colones)
Nov. 11.	Columbus, O.	Pres. Ch.:-
Feb. 24, 1924.	Alameda, Cal.	2nd Pres. Ch.:-
Mar. 6	Chicago, Ill.	Schwab's Rec. Ch.:-
Feb. 4, 1925.	Chattanooga, W. Va.	Dypt. Ave. " "
8	New York N.Y.	Walmes Rd. Baptist Ch.;
Sep. 13	Toronto, Ont.	Improv. Bapt. Ch.:-
Dec. 1, 1929	Baltimore, Md.	" Tabernacle.
Nov. 26, 1934.	Philadelphia, Pa.	Cong. Ch.;
Apr. 4, 1940	Cambridge	Westminster
Apr 1	London	

Reading in groups  
1st. 22. ix. 22.

Down  
1st. 22. ix. 22.  
1st. 22. ix. 22.

A. THE PICTURE.

I. The Men. Paul and Silas.

Jews. Roman Citizens. Christians.

The one. An Apostle.

The other. A Prophet.

Their Ministry and Message challenging effete Judaism and Paganism; and calling men everywhere to a new way of life, both as to ideals and power.

Men therefore who everywhere were persecuted and honoured.

II. The Circumstances.

i. "But" Suggests the things gone before.

They had been changed with Sedition.

Had been beaten with many stripes. Cast into the inner prison, their feet made fast in stocks.

ii. "About Midnight". Accentuates everything.

The Loneliness, the Weariness, the Pain.

III. The Occupation.

IV. The Issue.

} See over 

III. The Occupation.

i. The Text. "Were praying and singing hymns".

Not two exercises, but one.

Proseuchomai. To draw near.

To worship.

Humneo.

To celebrate.

ii. The Fact.

"Two gathered". Therefore The Presence.

They did not ask! They gave!

The giving the outcome of their Gladness.

What was there to make them glad?

They would have said-"Nay, what is there to make us sad?"

IV. The Issue.

i. The Prisoners were listening.

The idea is attentive listening!

The use indicates Pleasure!

ii. The Earthquake, and the subsequent Events.

B. THE CENTRAL VALUE.

1. This is the true normal Christian Experience.

i. The Victory of the Soul over adverse Circumstances.

ii. The Transmutation of all opposing forces into Allies. E.G.

Sorrow worketh repentance.

Tribulation worketh patience.

Affliction worketh weight of glory

II. This Experience is the Outcome of the Knowledge of God.

i. He is seen making all things work together for good.

ii. Therefore the experience is not Stoicism. The Christian soul does not say, 'What can't be cured, must be endured.' It says rather, 'These things must be endured because they are part of the cure.'

iii. The cancellation of bondage to secondary causes, in relationship to the primary and final.

III. Therefore the Experiences which otherwise would depress and lead to despair, become the witness to hope, and the inspiration of song.

"At midnight".

No, better "about midnight".

"A little bird I am,  
Shut from the fields of air;  
And in my cage I sit and sing  
To Him Who placed me there;  
Well pleased a prisoner to be,  
Because, my God, it pleases Thee.

My cage confines me round;  
Abroad I cannot fly;  
But though my wing is closely bound,  
My heart's at liberty.  
My prison walls cannot control  
The flight, the freedom of the soul.

Oh! it is good to soar  
These bolts and bars above,  
To Him Whose purpose I adore,  
Whose providence I love;  
And in Thy mighty will to find  
The joy, the freedom of the mind."

Madame Guyon.

### C. THE PARTICULAR TEACHING.

- I. Men who sing while they suffer, are men who have learned the profound secret that suffering is the method by which joy is perfected.  
"Your sorrow shall be turned into joy"  
Which is much more than being exchanged for joy.
- II. Men who sing in prison are men who cannot be imprisoned.  
Fellowship with God is the Franchise of Eternity.
- III. Men who sing at midnight are citizens of the city which has no night.  
They are children of Light.  
They are stars of the Morning.
- IV. Men who sing when their work is stopped are men whose work is never stopped.  
The prisoners are listening.

### CONCLUSION.

We have so far considered one verse of the Text.

There is another!

I included it for purposes of conclusion.

It tells the story of the Earthquake.

I kept it in, in order to say it doesn't matter.

These men sang before the earthquake.

For many there is no earthquake.

They stay in prison and die!

They sing nevertheless'.

Paul in Rome.

The singing letter to the Philippians.

Paul in Rome.

The singing letter to Timothy.

There is always an earthquake.

Death is the earthquake if there is no  
other.

Then the prison doors open, and the final  
song begins.

"Your harps, ye trembling saints,  
Down from the willows take.  
Loud to the praise of love divine,  
Bid every string awake.

His Grace will to the end  
Stronger and brighter shine;  
Nor present things, nor things to come  
Shall quench the spark Divine.

When we in darkness walk,  
Nor feel the heavenly flame,  
Then is the time to trust our God,  
And rest upon His name.

Blest is the man O God,  
That stays himself on Thee!  
Who wait for Thy salvation, Lord,  
Shall Thy salvation see!"