

Responding to Suffering

read

Acts 16:16-34

think

Paul's day could not have been worse. In the name of Jesus, he commanded a demon to come out of a slave girl, and as a result he and his friend, Silas, were now bloody, sore, and imprisoned in a dark, dank, foul-smelling cell. They could not even find a comfortable position to sleep as a result of their feet in the stocks. We might expect their reaction to be tears, discouragement and anger – anger at those who beat them and anger at God for allowing it all to happen in the first place. Instead, we read that Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God.

It is likely the men did not feel like praising God. However, they chose prayer and praise because they were certain of God's steadfast love, unchanging character and certain promises. The truth about who God is trumped their emotions. Paul and Silas' response to their situation was so unexpected that it caught the attention of those suffering with them. When the earthquake caused the prison doors to open and the prisoners' chains to fall off, the prisoners did not flee to freedom. Instead they stayed.

We know the Lord used this unusual situation to bring the jailer and his household to salvation; perhaps some of those prisoners were saved as well. Paul and Silas' response to suffering brought glory to God and made an eternal difference in the lives of others. Our response to suffering and pain can do the same.

apply

- How do you typically respond to suffering? What specific attributes and promises of God can help you shift your focus from your circumstances to Him?
- What hymn or worship song can you learn, so you can sing during difficult times?
- How is the Lord using your witness as a family to point others to Him during this pandemic?

pray

Lord Jesus, we confess that we do not like to experience suffering and pain. Thank you that you see us in our circumstances and you hear our prayers. Thank you that you promise to be with us during these times and that you promise you will use these situations for our ultimate good and for your glory. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on you. Amen.

by Kathy Kishbaugh

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