**Unstoppable - wk 28 – The Midnight Miracle**

**When everything seems hopeless. Suicide 2020 - 1.2 mill attempts, 46,000 succeed, 130 a day. Today 2 responses to the pressure.**

**Acts is Jesus: The Sequel. Luke Vol 2 – The “what now?”**

**Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**Roughly 20yrs since Jesus. Paul and the team (Luke, Timothy, Silas) are led to Europe by the HS to preach the gospel.**

**(Military town of Philipp - home of Lydia) Acts 16:16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination (Python spirit – Apollos) and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.**

**Demons are fallen angel – and are not omniscient. They are great at reading people and predicting human behavior.**

**17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” 18 And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, (followed, shouted) turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.**

**To have permitted would be considered an accepted alliance – causing confusion. “We are not together. You are led by a false spirit. We don’t want your endorsement.” (1Tim 4:1-2)**

* **Demonic Spirits know the truth**
* **Demonic Spirit are subject to Jesus’ authority**

**(Delivered – great news!) 19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. (don’t mess w/ our money - occult pimps prostituting and benefitting from her darkness) 20 And when they had brought them to the magistrates, (local judges) they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. 21 They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.”**

**P&S looked and sounded Jewish. They were the object of aggression. Assumed they were not Roman Citizens – but Jewish rebel scum. Rome attitude toward non-romans.**

**22 The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them (stripped) and gave orders to beat them with rods. (That escalated) 23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, (Love of money in a person can be more dangerous than demonic possession) they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. (secure) 24 Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

**Conduits for Jesus to deliver a young girl. The reward was to be beat, bloodied, bruised, and chained – now in medical attention.**

**Lessons in the Midnight Hour**

**When you find yourself in the dark of night**

**1. When you do what is right, things won’t always go right - for you.**

**2Ti 3:12 - all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

**If you live the word of God persecution will come. The Word of God contradicts the world and the flesh - culture is driven by feelings.**

**But what about – Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**

**Due season might be when your dead. This is why a primary message of Paul to the churches was to endure – stay faithful.**

**It’s understandable if they got mad at God… but despite all that…**

**Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, (those prisons walls had never heard such a thing.)**

**2. When life is blown off course - praise in the night!**

**When nothing goes right – praise in the night! Pray and Praise God!**

**In their midnight they sand praise and prayers of thanksgiving! Regardless of the circumstance. Praise!**

**Paul and Silas followed the Words of Jesus - Matthew 5:11 “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

**This was not “fighting their battles” or waiting for breakthrough or getting something from God – it was humble praise despite the situation. God has been so generous to us, that is enough. This will pass, we have a greater reward.**

**3. When your life is falling part – the world is watching your reaction.**

**Acts 16:25b …and the prisoners were listening to them,**

**The world is listening and watching you while in your chains**

**What do you do, when you do what is right, and it gets worse?**

**When you are in a place of darkness - middle of a trial, when it’s the midnight hour, what will others hear? Songs in the night or negative attitudes, bitterness, & rage? Deconstruct or fallaway.**

**They were prisoners but were still free! Your situation may be dark – but Jesus is near – there is a joy to be had!**

**Joy of the Lord and gratitude – surpasses our conditions. Only God can do that – bring that.**

**Acts 16:26 …and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.**

**Similar event w/ Peter a several years back – you might expect that this was God’s deliverance, and they would all run out.**

**27 When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.**

**Jailers would pay the debts conviction of escaped prisoners.**

**\*What a different response when the situation seemed hopeless. Without Christ it is hard to see hope…**

**28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.”**

**(They stopped just in time – cut his throat – fall on his dagger)**

**\*\* Another’s salvation is more important than our freedom & comfort. They saw an eternal work worth sacrificing for.**

**They could have run - but the spiritual freedom of this jailer was more important than their physical freedom.**

**The circumstance said run – but love compelled them to stay.**

 **29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. (Broken) 30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (A Christians favorite words to hear)**

**4. When things seem hopeless – there is always hope in Jesus Christ!**

**In your darkest hour there is hope – there is a reason to live. Don’t give up – turn to lover and creator of your soul.**

**Acts 16:31 And they said, “Believe in (pisteuó – have faith in – trust in) the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. (Likely lived on site.)**

**They did not run away – knowing his life would be the price. It was their life and love that brought brokenness and questions.**

**\*\* Our response to trials and our love will get attention but only the Word of God can change a life**

**1 Peter 2:12 – live in such a way as to cause unbelievers around you to glorify God. / 1 Peter 3:15 – always be ready to give an answer to hope that is in you.**

**He wanted what he saw in them! Whatever it was? We should be magnates by our actions – but only their words brought life.**

**Living an honorable life is not enough. We must tell others of the hope of Jesus – otherwise we are just good people.**

**Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.**

**Bloodied and bruised they shared the gospel. To hear of the goodness of God from two physically broken men- spiritually alive.**

**Upon hearing the good news (changed) All were awakened - as they listened, they doctored the wounds – they believed and were baptized that very night – and celebrate rejoice with a meal!**

**From suicide to salvation and abounding joy! And it all started with praise and prayer in the midnight hour.**

**That morning - still in jail - release papers come - Acts 16:35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, “Let those men go.” 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace.”**

**If God planned for them to be released the next day, why an earthquake and released chains. The earthquake was not for Paul – but for the jailer.**

**5. Sometimes God will allow difficult circumstances to lead others to spiritual freedom.**

**Martyred Christians, tragedy, sickness, trials - lead to family and friends seeing how we respond to the hope of Christ. Missionary stories – 911 – tornadoes – tragedy – pandemic.**

**Does a flashlight shine brighter in the daylight or darkness? The same. But when can you see it better? In the darkness. Every reaction shines bright in the world as it grows darker.**

**Seems a like a good ending - everybody goes home. But - there was an injustice and blatant denial of civil rights - Acts 16:37 But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.” 38 The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.**

**As a roman citizen he was standing up for his legal rights.**

**We were attacked, beaten, falsely condemned, and imprisoned without a trial (crime) - now they just want us to walk go away.**

**39 So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out (escorted out of jail) and asked them to leave the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed. (Perhaps introducing the jailer – or telling them about him)**

**They leave on their own terms.**

**\*\* If we have legal rights – stand for them**

**Don’t let yourself get bullied by people who just don’t like you. We are called to be compassionate - not pushovers.**

**Just because you don’t like us, does not mean we can’t be here.**

**We have every right to meet, gather, talk about Jesus – speak up in your classroom, work, govt. \* You have rights – know them.**

**BTW - It was Christian’s awareness that improved prisons.**

**Some countries don’t allow it (we are blessed) Stand for your rights unashamedly. You’re not being difficult.**

**\*\*They pointed out their rights – but did not seek retaliation.**

**They wanted a public apology (no arrests – no punishments)**

**God’s purpose is more important than our rights.**

**Paul played his love card over his rights card. As Jesus did. Every circumstance was an opportunity to love deeper.**

**A New Church in Philippi is started!**

**\*\* A happy single woman Lydia – successful and religious – her heart was gently moved by the Holy Spirit.**

**\*\* A lonely slave demon processed girl – used, abused, and antagonistic young adult – who was confronted by God.**

**\*\* A desperate family man jailer – contemplating suicide, an earthquake and compassion caused him to discover he was loved by Jesus.**

**This new group of disciples launched the church in Philippi. This was the house of God looks like!**

**From there the teams goes to Thessalonica (to return late)**

**V16:40 - switch from “us” to “they” suggest Luke stayed back for a while.**

**Years later Paul writes to this church in Philippi from a cell (Philippians) The letter to the Philippians – theme of joy.**

**Apostle Paul refers to joy sixteen times in only 104 verses.**

**They saw his stripping, beating, and bloodied body and says…**

**Philippians 3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ**

**The letter speaks of hardship, humility, love, and hope beyond suffering, and God's glory. Paul tells the Philippians that even though they face danger – our lives speak of Christs promise.**

**Philippians 2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: (written in stanza form – put on screen in stanza form)**

**6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!**

**9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

**Why was this written in Stanza form? Many scholars believe it is because it was meant to be a song. Remember the praise int the night? What did you sing when you were in prison – what are you singing now? I’ll tell you… We sang about Jesus.**

**Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**

**Most important question in the world - “What must I do to be saved?”**

**Acts 16:30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”31 And they said, “Believe in (have faith in – trust in) the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.**

**\*\* You need to be and must be saved!**

**Paul expounded and gave the gospel of Jesus.**

**The Deity, Death, Resurrection – for the Forgiveness of Sin.**

**A turning from self (repent) and turning to God (confession)**

**You don’t have to feel hopeless - to realize this.**

**He was never to be a last resort – but the start.**

**You can see it now. You need salvation. From your sin – from self. Salvation that is only found in Jesus alone.**