

Real Freedom

Acts 16:16-34

Real freedom is NOT based on surroundings or geographic location; it is not based on an abundance of resources or an overwhelming sense power and prestige. No, real freedom has little to do with the external and everything to do with our attitude in the midst of everyday life.

If we can ever become consistently at peace in whatever situation we face we will find that it will open us up to a wonderful area of ministry that most Christians will never experience. Ministry that grows out of our freedom – a freedom that allows us to be flexible, adaptable, and pliable to whatever life throws at us. It is being prepared for the unexpected and anticipating the unplanned, being open and rarely overwhelmed by life's changes; that is what real freedom looks like, the ministry we engage in as a part of our lifestyle—it is who we are.

I. The Unintentional (Unconscious) Ministry of Paul and Silas

- A. Paul and Silas came to Philippi to perform one kind of ministry, but they ended up performing another.
 - 1. They had come to Philippi to preach the gospel but they ended up in jail. They had come to do good but received only evil in return. They had come to set people free only to have their freedom taken away. In similar fashion, our service for God today does not always result in positive response or personal reward.
 - 2. With their imprisonment came a new, unexpected, unplanned opportunity to minister. In a similar way, our planned ministry can open doors to unplanned ministry. We may set out to do one thing, but God may have something else in mind.

- B. Paul and Silas' response to their undeserved confinement was to worship.
 - 1. Instead of cursing God or crying to him as many a prisoner must have done, they chose to sing to Him songs of praise.
 - 2. We, too, have choices with regard to how we will respond to life's "unfair" blows. We can be broken by them or see the resentment in them, or we can look within them for some new reason to praise God.

- C. Paul and Silas' worshipful response to their undeserved punishment, created an unintentional ministry opportunity.
 - 1. They sang because of their faith, knowing Christ was with them and giving them strength. They sang because they could not help but sing.
 - 2. Though they never dreamed it, they were serving others better than they could have ever planned.

II. Our Unintentional (Unconscious) Ministry

- A. To be sure, the church still needs our conscious, intentional ministry. It needs our planned giving, our planned service, our carefully planned teaching, preaching and singing. After all:
 - 1. Unplanned ministry is often unfruitful ministry.
 - 2. Lack of conscious preparation often results in wasted and misspent resources.

B. Some of our best ministry is unconscious ministry.

1. That which flows from us naturally because of who we have become is sometimes our purest service.
2. Overhearing us can be a greater blessing to people than hearing us. God is able to take our songs at midnight and use them to bless others.

Conclusion

Our finest sermons may be the ones we live, our finest songs the ones we sing at midnight.