



Encouraging Word
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Fr. Christopher Bernabe

“About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God... all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose.” Acts 16:25-26

Do you ever feel down? Put upon? Brushed aside? Are there moments where you feel all alone? Neglected? Abandoned? Are there ever moments when the darkness is so thick that it's suffocating? So heavy that you feel crushed? So cold and steely, manacled hand and foot, that you can hardly move? Imprisoned like there's no hope of escape?

Anyone lacking such a terrible experience is either singularly blessed, lost in denial, or too young to really know life. A shallow Christian bypasses evil circumstances believing their life must be a continual movement from “glory to glory” (2Cor 3:18), a surface-level radiant smile, a continual “Halleluia” shout. Is this really what God expects of his disciples?

What happens to the soul that falls into terrible calamity while practicing all the precepts of true religion? Could this illness, death, ect. really be the result a lack of faith? No and Never. Those who preach a saccharine health and wealth gospel have a severe challenge when they run into the grave misfortunes recorded in Scripture concerning Holy Job, not to mention the lives of contemporary faith-filled believers.

Authentic Christians often run face-first into walls of natural evils through no fault of their own. It's a fallen world. The Devil is the god of this present age (cf. 2Cor 4:4). God sends “rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Mt 5:45) and permits the results of sin to smack the unrighteous as well as the righteous (cf. Job 2:20)?

Life in Christ is often a song of “Suffering of Affliction” (*mahalath leannoth*) like Heman the Ezrahite gives in Psalm 88. The whole Psalm would easily cast a soul into despair, but to demonstrate its sense, how does it end? “All day long [severe personal

evils] surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. You have taken from me friend and neighbor — my one companion is darkness.” Scripture records such emotion because the faithful Christian can be driven to these depths. Be comforted in your struggle faithful soul.

What’s the way forward for the Christian *“in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths”*? Recall Acts 16. Sts. Paul and Silas were brutalized by the crowds of Philippi and thrown into prison for delivering a fortuneteller from demonic oppression. What’s their reward? All this evil. It would have been easy to throw up their hands in despair at the crushing darkness of their predicament. But what did these intrepid apostles do? All night long, they were *“praying and singing hymns”* of praise to God. The result was nothing less than a miraculous liberation from captivity. The other *“prisoners listened”* and were likewise set free.

Why did this simple act break open prison doors and set captives free? *“God inhabits the praises of his people”* (Psalm 22:3); *“Where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom”* (2Cor 3:17). What men design for evil God can orchestrate for the good of those who love him (Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28).

Sts. Paul & Silas were neither pretending to enjoy their wounds nor that the chains and bars failed to bind. They acknowledged their unjust, evil condition. They didn’t know God would work a miracle but believed God would be with them even in the darkest prison. We see this same trust in the life of all saintly men and women – too numerous to recount.

Here's a *“Litany of Trust”* you can sing to God amid your distress. Add a *“Deliver me, Jesus”* after each ellipsis. *“From the belief that I have to earn your love... the fear that I am unlovable... the false security that I have what it takes... the fear that trusting You will leave me more destitute... all suspicion of Your words and promises... the rebellion against childlike dependency on You... refusals and reluctances in accepting Your will... anxiety about the future... resentment or excessive preoccupation with the past... restless self-seeking in the present moment... disbelief in Your love and presence... the fear of being asked to give more than I have... the belief that my life has no meaning or worth... the fear of what love demands... discouragement.”*

Now pray a *“Jesus, I trust in you”* after each ellipsis. *“You are continually holding me, sustaining me, loving me... Your love goes deeper than my sins and failings and transforms me... not knowing what tomorrow brings is an invitation to lean on You... You are with me in my suffering... my suffering, united to Your own, will bear fruit in this life and the next... You will not leave me orphan... You are present in Your Church... Your plan is better than anything else... You always hear me and, in Your goodness, always respond to me... You give me the grace to accept forgiveness and to forgive others... You give me all the strength I need for what is asked... my life is a gift... that You will teach me to trust You... You are my Lord and my God... I am Your beloved one.”* Your Lord has not forsaken you. God love you friends+