

***Shaking Your World with Serious Hope* © 2010 Shelli Prindle**

- While Paul and Silas were in prison – after having been beaten – they prayed and sang praises to God (Acts 16:22-30) Yes, this miracle of inexplicable joy occurs when we think as God desires.
 - Paul tells us later in II Corinthians 4:16-18 how we are to reason in order to have hope despite difficult circumstances.
 - There exists an inverse relationship between the decay of the “outer man” and the renewal of the “inner man.” The second law of thermodynamics simply cannot overcome our sinless, Creator God.
 - Though Paul experienced tremendous trials and suffering, he was able to proclaim the light and temporary nature of earthly trouble. How? Compared to the eternal weight of what God is bringing about, our suffering is infinitesimal.
 - God is so big that He measures all the waters of the earth in the hollow of His hand. He is infinite, able to mark of the heavens by the span. (Isaiah 40:12)
 - Though we may try, there is no way we can comprehend God’s ability to bring about an eternal weight of glory from our trials. As finite creatures, we cannot comprehend the infinite. However, this in no way negates the reality of the glory to come.
 - Peter affirms that our reward is scientifically solid (I Peter 1:4).
 - Paul affirms that we are to fix our eyes on the unseen God and His kingdom (eternal), not on what is visible to us (temporary).
- As Paul and Silas focused on God, the foundations of the prison were shaken and their chains were unfastened (Acts 16:25-26). This is an example of the *intersection of Heaven and earth*.
 - When we call on our God, He reaches down and works in the natural realm. In this case, God literally shook the earth, opened the prison doors, and unfastened chains.
 - We do not know why God chose to wait until this point in time to physically intervene, but we trust in His infinite wisdom (recall the points above).
 - Daniel in the lion’s den demonstrates another example of the intersection of Heaven and earth. God did not remove Daniel or the lions, but He reached in and held the lions’ mouths shut.
 - Philippians 3:20-21 assure us that our citizenship is currently in Heaven. The actual administration of our earthly affairs takes place in a higher realm.

- Paul and Silas continued on to Thessalonica after their imprisonment in Philippi. Their presentation of the Gospel resulted in them being accused of “upsetting the world” (Acts 17:4-7)
 - How truly our world needs upset/shaken! This world system is on a selfish, meaningless, fleeting course. Wrong paradigms have even crept into the church.
 - People may act from an atheistic, materialistic, or pantheistic worldview even though they claim to be Christian. (Examples: mistreatment of a waitress as a form of survival of the fittest, time and affection spent on house and clothes as a form of materialism, and focus on self as a form of pantheism.)
 - This world is broken, and the brokenness is not the way things are supposed to be. We cannot fully wrap our minds around it; hence, the unrest. (Example of fractions in mathematics) Refer to Romans 8:22-23 and II Peter 3.
 - Jesus shakes the puzzle box, dumps out the pieces, and they all come together! He undoes the sin curse and the second law of thermodynamics!
 - Since God is causing all of creation to head toward righteousness (II Peter 3:13), righteousness needs to be our goal in our realm.
 - Jesus truly turns things inside-out. Though when He came the first time to earth, He could find no place in one tiny spot of the world (Luke 2:7); when He comes the second time, He will take over all places! (Revelation 20:11, John 14:2) Jesus will remake by fire this earth and heavens so that things will finally be as they ought to be.
- Paul and Silas were also accused of serving a king other than Caesar, King Jesus. In the first century, this was considered treason. Today, so many things/people press in and try to force our allegiance. Do not give in; there is only one King, Jesus!
 - Remember that evil king Herod tried to eliminate the plan of God in a jealous rage. He ordered the murder of male children two years old and younger in the town of Bethlehem. This same king had his own wife and sons killed. He was very powerful and influential, having built palaces and fortresses.
 - For purposes only God understands, He ordained that Jesus be born into this political situation (Matthew 2:1).
 - As with all evil, Herod had an end. Recall the critical phrase, “But when Herod died” (Matthew 2:19).
 - All selfishness/sin has an end (Revelation 20:2, 10); but right will continue on forever.
- The hope of these Thessalonians is based on the living God.
 - They turned to God from idols. Everyone worships something or someone. It is essential to turn from anything/one other than the one, true God.

- In Psalm 138:1, David recalls that he worships the Lord with his whole heart. He is able to walk right up to any other idol (false god) and sing the praises of the true God.
 - We, too, need to be able to proclaim full praise to God in the midst of surrounding idols.
 - Idols can be people, possessions, addictions, or fears and anxieties.

- The Thessalonians turned to the *living* God. God is a Trinity; He exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This living God is with us in the room. Jesus – the living Word – is alive at the right hand of the Father. The Bible – the written Word – is also living.
 - Hebrews 4:12 affirms the living nature of the Bible.
 - The Word of God and the blood of Jesus Christ are able to penetrate every miniscule crack and crevice of the human heart and mind. He truly understands and has the power to redeem.

- The Thessalonians believed that God raised Jesus from the dead. Given that this letter was written c. A.D. 49, the resurrection of Jesus was an undisputed fact at this point, with living witnesses available. Heresy had not yet had time to creep in.
 - Jesus arose from the dead physically.
 - We need to rise from the dead spiritually and physically.
 - Romans 6:23 makes clear that our sin has rendered us spiritually dead and, therefore, destined for physical death.
 - We can no more bring spiritual life to ourselves any more than we could have caused our physical birth. Only God can make the dead live.
 - As we are dead in sin, Jesus – through His sacrifice and resurrection – gives life back to us.
 - We live spiritually now, and we will rise physically one day!