

Week 07
038/327

Transforming Daily
“... put us out secretly ...”
Acts 16:37

Only Paul would be so steadfast in the face of wrongful acts by the authorities. Paul and Silas were wrongfully beaten and otherwise badly treated in general as well as imprisoned for the cause of Christ. This is the same imprisonment that saw the head jailor come to faith in Christ. When the jail doors opened the first time by an act of God, Paul and Silas remained inside. The jailor was moved by this and many prayers as well as the general witness of Paul and Silas. He fell in a heap of fear thinking he had lost the magistrates prisoners only to find that they hadn't gone anywhere. In result, the jailors guilt transformed into conviction and he and his household were saved and subsequently baptized.

The second time the jail doors opened it was by order of the magistrates. Again, Paul and Silas refused to leave. This time it was on legal principle rather than spiritual discipline that Paul and Silas refused to leave the jail cell. Paul and Silas were dual citizens, both of Hebrew nationality and Roman province. So they were Hebrews as well as Romans.

I have a friend who is both a citizen of the Bahamas and the United States of America. He was born in America to American citizens, but afterwards adopted by his Bahamian family. So he is a dual citizen. Subsequently, when his children were born the oldest was born in the Bahamas and is only a citizen of the Bahamas, but the youngest was born to an American (her father, my friend) in America. So, she too is a dual citizen, like her father, and as I understand it, is entitled to all the rights and privileges of both countries. This was the very point that Paul was making.

The magistrates realized that there was no real advantage to keeping Paul and Silas any longer, so they instructed the jail keeper to release them. Then Paul dropped the bomb shell that they were Roman citizens and had been unjustly treated according to Roman law, and if the magistrates wanted them to leave, they themselves would have to come and release them. Why did Paul do that? Was it simply because he could? Maybe. The text doesn't say, but I think it was to send out a message to the legal reps and religious leaders that Paul and the disciples of Christ weren't just a group of people cowering in the face of the enemy; that what they believed in, or who they believed in, was worth dying for. They weren't fly-by-night, but they were there to stay and to change the world. They had depth, breadth, and substance regarding their cause, and they wanted everyone to know it. What an amazing demonstration of faith, belief, and trust.

What would you do in the face of wrongful legal persecution for your faith? How would you respond to open threats, public humiliation and physical abuse because of the name of Christ? Think carefully and train yourself well because many Christians have and are already experiencing such treatment around the world, and I feel that we are at the threshold of it occurring right here in America. Will you remain steadfast in the face of public persecution or allow those who would to put us out secretly?