

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Paul and Silas had been slandered, beaten, thrown into prison and put in stocks, yet at midnight, they were praying and singing hymns to you! I'm inspired and challenged by their example, for it reminds me that I need to praise you in the bad times as well as the good. I exalt you today as the God who is always worthy of my praise, and I glorify your name! Praise the Lord!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Paul's second missionary journey, and I was fascinated by the way you led Paul and Silas. They wanted to preach the gospel in Asia but you forbade them, and when they attempted to go into Bithynia, your Spirit didn't allow them. Then they saw a vision of a man of Macedonia, yet when they got to Philippi, they met a group of women! This teaches me several important things about your leadership. First, when Paul started his journey, he had no idea he would end up in Corinth. He got there by a series of choices and events in which you guided him one step at a time. This teaches me that you lead me step-by-step, and even if I know the ultimate destination (as the Israelites did when they left Egypt), you often lead me by the path less traveled (cf. Num 9:15–23). Second, Paul didn't panic when you kept him from preaching in Asia. He simply yielded to the guidance of the Spirit and made plans to go into Bithynia. This teaches me that there's nothing wrong with taking the initiative and going in a direction I believe is prudent. If it isn't your will, you are more than capable of shutting the door. I take comfort in this, for it allows me to relax into your guidance and not be fearful that I'm making a mistake. Third, when your Spirit kept Paul from going into Bithynia, he didn't throw up his hands in despair. Instead, he passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. This teaches me to expect course corrections as I follow your leadership. There may be times when I try to go in several different directions and you shut the door on all of them. That may mean that I need to wait for your timing, or it may mean that you want me to meet a Lydia in Philippi! Whatever the case, I can rest in knowing that you will help me reach the right destination. Fourth, Paul no doubt expected to meet the man from his vision, but when he met the women by the river, he didn't allow this to keep him from sharing Jesus. This teaches me to take advantage of every opportunity and manage my expectations about ministry, because I may end up doing something very different than what I thought!

Reflection

The Jews of Berea "were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Is this true of me? Do I welcome your Word with eagerness and spend time each day studying your truth?

Request

Father, I ask that you would help me, like Paul, to think biblically yet speak secularly. When Paul was brought to the Areopagus, he spoke to the Athenians about you in a manner they would understand, even quoting their own poets. Help me to imitate his example and interact with the world in such a way that they are brought into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the good news of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Some will mock this message, but it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes! (Rom 1:16).

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: "Step by Step" – Lizzie DeArmond.

Meditation Verse: Acts 17:30–31.