

Lessons I Learned From Prison

Success can seem like a hard nut to crack. There are times that you give 100% and get zero back.

The Apostle Paul went to Philippi to preach the message of living life in Jesus. While he was there he healed a young slave girl of a tormenting spirit. Only, her owners made big bucks for themselves by passing her off as a fortune teller. Delivered of the spirit, the slave was no longer profitable.

Paul was hauled before the judges, stripped of his clothes and “severely flogged.” (Acts 16:23 NIV). Those two words drip with meaning; don’t read them lightly. Then he was “thrown” into the prison—obviously he was not able to walk. Upon Paul’s arrival, the jailer was given orders to guard him “safely” the King James says. The jailer paid heed to those orders by putting Paul in a cell reserved for the most dangerous criminals in the inner section of the prison, and as an extra precaution, “fastened [his] feet in the stocks.” (Acts 16:24 NIV)

What happened to Paul was below zero.

Maybe this is where you feel like you are in your career, your goals, your life. You are in a prison, limited, restrained, with no obvious way up and out. Circumstances beyond your control hem you in. If only you understood the key, the impetus, to start you on the path to success and move forward.

You’ve listened to all the experts. You’ve taken their advice. You’ve tried their methods. But nothing has worked. Here is where most of us question our purpose, compare ourselves to others, whine and complain, decide to get a different job or drift because the way is hard or... just quit. Maybe we start again, with a different approach and plan made successful by another expert.

Perhaps it is time to listen to Jesus the Way Maker.

Paul believed, not in himself, but in the message he carried. It was true; it was truth, and he knew it could change people’s lives. We can read what he was thinking in his letter to the Philippians. He was praying *for them*. He was thanking God *for them*. Acts 16:25 says that he was also “singing hymns to God.” *To* God. He was praising God, affirming God’s greatness, goodness, mercy, truth, kindness and majesty.

Paul understood an important principle.

When you have done all, stand. (Ephesians 6:10-18) In Hebrews 10:35 he states, “...when you have done the [will of God](#), you will receive what He has promised.”

I encourage you to stand. Jesus said, “Have faith in God.” (Mark 11:22-25) *In* God. Not yourself. Not your method. Actually, Jesus said to have faith many times. Once to a man whose daughter had died. (Mark 5:36) You can’t get more hemmed in than dead. He instructed the man not to fear, to just believe.

Paul acted as if he was not in an inner cell in stocks. He did not act bound at all. He spoke words of success concerning his work, and far from blaming God for his predicament, he trusted God to make his efforts successful. He believed he was going to get out of his chains. (Philippians 1:24-25) And he did.

Paul's words moved God to break the foundation of that prison. God went to the root of the limitation. All the prison doors opened, and all the chains fell off.

Pastor Randy Merren of [Clinton Valley Assembly](#) preached a message on adversity, comparing it to a scenario in football. He asked, as the offense neared the goal line, did the defense's effort get stronger or weaker? Stronger, of course. His point was that the nearer to success, deliverance, healing that we get, the stronger our enemy works against us.

That example has always stuck with me. In real life there may be no goal posts signaling the endzone, but we are to live by faith in God and what He says not by what we can know through our physical senses. We are not to "shrink back" as the Hebrew verses go on to tell us.

To be successful, we must train for adversity by knowing God's will, building our faith by reading His word and trusting in Him. Then we can stay focused, speaking those truths in His word that lift us up and out just like Paul.

Have no idea what God's will is? Click this [link](#) to receive free teachings on knowing God's will and walking in a relationship with Him.