

“When God Intervenes”

Acts 16:22-31

By Kent Crockett

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Have you ever been in a situation where you just needed God to step in and intervene? Maybe you're in that situation right now, where no person can help you. What you need is a supernatural intervention from God Himself.

Years ago, Bible teacher F. B. Meyer was on a ship crossing the Atlantic. He was asked to give a speech to the passengers about how God answers prayer. An agnostic listened to Meyer's message said, “I don't believe a single word that you've said.”

Later the same day, Meyer went to speak to another group of passengers, so the agnostic went to heckle him. Before he went, the agnostic put a couple of oranges in his pocket. On his way he passed an elderly woman who was asleep in her deck chair. Her arms were outstretched and her palms open, so as a joke he put the two oranges in her palms.

After the meeting he saw the elderly woman eating the oranges. He said with a smirk on his face, “You seem to be enjoying those oranges.” She said, “Yes, God is so good.” The agnostic said, “What does God have to do with it?”

“I've been sick for days and I prayed that God would somehow send me an orange,” she answered. “I fell asleep when I was praying and when I woke up, I found two oranges in my hands!”

The agnostic was stunned, realizing it was no accident that Meyer had talked about answered prayer—and that God used him to answer her prayer. (*[If God Knows What I Need, Why Should I Pray?](#)* Hendrickson Publishers 2015, p.177)

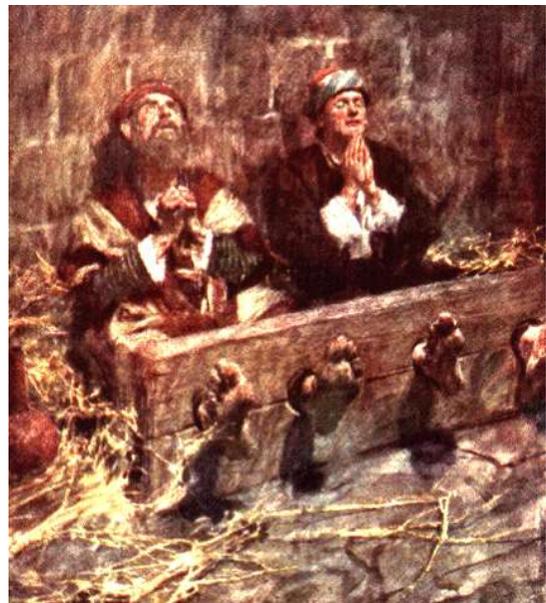
God intervened in her situation. He intervened in Paul and Silas' situation. And He'll intervene in yours as well. Here are six things in Acts 16:22-31 about God's intervention:

1. When God intervenes, it's in response to prayer and praise (16:22-25).

Paul and Silas were in a heap of trouble. They had been beaten and thrown into a maximum security prison, with little hope of getting out. They could have complained, “Lord, we're just trying to do your will and preach your Word, but then you let them beat us and throw us in prison. We're done serving You!”

But they didn't react that way. Instead, they prayed and praised Him.

Prayer is the privilege God gave us to invite Him to intervene in our situation. If you are in a hopeless situation right now, connect with the Creator of the universe through prayer.



Ivan Denisovich was in a Soviet prison. One day he was praying and another prisoner said, "Prayer won't help you get out of here any faster." Ivan answered, "I'm not praying to get out of here. I'm praying to do God's will while I'm in here."

That's why Paul and Silas were praying, "Lord, you must have us in here for a reason. What do you want us to do? Are we supposed to preach to people in here?" (As we will see, that's exactly why they were in there).

The purpose of prayer is not to get our will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. But sometimes we just want to use God to get our prayers answered. We're like the little girl who was scared to walk up the dark stairway. Her mother told her she would overcome her fear if she would ask Jesus walk up the stairs with her. So she did. When she got the top, she said, "Thanks Jesus, you can go now."

We do that with God sometimes. We want Him to answer our prayers and get us out of trouble, but after that we don't want Him around any more. God wants to help us, but He also wants to stick around the rest of the time too.

Paul and Silas **prayed**, but it also says they **praised**. Did you know it takes more faith to praise than it does to pray? Many people pray, but not that many will praise because praising implies victory. When our faith is weak, we can start by praying but we need to move it up a notch and start praising.

These two apostles were in great pain because many blows were inflicted upon them. They were bleeding. They had welts on their arms and backs. Their feet were put in stocks, which kept them from moving to a more comfortable position.

Do you think Paul turned to Silas said, "I'm bleeding all over the place and it makes me feel like singing!" No, they rejoiced because they had faith that God was in control and that He was going to intervene in their situation.

How do you react when you are mistreated? You might have heard about the guy in the hospital that said, "I hate this place. I'm treated like a dog around here."

The nurse said, "No you don't. Now roll over!"

How do you react when you're treated like a dog? What did Paul and Silas do? They praised God! There's power in praise. Praising God in spite of the circumstances can bring divine intervention into our situations.

In 2 Chronicles 20:18-22, King Jehoshaphat sent out people to sing and praise in front of the army. Why did he do that? Because he knew that God wants us to sing and praise before we see the victory. Praise is a statement of faith that God will come through.

2. When God intervenes, it's in His timing (16:25-26).

It was "about midnight" when the earthquake hit. That was God's timing. Have you ever noticed that God's timing usually doesn't match ours? We would have sent an angel to get them out of jail as soon as they got in there.

But God waited until midnight for a reason. Sometimes God seems late because there are other things involved that need to be in place that we don't know about. God waited until midnight because that's when this prison guard was on duty. He was one of the main reasons they were there.

In 1988, Larry Johnson from New York City said that he mailed a check for \$1,000 to his father in South Carolina. His father said he didn't receive it. One year passed, then two years. His son insisted that he sent it. Four years passed and then finally ten years went by when he opened his mailbox. There was the letter postmarked September 26, 1988, with the \$1,000 check enclosed. It had arrived ten years after it was mailed.

His father said, "I kept telling him, I don't have it and he kept telling me that he had sent it. It was hard to believe that he had sent it, but then I knew he wouldn't lie to me." Sometimes when we pray God sends the answer, but it doesn't show up until much later. We must continue to trust His promises.

3. When God intervenes, He shakes things up (16:26).

Acts 16:26 says, "and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken" When God intervenes, He shakes us up to jolt us out of our comfort zones.

We naturally want to stay inside our comfort zone where it's safe. One boy told his father, "Dad, I wouldn't mind going to war and being a hero, if I knew I wouldn't get hurt!"

The fear of getting hurt keeps lots of us imprisoned in our comfort zones. And that's why God has to send earthquakes—to shake things up. We've got to get out of the nest if we're going to fly.

A little baby eagle is safe in its nest. But there comes a time when the momma bird starts making the nest uncomfortable. She's getting the baby ready to leave the nest. She picks up the eaglet, soars into the sky, and drops it.

The little bird goes into a free fall screaming Nooooooo. But then momma eagle swoops down and catches it. She will keep doing this until the eaglet learns to flap its wings and fly.

Sometimes God will kick us out of our nests and shake our foundations. He does it because He wants to move us out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary.

4. When God intervenes, He opens doors (16:26).

". . .the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened." Everyone in that prison had the opportunity to walk through those doors.

When God intervenes, He opens doors. The doors opened as a result of their prayers and praise. But some people never give God credit for answering their prayers and opening doors.

An atheist told a Christian, "You've got it all wrong about this God stuff. He doesn't exist."

The Christian asked, "Why do you say that?"

The atheist said, "Well, once I was ice fishing in the Artic, far from the nearest village, when a blizzard hit and I couldn't see a thing. So I got down on my knees and prayed, 'God, I know that I've always denied your existence, but now I'm not sure. If you're real . . . if you really do exist, please help me get out of here!'"

The Christian asked, "Well, didn't He help you get out?"

“Heck no, God didn’t lift a finger! Some Eskimo appeared out of nowhere and showed me the way.” (*If God Knows What I Need, Why Should I Pray?* Hendrickson Publishers 2015, p.45)

When God intervenes and opens doors, don’t forget to give Him the credit.

5. When God intervenes, He makes chains fall off (16:26)

“And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.” This wasn’t an ordinary earthquake. Natural earthquakes don’t unlock chains. In a natural earthquake, walls fall down and people get hurt. But in a supernatural earthquake, God opens prison doors and makes chains fall off. This is a picture of spiritual prison and spiritual chains.

Call this a “chain reaction” to their praising. When we start praising God, the chains react by falling off. It wasn’t until after they praised God that He opened the doors and made the chains fall off.

What chains are you wearing? Are you wearing the chains of depression? Start praising! The chains of fear? Start praising! The chains of worry? Start praising and watch the chains fall off!

Do you think God would have unfastened their chains if they had complained instead of praised? I don’t think so.

6. When God intervenes, people will get saved (16:29-31)

Notice that God didn’t send the earthquake just to get Paul and Silas out of jail. He sent the earthquake to get the jailer into heaven.

God created the opportunity to present the gospel to the jailer, but it was the jailer’s decision to accept Christ. And it’s your decision too.

The Gold Rush of 1849 had people from all over the world rushing to California to find gold. It all started when James Marshall discovered gold at Sutter’s Creek. You would think that the man responsible for starting that gold craze would have been one of the riches men in California. Instead, he died broke in the late 1880’s.

How could that be? Because even though he discovered all that gold, it was never his because he forgot to stake his own claim.

Many people have been presented the opportunity to know Jesus and the eternal life that He offers, but they’ve never staked their claim. This jailer staked his claim. [Have you?](#)

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