

Week 11 Day 7 | *New Testament Heroes: Silas*

Silas, like Joseph and Job, is another unsung hero in the Bible. People such as Moses, David, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul seem to get all the glory, while lesser-mentioned greats like Silas fly under the radar. Yet their faith is equally impressive. If we study them and give them the attention they deserve, we see that their example can be equally influential.

A Jew with Roman citizenship (and the Roman name of “Silvanus”), Silas is described by Luke as one of the leaders of the believers in the church (Acts 15:22). Silas was also a prophet whose preaching did a great deal to encourage and strengthen the faith of the church (Acts 15:32). If you can count the quality of a man by the company he keeps, Silas was of the highest quality. Not only was he a scribe for Peter, Silas was surrounded by other “prominent” believers (Acts 17:4). However, he’s probably most well known for being Paul’s partner on his second missionary journey.

This is where Silas starts to feel like Scottie Pippen to Paul’s Michael Jordan, or Robin to Paul’s Batman. Paul gets the limelight, but Silas is with him nearly every step along the way. Silas preached with Paul in Berea (Acts 17:10) and Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:19). However, it was their time together in Philippi that best reveals Silas’ character.

In Acts 16, Silas and Paul were unjustly dragged out into the public square after Paul healed a girl of her demon possession. Once in front of the authorities, they were lied about, stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison. While their feet were clamped in stocks, they sat disgraced and in pain under the watch of a jailer.

What would you do in this situation? Cry? Cuss? Complain? All of the above? I’m not sure what I would’ve done, but I’m pretty sure it wouldn’t have been what Silas and Paul did:

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”—Acts 16:25 (NIV)

Say what? You free a girl from an evil spirit, you’re chastened, chained and beaten for it, and you respond with worship? You praise Jesus, for whose sake you were thrown in jail in the first place? You point back to Jesus?

You see, Silas and Paul’s circumstances didn’t *change* their beliefs; they *revealed* them. You don’t see Silas blaming Paul: “Look at what you’ve gotten me into!” They didn’t question, challenge, or complain about God’s plan. Instead, they trusted that God would stay true to God’s character. Lo and behold, in the very next verse, God delivers.

An earthquake shook, prison doors flew open and prison chains fell off. When the jailer saw what had happened, he figured the prisoners had escaped. So, he drew his sword to kill himself, knowing he’d be executed for it anyway. Paul shouted to stop the jailer, as no prisoner had escaped. Then, the trembling jailer asked Silas and Paul what he needed to do to be saved. Once again, Silas and Paul used their circumstances to advance the gospel. They used their situation to point back to Jesus:

“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.”—Acts 16:32 (NIV)

Silas and Paul remained faithful, in spite of their circumstances. God, in His glorious faithfulness, then used them to bring the jailer and his family into His fold (Acts 16:33–34).

Now, just for a second, let’s say there was no earthquake—the chains never fell off, the doors never opened, and Silas and Paul died in prison. Would this sully or tarnish God’s character? Would the Lord be any less faithful if He

had not set Silas and Paul free? Of course not. The goodness of God’s character lies not in what He does or allows, but in who He is.

If we confuse the two, it becomes a “what have you done for me lately” relationship . . . loving with conditional love. Silas and Paul knew the difference, even though they did not know the future. They humbly demonstrated their faith through their praying and singing following their incarceration, always pointing back to Jesus.

We, too, would be wise to remain faithful in all things, regardless of our circumstances. “All things” includes our fitness. We want to be praying and praising, whether or not we see results. That way, whether God sends an earthquake or not, we can be found faithful. Whether we break through a new plateau or get hit with another setback, we’re assured that we’re honoring God with our heart.

Our heart is always our first priority. After that, we can trust God with the rest. What God did with “the rest” of Silas and Paul’s time in Philippi didn’t end with the jailer:

“After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.”—Acts 16:40 (NIV)

It’s just like God to use the situation for one more piece of good. He allowed Silas and Paul to “encourage” the believers, pointing back to Jesus once again.

“Then they left.” Just like that, they’re gone from Philippi. It kind of fits Silas’ personality, if you think about it. There for a moment . . . then gone—quietly weaving his way in and out of the New Testament, maintaining his humility and tenacity and integrity.

Silas was content being used by God however, wherever, and whenever God needed Him, regardless of the outcome. Oh, to have my life characterized in the same light . . . ever pointing back to Jesus.

Are you content with how God is using you for His purposes? Have you considered that He may have a plan for even your fitness, whether it’s going strong or not? God used Silas’ situations, whether favorable or not, for God’s glory. He can do the same for you.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Silas and for his example to remain faithful in all situations. Will You please forgive me when I let my circumstances dictate my response? Please develop in me a heartfelt and steadfast obedience. Amen.

Meditation

I will praise You . . . no matter what.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Pick a meal to fast from for the day. The hunger you feel is a reminder to be praying for a fully surrendered life. As you pray throughout the day, be sure to ask God what He’d like you to learn from this exercise. We don’t just pray. We pray and we listen.