Bound and Determined

“The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose.”

Acts 16:22-26

The Bible is filled with historical accounts of God’s saving grace. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are shackled and confined to prison after being stripped and flogged publicly. Understandably, it would be easy for them to give up and give in – to resign to the inevitable, death. Maybe they would send up one more silent prayer asking God, “Why me” or begging, “Save me.”

Who would expect the miracle that transpired? Paul and Silas began singing and offering praises to God. There was no selfish muttered prayer formed out of fear as I would anticipate. They raised their voices for all to hear out of true faith and love for a righteous God. Their act of faith and courage during a painful and dark time set an example for others. I think of the other prisoners who heard the prayers and praise receiving encouragement when circumstances were so grim.

Paul and Silas were literally bound yet determined to continue following and praising their Lord sharing the good news with others. Paul and Silas were believers and followers, but they were not fortune tellers. They had no way of knowing their offering during the dimmest part of their lives would break their chains.

Acts 16:27-29 continues with more of their story:

“The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

At this point, the prisoners could have made a run for it, never to be seen again. But they didn’t. They stayed to show the skeptical guard the miracle in action. They were
bound and determined to believe no matter the circumstances and share the love of God even up to death if required.

Today, are you bound? In this life, you and I may never experience the treatment of Paul and Silas or know the feeling and fear of the stocks restricting movement. But we are all bound by something. Imprisoned by our own thoughts. Restricted or constricted by our circumstances. Handcuffed by the actions of others.

Bound … we are all bound by something to varying degrees and at various times.

Today, are you determined? In our human condition, we can be determined to fix everything for ourselves which rarely works. When I try to fix things on my own, I generally make situations worse instead of better. Only God knows what is ahead and what we need. Only God can release us from our chains.

Determined … Be determined to raise your voice in praise and prayer. Call on God. Focus on His peace in all circumstances. The Earth may not shake or doors swing wide but you will feel it when it happens … the chains falling and the bars removed.

Use your dimmest days like Paul and Silas. Share your experiences and the miracles of your life to positively impact others.

Be bound and determined to praise your Savior all the days of your life.

Dear Lord,

Thank you for releasing me from things that bind me and keep me imprisoned. I will lift my voice to you in prayer and praise so others may know what you have done for me.

Amen.