

## Hide It Under A Bushel? No!

The book of Acts is a book of conversions. It is the historical record of the apostles fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ, “go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15). They did so in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and in the uttermost parts of the world. They did so with great success.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were on the Second Missionary Journey and came to Troas. There, Paul received a vision in the night of a man who said, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). They set course immediately. While in Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia, they taught and baptized Lydia and her household. This initial success was quickly countered with an altercation with the local law enforcement. Though Paul and Silas were put in jail, they were not set free from their responsibility to preach the gospel of Christ.

Jesus said to “let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Everyone has a light, one that is not meant for hiding but shining. Never is this more clearly seen than through Paul and Silas’ behavior in their dark prison cell.

What can we learn from their shining example?

**Your will face many temptations to turn your off your light.** Paul and Silas had every right to be discouraged. Their robes torn off of them, they were beaten with rods with “many blows,” thrown into the inner prison, the most secure cell, and their feet fastened in stocks (Acts 16:22-24). This was a device used to spread the legs as far apart as possible, to ensure cramps and discomfort. What was their reaction in all of this? Did they grumble and complain? Did they threaten to quit or surrender? “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God” (Acts 16:25). Their candles were literally burning the midnight oil.

The darkest times are when you must shine even brighter. Your attitude reveals a great deal about your character. Christians ought to be people who respond differently to tragedy and calamity than the rest of the world. We see the bigger picture. We know God is still in control. We believe He has the power to work everything together for good.

Paul and Silas were singing “hymns of praise” in prison. It’s as if they were thanking God for the privilege of persecution. When disaster strikes, don’t look for the “off” switch. Press “on.”

**You never know who can see your light.** The Lord was not the only one hearing their prayers and songs. “And the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25). The sounds in their cell were as important as the words of their sermons on the streets. Remember, Paul and Silas had received a vision to go to Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to go preach the gospel there. And they were not about to quit preaching. Even in jail, they saw an opportunity to turn these prisoners into bond-servants of Jesus Christ.

People are watching you, too. In your neighborhood, in your classes, on your team, at your work. They notice that you are different. They don’t hear the same words coming out of your mouth that they hear from other people. They don’t see you going the same places and participating in the same activities as those in the world. Or do they...?

God has called all of us to preach. Not just with our words but with our example, how we live our lives. The purpose of letting your light shine is so men will “see your good works and glorify your Father” (Matt. 5:16). They’ve already seen plenty of bad ones. Give them something good to watch. Let them see Him who is source of light.

**You can’t be a light without sending the light.** Souls were saved the night Paul and Silas shone. After the earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison, the jailer awoke to find all the doors opened. When he learned that none of the prisoners had escaped, he ran and fell before the feet of Paul and Silas and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” (Acts 16:30)? The jailer must have been listening to their songs and prayers along with the prisoners. He went to them with a question he knew they could answer. He could see that they were living the kind of life they were preaching about.

You have souls to rescue, souls to save. Make sure that people know where to find you. If they can make no distinction between you and the rest of the world enslaved to sin, what reason would they have to ask you about salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)? And make certain you’re prepared for the opportunity. Paul and Silas “spoke the word of the Lord to him” that night (Acts 16:32). How much would their flame had been extinguished had they not been able to answer his question of eternal life?

There are some people whom you alone can reach. Be sure to leave the light on for them.

The same jailer who had fastened the feet of Paul and Silas in the stocks was baptized and set free from the bondage of sin. Think about him the next time you are tempted to hide your light under a bushel.