

Prayer of the week

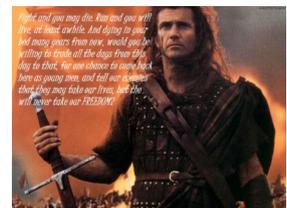
Scripture Reading: Acts 16 22-31

Beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises at midnight, when an earthquake shook the prison so hard that doors flew open and chains loosened. The jailer, assuming the prisoners would have escaped, prepared to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him not to harm himself as all the prisoners were still there. That night, the jailer came into a relationship with God.

If there is one theme that is laced throughout the scriptures that still dominates much of life today it is the issue of freedom in all its forms: physical liberty; freedom of religion, of speech, of travel; freedom to vote, to congregate, to protest ; freedom from fear, danger and abuse - to mention just a few.

The pandemic resulted in severe restrictions to our physical liberty and to our rights to carry out many aspects of our previous ordinary lives. Now that we are mostly 'free' does life 'ping' back to normal?

In the 1995 film Braveheart, there is a scene where William Wallace rides out to address his rag tag army who were facing a much larger English force. He challenges his countrymen, saying 'You have come to fight as free men, and free men you are. What will you do with that freedom?.....



Today, that question is a challenge for each of us. Will we simply reclaim the patterns of our lives? Will we adjust our priorities? Will we live full lives or be limited by self-restriction?

We do know from scripture that freedom doesn't mean licence to do what we want without considering the effect on others.

Why did Paul and Silas not simply walk out of the open jail? Surely, it was because they knew how harshly the jailer and his family would have been treated. Their concern for him transformed the man's life. But Paul and Silas did not stay imprisoned indefinitely, nor did they remain in fear of the dangers that had put them there. Officially freed the next morning, they went on with their ministry.

Today, we too will continue to face choices, between: reclaiming former freedoms while being vigilant about possible effects on others or accepting a permanently constrained existence in pursuit of security.

PRAYER

Father we thank you that in your Son, Jesus, we are free indeed and we mindful that He came to earth, lived, died and rose again so that we might have life in all its fullness.

As we take up the reins of our lives again, we pray for guidance in our decisions about how we use the freedoms we once took for granted.

We bring before you the people of Afghanistan experiencing a devastating destruction of their security, basic rights and freedoms. We pray for wisdom for peacemakers.

We pray for aid and support to arrive quickly to the people of Haiti who have lost family, friends, homes and basic provisions in the recent earthquake.

Bless and strengthen all who are rescuing , protecting and treating those in difficulty.

In Jesus, name. Amen

My chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose went forth and followed Thee. *Charles Wesley*