

SPIRITUAL SHOCK ABSORBERS

(Acts 16:16-34)

Intro: When I was younger.

-Maybe:

#30.

#40.

#50.

*Years ago.

-I played a lot of:

#Baseball.

#Softball.

*Little League.

*Bigger Major League.

+It was called.

*Church League.

*City League.

*Tournaments.

-I played almost every position.

#Over the years.

#Except for catcher.

-My favorite position was center field.

#I loved to run.

#I was fast.

*But outfielders need to learn to run in such a way.

+Their eyeballs don't bounce up and down.

=When they're honing in on a line drive.

+Have you ever experienced that?

=Ball is flying in an arc.

-But it looks like it's bouncing all over the place.

=What's bouncing.

-Not the ball.

-But your eyeballs.

*When you can't get your eyeballs to stop bouncing up and down.

+It's time to retire.

Maybe that's how we experience life.

-If not all the time.

-Some of the time.

#We'd like it to be smooth.

#But instead it keeps bouncing up and down.

*School.

*Work.

*Health.

*Finances.

*Relationships.

When life is bouncing all over the place.

-Our faith can be bouncing, too.

How do we stay focused?

-When life keeps bouncing up and down.

Where do we find a spiritual shock absorber?

-To smooth out the ride.

Prayer of the Day.

-Make us love what you command and desire what you promise,
That, amid all the changes of this world,
Our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found,
Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. Paul And Silas Had A Bumpy Ride.

A. They Were In Philippi.

1. At first things went smoothly.

a. They went to a place of prayer.

-On the Sabbath day.

b. They preached the Gospel to a gathering of women.

-By the river.

c. God opened the heart of Lydia.

-She believed.

-She was baptized.

d. That was last week's reading.

-Acts 16:9-15.

2. But then things started to get bumpy.

a. There was a slave girl.

-With a spirit of divination.

-Who made money for her owners.

#By fortune-telling.

- b. She followed Paul and his companions around.
 - Crying out with a loud voice:
 - # "These men are slaves of the Most High God,"
 - # "Who proclaim to you a way of salvation."
 - * Acts 16: 17.
 - What was the harm in that?
 - # What she said was true.
 - # It was free PR.
 - But this started to annoy Paul.
 - # Day after day.
 - Until one day he had had enough.
 - # He said to the spirit:
 - * "In the name of Jesus Christ,"
 - * "I order you to come out of her."
 - + And it did.
 - + Right away.
- c. Another success story, right?
 - Not exactly.
 - # No good deed goes unpunished.
 - Slave girl's owners were none too happy.
 - # Dragged Paul and Silas:
 - * Into the city square.
 - * To the courthouse steps.
 - # Demanded their pound of flesh.
 - * In the form of:
 - + Public humiliation.
 - + Severe whipping.
 - + Imprisonment.
 - = In jail.
 - = In the hole.
 - = In belly chains.
- d. I can well imagine.
 - Paul and Silas' eyeballs starting to bounce.

B. But Paul And Silas Had A Spiritual Shock Absorber.

1. What would you do?
 - a. If you had done a good deed.
 - b. If you had been publicly humiliated for it.
 - c. If you had been unjustly deprived of your freedom.

2. I'll tell you what many folks would be doing:
 - a. Calling their lawyer.
 - b. Trying to post bond.
 - c. Preparing to file a lawsuit for:
 - False arrest.
 - Wrongful imprisonment.
3. What did Paul and Silas do?
 - a. They stayed focused.
 - b. They were:
 - Singing.
 - Praying.
 - Praising the Lord.
 - c. That was their ministry.
 - Out of jail.
 - #In jail.
 - When things were going smoothly.
 - #When their eyeballs were starting to bounce.
4. Their eyeballs were about to bounce some more.
 - a. There was an earthquake.
 - Jail doors swung open.
 - Their chains fell off.
 - b. What would you do?
 - Feel your prayers had been answered.
 - Make a run for it.
 - #Eyeballs bouncing.
 - *Or not.
 - c. What did Paul and Silas do?
 - They stayed put.
 - They stayed focused.
 - #They had a message to share.
 - *Out of jail.
 - +In jail.
 - *With the other prisoners.
 - +With the jailer.
5. Paul and Silas had a spiritual shock absorber.
 - a. To keep them focused.
 - When everyone else's eyeballs.
 - #May have been bouncing all over the room.
 - b. Prayer of the Day.
 - Make us love what you command and desire what you promise,
That, amid all the changes of this world,
Our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found,
Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- +St. Augustine already had a jail.
 - =Downtown.
 - =Across the street.
 - From one of Henry Flagler's hotels.
- +He offered to build the city a new jail.
 - =On the outskirts of town.
 - Away from his hotels.
 - =In exchange for the old jail property.
- +Jail that Henry Flagler built.
 - =Pink stucco.
 - =Had two stories.
 - Bottom floor for women.
 - Top floor for men.
 - =Had two sides.
 - One for prisoners.
 - Other for:
 - #Sheriff.
 - #His family.

-That's how the jail in Philippi was.

#Maybe not pink stucco.

*What I saw in 1995 was more like:

+Dungeon.

+Hole in the ground.

#But it had:

*Cell space for prisoners.

*Living space for:

+Jailer.

+His family.

4. Philippian jailer was sound asleep.
 - a. When his eyeballs began to bounce.
 - b. There was an earthquake.
 - He woke up.
 - Saw the jail doors standing open.
 - Assumed the prisoners had all escaped.
 - Believed he was responsible.
 - Was going to kill himself.
 - c. He believed his choices were:
 - Suicide.
 - Execution.

- d. When Peter was in prison.
 - In Jerusalem.
 - #Acts 12:1-19.
 - An angel of the Lord sprang him loose.
 - #In the middle of the night.
 - #From under the noses of 16 guards.
 - Next morning.
 - #When Peter could not be found.
 - #Herod had all of the guards executed.
 - *Acts 12:19.
- 5. I can well imagine the eyeballs of the Philippian jailer starting to bounce.
 - a. Sword in hand.
 - Ready to kill himself.
 - b. When Paul cried out:
 - “Don’t harm yourself.”
 - “We’re all here.”
 - #Acts 16:28.
 - c. Jailer’s eyeballs must have still been bouncing.
 - When he:
 - #Called for lights.
 - #Rushed to the cell of:
 - *Paul.
 - *Silas.
 - #Brought them out.
 - When he asked:
 - #“What must I do to be saved?”
 - *Acts 16:30.
 - #Saved from what?
 - *Earthquake aftershocks.
 - *Suicide.
 - *Execution.
 - *God who could:
 - +Free Paul and Silas from their jail cell.
 - +Free Jesus from his tomb.
 - +Free the jailer from his sin.

6. Paul and Silas provided the jailer with a spiritual shock absorber.
 - a. Word of the Lord.
 - b. Waters of Holy Baptism.
 - c. Gift of faith.
 - d. Promise of salvation.
 - To keep his eyeballs:
 - #From bouncing all over the place.
 - #Focused on God.
 - *Who can open jail cells.
 - *Who can open troubled hearts.
 - +To believe.
 - +To be calmed.
 - +To be saved.

B. God Gives Us The Same Spiritual Shock Absorbers.

1. When our quiet world gets shaken by:
 - a. Disappointment.
 - b. Conflict.
 - c. Betrayal.
 - d. Guilt.
 - e. Despair.
2. When our eyeballs are bouncing up and down because of:
 - a. Battered bodies.
 - b. Muddled minds.
 - c. Fragile finances.
 - d. Rocky relationships.
 - e. Heavy hearts.
3. God provides spiritual shock absorbers.
 - a. Water and word.
 - b. Bread and wine.
 - c. Faith and forgiveness.
 - d. Healing and hope.

Concl: Make us love what you command and desire what you promise,
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 Our hearts may be fixed where true joy is found,
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