



Acts 16:25-34

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

26 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.

27 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.

28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.

30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.

34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

Special Music - Even If - Mercy Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6fA35Ved-Y>

I found this story in a collection of stories by Brent Esplin entitled
[5 Inspiring Stories of People Who Value Integrity More Than Money](#)

In May of 2005 American professional tennis player Andy Roddick was playing Fernando Verdasco, of Spain, in the round of 16 at the Italia Masters tennis tournament in Rome, Italy. Roddick was the number one seed in the tournament and a heavy favorite to win the match and advance.

Roddick, one of the top players in the world, was at the top of his game. Indeed, just one month later he would make it to the finals at Wimbledon before losing to Roger Federer.

Roddick dominated as expected and had triple match point when something extremely unusual happened. Roddick couldn't return Verdasco's hard second serve but the linesman called the serve out and awarded Roddick the point and the match.

With the crowd cheering Verdasco ran to the net to shake Roddick's hand and congratulate him on his victory. However, Roddick knew something that the linesman, the umpire, the cheering crowd, and Verdasco himself didn't know. The serve had not been out, but had hit on the line, making it in.

Roddick could have kept this information to himself and accepted the victory. Indeed, honor calls are not expected in tennis. Instead he informed the umpire that the ball had been in and offered to show him the mark on the clay

where the ball had hit to prove his point. The umpire reversed the call and awarded the point to Verdasco.

Having been given a second chance Verdasco made the most of it. He came back to win the game, the set, and the match giving him a highly improbable victory, especially considering not long before he had been standing at the net ready to concede.

Sportswriter Frank DeFord estimates Roddick's honesty cost him at least "tens of thousands of dollars;" perhaps much more if he had gone on to win the tournament. Integrity was clearly more important to Roddick than either winning or money. Andy Roddick lost a tennis match that day but won something much more important, and in the process set a great example of sportsmanship for competitors everywhere.

Just to set the stage for today's passage

- 1. Paul and Silas are on the Second Missionary Journey. (Remember that Paul took Silas with him because of his disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark)**
- 2. They travel to several cities, visiting churches that Paul helped to establish on the First Missionary Journey**
- 3. They land at the port in Philippi**
 - a. Philippi was a mixed community of Romans, Greeks, and miscellaneous foreigners.**
 - b. It was a city of radically mixed cultures where many gods were worshipped.**
 - c. Not long before the incident we are going to talk about, Lydia had been converted when Paul was speaking to the women along the river.**
 - d. When Luke talks about Paul and Silas on their way to a place of prayer, it leads us to believe that there probably weren't enough Jews in Philippi to support a synagogue.**
- 4. Paul and Silas are in Philippi and on their way to the place of prayer**
 - a. Along the way they are met by a slave woman possessed by a spirit that allowed her to predict the future.**
 - b. She started following Paul and his group around and shouting "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."**

- c. She did this for days
- d. Paul loses his patience with her and commands the spirit to come out of her.
- e. Her owners are none to happy with Paul because they were now going to lose a lot of money since the woman could no longer predict the future.
- f. The owners don't complain to the authorities about the money they will be losing, but instead tell the officials that **"These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."**
- g. The crowd joins in with the accusations and it becomes pretty much a riot situation, so Paul and company are stripped beaten and thrown into prison with their feet in stocks. The guard is told to guard them very carefully.
- h. This is where they are when today's passage occurs

5. And as our story goes

- a. Paul and Silas are singing hymns at midnight
- b. There is a violent earthquake
 - i. The foundations of the prison are shaken
 - ii. The prison doors fly open
 - iii. Everyone's chains come loose
- c. The jailer wakes up and sees all the prison door are open and assumes that the prisoners have all escaped and he knows that

his superiors will have his head on a platter. So, he takes out his sword to kill himself rather than face their wrath.

d. But Paul is aware of what is about to happen and shouts out to the guard **“Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”**

e. The jailer’s response is amazing as well.

i. He is so astonished that Paul and the other prisoners did not try to escape that he asks Paul how he can be saved.

ii. Paul explains to him, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”**

iii. Then the jailer took them, cleaned them up, dressed their wounds, had everyone in his house baptized, and then fed Paul, Silas and the other prisoners.

6. The salvation and baptism of the jailer and his family is truly a wonderful event in this story, but our message is about integrity.

a. I want you to imagine yourself being in a dingy jail in a town that is not friendly towards you, chained up after having been stripped and beaten over trumped up charges.

b. And suddenly, you have the opportunity to escape. No one would be the wiser.

c. And while it is true that the jailer would probably be held responsible for your escape, what is the jailer to you except as the man who chained you up and was put there to ensure you did not escape. Certainly, you don’t owe him anything.

- d. While you may consider the words of Jesus, **“If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”** You are probably thinking that this jailer isn’t wanting to slap us around a little. He is going to want to lock us back up. Surely this earthquake was sent by God to free us so why shouldn’t we escape? After all, both Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and had been locked up without a true hearing.
7. Why do Paul and Silas stick around? Why did Andy Roddick tell the umpire that the tennis serve from Fernando Verdasco was indeed “in” when everyone else said that it was “out”, even though he had so much to lose? Why do we bother to do the “right thing” when there is a chance that no one will know the difference or that doing the right thing will end up costing us a great deal?
- a. Such is the nature of integrity. Doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do, even if no one else knows that it is the right thing or that it proves to be costly to us and our families.
 - b. Just because an overwhelming number of people think something is right does not necessarily make it right. Just because an overwhelming number of people think something is wrong does not necessarily make it wrong.
 - c. Can we, as Christians, be counted upon to do the right thing even when everyone around us tells us it is the wrong thing.

d. We have people that constantly speak into our lives, even when we don't ask for advice.

- i. Don't give him money. He'll just spend it on booze or drugs.**
- ii. Don't buy her groceries. She's on food stamps and drives a Cadillac.**
- iii. Don't give him a job. He's a bum and will steal from you.**
- iv. Don't encourage her. She's got a mouth like a sailor and never attends church.**
- v. The government makes it so easy to cheat on our taxes.**
- vi. I don't have the money pay for it right now so I will just borrow it and pay for it later.**
- vii. Just run away. No one will ever know and you will be free!**
- viii. Don't tell the line judge that it was a bad call because it will come back to bite you.**

8. In Matthew 6, Jesus says:

1 "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2 "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be

honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

9. When we are faced with rules, regulations, and judgemental attitudes that challenge our ethics and belief system, who are we truly accountable to?

- a. First, we are accountable to God. God gifted us with the Holy Spirit for a reason and the Holy Spirit will help guide us towards decisions and actions that are favored by God if we will only listen to our hearts. But also remember that God may use the Holy Spirit to guide others to completely different decisions. We are accountable for our response to the Holy Spirit in our lives. We are not responsible for how others respond to the Holy Spirit nor are we to sit in judgement of how the Spirit leads them.**
- b. Second, we are accountable to ourselves. We must hold ourselves to a higher standard as exemplified by our Savior Jesus Christ. Sometimes, we will fail. But we should rise each morning saying I want to be more like Jesus today than I was yesterday.**

- c. **Lastly, we are accountable to those around us, not by them speaking into us, but by being an example that will shine the light of Christ into lives that we touch. Are they able to experience the love and grace of Jesus through us?**

10. How does God bless our integrity?

- a. **Because of his integrity, Paul was able to lead the jailer and all of the jailer's family to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.**
- b. **Because of his integrity, Andy Roddick set the bar high in his field for responsible sportsmanship and gained the respect of everyone in the sports industry.**
- c. **Because Jesus committed to completing what He had started, He was able to provide a relationship with the living God to every human being on this planet through His blood and sacrifice.**

Let us each rise each day and proclaim that "Today, today, I am going to strive to be more like Jesus than I was yesterday. Let me be Christ's hand and feet in this world. Let me be clay in the hands of my master. Let me see people as Jesus sees people. Let me strive to make a difference."

AMEN