

TRANSFORMED! PT6- Transformation for Everyone

Scripture used: Acts 16:11-33 (NIV)

OVERVIEW

This week's message is part six in our series and drives home the truth that transformation is not only for some people, but for everyone. To make this point, we read a passage in the book of Acts that followed Paul and Silas through Philippi to three separate encounters they had while preaching the Gospel. The first encounter was with a Gentile named Lydia, a wealthy businesswoman who believed in God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. Like the Jews, she had religion but not an intimate relationship with God. She overheard Paul's message and the Lord opened her heart. The second encounter was with a slave girl who was oppressed by both her masters and a demonic spirit, and her deliverance came through the power of the Holy Spirit. The third and final encounter was with the jailer of the prison Paul and Silas were in after being beaten and flogged. In their time of suffering, they chose to sing and praise God in earshot of both the jailer and other prisoners. When a violent earthquake released the prisoners' chains, the jailer was about to take his own life for failing his duty, but stopped when Paul assured him that none of the prisoners would leave. Upon witnessing joy in the midst of suffering and prisoners who chose to stay in their cells to save spare his life, he experienced God's radical grace through His people. God's transformation is truly for everyone: the religious, the oppressed and wounded, and the ungodly.

KEY POINT

The Big Idea: The transforming power of God reaches different people in different ways, but because of God's love, His invitation to transform is available to everyone.

- 1) God transforms the religious through the message of the Gospel. - Lydia took religion seriously. Religious thinking says, "If I do the right thing and live the right way, I am a worthy person and deserve good things." It is based on works, but the Gospel turns this thinking upside-down. God already loves us simply because of what HE did for us, not what we could ever do for Him. We can never earn His love. Religion says "do," and the Gospel says, "done!" God desires to transform religious people through the Gospel.
- 2) God transforms the oppressed and wounded through the power of the Holy Spirit to heal and set free. - The slave girl had no money, was the property of her masters, and was physically, emotionally, and spiritually oppressed. Although she followed Paul and Silas for many days, Paul did not cast her demon out right away. There are people who are still waiting for deliverance, and like the slave girl, we do not know why it does not come immediately. But it is in seasons of waiting that God teaches us that He is there with us right where we are.
- 3) God's transforms the secular through the radical grace of God's people. - The prisoners could have escaped and left the jailer for dead. Why would they care? After all, he was the very one to shackle them and keep them in their cells, not caring about them or their fate. When they stayed to save His life, he witnessed radical grace.

Two Truths:

1. God's transformation is available to everyone. We are not always only one of these people at all times, but we can go through seasons when we can be any one of these three.
2. God's grace is bigger than we can imagine, and He uses all of us in His story.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Of the three encounters Paul and Silas had, which of the three do you relate to? Were you religious and came to know the Gospel? Did God miraculously free you from wounds and oppression? Or were you loved so well by God's people that you could not deny His existence? What was your first encounter with the Gospel?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Read the passage again out loud together. Imagine yourself in this time and place as these separate people. Where would these people be without God's radical grace? For a moment, imagine how their transformation could have made a ripple effect of grace in the lives around them. What could it have looked like?
- 3) **DO** - There are people all around us in need of God's radical grace through His people. How can your transformation story help to transform others?

