**“MIDNIGHT MADNESS”**

TEXT: Acts 16:22-26

THESIS: To show that even dark experiences in a believer’s life may turn out to be a blessing.

INTRO:

 A. Every New Year’s Eve the world shows itself in its true colors. “MIDNIGHT MADNESS” is the order of the day as the world drinks its way into oblivion to usher in the new year, instead of carefully assessing its errors of the previous year and setting new goals to make the new year different. Sinfulness, not sobriety and seriousness characterize the ushering in of each new year in the world.

 B. The devil often operates under the guise of darkness and midnight is often associated with nefarious and sinful activity. It is the “witching hour.” The time for renewal becomes a time for evil and even some believers use the late evening hours or early morning hours for backsliding. “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil...” John 3:19

TRANS: Our text reveals one midnight scene where the devil seems to be in control, but God turns things around for His glory.

**I. MADNESS AT MIDNIGHT: v.22-24**

 A. Imprisoned For Preaching: Cf.v.17

 1. Often God’s people are persecuted for doing right.

 2. We shouldn’t be surprised if people don’t appreciate what we stand for.

 B. Beaten For Casting Out Demons: Cf.v.18

 1. The motive behind much resistance to God’s people revolves around profit ($$$)! v.19

 2. Of course those who oppose the Gospel will lie about their motives. v.20,21

 3. The leaders often dupe their followers, who in turn do their bidding. v.22

ILLUS: Christian parents can have their children taken away from them for obeying the Bible re: child discipline and may be labeled “child abusers.” The motive is money! Christians place their children in a church-school and that takes money out of the coffers of the public school. The leaders then accuse the parents of child abuse to get the kids back in the system and get their money back. The people think this is good, because they have been duped. They have swallowed the Satanic lie that biblical child discipline is child abuse! The believers may even go to jail!

 Instead of thanking Christians for taking control of their children so they don’t become delinquents, the system punishes them.

 C. Punished For Doing Right: v.23,24

Mt. 5:10-12

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

ILLUS: Bible preachers are often misunderstood and labeled negative for naming names and warning against the wolves in sheep’s clothing. One preacher who publishes a magazine with many warnings defended his ministry as follows: “I realize that many people are displeased with my preaching. I realize that my preaching is more negative than that of the typical ministry today. I also realize that I am not the perfect Christian, and that I have no authority in myself. I often agonize over this. ‘Lord, who am I to preach to others; I am such a miserable excuse of a Christian myself!’ The fact is that I am not preaching myself; I am preaching the Bible. I am sure the prophets of old considered themselves unworthy to proclaim righteousness and truth to others. No man has ever been worthy to preach God’s Word. But the fact is that God calls preachers, and He has given them a commission, and I must seek to obey God even if I do it imperfectly and even if I make mistakes. To be honest, I often wish that I could preach popular things and not have to focus on error, something to make men feel good. But the fact is that these late hours are characterized by error, and God works mightily in some men to expose it. Jeremiah’s heart burned within him, and he found that he could not refrain from speaking God’s reproofs. Do you not think there are prophets of God whose hearts are so inflamed today?” -- David Cloud, “O Timothy”

**II. SADNESS AT MIDNIGHT:**

 A. Don’t Get Backslidden At Midnight:

 1. When the darkness moves in, don’t let the devil use it to cause you to backslide.

 2. The believer is promised that if he will live godly, persecution will come.

 3. Rather than get backslidden, the believer ought to rejoice knowing he or she is in God’s will!

ILLUS: Don’t let that midnight experience cause you to get bitter. Don’t let the darkness of your illness, job situation, heartache, family problem, etc. make you depressed. Turn it into an opportunity to witness and praise the Lord.

 B. Don’t Make Decisions At Midnight:

1. The devil wants you to decide without asking for God’s guidance - he wants you to panic and make the wrong moves.

2. Don’t make decisions when your decision maker is broken, or you will live to regret them.

3. Never make a move when things are not going well - don’t push the panic button and run.

**III. GLADNESS AT MIDNIGHT: v.25**

 A. Praying and Praising In The Midnight Hour:

 1. Naked, cold, and in a dungeon with their backs bleeding from the horrible beating they had received (v.22), they were able to praise the Lord and sing because they knew they did right and were in God’s will!

 2. There is power in truth and blessing in doing right!

 3. Note the phrase in v.25b “and the prisoners heard them.”

ILLUS: We are always witnessing, whether we know it or not. Others are watching how we respond to our negative circumstances.

 B. Midnight Ushers In A New Day (Year):

 1. Our dark experiences may be used of the Lord to bring about great blessing. v.31-34

 2. Midnight may be the opportunity for a new beginning.

ILLUS: Eleven fifty-nine is P.M., Midnight is A.M.! This is the way we need to look at our dark experiences. One thing is certain: things will change! You say, “Yeah, I know...they will get worse!” But remember that “Our extremities are God’s opportunities!”

 3. Perhaps you are in the darkness so that you can see God better.

4. Maybe in the darkness you no longer are looking at the “things” around you which have become your supports and you must now trust in God alone.

 5. What better time than NOW to start out fresh and make some positive commitments?

 C. God Is Good At Midnight As Well As At Midday!

ILLUS: Many people only praise the Lord in the good times. Paul and Silas praised the Lord while they were in their worst time. They realized that though circumstances change, God doesn’t!

 He is the God of the darkness as well as the God of the light. He created both! He is in your midnight! Praise Him! You have lost your job. Praise Him anyway. You child is sick. Sing His praises. You have lost a loved one. Give Him the glory.

Ps. 42:8

8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

CONCL: Don’t let “MIDNIGHT MADNESS” overtake you! Don’t join in the world’s unholy revelry tonight. Decide that you will use the new year as a new opportunity to serve the Lord and your “midnight experience” as an opportunity to praise the Lord.