

AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #96 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 7/8/20)

“Have fun whether you like it or not!”

At various times of life (and especially before the junior high dances), Mom told us, “Have fun whether you like it or not!” I have found this to be a very profound statement, and, I confess, I have shared it with many others, including my own children. This simple statement reminds me that my attitude is my choice. I can gripe, complain, or sulk about something I don’t like—and make myself and others around me miserable; or, I can choose to make the most of the situation and find a way to have fun and make the most of it, even if I don’t like it. I think Mom’s reminder might offer some good advice for us in the midst of the world in which we live today.

I don’t like having to cancel or change my plans for vacation, but I can find another way for my family to have fun and spend good, quality time together. I don’t like wearing a mask, but I willingly do so to help protect others. I didn’t like that the pandemic kept us from having in-person worship or gatherings, or that we have to change so many things for us to do so now, but we chose to make the most of it and found new, creative ways to worship and gather online. We choose how we respond to every situation.

This reminds me of Paul and Silas after they were stripped, beaten with rods, severely flogged, thrown into the inner cell of the prison, and had their feet fastened in stocks... just for sharing the Good News of Jesus:

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 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. 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. But Paul shouted, ‘Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!’ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. 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.” (Acts 16:25-34, NIV)

Paul and Silas had every reason (and then some!) to gripe, complain, and be upset by what happened to them. However, they chose to praise God instead. They chose to sing praises to God instead of spewing hatred and anger. As a result, others around them heard (and I’m sure wondered about) these men praising God after all they had experienced, God loosened the chains of ALL the prisoners, and then God worked through the whole situation to bring the jailer and his family to Christ.

Just think what God might do through you and all of us—if we choose to praise God (and have fun) whether we like it or not! God could change your life; he could loosen your chains and the chains of everyone around you—and set you and many free; and God could bring many people to know him... because of you... and the thankful, praising attitude you choose. It’s your choice. You may gripe and complain and poison your life and the lives of others around you, but why...? What good comes from that? Instead, why not praise God (and have fun) whether you like it or not! If you do, God can change you and the world through you! So for today, and every day, let’s choose to praise God (and have fun) whether you like it or not! (My mom said so!)

PRAYER:

Loving, merciful God, I praise you that you can bring good out of all situations! Forgive me for the times I gripe and complain. Help me, like Paul and Silas, choose to praise you in all circumstances—so that I, and others around me, will know you and your joy in all of life. Throughout each day, remind me to choose to praise you so you may work through my praises to set people free and find hope, healing, joy, and everlasting life in you. Amen.

LIVE IT!

Choose to praise God (and have fun) whether you like it or not!