

THE WORKPLACE IS A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE...

...AND THE PRISONERS ARE LISTENING

by RICK YEATTS

Paul and Silas had quite the day. There they were, going about their daily routine, when they met a young woman and delivered her of her demons. The next thing they knew, they were beaten, put in stocks and imprisoned.

Despite their seemingly hopeless state of affairs, Paul and Silas sang praises to God within earshot of all the prisoners and the guards. They had become the captors—their audience had no choice but to listen.

Every day I talk to faithful men and women who entered the marketplace yearning to be used by God, but now feel beaten, immobilized and imprisoned just like Paul and Silas. If this sounds familiar, I want to share some things the Lord has been impressing on me through His word.

The truth is that life and work will be ordinary and unremarkable until you put the Kingdom of God in the mix.

Simply forgiving, offering prayer or exhibiting humility, can trigger the most volatile responses. All hell *literally* breaks loose, and the forces of the enemy are deployed.

Insert needle-scratching-across-a-record-noise here.

This is the response for a taking a risk? Persecution: You won't hear it from the "let's keep it positive" preachers, but it is a reality of the Christian experience. Dear believer, if you are in a dark place right now—be it work, home, finances or all of the above—and you feel like a prisoner of events you did not choose, take heart.

First, know that you are not alone. There are believers across the globe experiencing pressure like never before. The good news is that you are not being punished—though at the time it may feel that way—you are being promoted.



About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. —Acts 16:25

Second, be mindful that your choices in this season will determine the level of God's power you experience in the next, as well as the length of your incarceration. Though you may feel helpless and isolated, understand there are prisoners of a different kind all around you. They are suffering, but not for the same reasons you are. They do not even know who God is. They are aimlessly sorting out their lives separated from Him. But they are your captive audience, listening to your every word and watching your every move. Carefully.

These prisoners rarely come to us, but God sees to it that we get to them. Such opportunities rarely occur amidst the comfort of other believers. These prisoners work beside you, catch the bus with you, serve you coffee, and bag your groceries, and they are listening.

Third, when we introduce the presence of God to the culture of the captive, things change. Acts 16:26 says that in the midst of Paul and Silas's singing there was an earthquake so violent that it ruptured all the prison doors and shattered the prisoners' chains.

Lastly, once the prison was demolished, not one prisoner made a break for it. Why is that? Could it be that prison is not necessarily a physical place, but a condition of the heart? Understand that escape from suffering is not always freedom. Trusting that God possesses the brute strength to change our worst circumstances how He wants and when He wants for His glory, is when we are truly free.