

# PAUL AND SILAS IN PHILIPPI

Acts 16:11-40

## STRUCTURE

**Key-person:** Paul

**Key-location:** Philippi

### **Key-repetitions:**

- Paul proclaimed the gospel to: the women, including Lydia (Ac 16:11-15); the jailor (Ac 16:31-32).
- People believed in Jesus: Lydia and her household (Ac 16:11-15); the jailor and his family (Ac 16:31-34).
- Opposition to the gospel: slave girl with evil spirit (Ac 16:16-18); slave girl's owners (Ac 16:19-21); crowd (Ac 16:22); Roman officers (Ac 16:22-24).
- Saved: the slave girl said that Paul was telling the way to be saved (Ac 16:17); the jailor asked what must he do to be saved (Ac 16:30); Paul told the jailor to believe in the Lord Jesus and he and his household would be saved (Ac 16:31).

### **Key-attitudes:**

- Paul's determination to proclaim the gospel.
- Paul's frustration with the demon possessed girl.
- Slave girl's owners' anger against Paul.
- Crowd's hostility against Paul and Silas.
- Roman officers' cruelty.
- Jailer's cruelty.
- Jailer's despair when he saw the prison doors open.
- Roman officers' fear when they discovered that Paul was a Roman citizen.

### **Initial-situation:**

Acts, chapter thirteen, begins the history of Barnabas and Paul's first missionary journey. Paul chose Silas to accompany him on his second missionary journey.

Timothy joined the team in Lystra. The Holy Spirit gave Paul a vision of a man from Macedonia urging Paul to come to Macedonia. The medical doctor Luke joined the team and they traveled to Philippi, a leading city in Macedonia.

### **Initial-problem:**

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and the medical doctor Luke traveled to Philippi. On the Sabbath, they went outside the city gate to the river where they expected to find Jewish people gathered for prayer. Lydia listened to them.

**Final-situation:**

Paul and Silas came out of the prison. They immediately went to Lydia's house, where they met with believers and encouraged them. Then they left Philippi.

**BIBLE STORY**

Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Dr. Luke traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.

On the Sabbath, they went outside the city gate to the river where they expected to find Jewish people gathered for prayer. They spoke to the women who had gathered there.

A woman named Lydia worshiped God and she listened to Paul. She was a dealer of purple cloth. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message. Lydia and the members of her household were baptized. Lydia insisted, "If you're convinced that I'm a believer in the Lord, then stay in my home." Lydia persuaded Paul and his companions to stay in her home (Ac 16:11-15).

On one occasion, Paul and his companions were going to the place for prayer and a slave girl met them. The slave girl had an evil spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This slave girl followed Paul for many days, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God. They're telling you the way to be saved." Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her!" Immediately, the spirit left her (Ac 16:16-18).

The slave girl's owners realized that the girl would no longer make them money. They seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the court officials. They said, "These Jewish men are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to practice."

The crowd joined in attacking Paul and Silas. The Roman officers ordered Paul and Silas to be stripped, beaten, and thrown into prison. The Roman officers ordered the jailer to guard them carefully. The jailer put Paul and Silas in the inner cell and fastened their feet in leg irons (Ac 16:19-24).

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. Other prisoners listened. Suddenly, an earthquake shook the prison's foundations. The prison doors flew open, and the prisoners' chains became loose. The jailer woke up, saw the opened prison doors, and drew his sword to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He asked, "Men, what must I do to be saved?"

Paul and Silas replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved." Paul and Silas spoke the Lord's word to the jailer and everyone in his house. Immediately, the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. The jailer and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and gave them food to eat. The jailer was overjoyed because he and his family now believed in God (Ac 16:25-34).

At daylight, the Roman officers sent orders to the jailer, "Release those men." The jailer told Paul, "The officers ordered that you and Silas be released. You can now go in peace."

Paul told the officers, "Roman officers beat us publicly without a trial and threw us into prison, even though we are Roman citizens. Now they want to get rid of us quietly! No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

The officers became afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. The officers went to the jail and apologized to Paul and Silas. The officers escorted Paul and Silas from prison and asked them to leave the city. Paul and Silas went to Lydia's house, where they met with believers and encouraged them. Then they left Philippi (Ac 16:35-40).

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story?                  | 5. How did the characters face their problems?                                       |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 6. How have you faced similar problems?  |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story?                  | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face?                     | 8. What does the story tell about God?   |

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did the missionaries find their first listeners?
2. What effect did the way the slave girl stated the truth have on the missionaries' effectiveness?
3. Have you experienced someone telling the truth in a way that made the truth hard to be accepted by others?
4. What happened when Paul freed the slave girl from demon possession?
5. How did Paul and Silas react to their unjust treatment?
6. What can we learn about facing unpleasant situations from the fact that Paul and Silas were singing in the prison at midnight?
7. How did Paul and Silas answer the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?"
8. Who had a salvation experience in Philippi, and how was each one's experience unique?
9. Who did God use to bring the gospel to you?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus' power is superior to the power of evil spirits.** Paul used Jesus' name and expelled an evil spirit from the young slave girl (Ac 16:18). (See Luke 8:28 and Matthew 28:18.)
2. **God's law is superior to the government's laws.** When obeying God's law is prohibited by the local government, God's law is superior and should be obeyed. In Philippi, Paul was accused of being a Jew who was proselyting Romans (Ac 16:21).

Under Roman law, Jews were permitted to practice their religion; however, they were not allowed to evangelize Romans. Christians should evangelize, in obedience to God's law, even when a national or local government prohibits it (Ac 4:19-20).

3. **The key that opens the door of salvation is faith in Jesus.** Paul promised the jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Ac 16:31). (See Acts 4:12 and 10:43.)
4. **People are different, and each Christian will have an uniquely different salvation experience.** Each experience is unique. Young Timothy had the faith that his grandmother and mother practiced (2 Tim 1:5). From a child he learned the Scriptures which made him wise for salvation (2 Tim 3:15). Lydia was influenced by keeping company with women who prayed. She opened her heart to Jesus the first time she heard Paul speak (Ac 16:13-14). The jailer, who had been cruel to Paul (Ac 16:24), observed Paul and Silas' conduct in prison. In a moment of despair, he asked them how to be saved (Ac 16:25-30).
5. **Christians can demand their rights as citizens from the government.** Roman law prohibited a Roman citizen from a public beating. When Paul was whipped in Philippi, he insisted that the Roman officers appease him (Ac 16:35-39). When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and the commander ordered him whipped, Paul demanded his rights as a Roman citizen (Ac 22:25).
6. **The gospel is for people of all social classes.** On Paul's second missionary journey, people of all social classes were evangelized. Lydia, a rich merchant, believed (Ac 16:14). A female slave was freed from an evil spirit (Ac 16:16-18). The jailer, who was a middle class public employee, was saved (Ac 16:25-33).

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### Role-playing Drama:

Ask for two volunteers to dramatize characters in the story.

- One volunteer tells the story from the perspective of one of the slave girl's owners.
- The other volunteer tells the story from the perspective of the jailer.