

Passage to Study:      Acts 16:16-40.

Read with the class:      Acts 16:22-32

Memory Text:

Children:      Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Youth:      Acts 16:30-31. "Sirs, What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

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**OBJECTIVES:** To teach that:

1. The gospel is good news, but there are many who oppose it being proclaimed.
2. Preachers of the truth suffer when lies are told.
3. God's intention is that in spite of opposition to the gospel, the message must go forth so that others may believe and be saved.
4. Preachers are sustained in the midst of tribulation by the power and presence of God.
5. The jailor's very real conversion showed the grace of God.

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**SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: (G-10) In the streets of Philippi, figures of Paul and Silas, followed by a girl shouting after them, and others observing. A sign with the girl's words.**

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- Sug.** It would be well to review the events in Troas that led Paul and his companions to travel into Macedonia.
- Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul and Silas, with Luke and Timothy, reached the continent of Europe and the prosperous city of Philippi to preach the gospel.
  - Soon after their arrival, they went out to the river on the Sabbath day where they found a group of women gathered together to pray.
  - Here they took advantage of the opportunity to speak to the women about salvation through Christ Jesus.
  - Lydia was saved through listening to the gospel preaching.
- Cmt.** Usually Paul and his companions went to the synagogue to come into contact with people. It would seem that in Philippi there was no such place, showing that there were very few Jews living there.
- While on their way to prayer, a girl with a "spirit of divination" met them, crying, "**These men are the servants of the most high God.**" This she did for many days, crying after them.
- Cmt.** The title of "the most high God" is used in the Old Testament and is the same title used by the demon possessed man of Mark 5:7. In the New Testament it is not used by believers except when quoting from the O.T. as in Acts 7:48.
- Cns.** The girl was telling the truth, but her testimony was not useful in the work of evangelizing in Philippi.
- Apl.** God's will is that testimony to His greatness come from redeemed persons, not from those used by Satan.
- The girl was being used by mercenary masters to earn them money from her fortune telling.
- Ccl.** Involved with Satanic activity, they did not want anything to do with the salvation the missionaries were preaching.
- Tired of the trouble the girl's cries were causing them, Paul commanded the evil spirit "**in the name of Jesus Christ**" to come out of her.
  - There was an immediate result, for the spirit "**came out the same hour.**"
  - When the girl lost her fortune telling ability, her masters lost the earnings the girl previously brought them.

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**Cns.** These men were not interested in the well being of the girl, and in this way were like her master, Satan, who has no interest in the wellbeing of human beings.

**Cmt.** The men only wanted to have their selfish commercial interests fulfilled. The devil also seeks to take advantage of human beings so that they will not serve God.

**Apl.** Those who are still out of Christ, are under the power of a cruel master. They are unaware that they are fulfilling the purposes of this enemy of God.

- The girl’s masters unleash their anger against Paul and Silas, seizing them and taking them to the hall of justice.
- They accused Paul and Silas of causing disturbances and of unlawful teachings, but the accusations did not reveal the real cause of their anger. (A religion that did not have the official approval of the Romans was considered an unlawful religion).
- They managed to get Paul and Silas imprisoned.

**Cns.** How long might they have been in jail had God not intervened?

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**SCENE No. 2 VISUAL AIDS: (C-2) In the Philippian prison, figures of Paul and Silas in chains, with their feet in the stocks.**

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- Besides being severely beaten, the servants of the Lord were thrown into prison.
- The jailor also treated them very cruelly, putting them into the innermost dungeon fulfilling his orders to keep them safely.

**Cns.** Perhaps the jailor feared the extraordinary power the missionaries had demonstrated in “healing” the girl, but he did not ask from where that power came.

- Besides the beatings, the men suffered the added torture of the stocks, an apparatus that made it impossible to move their feet.

**Note:** The STOCKS were made from two boards mounted one on top of the other with holes drilled large enough for the prisoner’s ankles only. The boards were locked together to hinder any effort to move about.

- They may have had their hands chained as well, for after the earthquake, everyone’s chains fell off.
- These disciples of the Lord must have felt very sore and uncomfortable.
- Instead of bemoaning their condition, they prayed and sang praises to God.
- The other prisoners heard them and must have been very surprised and perhaps impressed by the joy they saw in these men.
- It seems the jailor could hear also. Their joyful testimony was evidence of the truth preached by the two missionaries.

**Cns.** Audible singing is one way of communicating the truth and thus showing one’s joy to others.

**Cmt.** Some, such as Lydia, are seeking the truth, and God allows them to hear it by the preaching of the gospel. When they are confronted with the truth, they obey it and believe. Others, such as the jailor, need something stronger that will shake them up and awaken them.

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**SCENE No. 3. VISUAL AIDS. (C-4) The prison after the earthquake with figures of Paul and Silas standing, the stocks broken, and the door open. Add the figure of the jailor and his question written out, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? Then add the sign with the reply, BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED, AND THY HOUSE.**

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- God has His ways of speaking forcefully when necessary, and here He used an earthquake to awaken the jailor from his ignorance and unbelief.
  - Seeing the doors open, the jailor supposed that the worst had happened and that the prisoners had fled.
  - The jailor would have had to pay with his life if some of the prisoners in his charge had escaped.
  - He wanted to avoid the punishment for escaped prisoners and immediately decided to take his own life.
- Cns.** While it is true that the jailor by committing suicide would have escaped appearing before his superiors, he would have found himself in a greater problem, that of appearing before God without the salvation of his soul.
- Without needing to be at the jailor's side, Paul somehow realized the jailor was on the point of taking his life and his words to do himself no harm saved the physical life of the jailor.
  - Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to escape from a difficult and uncomfortable situation, Paul and Silas remained in the prison to reach the jailor with the gospel.
- Cmt.** When the Lord permits difficult circumstances in our lives, it is because He is going to bring some good out of the situation.
- Conscious of his error, the jailor sought Paul and Silas hurriedly, and in repentance.
- Trembling, the man asked the most important question of his life, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?**
- He had realized he was not ready to die and that death can come at any time. The earthquake had shown him this.
  - In his desperation, he remembered that Paul and Silas preached and sang about salvation. He wanted to be saved.
- Cmt.** When one is sincerely seeking peace, he finds the Saviour is near and salvation is readily available.
- There is only One who can give salvation, and Paul told the jailor that upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, he would be saved.
- Sug.** Stress how short and simple the message of salvation is, and explain what it means to **BELIEVE.**
- The gospel does not ask one to have great faith or to do something special. An example of this is the jailor who believed the word of God that tells of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Author of salvation.
  - The jailor was saved the moment he believed.

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# THE JAILOR OF PHILIPPI

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**SCENE No. 4. VISUAL AIDS. (H-13) In the house of the jailor, figures of the table set and the family and servants present while the jailor washes the wounds of Paul and Silas.**

**DEVELOPMENT:**

- The jailor took Paul and Silas to his house.
  - The reality of his conversion was demonstrated in different ways.
- Sug.** Mention evidences of the changes in the jailor that were indications that his conversion was real.
1. He has Paul and Silas speak the gospel to all that were in his house. Taken from the uncomfortable dungeon they find themselves in the warm atmosphere of the jailor's house.
  2. He washed the wounds that he himself possibly caused, and did what he could to repair the damage that had been done.
  3. Like Lydia, he was baptized and all in his house that believed, in obedience to the Lord.
  4. The jailor at once began to serve, for a meal was prepared in his own house.
  5. He was happy, for he was saved through believing God.
- The baptism would be by immersion in water. Those baptized had believed for themselves. They were not young children unable to believe on Christ for themselves.
- Cmt.** As in the case of Lydia, true conversion is evidenced by baptism, by love and joy, and this is the case of the family of the jailor as well.
- Cmt.** The jailor was not afraid to be identified with Paul later for when the magistrates came wanting them to leave the prison at once, he presented their case fearlessly.

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