

Paul and the Philippians Jailer

Acts 16:16-40



Come to
Macedonia



Paul set out for his second missionary journey and traveled back to many of the churches he visited before, but one night Paul had a dream.

He saw a person standing in a city and calling to him, “Come to Macedonia and help us.”

The next morning he told his companions, Timothy, Luke, and Silas their next destination.

“We’re heading to Philippi, it’s in Macedonia.”

“Why there?” they asked.

“God told me to go there next,” he answered. So they board a boat for Philippi.



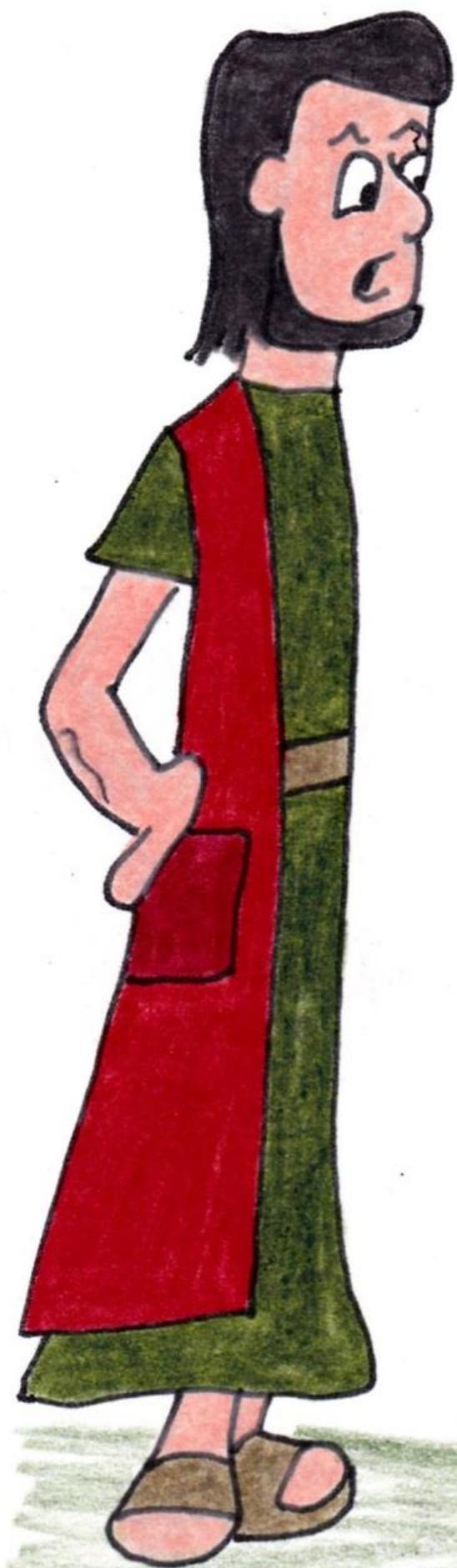
There was no synagogue in Philippi, instead the Jews and God-fearers met by the river and called it a place of prayer. Early on that Saturday morning Paul went out and preached to the women gathered there. Many believed, in particular a woman named Lydia believed in everything Paul said.

“God has blessed me greatly and I have a large house with extra space, come and stay at my house while you are here. There is no reason for you to sleep on the streets or pay huge prices for an inn.”

Paul looked at, Silas, and he silently shook his head. “I’m sorry, but we can’t stay with you, that would be an imposition.”

“Nonsense,” she said. “You are staying at my house, I will not hear otherwise.”

Paul realized he had met his match in stubbornness and agreed to stay at her house.



Each day Paul would go back to the place of prayer and teach anyone who was able to come and listen during the day.

Every day as he walked through the town a slave girl would follow them yelling at the crowd, “These are servants of God, and they teach salvation.” Over and over again, she would yell this as they walked past where she told fortunes for her master.

Finally Paul had enough, and turned on her yelling, “Demon, come out of this girl in Jesus’ name!”

Her owners saw all of this and were dismayed, how were they going to make money off of her if she could not tell fortunes?

They started to whisper together and plot how they could get revenge on Paul.



Finally they went to the Roman officials and complained about Paul. “These Jews have been disturbing the city. You know what strange things Jews believe in. They believe in one God, and who knows what other weird stuff! You must arrest these men, stop their spreading lies.”

The Roman officials had heard the same strange rumors about Jews, and about this new weird cult called “Christianity.” They did not want riots, or other trouble.

As the Romans talked, the owners went to the crowds and spread more rumors. The crowd stood outside the government buildings chanting “Beat them, beat them, beat them,” over and over again.

Finally the Roman governor proclaimed, “Enough! Arrest these men and beat them.”



The mob gleefully ran out and grabbed Paul and Silas. They threw them to the ground and grabbed large sticks to beat them with.

“What are you charging us with?” Paul asked.
“I’m a Roman citizen; you must give me a trial.”

But the crowd did not listen; they were so angry they beat Paul and Silas then locked them in jail.

The Roman governor went to the jailer, “Hold these men, and I will give you further instructions in the morning.”

The jailer nodded his head, and locked Paul and Silas in stocks to keep them from escaping.



Paul and Silas spent their night in jail singing to God and praying. The other prisoners listened in as they sang of their joy during their persecution, and thanked God for their bruises and cuts.

The night continued and a great earthquake shook the foundations of the jail and the doors flew open. The prisoners looked down in shock as the chains on their feet fell open.

One by one they staggered forward, but did not leave. They looked at each other in confusion, were they free now?



The jailer woke up as the ground shook and saw the jail doors open. He looked around in shock and grabbed his sword ready to kill himself. He was sure the prisoners had escaped, and he was going to be executed for losing so many prisoners.

Just as he lifted his sword a voice rang out.
“Wait!”

Paul moved forward hands out, “Wait, we’re all here. No one has left. You do not need to die.”

The jailer stepped forward and into the jail. He looked around in amazement as he saw every prisoner still in his cell.



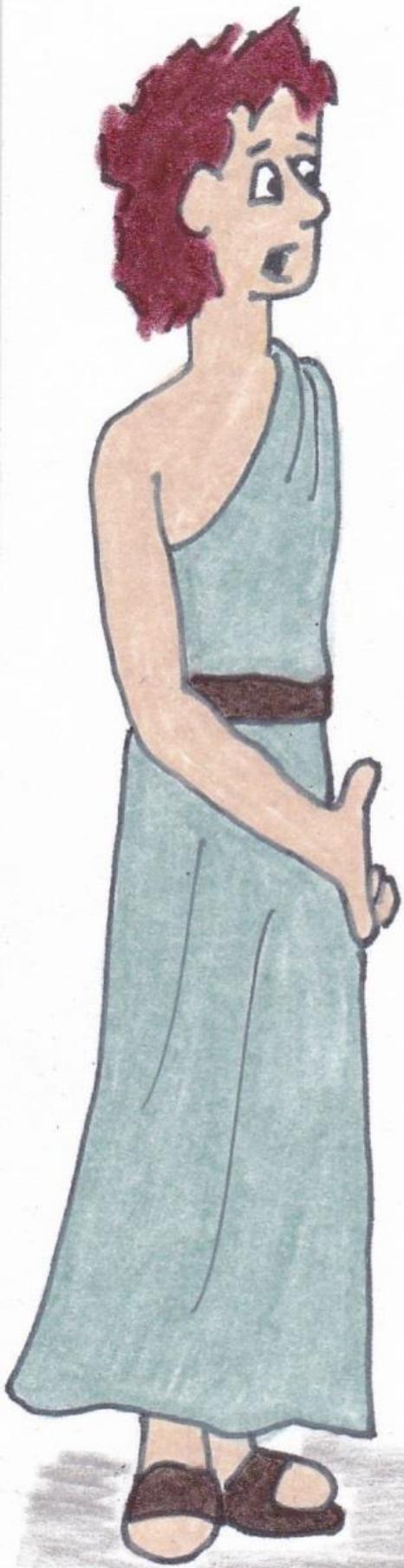
“How did this happen?” the jailer muttered.

“Let me tell you a story,” Paul answered. And he told the jailer all about God, how God created the world, but we broke God’s creation. How God had a plan to rescue us, and worked hard to save everyone. How Jesus died and rose from the dead.

The jailer heard all of this and fell to the floor, “What must I do to be saved?”

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,” Paul answered. They shared the Gospel with him, and all of his family.

That night he asked to be baptized, and they took him down to the river and baptized him and his entire family. He brought Paul and Silas to his house, fed them, and washed their wounds.



The next morning the magistrates came to the jailer's house and told him to release them and send them out of town.

Paul sat back in the chair and refused to move, "They beat us publicly with no trial, Roman citizens were treated like slaves. They will not send us away secretly. They will escort us out of town personally."

The jailer delivered Paul's ultimatum and the magistrates turned pale hearing Paul's request. "They're citizens? What have we done? Please convey to him our humblest apologies, we had no idea."

So Paul and Silas left the jailer's house and visited their friend Lydia, and encouraged the rest of the church for that morning. Then they packed up their bags and left town.

Questions

Younger Kids

1. Why did Paul decide to go to Philippi?
2. What did Paul and Silas do while in jail? Have you ever been in trouble? Were you happy during that time?

Middle Kids

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:2. What shameful treatment is Paul talking about?
2. What are Paul and Silas busy doing in jail? Read Acts 16:25. Would you respond that way?
3. Did Paul have to speak up and save the jailer? Read Acts 16:28. Why do you think he did?
4. Read Acts 16:37-39. Why does Paul make a big deal about being a Roman citizen? What things are a big deal for us now?

Older Guys

1. Read Acts 16:16, who is we? For more information read

2. Read Acts 16:17, why is the demon announcing this? What possible reason could this be advantageous to the demon? Read v. 18, why do you think Paul was annoyed by her actions?

Activities

1. Cut strips of paper and write things that hold people in bondage on them. Then form them into a chain and put them around your wrists. Finally break the chains to remind you that Jesus broke the chains of sin for you.

Online

1. Paul in jail lesson (great demonstration)- <http://www.futureflyingsaucers.com/paul-and-silas-in-prison-free-acts-16-bible-lesson-for-kids/>
2. Paul in Philipians jail- <http://ministry-to-children.com/paul-silas-in-prison-lesson/>