

(Acts 16:12-17:1)

Our life in the Kingdom isn't always full of fun – but it is always full of joy. And God can use every circumstance, no matter how desperate, for the expansion of His Kingdom.

Introduction

Saul becomes known as Paul in the Greek-speaking world. He grows in his relationship with Jesus, and a few years later he begins traveling with companions throughout the area telling people the Good News that Jesus is the way into God's Kingdom.



Lydia

Paul and Silas arrive in a city and go to the river on the day of worship to see if anyone is praying. A group of women is there, and Paul speaks to them. God opens Lydia's heart, and she accepts Jesus. She and her household are baptised. Paul and Silas stay with Lydia.



The slave girl



A slave girl possessed by an evil spirit follows Paul and Silas everywhere, saying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." Finally,

Paul gets so exasperated that he commands the evil spirit to come out in Jesus' name. When the evil spirit leaves her, she can no longer make money for her owners by telling fortunes. The owners are angry and have Paul and Silas thrown in jail.

The jailer

Around midnight Paul and Silas are singing in jail. An earthquake shakes the jail and the doors are thrown open. The jailer thinks everyone has escaped and pulls a sword to kill himself. Paul stops him and the jailer asks, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas tell him, and he and his household are baptised.



Back to Lydia

Paul and Silas are released from jail. They return to Lydia's house and encourage the believers who meet there. Then they go to another town.



Weekly Meditation and Reflection

Below are some questions and further reading if you would like some extra food for thought on this story. Some may find it helpful to journal the answers, and others may simply want to read and pray through them.

1. Paul and Silas could have seen their imprisonment as a consequence of them not handling their mission correctly. However, they reacted to their imprisonment in a surprising way – with worship. That worship in the midst of a very difficult time drew others to God. How do you think Paul and Silas could do it? What was it that gave them such extraordinary strength? Do you want this kind of strength also? If so, spend some time talking to God about it.
2. Go back through the story and imagine yourself as Paul. Ask God to reveal new things about Himself and about yourself as you do this exercise. At each step in the story, ask yourself what you (Paul) are thinking/feeling. Feel the delight when God opens Lydia's heart, the annoyance when the slave girl follows you day after day and shouts incessantly, the adrenaline rush as the angry mobs come rushing towards you and you are finally thrown into a dark dungeon. What is your first instinct when the earthquake shakes open the door and shakes off your chains? What will you tell the jailer when he comes falling at your feet and asking what he needs to do to be saved? As you say good-bye to the believers in Philippi, how do you feel?

Meditate on the following passage:

Try reading the book of Philippians. Philippians is the letter that Paul wrote to the church that he started in Philippi. Now that you know more about how the church in Philippi started, you may understand more of Paul's later letter to them!