

PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 16:9-40.

LESSON 334 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 16:9-40

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

¹⁰ And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

¹¹ Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;

¹² And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

¹³ And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.

¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

¹⁶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Help

"Come over into Macedonia, and help us"; these are the words, which Paul heard. He had a vision at night. He saw a man of Macedonia begging him for help. He wanted Paul to help him learn about Jesus.

Paul had helped many people when he was on his first missionary journey. He had given them spiritual help. He had preached about Jesus, and many people had believed his words. Paul had worked for the Lord and for His people. Churches had been established and elders had been ordained in every church.

Macedonia was far away across the sea. Would Paul go such a distance to help someone he did not know? Yes, Paul wanted to spread the Gospel. He felt that this vision was a definite call for him to preach to the people of Macedonia. God does not always give people a vision when He is calling them to do missionary work. Sometimes letters are written, asking for help. Sometimes God puts it in the hearts of His people to be concerned about those who live in a certain place. Sometimes God brings to mind a certain person who can be given an invitation to the Sunday School and church services. Missionary work is not always done far from home. There are people near by who need our help. God can use children, too, in His missionary work.

Leaving Immediately

After Paul had received the Macedonian call, he knew that God wanted him to go to that faraway land. Paul was assured that God wanted him to preach the Gospel to those people. A person can be sure of his calling. One can know God's will. When a person prays, consecrating his life to be willing to go or to stay, God will show him what to do.

When Paul was assured of God's will, he took Silas with him and left immediately for Macedonia. He probably felt as David did, who said, "The king's business required haste" (I Samuel 21:8). Paul was working for Jesus, the King of kings, and he knew that he should work when he had the opportunity. Some people postpone doing God's will. Sometimes they have other plans that they do not want to change. Sometimes they have other things they want to do before they do God's will. Sometimes they have to think about it a long time before they want to be obedient and to please God. Paul had no other plan for his life than to do God's will. Paul was willing and ready to obey. When there was an opportunity to spread the Gospel and to help others learn about Jesus, Paul was ready to go and ready to do.

**"Ready to go, ready to stay,
Ready my place to fill;
Ready for service, lowly or great,
Ready to do His will."**

At Philippi

Paul and Silas set sail from Troas and finally arrived at Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia. There they stayed for a few days. They planned to have a prayer meeting on the bank of

soothsaying:

¹⁷ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

¹⁸ And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

¹⁹ And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the marketplace unto the rulers,

²⁰ And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

²¹ And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

²² And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

²⁴ Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

a river, outside the city. Some women had gathered there and Paul began to preach to them.

A Seller of Purple

One of the women who listened to Paul was named Lydia. Her home had been in the city of Thyatira where the people were well known for their making of dyes. Lydia sold those dyes in Philippi. She was a religious woman and worshiped God. As she listened to Paul, she heard about God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord spoke to Lydia's heart. She believed the things, which Paul said. She opened her heart, received the Gospel, and became a follower of Christ.

Water Baptism

A person can be saved by praying, admitting his sins, asking God to forgive him, and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. After one is saved, he wants to be baptized in water. This is the will of God. Water baptism is a part of the Gospel, and the Lord wants His people to obey every part. When the Lord gave His disciples the great Commission, He said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20).

In the Bible are a number of examples mentioned of those who were saved and were then baptized. On the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached a powerful sermon, "they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Philip preached about Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch as they were riding along in a chariot. When they came to some water, the eunuch saw the opportunity for him to obey God by experiencing water baptism. The eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." (See Lesson 292.) They both went into the water and the eunuch was baptized. Then he went on his way rejoicing.

Lydia and her household are others who were baptized. She was grateful to God for what He had done for her. She was happy because she had obeyed the commandment of the Lord. She wanted to do something for the Lord. She showed her thankfulness by being kind to God's people.

Kindness

Lydia asked Paul and Silas to stay at her house if they felt that she was faithful to God, and worthy of that privilege. Lydia felt that it was a privilege to entertain these men of God. She did it as unto the Lord. We read: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23,24). There is a reward for those who are kind to God's people. As they receive the reward they will hear Christ say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

A Fortuneteller

One day as Paul and Silas were going to the prayer meeting, they were followed by a young woman. She was possessed by an evil spirit, and was a fortuneteller. She ran after them, crying out. This happened for several days. Paul was grieved that this young woman was a victim of evil. Paul rebuked the devil in the name of Jesus Christ, and she was delivered from the demon, which had had control of her.

This young woman had been working for some men. She told fortunes and the men received the money. When the evil spirit was cast out of her, she was no longer a soothsayer, and her employers lost that means of much gain. The men did not like that. They did not feel sorry for her when she was possessed of

²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

³³ And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

³⁴ And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

³⁵ And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

³⁶ And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

³⁷ But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

³⁸ And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

³⁹ And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

⁴⁰ And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

an evil spirit. They felt sorry for themselves since they could not receive money in this evil and easy way.

In Prison

Her masters caught Paul and Silas, took them to the market place where court was held, and brought charges against them. They said, "These men, . . . do exceedingly trouble our city." Was it trouble to hinder evil works by doing good? That was only an excuse. And in their dislike for Paul and Silas, they stirred up the people against the men of God. Without a chance to defend themselves, Paul and Silas were roughly treated, beaten with many stripes, and cast into prison. The jailer was told to "keep them safely," so they were put into the inner cell with their feet locked in stocks.

Deliverance

At midnight a strange thing happened. The other prisoners heard songs of praise and prayers to the glory of God. Did these two men, whose backs were bleeding and whose feet were cramped in stocks, still praise God? Could these two men who had been treated so wrongfully still believe in God? Did these two men who had suffered so innocently still trust in God? They certainly did, and God heard their praises and prayers. Suddenly there was a great earthquake. The prison was shaken, even to the foundation. The prisoner's bands were loosed. All the doors were flung open.

The Jailer

The jailer awakened from his sleep. When he saw the doors open, he thought that all the prisoners had fled. He was about to fall on his sword. He felt sure that his life would be forfeited when he could not give an account of all the prisoners, especially the two who were in the inner prison. Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm." Then the jailer called for a light that he might see the prisoners. He went into the cold, damp, inner cell where Paul and Silas were. He knew that they were men of God. He also knew that they could help him, a sinner. When he had taken them out, he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Salvation

Paul and Silas talked about the Lord to the jailer and his family. They believed the words that they heard, and were saved. They, too, were baptized in water as an acknowledgement of their faith in Jesus and to show that an inward work had been done in their lives.

The jailer was kind to the men who had helped him to find Jesus. He took them to his house. He bathed their wounds, and served them a meal. How happy he was to be saved! How he rejoiced that his family was saved! How he enjoyed being with these men of God!

Suffering for Christ

No doubt Paul and Silas rejoiced, too, because they had witnessed the salvation of souls. What did it matter that they had been beaten, when they could tell some soul about Jesus? What did it matter that they had been cast into prison, when it meant salvation to the jailer and his family? Paul and Silas did not bemoan their suffering. They did not rush out to escape when the doors were opened. Their concern was to do the will of God for the salvation of souls. These were real men of God and good examples for us. Do we have a great concern to see others saved? Do we praise God when we are suffering? Do we hold our peace when we are persecuted? One of the Beatitudes is: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before

you" (Matthew 5:11,12).

Released

The next morning the officials sent word to "let those men go." But Paul was in no hurry to leave. They had been insulted and roughly treated when they were "uncondemned." They had been unlawfully cast into prison though they were Roman citizens. They had been mistreated in the presence of many people but very quietly they were to be freed. Paul said, "Let them come themselves and fetch us out."

When the magistrates heard these things, they were fearful. They had been so proud and heartless, but now the Lord had humbled them. as if to show the innocence of Paul and Silas, the magistrates went to the jail and had them released they requested that Paul and Silas leave the city. No doubt they felt condemned for doing wrong, and they were anxious that the whole matter be dropped.

By asking Paul and Silas to depart, they were asking those who preached salvation to leave them. In this way they lost their opportunity to hear the Gospel at this time. Nobody knows if these same people ever had another chance to hear the preaching of Paul or to hear about salvation.

With the Saints

Paul was not frightened by suffering. He and Silas did not rush out of town, fearful of being beaten again. They calmly and deliberately went to the home of Lydia. There they probably told of their experience in jail and of the salvation of the jailer. After they had talked with the saints and comforted one another with encouraging words, Paul and Silas departed from Philippi to the next place in Macedonia where God would have them preach.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the Macedonian call?
2. To whom was it given?
3. What did it mean?
4. How did Lydia hear about salvation?
5. How did she show her appreciation to God?
6. Why were Paul and Silas put into prison?
7. What did they do at midnight?
8. How did God answer their prayers?
9. What happened to the jailer?
10. What did Paul and Silas do after they were released from prison?