

Paul, Silas, and Timothy are still in Philippi, the main city of Macedonia in what is now Greece
The church in Philippi will receive the Letter to the Philippians, which we begin with next week
We don't know how long they remained in Philippi, but it must have been some time
On this occasion, they return to the place of prayer down by the river where they met Lydia

While going to the place of prayer, a slave girl kept following them and crying out...

"These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation."

She had a spirit, by which she was able to tell fortunes making her owners rich

Her spirit recognized that the Spirit of God was present in Paul and his companions

Therefore, it told the truth about them

Paul tired of the attention and in the name of Jesus, commanded the spirit to come out of her

That made the owners angry as the slave girl could no longer tell fortunes

They complained and both Paul and Silas were thrown in jail

That night Paul and Silas were singing and praying in the jail cell—a dungeon really, not like our jails
Amazing that they would be singing in such an awful place, while in stocks and chains
It speaks of deep trust in God that they could sing in the midst of the dungeon
I find singing is one way that I can focus on trusting God, rather than my difficulties
Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, which opened the doors and loosened all chains
It woke the jailer up and he was afraid for his life because of the escaped prisoners
Before he could kill himself, Paul shouted that they were all still there and no one escaped
The jailer called for lights and ran in to see for himself, trembling before Paul and Silas

He said, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

Probably more like: "Help, how do I stay alive? Call on your gods to save us!"

Rather than asking how to become a Christian

Paul said, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Like Jesus, Paul and Silas give a spiritual answer to a practical question

But it is simple—no mention of repentance or knowing about Jesus

Just believe... *pisteuo—to trust, to rely on, to adhere to*

...and your household? This seems strange to our individualistic American ideology

But, even for us, what we do impacts others and there is a communal aspect

The jailer took them home, washed their wounds, and fed them

Paul and Silas baptized the jailer and his entire household as they all rejoiced

In the morning, the magistrate sent word that Paul and Silas were free to go home

However, Paul refused a secret leaving after a public punishment, claiming Roman citizenship

Afraid of their rights as Roman citizens, the magistrate came and apologized to them

Paul and Silas went to the home of Lydia and encouraged the brothers and sisters who were gathered
After encouraging them, Paul and Silas traveled on to Thessalonica, also in Macedonia

Queries...

In the midst of this pandemic, what songs do you find yourself singing?

What helps you focus on Jesus' presence with us when things are difficult all around us?

Where have you seen doors open when you thought everything was locked down tight?

What deeper questions were answered when you didn't expect it because you asked a basic question?

Who has your faith journey impacted?

Who is it that you are to encourage?