

Acts chapter 16 (NIV)

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.' ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned round and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ When her owners realised that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, 'These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practise.'

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!'

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

³¹ They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.' ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptised. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God – he and his whole household.

1

READ THIS

2

•What were Paul and Silas doing?

•What were they accused of doing?

- Was this accusation fair?
- What does 'severely flogged' mean?

Imagine this has all happened to you (verses 22 and 23).

What sort of reaction would you have?

Maybe there have been similar things - times when you haven't done anything wrong but have got into trouble anyway. How did you react?

4

But how did Paul and Silas react (verse 25)?

What resulted from this?

Making changes to our attitudes

5

Philippians 4 verse 4 says *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice!*

What changes do you need to make to your outlook on life to be able to do that?

What is your attitude when friends or others treat you unfairly?

What ways do you know for praising God when you are on your own?

Do you ever spend time with your Christian friends praising God or worshipping Him (apart from in organised meetings or church)?

The other key thing from our main passage is that Paul and Silas did all this publicly.

How easy do you find it letting people know that you are a Christian?

If someone asked you, could you tell them the Good News about Jesus?

Spend some time praying - and/or praising - together now.

6

PAUL

PERSECUTED FOR OBEYING GOD

VERSES TO LEARN

Matthew 5:11,12

¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

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