

The Gospel Is the Power of God

A badly beaten man limped his way down the road towards Athens. His back ached. Every footstep was agony. The day before he had been grabbed, dragged into court and falsely accused. Officials tore off his clothes and those of his companion. They'd been badly beaten with a whip, brutally thrown into a top security jail cell and their feet locked in stocks.

At midnight the two prisoners started to pray and sing hymns! Suddenly there was a violent earthquake measuring about 7.5, all the prison doors flew open and the prisoners' chains came loose. The jailer woke up and seeing all the prison doors open, pulled out his sword to kill himself when a prisoner shouts: "Don't harm yourself! No one has escaped."

Leading the prisoners down the corridor to his house, the jailer washes their wounds, feeds them and asks: "What do I have to do to be saved?" The prisoners reply, "Have faith in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved! This is also true for everyone who lives in your home." That night most of the jailer's household became Christians.

Next morning the officials come to the jail, apologise for falsely imprisoning them, and beg Paul and Silas to leave. Paul and Silas after meeting and encouraging the believers leave Philippi. They leave behind a young thriving church.

Travelling through several towns, Paul and his missionary team arrive at the seaport city of Thessalonica with a population of over 200,000. Given the harsh unjust treatment they had experienced at Philippi for preaching the gospel, what would you have advised them to do?

For the next few weeks Paul goes to the synagogue to preach. Using the Old Testament he proves that Christ had to suffer, but that he would rise from death. Paul explains that Jesus is the Christ. Some Jews, non-Jews and many important women believed the message. A new church is planted. The Church at Philippi sends gifts to help support Paul and his team.

Then trouble. Jealous Jewish leaders got some worthless people who hung around the marketplace to start a riot in the city. Not finding Paul or any of his team, they drag out Jason and some other Christians. They take them to the city authorities and shout, "Paul and Silas are upsetting things everywhere. Now they come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his home. All of them break the laws of the Roman Emperor by claiming that someone named Jesus is king."

That night the Christians send Paul and Silas down the road towards Berea. They leave behind a young infant church that is being severely persecuted. Sleepless because of imaging what's happening to the church, Paul sends Timothy and Silas back. Returning from Thessalonica with good news Paul writes the letter known as First Thessalonians. Read Acts 16:1-17:12