

# Paul & Silas in Prison: Sunday School Lesson

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This lesson continues the Journey through Acts as Paul and Silas continue on their missionary journey into Macedonia. This lesson encourages believers that the Holy Spirit enables them to praise God during difficult times. The lesson was prepared for older students but can be adapted for other ministry opportunities. The lesson is only a guide to help prepare to teach your class. It is meant to be a springboard for ideas to help

you teach the truth to your class. [Click here](#) to see all the lessons in this curriculum series.

**Bible Story:** Paul & Silas Praise God in Prison

**Scripture:** [Acts 16:11-40](#)

**Target Age Group:** Age 9 – 11 (U.S. 3rd – 5th Grade)

**Learning Context:** Sunday School

**Target Time Frame:** 60 minutes

**Printer Friendly Bible Lesson:**

**You Can Help:** Please share your feedback and suggestions to improve this children's Bible lesson. [Click here](#) to respond

**Supply List:** Bibles, Bible Map, Purple cloth, hymnal, Picture of a prisoner in stocks, index cards (for memory game),

**Learning Goal:** Students will learn that the Holy Spirit enables believers to praise God during times of difficulty.

**Learning Indicator:** Students will demonstrate their understanding of the lesson by answering review questions and by reenacting the story.

**Learning Activity #1:** Choose a hymn that your students may not be familiar with and sing together as a class. Explain any words the students may not understand. As you teach the song tell the students that singing songs that focus on God and His character help us in our times of difficulty.

**Learning Activity #2:** Use this memory game as an activity to enforce the meaning of the Memory Verse. Create cards that have natural responses with the corresponding Biblical response (Example: fear/courage, worry/peace, discouraged/praise,) As students play the game discuss how the Holy Spirit enables us to respond to our circumstances in ways that please God. Whenever we respond as Jesus would it is God who has given us victory.

**Learning Activity #3:** After the lesson students can take turns acting out the Bible story.

**Test:** Review Questions

**Memory Verse:** Psalm 44:7 “But You give us victory over our enemies, You put our adversaries to shame.”

**Bible Lesson: Paul and Silas Praise God in Prison**

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In our last lesson we learned that the Holy Spirit gave directions to Paul and his missionary team as they traveled to share the Good News. We heard how the Holy Spirit told Paul when to stop and made it clear when and where Paul was to go.

When Paul was in Troas God gave him a vision. Who remembers the vision Paul had? (A man from Macedonia begged Paul to come and help the people there) As soon as Paul received this vision from God he immediately made plans to travel to Macedonia. Paul and his friends Silas, Timothy and Luke got on a boat in Troas and went to Samothrace and then to Neapolis. (Allow students to locate on a Bible Map) Paul and his missionary team arrived in Macedonia and stayed several days in a place called Philippi.

Whenever he entered a new city Paul usually went to the local synagogue as a place to begin sharing the exciting news about Jesus. Philippi did not have a synagogue because there weren't very many Jewish people living there. Jewish law said it took at least 10 Jewish men to start a synagogue.

Since there wasn't a synagogue in Philippi, Paul knew that the Jewish people that did live there would meet for prayer by the water for washing ceremonies that were a part of the Jewish prayer service.

On the Sabbath day Paul and his missionary team went down to the riverside to have a time of prayer. When they arrived, there were some women who had come to pray. Paul and his friends sat down and began to talk to them about Jesus.

In the group of women that were meeting for prayer at the river was a woman named Lydia. She was a woman who sold purple cloth. (Show piece of purple cloth) She loved God and worshiped Him. She had never heard the Good News about Jesus. As Paul was teaching them about what Jesus had done for them, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to listen to Paul's words. She paid close attention to Paul as he told how Jesus died for the sins of everyone in the world and that He came back to life again. No one but God had the power to bring anyone back to life. Now she had to decide whether or not she believed that Jesus is the one true God who has power over death and life. The Holy Spirit helped Lydia understand that Paul's message about Jesus was true. Jesus had died to pay for her sin so that she could be forgiven and live forever with God.

Lydia believed in the Lord Jesus and was baptized. After Lydia was baptized to show that her sins were forgiven and that she was now a member of God's family, she wanted to help Paul and his friends. She knew they needed a place to sleep and food to eat. Paul and his friends were glad for Lydia's willingness to share her home with them.

Paul and his missionary team stayed in Philippi for awhile. One day as they walked to the place by the river to meet for prayer, a slave girl started to follow them. As the team walked along what are some thoughts they may have had as this girl followed them? (Perhaps this young lady wanted to hear about Jesus and God put her in their path so they could share the

Good News with her) As they walked to the river the girl began to shout, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” She followed Paul and Silas around for many days.

This slave girl was not a believer and did not have the Holy Spirit living inside her heart. She had an evil spirit living inside her. The evil spirit enabled this slave girl to predict the future. Her owners made a lot of money from this slave girl because many people paid them to have her tell them their future.

Knowing this about the slave girl, was there anything wrong with the message she was giving? (No) The Holy Spirit gives insight into situations that seem to be normal. Let’s read Acts 16:18. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to realize that it was time to put a stop to what the slave girl was doing.

Try to imagine what it would be like to be in Philippi sharing the Good News with others. A person who is known as the town’s fortune teller is following you around as a shouting billboard telling others that you are servants of the Most High God. Was the shouting causing people to want to listen to the message Paul had to share or was the shouting causing people to focus on the fortune teller? We don’t know exactly what was taking place we can only tell from the Scripture that the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to see that this girl wasn’t a messenger from the Most High God but was a servant of Satan. The Holy Spirit empowered Paul to command the evil spirit controlling the slave girl to leave and in Jesus’ Name the evil spirit obeyed and left the girl. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to stop this slave girl from being used by the evil spirit to distract others from coming to Jesus and being saved.

The slave girl had been set free and was no longer controlled by this evil spirit. This was a good thing but her owners were not very happy with what Paul did. Her owners made lots of money from this slave girl. Now that she was not able to be a fortune teller they weren’t going to be able to make money. This made them very angry with Paul and Silas. Enraged they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place and brought them before the rulers of the city. They told the authorities, “These men are causing trouble for our city because they are Jews, and are telling others about things which we Romans are not able to accept or follow.”

The leaders tore off Paul and Silas’ robes and commanded that that they be beaten. The crowd joined in the attack against them and beat them with rods. They hit them with these rods many times and then threw them into prison.

The leaders commanded the man in charge of the prison to make sure that they were secure and could not get out. When the jailer received the leaders’ orders he took Paul and Silas far back into an inner prison that had no outside walls and put their feet into blocks of wood called stocks. (Show picture of what stocks look like) These stocks were two pieces of wood that would clamp down over the prisoner’s legs at the ankles. This type of imprisonment was meant for the most dangerous prisoners. Paul and Silas had not done anything wrong to be treated this way. They were not a danger to anyone except Satan’s kingdom of darkness. If they were free to share the Good News people would be rescued from sin and saved to spend eternity with Jesus.

Paul and Silas had open sores and blood on their bodies as they sat in their prison cell. If you were Paul and Silas what do you think you would do as you lay there in the dark, cold cell? (They could have cried and said they wanted to go home. The work was too hard and they couldn't take being punished as a criminal for obeying Jesus. They could have been angry and shouted how unfair their treatment was. How could God allow such treatment to happen to His servants?)

As humans we have many natural responses to difficulties. We don't always react the way Jesus would in difficult situations. As believers we have power to respond in a very supernatural way that is so different than what most people act like when they are facing difficulties. Believers have the power from the Holy Spirit to respond with faith and courage. Paul and Silas will show us how the Holy Spirit enables believers to respond in a very difficult situation. Let's read verse 25.

Let's think of some songs we sing to praise God. What are some songs that Paul and Silas may have sung if they knew the songs we sing? (Hymns-Turn your eyes upon Jesus, I will call upon the Lord, Jesus never fails, A mighty fortress is our God, To God be the glory, Contemporary-Our God, Our God is an Awesome God, etc)

Because both men were filled with the Holy Spirit they chose not to focus on their unfair treatment but focused on God's character. They knew that God was powerful. They knew that their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had suffered far more than they had when He was crucified on the cross. Because they chose to worship and praise God in their difficulties it caused the other prisoners to listen to them as they prayed and sang. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul and Silas to be a witness for Jesus to these prisoners.

While the prisoners who were in prison for actually committing a crime were listening to the prayers and praises of Paul and Silas, they felt the ground begin to shake. They didn't have trains that rumbled by the prison there in Philippi so it must have been a little strange for them to feel the earth begin to tremble. The tremble turned into a great earthquake and the whole prison began to shake. All the doors were opened and the chains fell off each and every prisoner.

The jailer had fallen asleep but the shaking ground and noises of opening doors must have awakened him. As he rubbed his eyes and looked and saw every door opened, fear struck his heart. His job was to make sure the prisoners were securely locked into prison. If one prisoner escaped he would be killed. When he saw the doors open he knew his life was over so he drew his sword and was ready to take his own life when Paul cried out with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, we are all here!"

The jailer asked for a torch so that he could see and when he ran into Paul and Silas' prison and saw that they were still there, he trembled and fell down before them. He brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

God's power had brought a mighty earthquake to shake this Philippian prison. The Holy Spirit caused this jailer to see and recognize that he needed to be saved. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul and Silas to know how to answer this man. They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." Paul and Silas spoke God's words to this jailer and all that lived in his house.

The jailer believed in Jesus. This same jailer who had been rough with Paul and Silas earlier by throwing them into jail and locking their feet in stocks now wanted to do something kind for these men who had shared the Good News. He washed their wounds from where they had been beaten with rods. God's power saved this man and changed his life. Now he wanted to be baptized.

This was an exciting night! Not only did the jailer get saved, but everyone in his family did too. They were all baptized and went back to his house and had a meal and they all rejoiced that God had brought them the Good News through Paul and Silas.

The next day when the leaders had learned that Paul and Silas were Romans. They had made a big mistake by having Paul and Silas wrongly beaten and thrown into prison. No Roman citizen was ever to be punished like that. If Paul and Silas had been treated as a Roman citizen they would have not been put in prison. Even though they were wrongly treated, they chose to trust God. God used their difficulties to save the Philippian jailer and his family.

The leaders begged Paul and Silas to leave the city because they didn't want any more trouble. Before they left Philippi they stopped at Lydia's house and spent some time with them. Lydia and the other believers with her encouraged Paul and Silas and then they left to head off for the next great adventure that God was going to send them on to share the Good News!

Today some of you may be like Paul and Silas and you are believers. Do you share the Good News with others knowing that the Holy Spirit will enable you to do so? If you face difficulty you can trust that the Holy Spirit will give you the ability to stay focused on God and not complain. Maybe you are like the Philippian jailer. Do you know what you must do to be saved? Today you can have your sins forgiven and have eternal life. In order to be saved you must believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, was buried and rose again on the third day. If you would like to know more about being saved, please talk to us.

Close in prayer.

### **Review Questions:**

1. What city did Paul and his friends go to first in Macedonia? (Philippi)
2. Why did Philippi not have a synagogue? (Not enough Jews lived there)
3. Who did Paul and his friends find at the river? (Women)
4. Who opened Lydia's heart to listen to the words Paul was teaching? (The Lord)
5. Who is God leading you to share the Good News/Gospel of Christ with?
6. Who was following Paul when he was sharing the Good News in Philippi? (A slave girl that could predict the future)
7. Why did the slave girl's masters get angry? (They couldn't make money from the slave girl anymore)
8. How was Paul and Silas treated by the crowd? (They were beaten)
9. What did Paul and Silas do in prison? (They prayed and praised God)
10. How did God's power change the jailer's heart? (He believed in Jesus)



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