

International Conversation Cafe

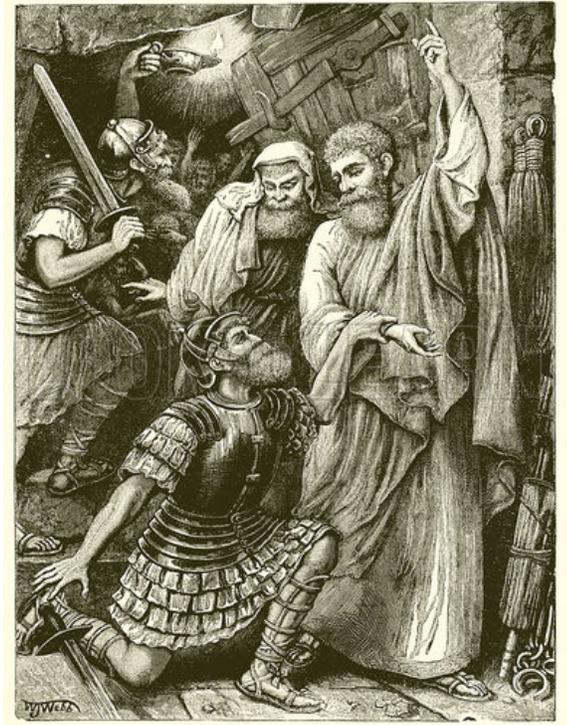
New Testament: The Phillippian Jailer, Acts 16

The New Testament writers tell many stories of people who turned from trust in idols to trust in Jesus. One of these stories comes from Philippi, a small city in present day Greece.

Paul and Silas, two missionaries in the early church, were telling people about Jesus, in Philippi. In the Greek/Roman world, people worshipped many gods and goddesses. When Paul taught that there was only one God, the Greeks saw it as a threat to their way of life. They thought the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, a waste of time and attention. Sometimes, cities found the message of Jesus so threatening, that they put Paul in prison or beat him. In Philippi, they put Paul and Silas in jail after beating them.

Acts 16

The crowd joined the attack against Paul and Silas. The judges ordered that Paul and Silas be stripped and beaten. They were whipped without mercy. Then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received his orders, he put Paul and Silas deep inside the prison. He fastened their feet so they couldn't get away.



Lesson Picture Card. Paul and the Phillippian Jailer. 1897. 7.5 x 10.2 cm. David C. Cook Publishing Co. Elgin & Chicago, IL.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying. They were also singing hymns to God. The other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a powerful earthquake. It shook the prison from top to bottom. All at once the prison doors flew open. Everybody's chains came loose.

The jailer woke up. He saw that the prison doors were open. He pulled out his sword and was going to kill himself. He thought the prisoners had escaped. "Don't harm yourself!" Paul shouted. "We are all here!"

The jailer called out for some lights. He rushed in, shaking with fear. He fell down in front of Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out. He asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you and your family will be saved." They spoke the word of the Lord to him. They also spoke to all the others in his house.

At that hour of the night, the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds.

Right away he and his whole family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house. He set a meal in front of them. He and his whole family were filled with joy. They had become believers in God.

Discussion questions

Retell the story in your own words, paragraph by paragraph.

What questions does the passage bring to mind?

What does this passage say about people?

What does this passage say about God?

Later on, Paul wrote a letter to the church that was at Philippi when Paul was in prison in Rome because of the gospel. The theme of this book is joy in suffering. Here are some of Paul's instructions to them as recorded in chapter 4.

Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful. Let everyone know how gentle you are. The Lord is coming soon.

Don't worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything. Ask and pray. Give thanks to him. Then God's peace will watch over your hearts and your minds because you belong to Christ Jesus. God's peace can never be completely understood.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, always think about what is true. Think about what is noble, right and pure. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect. If anything is excellent or worthy of praise, think about those kinds of things. Do what you have learned or received or heard from me. Follow my example.

The God who gives peace will be with you.

Why do you think these words were important to the early church?

What words from this passage would you like to remember?

