

Paul And Silas Are Imprisoned

Acts 16:16-40

MEMORY VERSE

ACTS 16:31

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many boxes or plastic tubs with lids as the number of children in your class, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, sequins, buttons, (and whatever else might make great and interesting pets) glue, scissors, and markers.

A fairly strong magnet, a piece of thick paper or poster board, and several small magnetically sensitive objects.

Several sheets of white paper, a bar of soap, and pencils.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

My Pet

Bring a box or plastic tub with a lid for each child in your class. Give them cotton balls, pipe cleaners, sequins, buttons, and whatever might make great and interesting pets. Let each child create his own pet (remind them that the pets must fit in the box or plastic tub, so they will not become giant monster pets). Let them put in some pretend food for their pets, and maybe decorate their little houses.

Ask your students how their pets will get food or a bed to sleep in or toys to play with. Some might say that their pet does not need anything; some might say that they will provide these things for their pets.

Explain that just like they are providers and caretakers of their pets, God is our provider and caretaker, but He never forgets anything! His eyes are always on us, His creation. We need never worry that He will not keep His word; **God is always in control**, even when things look out of control.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever been curious about the future. Have you seen signs along the road way for palm readers or fortunetellers? Or have you seen ads on television about psychics who are supposed to be able to tell you things about you and your future? We are told in Leviticus 19:31 "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them..." Fortunetellers can lead us into sin.

Our Bible story today starts with a slave girl who made a lot of money for her owners by predicting the future. She was able to do this because she was possessed by a spirit and did this through the power of Satan. We know that God is immeasurably more powerful than the devil; **God is always in control.** Let's find out what happened when this slave girl meets up with the apostle Paul.

ACTS 16:16-18

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

The Bible says very plainly that this girl was possessed with a spirit of divination, she was controlled by a demon. She also brought her masters a lot of money by "telling the future." But this certainly was not honoring God.

This girl began to follow Paul and Silas. She kept disrupting their preaching by continually shouting that they were servants of God. What she was saying was true, but she was yelling it out everywhere they went. After a while this could probably get on the nerves of even the most patient of people. She continued to do this for several days. No one could hear what Paul was saying and was no doubt a distraction to his preaching the gospel. Finally Paul turned and in Jesus' name cast out the evil spirit from her. She immediately became well and normal.

A couple of things that we could learn from this slave girl are that the power of Satan is very real. As Christians we do not need to be afraid of Satan because “greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.” But we also need to stay away from anything that would even be close to it. We should not desire to have our fortunes read or find out what our horoscopes say. Those things are not of the Lord.

ACTS 16:19-21

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;

and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

These men who were her masters should have been excited that she was free from the bondage of Satan. When the evil spirit left her, she lost her power to be a fortuneteller. Only thinking about the money that they would lose now, the men got angry and went after Paul and Silas. They took Paul and Silas to the authorities and had them arrested by lying to the police. Paul and Silas were in a difficult situation, but **God is always in control.**

It is interesting that Paul and Silas did not do anything wrong. They really were helping this young girl by delivering her from this demon. But sometimes when we do the right thing, difficult things can still happen. **God is always in control.**

ACTS 16:22-24

Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.

And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The crowd also became upset because this slave girl could no longer tell their futures, so they also turned against Paul and Silas. The police had them beaten and put into jail. The jailer was told to keep a close watch on them so he put them in a back cell and fastened them very securely with their feet in chains. It must have been frightening for Paul and Silas, but **God is always in control.**

Not only were there a few men against them but a large multitude. If you remember last week we studied about the dream that Paul had about the man from Macedonia calling Paul to come and help them. But now it seems like the whole city hates them and may even kill them. How could this be the will of God? I wonder if I would have doubted if I heard God's instructions right. But Paul and Silas were completely in God's will at this time. **God is always in control.**

ACTS 16:25

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Their bodies must have been bloodied and bruised. What was Paul and Silas' reaction? Did they get angry with the people and the government leaders? No, they reacted in a very godly way. They begin, in the midst of prison, to pray and sing hymns. They knew that **God is always in control.** The prisoners and guards listened. We must be faithful during difficult times, we never know who is watching.

What was it that kept them singing? It was the joy of the Lord that filled their hearts. Even in a very hard time they could sing praises to the Father and simply trust in Him. God can give us joy also in any circumstance. All we need to do is ask Him to do it.

ACTS 16:26

Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

At midnight, in answer to their prayers, God caused an earthquake that opened the prison and the chains, and set them free. Paul and Silas were set free by the powerful hand of God; **God is always in control.** Even when things look impossible to us we need to remember that we serve a powerful God. He can open up prisons to release us if necessary.

Invisible Force

For this activity you will need a fairly strong magnet and a piece of thick paper or poster board. Try to keep the magnet hidden from sight. While seated with the magnet in your lap, put several magnetically sensitive items on top of the paper. Ask the children if they think you can move the items without touching them. Move them around with the magnet.

Show the class your magnet and explain how you've moved the items around. Explain that God's power is an invisible force; like the wind, we see what He does and we have no doubt He's working. We know that He is always in control, even though we cannot see Him.

ACTS 16:27-28

And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

In those days, when prisoners would escape the jailer in charge would be killed. When the jailer saw the jail was open, he thought everyone was gone so he was going to kill himself. Paul stopped him by shouting that they were still there.

Paul could have just ran away and not cared about what happened to the jailer, but He wanted to do what was right and stay to help the jailer. Also, God was about to use Paul to minister to this man who needed Jesus.

ACTS 16:29-30

Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The jailer saw the power of God in the earthquake and was very frightened. Because Paul and Silas didn't run away, the jailer was safe. He brought them out of the prison and fell before them and asked how he could be saved. Even the jailer had learned that **God is always in control.**

It is important for us to be good witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ. What do we do when difficult things happen in our lives? Do we praise God continually, in good times and bad? Or do we complain? Do others see Jesus in our lives and the joy that He can give us? There are always people watching us. They want to see if Jesus really does help us.

ACTS 16:31-34

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Paul told the jailer and his household to believe in Jesus Christ. He instructed them to ask for forgiveness and to ask Jesus in their hearts as Savior and Lord. The jailer took care of Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. The jailer and his family believed and were baptized. The jailer was filled with the joy of the Lord. Sometimes the people we least expect will come to the Lord. **God is always in control.**

ACTS 16:35-36

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."

So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."

In the morning the officials sent word to release Paul and Silas. The jailer was very happy to be able to release them and told them to go in peace. Paul and Silas had been willing to be used of God, even in a difficult situation. Their faithfulness to the Lord proved to many that day that **God is always in control.**

ACTS 16:37-39

But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."

And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.

The town officials had broken the Roman law by beating and jailing Paul and Silas without a trial. Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and therefore had certain rights and privileges. The town magistrates could get in a lot of trouble for what they had done. Paul pointed this out to the officers. They became very frightened and came to the prison to personally escort them from the prison. This gave Paul and Silas a police escort and ensured their safety from their enemies. In every detail of our lives, **God is always in control.**

ACTS 16:40

So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Paul and Silas met with the believers in Lydia's house. Paul told them what had happened and about the faithfulness of God. They encouraged the church and then continued on their journey.

Healing the slave girl had made her owners and the crowd very angry. Paul and Silas were punished and jailed for healing her. Even though circumstances seemed like everything was going wrong, God was still in control; **God is always in control.** God used what seemed like a bad situation and turned it into good. The jailer and his family were saved because Paul and Silas were faithful and obedient to God.

When the circumstances in our lives go wrong, we need to stay faithful and obedient to God. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus instead of the situation around us. Remember that **God is always in control.**

Mystery Message

Write each word of the memory verse on a separate piece of white paper with the edge of a bar of soap. Pass out the papers to the class. Let them discover the mystery words by shading over the sheet of paper with the sides of their pencil leads.

If your class is old enough, let them organize themselves into a line putting the memory verse in correct order. For younger children draw happy faces or simple shapes for them to “discover.”

Explain that God is in control even if we cannot see what the end result will be; all we have to do is obey, just like this class did as they shaded in their papers.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for the perfect control the Lord has over every situation. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.