

Faithful: Daily • 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

I. INTRODUCTION • Read Acts 16:16-34

A. Philippi

1. The cell was damp & dark & the late nite's chill had crept in to add to their discomfort.
2. Paul & Silas were locked in the heart of the jail, their feet in wooden stocks; their hands secured by chains.
3. The pain from the beating they'd received a few hours before ached with every heartbeat.
4. The throbs set a rhythm that reminded Silas of one of the hymns his church at Antioch sang.
 - a. Quietly, he began to hum. The pain eased a bit. He hummed a little louder.
 - b. Paul heard him & picked up the tune.
 - c. Then in a strong clear voice Silas began to sing the words. Paul joined.
 - d. When Silas forgot a line, Paul carried on till Silas rejoined him at the chorus.
 - e. The only accompaniment, the clanking of their chains.
5. When they finished. Paul began another song praising the One who'd saved them.
 - a. Silas smiled in the darkness. Paul was a great preacher, but he was no singer.
 - b. He couldn't carry a tune in a bucket, so Silas joined in hoping the other prisoners wouldn't shout them down.
6. After a 3rd song, there was a moment of silence, then Paul began to pray.
 - a. He thanked God for allowing them to come to Philippi to share His love & message.
 - b. He rejoiced that he & Silas were allowed to suffer for the cause of Christ.
7. When he finished, one of the other prisoners asked who Paul & Silas were & why they were in jail.
 - a. Paul told him. Earlier that day they'd cast a demon out of a slave girl who made her masters a lot of money telling fortunes.
 - b. Fuming over their loss of income they'd made up false charges against Paul & Silas.
 - c. The authorities were more concerned about appeasing a couple wealthy Philippians than justice & had beaten them, then thrown them into jail to be held over for trial the next day.
8. Another prisoner asked who they were singing their songs about.
9. That was the opening Paul hoped for & launched into a powerful presentation of the Gospel.
10. When he was done, one of the prisoners issued a challenge: If Jesus was who Paul claimed He was, why did He let his messengers mistreated as they were?
 - a. A couple other prisoners voiced their agreement.
 - b. Silas replied; "We're here because God loves **you** & wants **you** to hear the Good News of His forgiveness too."
 - c. Paul added, "If the only way to reach you is a night in jail, we count it a privilege."
11. After another minute of silence, one of the prisoners said, "Tell us more." So Paul spent the next hour telling them about Jesus, the cross & resurrection.
12. Then he invited those who wanted to repent & believe to say their name out loud.
 - a. All but a couple of the dozen prisoners confessed Christ.
 - b. One of them then said, "Teach us that first song you sang."
 - c. So Silas taught them until they all were singing.
13. About midnight, as they'd begun learning a 2nd hymn, the ground began to shake violently.
 - a. The walls of the jail swayed, unhinging the bars of their cells.
 - b. The wooden stocks holding Paul & Silas' feet shattered.
 - c. The chains on their wrists dropped away as if opened by an unseen key.
14. Coming out of their cells the prisoners gathered round Silas & Paul.
 - a. Though no one voiced it out loud, they looked to them for guidance on what to do.
 - b. As the shaking subsided, Paul reached out to lay a hand on the shoulders of the men nearest him, men who were now his brothers in Christ.
 - c. They all looked to the single point of light in the darkness, the doorway leading to the courtyard of the jail.
 - d. The thick wooden door that had once closed the opening lay in pieces on the ground.
15. They saw the jailor step before the open door.
 - a. He looked down at the broken door & hung his head.

- b. One of the prisoners whispered, “He thinks we’ve escaped.”
- 16. They all knew what that meant. Jailors were responsible for those entrusted to them.
 - a. If they escaped, the jailor would suffer the fate intended for the prisoners.
 - b. There was no way he could face the shame of having lost them all.
 - c. So he drew his gladius, felt for a soft place between his ribs & set the tip.
- 17. But before the fatal thrust, Paul called out, “Stop! We’re here.”
 - a. The jailor lifted his head but did not move the sword.
 - b. He said, “You are. What of the others?”
 - c. A chorus of voices confirmed they were **all** still there.
 - d. The jailor then turned his sword around & pointed the tip at the doorway, “Come out to the light,” he said, though there was little in the way of command in his voice.
 - e. Paul led the way, “There’s no need of your sword now friend,’ he said.
 - f. The jailor uncertain, lowered the tip but kept it at the ready.
 - g. As the prisoners stepped into the courtyard, he counted them off; they were indeed all there.
 - h. Sheathing his sword he asked, “Why did you not escape? You could have fled inland & no one would have been able to catch you.”
 - i. Silas stepped forward laid his hand on the man’s shoulder, saying, “Our escape would come at your expense. We could not do that to you.”
 - j. The jailor was silent of a moment, then looking at Silas he asked, “Why do you care? I’ve shown you no kindness.”
- 18. One of the prisoners who knew the jailor said, “Demeter, you should hear what these men have to say. I have & it’s changed me.”
- 19. The jailor listened & was saved. He took Paul & Silas home to meet his family & they were saved.
- 20. The next day when the authorities realized they’d grossly violated Paul’s rights as a Roman citizen, they were terrified & pleaded with him to leave.
- 21. When Paul & his team departed, they left behind a small but strong church.
 - a. The officials were careful about how they treated the believers for fear of discovery on their illegal treatment of Paul & Silas.
 - b. Later, when persecution did eventually heat up, the man given charge of those arrested for preaching the Gospel was himself a brother in Christ.
- 22. As Paul, Silas & Timothy left Philippi & made the trek to Thessalonica, they saw the previous day’s sufferings in a different light from how it had seemed when they were in the midst of it.
- 23. God worked through it all to bring many to faith & to lay a foundation for the future none could have foreseen.
- 24. As the team stepped into the streets of Thessalonica, I wonder if they said, “Okay Jesus – Here we are. Let’s have some fun!”

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 1-2

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain.² But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict.

- 1. The trip from Philippi to Thessalonica took a few days.
- 2. When they arrived, Paul & Silas **still bore** the evidence of their beating.
 - a. They were bruised & sore.
 - b. Their wounds needed to be treated.
- 3. Even though preaching the Gospel had brought them harsh treatment, they wasted no time sharing the message in Thessalonica.
- 4. And again, it didn’t take long before those who rejected Christ were causing trouble just as they had in Philippi.
- 5. But this didn’t discourage or slow them down; they preached Jesus all the more boldly.
- 6. When you have the lessons of Philippi **behind** you, the challenges before you don’t seem so daunting.
 - a. When the wounds inflicted at Philippi **move** the people of Thessalonica to listen more closely & come to faith more quickly,

- b. Those wounds become a blessing to rejoice in.
 - 7. This was Paul & Silas' testimony. This was their experience & story.
 - 8. Things don't always go the way we think they should.
 - a. In fact, sometimes things go in what seems like the exact **wrong** direction.
 - b. That's when our faith has to ante up.
 - 1) Is God real? Is He good?
 - 2) Then trust Him to work it out.
 - 9. When your world seems to be caving in, like Job's –
 - a. When all the things you've been taught & believed about the goodness, love & power of God are on the line –
 - b. When there isn't a shred of evidence left but His promise –
 - c. Hold on, because His glory is on the way.
 - 10. 12 men sit in a room listening to their rabbi, their master, as He tells them He's about to be betrayed into the hands of those who will kill Him.
 - a. They've just devoted the last 3 years of their lives to follow Him & have rarely left His side.
 - b. **Because** they've been so close to Him they know He's much more than mere man.
 - c. He's the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God.
 - d. He can feed thousands with one Happy Meal.
 - e. He raises the dead back to life.
 - f. He walks on water & calms a raging storm with a word.
 - g. Demons cower before him, then flee at His command.
 - h. It was inconceivable to the disciples Jesus' path led **anywhere** but to the Throne of Israel.
 - 11. They could not see that a place called Calvary was on the path **to** the Throne not just of Israel but of Creation.
 - a. Their hope died with Jesus on that cross.
 - b. And it died because they lost sight of what faith **must not** lose – **God always comes through.**

Today we know the cross Isn't the end of the story.
Here's what we need to hold on to – It never is!
 - 15. Those hopeless disciples were confronted by their lack of faith a few days later when the Risen Christ appeared & rebuked them for being so slow.
 - a. They'd been so busy denying His warnings of imminent death, they'd not even **heard** His promise to rise again.
 - b. The disciples' problem wasn't that they thought too much of Jesus that He could die.
 - c. They thought **too little** of Him that He could rise!
 - 16. We believe in a God of Resurrection.
 - a. But in order for there to **be** resurrection, there must first be death.
 - b. We **must** hold on to the truth that death is not the end of the story.
 - c. It's just the set up for the end, which is life eternal.
 - 17. It was **this** conviction that enable Paul's team to press on in the face of intense opposition.
 - 18. They'd seen time & again how God turned **opposition into opportunity** to bring salvation to even more.
 - B. Still the Case
 - 1. We need to hear this.
 - 2. We need it because the freedom & prosperity we enjoy in modern America has **lulled** us into an easy believism unprepared for adversity.
 - 3. On the contrary, a plethora of false teachers now claim Jesus died to make us rich & happy;
 - a. They say the measure of faith is health & wealth.
 - b. They've turned the American Dream into the promise of God.
 - 4. But Jesus isn't an **entertainer** who came to make us **happy**. He's the **Savior** Who came to make us **holy**.
 - 5. He didn't stage a **show**, he staged a **rescue operation**.
 - 6. He doesn't save us from **boredom**, He saves us from **hell**.
 - 7. Jesus didn't promise His followers an easy life. Rather, He promised **trouble**.
- John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have

tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 15:18–20 • ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.

8. Jesus couldn’t be any clearer – Belonging to Him means being hated by the world.
 - a. Why is it then that so many Christians & churches are trying to buddy up to the world?
 - b. They’re seem concerned with being **relevant** than being **true to God & His Word**.
 - c. The desire to be **Hip** has replaced the longing to be **Holy**.
9. Paul wouldn’t be welcome in many churches today.
 - a. He wasn’t afraid to call sin, Sin.
 - b. He didn’t shrink from preaching the **scandal** of the Cross.
 - c. He didn’t hesitate in calling sinners to repent & flee from the righteous wrath of God.
10. When enemies attacked, he took it as confirmation his message was hitting home.
11. We need more of that courage in our pulpits today.
 - a. But we don’t just need it in the pulpit – we need it in the office cubicle too.
 - b. We need it on the assembly line, in the boardroom, city council & classroom.
 - c. We need it in the living room, den & bedroom.
12. We need to weed out our **wimpiness** & man-up. New-man-up!
13. Today is IDOPPC.
14. All over the world, our brothers & sisters in Christ are suffering persecution.
 - a. Yet in the midst of their suffering, they’re praying **for us**.
 - b. They know how suffering has honed **their faith** to a keen edge.
 - c. They’re concerned for us because they fear our prosperity & **lack** of persecution combine to lull us into a spiritual laziness dishonoring to God.
 - d. It’s humbling to realize a suffering believers are is praying for us, specially when we’re not praying for them.
 - e. Who needs prayer more? We do!
15. I think of a young Ugandan I met in Kampala in August; **Ivan Semwogerere**.
 - a. He came to the Lord & learned to lead worship at CC then became the worship leader at another church.
 - b. He, his fiancé & the senior pastor were sitting with a bunch of other people from their church watching the World Cup when radical Muslims detonated a bomb.
 - c. Ivan’s fiancé & pastor were both killed.
 - d. He lost hearing in his right ear & sight in his right eye.
 - e. Even though he was still recovering from the blast, with no one else to lead the church, he’d had to step in to the role of senior pastor.
 - f. He was at the Pastor’s conference there at CC Kampala.
 - g. I’d already taught 2 sessions when he gave his testimony.
 - h. As I listened, I thought, “This man who’s suffered for his faith, who’s lost 2 of the people closest to him just a few weeks before, has sat there listening to me teach the Word of God.”
 - i. What’s my faith cost me? What suffering has preaching brought my way?
 - j. My preaching causes **others** to suffer, not me.
16. If it **does** bring suffering-will I continue to preach?
17. Or we should ask – **WHEN** being faithful to God’s Word brings hardship, will we be faithful?
18. For surely, we stand on the threshold of such a time.
19. Apart from revival sweeping the land, persecution is in our future.
- III. CONCLUSION
- A. Prepare – Faithful: Daily
1. The question we face is, “When persecution comes, will we have the courage to endure it as Paul did?”
 - a. As Peter, James & John did?

- b. Will we follow in the heroic footsteps left us by the **millions** of believers who've suffered rather than deny the Lord?
 - c. Will we join the ranks of our brothers & sisters who today in China, North Korea, Nigeria, Pakistan, & India are being driven from their homes, thrown into prison, beaten, & killed for their faith?
2. The way to make sure we'll pass **that test** when it comes is to be faithful with the smaller challenges we face today at home, tomorrow at work or school. // [Persecution .com](http://Persecution.com)