

A Jailer

Finds Joy



Track 43

The jailer jingled his keys and started to whistle.

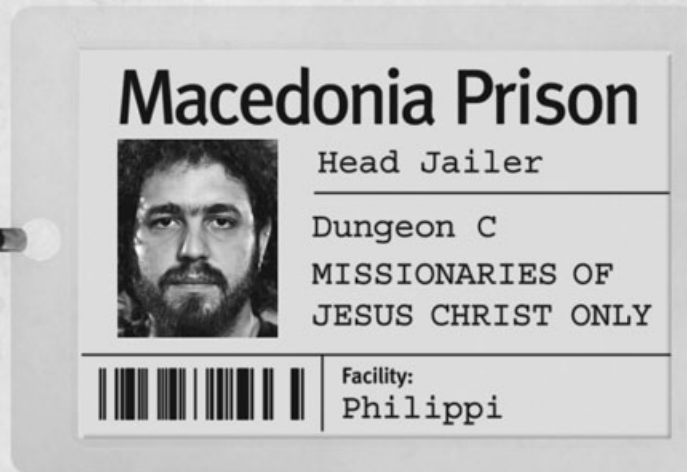
What a good day! He smiled to himself.

His prisoners were all locked up safely. The prison floor was swept. Now he could just sit in his chair and relax.

Uh-oh! Who's coming?

A group of Roman officers arrived at the jail. They dragged two new prisoners with them.

“Meet Paul and Silas,” said the officers. “They’re in trouble for preaching a strange, new religion about salvation through Jesus Christ. We beat them with sticks, and now you must lock them up.”



Watch them carefully so they don't escape."

"Yes, sirs," said the jailer. "I know just the place for these men. We call it the dungeon."

The jailer and his helpers¹ grabbed Paul and Silas and pulled them far inside the prison to the darkest, coldest, smelliest room of all.

"They won't escape from here!" said the jailer.

Then the jailer and his men pushed Paul and Silas onto the ground – right on their sore, bloody backs.

OW! That must have hurt!

"Lock them up tight!" ordered the jailer.

They stretched Paul and Silas' legs far apart and chained their feet to wooden blocks, called stocks.

"Sleep tight, Paul and Silas!" called the jailer as he shut the door and turned the key.

The jailer returned to his chair. Finally, he could relax! After a while, he fell asleep.

About midnight, the jailer dreamed he heard sweet, happy singing in the prison. He didn't know it, but this wasn't a dream at all!

His two new prisoners, Paul and Silas were praying and singing



praises to God. They sang so loud that all the other prisoners heard them too.

“How can they sing in the dungeon?” asked the other prisoners, surprised. “Aren’t they in pain? Why are they thanking their God?”

Suddenly, a mighty earthquake shook the walls and the floors of the prison. The locked doors swung open! The chains of every prisoner came loose!

The jailer awoke and jumped to his feet. “What’s happening?” he screamed.

But when he saw the open doors, he knew his worst nightmare had come true. His prisoners had escaped. And what would a jailer’s punishment be? **DEATH!**

He pulled out his sword and raised it high.

“Wait!” shouted Paul. “Don’t hurt yourself. We’re all here.”

The jailer dropped his sword and called to his helpers, “Bring me torches so I can see!”

Then the jailer dashed into the prison and looked around. Sure enough – all his prisoners were there, safe and sound.

Shaking with fear, the jailer fell down before Paul and Silas. *What an awesome, powerful God they served!*

The jailer brought Paul and Silas out of the prison. He had one question to ask them – a BIG question. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” he asked.

Paul and Silas looked at him kindly. “Believe in the Lord Jesus,” they said. “You and your family will be saved if each one of you believes in Him.”

“I believe!” shouted the jailer.

He invited Paul and Silas to his house. He washed up their sores and fed them a meal. Then, in the morning, the town leaders set Paul and Silas free.

“Goodbye, friends!” called the jailer from the doorway of the jail. But today, his keys jingled more joyfully than ever. Finally, he and his family had met the Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ!

¹We assume the jailer had helpers since he called to others for lights.

**Learn from the the jailer’s biography:**

- Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.
- Believers in Jesus can be joyful even during hard times, like Paul and Silas were.

Parent Ideas

A Jailer Finds Joy

Scripture: Acts 16:16-40

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.
- Believers in Jesus can be joyful even during hard times, like Paul and Silas were.

1. Read-together activity

Gather the whole family and some friends or neighbors to act out this biography while you read it. You'll need people to play the parts of the jailer, Paul, Silas and one or two Roman officers (who could also play the jailer's helpers). When you read each character's dialogue, prompt that character to repeat it after you with dramatic flair. Add props, such as keys, a broom, a chair, a sword (or stick), candles (for torches), and bread (for the meal).

If you have extra people, assign them the parts of the other prisoners, the stocks (two to four people) and the dungeon door (two people). When the jailer and his helpers stretch Paul and Silas' legs apart, the people acting as stocks each grab one or two ankles and hold them tight. They release their grip during the earthquake. When the jailer locks the door to the dungeon, the people playing the door will stand side by side, holding hands. They will let go of each other's hands and move apart during the earthquake.

2. Read-together activity

If you usually read the biographies with your child, ask your spouse or another adult relative to read this biography. Your child will benefit from different relationships and interaction. Since this biography focuses on salvation, consider asking a relative who has not yet trusted Christ.

3. Discussion activity

Change the setting of your discussions. For example, if you normally sit on a couch while you talk, walk outside, drive in a car or talk at the dinner table instead. Ask questions like these:

- Describe the jailer at the beginning of the biography. How did he treat Paul and Silas?
- What would you do if you were sore and chained in a dungeon?
- Why were Paul and Silas able to be so joyful?
- What awesome things did God do in the jail?
- What big question did the jailer ask Paul and Silas? What was their answer?
- How did the jailer change once he trusted Christ?

4. Application activity

Help your child to understand that trusting in Jesus Christ is the *only* requirement for salvation. God does not save us because of our good behavior, our appearance, or our talents and skills.

If your child has already trusted Christ, encourage her to write a cinquain poem expressing her joy. A cinquain is a five-line poem that does not rhyme. Tell your child to write the word *Savior* on the first line. On the second line, she should write two adjectives that describe the Savior. On the third line, she should write three interesting action words

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that end with “ing.” These words should describe what the Savior did or does for her (e.g., sacrificing, seeking, surprising). The fourth line includes a four-word phrase or sentence that expresses her feelings for the Savior (e.g., “He makes me sing.”). The final line contains a one-word synonym for Savior (e.g., Friend).

If your child has not yet discovered the joy of salvation, share about the joy the Savior gives you. (Talk to your child’s Sparks leader if you have questions about salvation.)

5. Application activity

Talk about hard times your child or family has faced. Were you able to rejoice in the Lord then? Why or why not? No matter what happens to us, we can always rejoice in God’s character and our eternal salvation.

Do you know a song for Philippians 4:4? If not, create a melody to go along with the words and sing it whenever you experience a hard time. To remind you of the joyful jailer’s biography, sing it now and jingle your keys to the beat.