

## PAUL AN AMBASSADOR OF GOD

Paul needed no letters of commendation from men, however high their authority in the church. His appointment as a minister of Christ was not received from men. He was God's ambassador by direct appointment. Nor was he a minister plenipotentiary invested with full power to negotiate terms of peace. He was invested only with power to proclaim to men the terms on which the King of kings would welcome them to become again His loyal and loving subjects. This message was one of free grace and pardon, a revelation of God's love for men shown in the death of Christ His Son, for whose sake He now beseeches men to be reconciled to Him. This is the climax of divine condescension.

## FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

## International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON II.—PAUL AND THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER.—JULY 11.

(Acts xvi. 22-24.)

**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—Acts xvi. 31.

**TIME AND PLACE**—Shortly after last lesson; Philippi.

**INTRODUCTION**—It is not certain for how long a time Paul and his companions were permitted to continue without interruption the work so favorably begun in Philippi, but it appears to have been for some time. Paul's company consisted at this time of Silas, whom he had taken with him from Antioch, Luke, who, at this point in the narrative, uses the first person plural, and Timothy, who had become his companion at Lystra. While engaged in their Gospel work at Philippi, they were interrupted by "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination," and her demoniac powers were used by her masters as a source of gain. At length Paul, "being grieved," commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. This so enraged her masters, who had their means of gain thus cut off that they seized upon Paul and Silas and brought them before the magistrates, with the result stated in our lesson.

**VERSE BY VERSE**.—V. 22. "The multitude rose up."—They were stirred up to this outbreak by the owners of the slave girl out of whom Paul had cast the evil spirit. "Rent off their clothes."—*i. e.*, The clothes of Paul and Silas, that they might be beaten. "Beat them."—The word means, beaten with rods. This differed from scourging, which was inflicted with the scourge, a whip with many strands, the ends of which were armed sometimes with pieces of lead or sharp iron.

V. 24. "Inner prison."—This was probably an underground dungeon. "Feet fast in the stocks."—Stocks were wooden frames into which the feet could be locked in such a manner as to cause great suffering. The spirit of the jailer is shown by the fact that he went beyond the orders of the magistrate in the cruel treatment of the apostles.

V. 25. "At midnight."—Their sufferings from their stripes and from the torture of the stocks would prevent their sleep. "Prayed"—Doubtless for grace and strength to bear the trial. "Sang praises."—Happy in the assurance that their prayers were answered, and that the Lord was with them for their defence.

V. 26. "A great earthquake."—This seems to have occurred at the midnight hour while Paul and Silas were engaged in prayer and singing. "Doors were opened . . . bands were loosed."—These circumstances indicate that while the earthquake may have been a natural phenomenon, there were attendant miraculous features.

V. 28. "Would have killed himself."—The Roman jailer was responsible with his own life for the safe-keeping of his prisoners.

V. 29. "Came trembling."—Being terror-stricken. "Sprang in."—Into the inner prison where Paul and Silas were.

V. 30. "Brought them out."—Out of the dungeon into the main prison. "What must I do to be saved?"—We must suppose the jailer had heard something of the gospel preached by Paul, was conscious of sin and was filled with alarm, and though he may not have had a very clear idea of the meaning of the word salvation, he earnestly desired help.

V. 31. "Believe, etc."—Trust in Christ as Saviour. "Be saved."—From sin and its penalty.

V. 32. "The word of the Lord."—The truths of the gospel were explained to him.

V. 33. "Washed their stripes."—Wounds made by the beating they had received. "Was baptized."—On profession of their faith in Christ. This baptism must have been performed within the prison.

V. 34. "Brought them into his house."—Still within the prison, but that part of it occupied by the jailer and his family. "Repined."—In the new found salvation.

**THOUGHTS**—The arrest of Paul and Silas was seen under false pretensions. The masters, who were robbed of their deceptive practices for money-making, were shrewd enough to conceal

their real motives. Those who disturb the false peace of sinners are often denounced as disturbers of the public peace; and so it was with Paul and Silas. The first charge was that they disturbed the city. The truth was, they aroused the sinner from his false repose. The second charge was, that they were presenting Jewish beliefs, to take the place of their own, which were Roman. The truth was, they were touching the pride and error of sinful men, who did not care to be reformed. The masters of the slave-girl cunningly gained the people, and they, like a mob, gave their voices against those holy men upon the statement of false accusers. Like wicked officers, the magistrates dared not act contrary to public sentiment, and they used all the strength of the law against the accused. Each in his turn shared in the imprisonment of Paul and Silas. Beginning with the masters, pushed by the people, sentenced by the magistrates, beaten by the officer, and led to prison by the keeper, they felt the strength of Roman hatred.

The worship at midnight was unusual among prisoners; but the prisoners were unusual characters. They were stifled in the damp, close atmosphere about them. They were afflicted by the bleeding wounds upon their backs. They were cramped by stocks and chains. They were in darkness and filth. Surely they were not inspired by their surroundings. They breathed freely a heavenly atmosphere. They were healed through faith in Him who had bled and died for their salvation. They were at liberty in the Spirit. They were filled with light and life, washed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Their worship came from a heart full of holy love. Prison walls, darkness and affliction could be but temporary, while the peace and joy in believing, if cherished, would be unending. They worshiped God, and it was found that they had a listening congregation; how large, they did not know, neither could they know how favorably they were impressed, but they reached the ear of God, and received an answer from Him. If the Romans hated them and their cause, God loved them, and burst the bonds of affliction which bound them.

The earthquake brought deliverance. It effected wonders in that prison at Philippi. Prison-doors were opened, chains were loosed, while light dawned upon the hearts and consciences of the keeper and the prisoners, and led them to liberty in Christ. Alarm gave way to inquiry, and the liberated prisoners became teachers to those bound by Satan's chains. The prison that had been made a peaceful chapel of prayer and praise, suddenly became an alarming place of judgment. The sight which met the jailer's eyes, when he awoke, bound him in fetters of fear and agony. His extremity was God's opportunity, and his ready instrument perceived the danger, and gave His voice to prevent it. The next scene in the prison was that of a trembling, repenting keeper, learning the way of repentance and faith. Then came the beautiful and natural results of that knowledge. The stout-hearted jailer was the tender nurse to the suffering, but faithful instructors. He had nursed spiritual health, and, in return, sought to restore temporal health. The prison became the spiritual birthplace of a family of souls. The chain of circumstances leading to the glorious results might be forgotten, but the rejoicing of that hour was recorded in heaven.

The question asked by the jailer was important and candid. He fell down before his benefactors in token of his willingness to hear and believe their words. It was an admission of his lost, sinful condition, and an appeal for help. It was asked, regardless of the opinion of magistrates or people. It was asked on behalf of his own self—not what his nation, or townsmen, must do; but what he must do to be saved. His conviction was genuine.

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

## DAILY READINGS.

First Day—Paul and the Philippian jailer. Acts xvi. 16-40.

Second Day—"In stripes, in imprisonments." 2 Cor. vi. 1-18.

Third Day—"For whom I have suffered." Phil. iii. 1-21.

Fourth Day—"None of these things move me." Acts xx. 17-35.

Fifth Day—"Persecuted but not forsaken." 2 Cor. ix. 1-19.

Sixth Day—The greatest of all questions. Acts ii. 37-47.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, July 11—How THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH IS DONE: HER CONSTITUTION AND COURSE. Acts vi. 1-8.

## EDMONTON PRESBYTERY Y. P. S. C. E. REPORT.

We feel that the report of your committee on young peoples' societies will be meagre and unsatisfactory for two reasons—the formative state of the movement in our Presbytery and the inexperience of the one preparing this report. But as the germinating process in plant life may be and is described by the scientist, so the initial stages of C. E. work in our Presbytery is entitled to description brief and bare though it may be.