



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Mission Adventure Series, Lesson 55

Lesson Title: Paul and Silas Set Free

Take Home Point: God wants to set you free.

Warm-Up:

In his book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, the main character Christian carries a heavy load on his back. He has been reading a Book that warns him of sin and its consequences, and the more he reads the more his burden weighs him down. His burden is recognized sin, and he does not know how to get rid of it. The more Christian reads his Book, the more the weight of his sin presses him down. Then he meets a man named Evangelist, who tells him how to be rid of the burden. He can follow a path to the cross of Jesus Christ, where the burden will be removed. When he reaches the cross, his burden comes loose from his shoulders and rolls into a nearby open grave, never to be seen or felt again. After this happens, Christian is "glad and light." He is also surprised, for he has done nothing to remove the burden; it comes off his back at the sight of the cross.

Read: Acts 16:16-34

Observation (What happened?):

Why were the slave girl's owners upset when Paul cast out the evil spirit?

What were Paul and Silas doing when the earthquake struck? Where were they?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

Why do you think the girl's actions troubled Paul? Wasn't she telling the truth about them?

Why didn't the other prisoners leave when the opportunity came up?

Insight:

"The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable." This little twist on the words of Jesus found in John 8:36, is actually pretty accurate. Why? Because learning God's truth means learning a way of life that is at odds with how we want to live. Jesus sets us free from sin and our own selfishness. It can be very hard to let go of our precious little habits and desires of independence and personal gratification, and it really can make us miserable. But just as painful surgery on our physical body is required to remove diseased tissue, so God must sometimes put us through difficulties, pain, and sorrows to turn to him for removal of sin's burden. Imagine the mental and emotional roller coaster the jailer went through in this Bible account. Just another "day at the office", then a disaster so terrible he despaired of life, then great relief, then true release from his life of sin and darkness, not only for him but for his family, as well. His fear and despair opened his eyes to the freedom found in Jesus Christ.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

What does it mean to you that Jesus has set you free?

What burden do you still carry even though he offers to set you free from that load?

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