

## **Back to lockdown! (Acts 16 v 19-40)**

### **Locked up!**

Just imagine how the people of Leicester are feeling seeing most of the rest of us enjoy some freedom and they are locked up again. In our reading from Acts 16 last week we looked at the way that the Lord opened the door to Europe, opened the door of Lydia's heart and opened the door for all the evil in the slave girl's life to be taken out in the name of the Lord Jesus. But of course, that meant the slave owners lost their ill gotten gains of income through the same exit door. Not surprisingly they were going to fight back. It can be the same with us. If we are making an impact, we must expect that the response we get from some will not be friendly. Paul and Silas were treated atrociously and harshly imprisoned on trumped up charges. How easy it is for a collection of individuals to be badly misled when they are in a crowd and sadly how often the authorities fail to protect those spreading the Gospel; just like Paul and Silas did and just like that happens so often in so many countries today, and even at times in our own.

Imagine how it felt for Paul and Silas locked away with their feet in stocks. How easy for them to start playing the blame game! Instead we see them testifying to their faith in Christ in the middle of the night, in prayer and in song. And then comes that miraculous opening of the jail and their stocks because no lockdown is immune to the Lord's intervention. But then look at a door that was even more miraculously opened, the door to the jailer's heart!

### **The jail and the jailer opened up!**

Just imagine how this poor man felt. All of a sudden in the middle of the night the bottom had dropped out of his world, the game was up, and he might as well take his own life before it was taken from him. But then he listens to Paul as we should. They were all still there. Such was the effect these two had had on their fellow prisoners. And then the man asks the most important question any of us can ever ask, "What must I do to be saved?". We can't be sure how deep his question was, but it seems

he knew that they had the answer, and what an answer it was! Quite simply they pointed this man to put his trust in the Lord Jesus. In no time at all he was understanding the Good News of Jesus and so were his family and we see his behaviour totally changed. No longer fastening these men in the stocks but now washing their wounds and feeding them. Once we belong to Christ, He challenges us to change radically!

### **Opened up to go!**

So now the authorities want to get rid of Paul and Silas. But Paul demands an apology because they are Roman citizens. He was prepared to use his privileged background in the service of the Gospel to give some protection to those that were left behind. Then they did leave but a group of Christian believers had stayed behind and so, it seems, had Luke. They didn't have an easy time of it but the door that the Lord had opened was not to be closed. (For further reading read Paul's letter to the Philippians when once more he is locked up).