

PHILEMON

Lesson 3: Notable Prisoners

15 January, 2016

The apostle Paul writes to Philemon while “a prisoner of Jesus Christ.” In fact, Paul had been imprisoned many times during his missionary journeys for serving the Lord and doing right, yet he never complained and never quit.

1 Peter 4:12-16 Trials are part of the Christian life. We can rejoice when we suffer at the hands of the world that hates us. God loves us. We are “beloved” (vs. 12). Trials provide us with a great opportunity to glorify God (vss. 14, 16).

Ridicule is the only trial that most Christians will ever face for serving the Lord. But many Christians throughout history and in many countries today have been beaten, tortured, imprisoned, or executed for their faith in Jesus Christ. We’ll consider some Bible accounts of faithful men who were mistreated and imprisoned for doing right and serving God. This will help us to have a proper perspective concerning our own trials.

Genesis 39:6-20 **THE ACCOUNT OF JOSEPH.** Joseph did the right thing and would not sin against God, but he was accused of wrongdoing and ended up in prison for doing right. In the end, Joseph ended up on a throne in a palace. God rewarded him for his faithfulness.

Jeremiah 37:1-21 **THE ACCOUNT OF JEREMIAH.** The prophet Jeremiah was locked up and starved because he preached the word of God to a people who didn’t want to hear it. He spoke the truth to the king of Judah concerning the captivity of Judah by Babylon. That was his only crime. In time, Jeremiah’s prophecies were fulfilled and Judah came to know that Jeremiah was telling the truth. The point is that Jeremiah stood for God even when he knew it would cost him his freedom.

1 Kings 22:1-28

THE ACCOUNT OF MICAIAH. There were 400 prophets (vs. 6) who were willing to lie and tell the kings what they wanted to hear concerning whether or not to go to battle against Syria. Micaiah would not speak only good things about the king, therefore the king hated him (vs. 8). Micaiah wouldn't "*go with the flow,*" though he was strongly persuaded by the other prophets (vs. 13). He told the truth—and got rebuked (vs. 18), hit in the face (vs. 24), put in prison and starved (vs. 27). Lesson learned: the truth is of great value. You must speak the truth, no matter what the cost.

Acts 5:15-21

PETER AND THE APOSTLES. The High Priest and the Pharisees got angry when they saw the apostles healing people. They "**laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison**" (vs. 8). When the Holy Spirit opened the prison doors and freed them, they continued to preach. They didn't let their previous circumstances change their determination to proclaim the gospel. Bad situations did not deter them from continuing to stand up for Jesus.

Acts 16:16-34

PAUL AND SILAS. They delivered a young woman from an unclean spirit. As a result, they were stripped, beaten, thrown in the inner prison, and put in stocks. They continued to praise and serve the Lord even in their painful conditions in prison.

The result: the jailer and his whole family were saved and baptized.

Lesson: sometimes Christians are put into bad situations so they can reach somebody for Christ who would never have heard the Gospel otherwise.
