

SINGING IN THE SLAMMER

Concept: Rejoice always!

Supplies: Paper chains (made as a craft by K-2nd grades), tape player with "earthquake" sound effects (Melody Klockner), costumes.

Scripture: Acts 16:16-24

Cast: Paul, Silas, Jailer

Setting: Paul and Silas are sitting on the floor, their legs wrapped in chains (made of paper). Both are wincing and move slowly as if their backs are very sore. The 3rd grade students sit off to one side with their hands or legs wrapped in "chains" to act as the other prisoners. Explain a signal or tell them to wait for the "earthquake" sounds to break the chains.

Narrator: Paul and Silas told a servant girl about Jesus. When the owners of the servant girl saw she believed Jesus, they knew that now they could not use her to make money. So they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the Roman rulers and said, "These men are Jews and are making trouble in our city. They are teaching things that are not right for us as Romans to do." The crowd joined the attack against them. The Roman officers tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and had them beaten with rods. Then Paul and Silas were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to guard them carefully. He put them in jail and pinned their feet in stocks.

Paul and Silas start to move around a little, looking at their surroundings while remaining seated on the floor. Paul gingerly looks over his shoulder to inspect his wounds and then at Silas' back.

Paul: Ow! Silas, those guards certainly did an expert job on us.

(Silas examines Paul's back and gives a low whistle.)

Silas: Yeah, Paul. I guess you could call them professional hit men! *(He shakes his head and touches Paul's shoulder.)* I thought we were headed straight for heaven this time.

Paul: Me, too. Oh well, since we're still here, there must be more work we can do for Christ! Good!

Silas: *(Wistfully, but cracking a grin.)* I'm glad, too. But I sure wouldn't mind if He'd send us a getaway camel next time!

Paul: *(Chuckles.)* Do you remember what Peter and Matthew told us Jesus said on the mountain?

Silas: *(Thinks a moment, then nods.)* Do you mean "Happy are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?"

Paul: That's right! And He said, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Silas: *(Reaches down to rub his legs above the chains.)* I suppose this is better than being in the bottom of a slimy well or in a monster fish's belly *(both men hold their noses or make faces)*, but I'm afraid I just don't feel much like rejoicing right now.

(Silas droops and rests his head in his hands. Paul eases closer with a few muttered "ouches" and touches Silas' arm.)

Paul: *(Gently.)* Me neither, Silas. But maybe we just haven't thought about what we have to rejoice about.

Silas: *(Looks up slowly.)* What do you mean? We don't have to be happy about being beaten and thrown in here, do we?

Paul: Of course not! And as soon as we can get out of here we should. But we know God is so great that He makes good out of the most terrible circumstances.

Silas: *(Stares at him, then nods slowly, eyes wide.)* Oh! Like when Jesus was crucified!

Paul: Yes! That terrible day resulted in forgiveness and eternal life for all who believe in Jesus and ask for His forgiveness!

Silas: *(Grins back at Paul.)* That's why we can have the eternal life He talked about. We can't earn it, so He paid for it Himself and then gives it to us for free!

Paul: Absolutely! And heaven will be far better than we can imagine! But what else can we rejoice about?

Silas: *(Thinks hard.)* Lydia and many of the other people have been listening and have put their faith in Jesus. Now they'll be with us and Him forever!

Paul: *(Like a teacher pleased with his pupil.)* Right! And since He hasn't called us home yet, there must be more people He wants us to teach. And He has promised to be with us through everything.

Silas: *(Eagerly.)* Hey! He's even here with us now!

Paul: *(Triumphantly.)* That is worth rejoicing about! You know, I really want to sing.

Silas: Me, too! Who knows? *(He glances toward the other prisoners and winks at Paul conspiratorially, giving him a light jab in the ribs.)* Maybe we could cheer up some of the others in this dreadful place!

Paul: With our great God, anything is possible!

(Paul and Silas begin to sing: possibly "Awesome God" or "Sing Alleluia to the Lord" or both. As they finish, play the "earthquake sound effects tape" and signal everyone to snap their chains.)

Silas: Wow! The chains have broken and the doors are open! Thank you, Lord Jesus!

Paul: *(Grins.)* Maybe your "getaway camel" is on the way! *(Looks to the side and frowns.)* Uh oh, the jailer thinks we've all escaped. *(Raises voice.)* Don't harm yourself! We are all here!

Silas: *(From far away.)* Lights! Quickly!

(He rushes in and drops down on his knees before Paul and Silas, trembling with fear and awe.)

Jailer: Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

(Paul and Silas smile at each other.)

Paul & Silas: Believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

Silas:

Silas: We do have a lot to rejoice about!

Paul: Yes, even here!