

**Worship Material**  
**Freeing captives**  
**Material from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Let us walk in the freedom that Christ gives.  
Let us use our freedom to praise God our Saviour.  
Let us use the freedom Christ gives to serve him  
and each other.  
Let us use our freedom to love.

**Read Acts 16:16-34**

**Bible notes**

This is a story about power – its abuse and the way Paul and his team harness God's power to bring about liberation to voiceless and powerless people.

It opens with an exploited girl hounding the missionaries. What she says is true – Paul and his team are slaves of the 'Most High God' and offering a message of salvation. But in her mouth that message is twisted, and people are likely to hear what she says in a way that distorts Paul's message and prevents them from meeting the Jesus Paul proclaims. So out of annoyance, he acts to silence her, release her from her captivity to a demonic spirit and the control of human masters, and give her the chance to taste the salvation she's been shouting about and which Lydia has tasted (see verses 14-15).

But her exploiters are outraged. Dragging Paul and Silas before the magistrate, they accuse them of stirring up a disturbance of peace and good order. The crowd joins in – though on what basis Luke doesn't tell us. Without much of a trial, the magistrates order that Jesus' followers be stripped, beaten and thrown in prison. It is possible that whatever Paul was teaching, the fact that he was a Jew ignited an antisemitic crowd against them; the fear of difference lurks everywhere.

Paul and Silas are unfazed. At midnight they are singing up a storm, praising God with a ready audience of prisoners. Their storm seems to cause an earthquake, and everyone is freed, but no one leaves. The jailer, fearing he is ruined, draws his sword to kill himself, but Paul stops him and he comes to

faith in Jesus and is set free. The gospel, coming to Europe for the first time, is creating a wave that leaves in its wake changed lives and people freed from slavery to the powers that be – whether demonic or Roman. Through the suffering of the missionaries, God's message has come to those who might not otherwise have heard it (those in prison). The captives have become the liberators to those who held them and fear is replaced by rejoicing with Paul and his team celebrating with the jailer's whole family round a meal table.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, thank you for freeing us  
from all that enslaves and oppresses us.  
We pray for all the burdens and worries  
people have shared today.  
We bring them to the foot of your cross  
and ask for your power and grace  
to break these chains.

**Amen.**

### **A prayer to conclude**

Lord, be with us through this coming week,  
as we seek to carry out your mission  
and reveal your glory to the world.

**Amen.**