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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2118 ~ Paul and Silas put in Prison.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

In the city of Philippi in the region of Macedonia where Paul was preaching, some men were very upset about losing their source of income after Paul cast out a demon from their fortune-telling slave girl. They gathered a crowd of people together and incited them to riot and drag Paul and Silas before the magistrates.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

The owners of the slave girl accused Paul and Silas of making trouble in their city because they were teaching customs which were not lawful for Romans to receive or observe.

And to a large extent, their accusations were true. By preaching the Gospel of Christ in a Roman colony like Philippi, Paul and his team were breaking the law which said it was illegal for anyone to preach a strange or foreign religion among Roman citizens.

In New Testament times, the Jews used to punish criminals by whipping them, whereas the Romans used rods to beat their criminals. Without even examining Paul and Silas, the magistrates of Philippi concluded on the basis of the crowd's uproar that they must be guilty of the accusation against them. So the magistrates gave the order that they be beaten. In 2nd Corinthians, Chapter 11, Paul wrote that 3 times he was beaten with rods. The beating in Philippi was one of those times.

After their beating, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison and the jailer fastened their feet in the stocks. In Roman prisons, such stocks were placed so that the prisoner's feet were spread widely apart and this resulted in intense discomfort for the prisoner.

What can men held fast in stocks locked in a prison do with their time? Most men in that situation feel intense pain and will groan and curse. But Paul and Silas were different. They started praying and thanking the Lord for being allowed to suffer for His sake. The other prisoners nearby couldn't believe the difference in their behaviour. Then Paul and Silas started singing. It was pitch black in the prison but their voices floated through the prison for all to listen to. And this included the jailor.

Prisons have always been rough, tough places with little of the basics for living. The guards and prison officers usually made life as difficult as possible for the prisoners within the rules of the prison. One of the great Christian overcomers of the prison system in modern times was a Jewish man named Richard Wurmbrand.

Richard was the youngest of 4 sons, born in 1909 in Bucharest, the capital city of the small European country of Romania. His father died when he was 9. In his youth, Richard was sent to Moscow to study Marxism but he secretly returned home the following year. He was tracked down by the Secret Police and arrested.

However, he was already an important Communist International agent, leader and coordinator who was directly paid from Moscow. He remained a staunch atheist until he was 28.

Richard married Sabina in 1936 and two years later, following the witness of an elderly Christian carpenter, Richard became a Christian. Soon after, Sabina gave her life to Christ Jesus too. After their conversion, Richard and Sabina started evangelising to civilians all over Romania. However it wasn't easy, as the Communist Soviet Union, or modern-day Russia, had started to occupy Romania.

Communism is a philosophy designed to overthrow wealthy people and capitalism to create a classless society of poor people where everyone except for the government elites, share property. Communism insists that there is no god and when in power, runs a country down until it is very poor and another type of government takes over to start up an economy again.

After WWII, Richard was ordained as a Lutheran pastor. He began a ministry to his countrymen and incoming foreign soldiers. Pastor Wurmbrand led his little congregation of many Jewish converts to the Bucharest train station, to toss Russian Gospels into the windows of passing trains filled with invading Russian soldiers. The soldiers kept the Gospels as they wouldn't have been allowed them in their Communist homeland.

When the government attempted to control churches, Richard immediately began an 'underground' ministry to his people. Richard is remembered for his courage in standing up in a gathering of more than 1,000 church leaders and denouncing government control of the churches. Sunday Schools had already been closed down and churches were being harassed. Richard was arrested in 1948 while on his way to church services.

The persecution which Richard and his brethren in Christ faced, particularly within prison, was especially horrendous. The Communists used a variety of cruel punishments to force confessions out of them. Because the Communists didn't believe a person had an eternal soul that needs to be saved from sin and fitted for living in heaven, they regarded the prisoners as just disposable human bodies to do with as they pleased.

At the beginning of his 1st punishment, Richard recalled regretful thoughts of past sins and duties left undone. Unlike the discipline that helped him through later days of imprisonment, he wrote that God came to him and fellow prisoners in a vision similar to what Stephen, the 1st martyr for Christ, had experienced.

He said: “We didn't see that we were in prison. We were surrounded by angels and we were with God. We no longer believed about God and Christ and angels because Bible verses said it. We didn't remember Bible verses anymore. We remembered about God because we experienced it. With great humility we can say with the apostles, "What we have seen with our eyes, what we have heard with our ears, what we have touched with our own fingers, this is what we tell you.”

Most Christian prisoners, if not all of them, endured the cruel treatment for Christ's sake and became examples of boldness to other members of the Underground church. Finally in 1956, after being in prison for 8½ years of being beaten, tortured and interrogated, Richard was released. He resumed his previous position for about a week during which he preached two sermons.

After that the authorities asked him to stop. But Richard witnessed to the brethren in Christ about the pain he had endured while in prison. He also directed a secret network of evangelists who spread the gospel to non-Christians. Finally the secret police caught him and Richard went through another 5½ years of prison, torture and many other horrendous things. However, just like in his 8½ years prison term, in his next one, he saw his fellow Christian inmates loving their persecutors, responding to their persecution with bravery, and winning many of their captors to Christ.

All together, Richard was detained in 7 different prisons over 14½ years and spend 3 of them in solitary confinement. This confinement was in a cell 12 feet underground with no lights or windows. There was no sound because even the guards wore felt on the soles of their shoes.

Richard later recounted that he maintained his sanity by sleeping during the day, staying awake at night, and exercising his mind and soul by composing and then delivering a sermon each night. Due to his extraordinary memory, he was later able to recall more than 350 and a selection of them were included in his book “With God in Solitary Confinement,” published in 1969. During part of this time, he communicated with other inmates by tapping out Morse code on the wall and in this way, he continued to help fellow inmates.

Prison food wasn't much to talk about and prisoners were grateful if they received a single slice of bread a day. One night as Richard was recalling Scripture verses about King David dancing before the Lord with all his might, it occurred to Richard that he had never danced before the Lord. He stood up and danced around his cell. He was being watched and the guards thought he'd gone mad. One raced down to the prison kitchen and brought him back a whole loaf of bread.

During his 1st imprisonment, Richard's supporters were unable to get information about him. Later they found out that a false name had been used in the prison records so that no one could trace him. Secret police visited Sabina and posed as released fellow prisoners. They claimed to have attended Richard's funeral in prison. During his 2nd imprisonment, Sabina was given official news of Richard's death, of which she did not believe. Sabina herself was arrested in 1950 and spent 3 years a prisoner doing manual labour.

Eventually, Richard was awarded an amnesty in 1964. Concerned with the possibility that he would be forced to undergo further imprisonment, two Christian organisations negotiated with Communist authorities for his release from Romania for 5 times the going rate for political prisoners. Richard was convinced by underground church leaders to leave the country and become a voice for the persecuted church. He devoted the rest of his life to this effort, despite ongoing warnings and death threats.

When Richard and Sabina began the work of *The Voice of the Martyrs* in America in 1967, some might think that they would have been changed by living in an open, wealthy nation where everything could come easy for famous, gifted people. But their love and their burden for helping those persecuted abroad always remained the same.

On one of their trips flying overseas, Richard and Sabina approached an airline counter with about 12 suitcases of clothes that they had purchased at a used clothing store. The clothes were to be carried into Communist Eastern Europe for persecuted Christians. The stunned airline agents crumbled under their heartfelt appeal and let them take the clothes.

Richard wrote 18 books in English and others in Romanian. In several of them, he wrote very boldly against Communism. Yet he maintained a hope and a compassion even for those who tortured him by "looking at men ... not as they are, but as they will be ... I could also see in our persecutors ... a future Apostle Paul ... (and) the jailer in Philippi who became a convert." Richard died in 2001 at the age of 92 and his legacy of helping those persecuted solely because they're Christians continues around the world through the organization that he started.

In Hebrews, Chapter 13, Verse 3, it says: "Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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