

What should we learn from the account of Paul and Silas?

Paul and Silas ministered together on the second missionary journey (Acts 15-18). Paul and Silas are first mentioned together after the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, as both men were part of the group that took the council's decision back to Syrian Antioch (verse 22). Silas is called a "prophet" who "said much to encourage and strengthen the believers" in Antioch (verse 32).

After Paul and Barnabas parted ways, Paul chose Silas as a traveling companion, and they went to Syria and Cilicia, ministering to the churches (Acts 15:41). After that, Paul and Silas traveled to Derbe and Lystra, where they picked up another companion, Timothy (Acts 16:1-3). Following a journey through Asia Minor, the Spirit led Paul and Silas into Macedonia (verses 6-10). During the missionaries' time in Philippi, people were saved and a church was established, but Satan opposed their work. Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and put in prison for their preaching (Acts 16:16-24). While in prison, Paul and Silas sat with their feet in stocks singing hymns. At midnight, an earthquake broke open the prison doors, setting the prisoners free. The jailer feared that his superiors would blame him for the jail break, and he prepared to run himself through with his sword rather than face the punishment. Paul and Silas convinced him not to harm himself, they preached the gospel to him, and he was saved, along with his entire household that night (Acts 16:25-34). It seems from verse 37 that Silas, like Paul, was a Roman citizen.

Paul and Silas then went to Thessalonica together and preached to a synagogue of the Jews. Some of the Jews were convinced of the truth and were saved. Many Greeks and "leading women" also believed (Acts 17:1-4). Again, Paul and Silas were opposed by

Satan, and the unbelieving Jews attacked the house of Jason, one of the new believers, accusing him of harboring “men who have turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:5-8). Paul and Silas moved on to Berea. There they encountered another group of Jews who were “more noble” than those in Thessalonica. The Bereans listened to Paul and Silas, and many of them believed after examining the Scriptures to ensure the truth of what Paul and Silas were saying (Acts 17:11-12).

The last mention of Silas in Acts is in 18:5, as he and Paul are in Corinth. Paul stayed with the Corinthians for a year and six months (Acts 18:11) and then left for Antioch, apparently alone. The Bible does not say what happened to Silas after that. When Paul left Corinth, he made a promise to return if possible (Acts 18:21). It is possible that Silas and Timothy remained at Corinth; a tradition says that Silas stayed behind as the pastor. Peter mentions Silas as “a faithful brother” in 1 Peter 5:12. Paul mentions Silas in 2 Corinthians 1:19 and in the introductions of both the epistles to the Thessalonians.

From the biblical record of Paul and Silas we learn the value of faithful companions and dedicated servants of the Lord in spreading the gospel. Paul and Silas were like-minded and equally committed to the service of God. Whether they were praying for guidance in Asia, blazing new trails in Europe, preaching in synagogues, or singing in jail, Paul and Silas did it together. Their loyalty to the gospel and to each other is a model of how believers should work together today.