

Afraid?

- Put up a slide of frightening things
 - talk about the ones I've put on the slide...
 - invite suggestions for how scary different people find them...
 - would anyone add anything?
- Some things that most people would be afraid of happened to Paul and Silas in today's reading:
 - they were beaten up
 - they were locked up in prison for something they didn't do, and no one would listen to them
 - in the middle of the night, there were no lights, it was dark
 - they were caught in the middle of an earthquake
 - But in the midst of all of that, they didn't seem to be scared!
 - they even told the jailer about Jesus!

Be Ready!

- Overview of Paul's relationship with the Philippians last week
 - zooming in this week on one particular incident - Paul and Silas in prison
 - illustrating that what Paul wrote wasn't "advice from outside" but exactly what he lived himself
- Paul and Silas found strength in God, and put on his "armour" (Eph 6:10-20)
 - how can we see the different pieces of armour at work in the story in Acts 16:23-40?

Are You Ready...?

... with truth and justice? (belt of truth)

- Paul and Silas knew they had acted and spoken rightly (Acts 16:17,18); (breastplate of righteousness)
 - they had done what was right, despite the pressure on them
 - they also knew that their treatment was unjust (Acts 16:37)
 - God looked after them and justice was done
- *Are we ready to speak truthfully, and act in all righteousness, no matter what the pressure upon us?*

... to witness? (shoes of gospel readiness)

- If you'd been in Paul's place after the earthquake, what would your first thought have been?
 - his immediate concern was for the jailer! (Acts 16:27-31)
 - the jailer was terrified because of the certain punishment he faced if the prisoners escaped
 - Paul and Silas also tell the jailer the good news about Jesus
- I was in a situation during the week - funeral car - driver - comment that possibly opened the door to conversation - maybe context not the best - but I bottled it, and realised that's what I'd done.
 - it sounds easy here - but its hard - we need to put on the armour, conscious act of will, start those conversations even when we don't know where they are going
- *Are we ready to speak of Jesus, to share our faith in him, whenever God creates the opportunity?*

... with faith? (shield of faith)

- Paul and Silas expressed their trust in God by praying and singing
 - God responded to their faith, intervening with events that set them free, and gave them opportunities to glorify him as they cared for the jailer and spoke to him of the Lord
 - how does our faith stand up when tested?
 - the jailer's faith in Jesus resulted in action - see Acts 16:33,34
 - have we committed our lives to Jesus?
 - does our faith show in our actions?
- *Are we ready to entrust ourselves fully to God, even when our lives seem to spin out of control (and when they seem in our control?)*

... with God's salvation? (helmet of salvation)

- Paul and Silas knew that they were saved and protected by God
 - God's protection was at work in the way they were freed, the apology from the officials, and the support of other believers (Acts 16:40)
 - perhaps the jailer's question (Acts 16:30) meant how could he be saved physically?
 - Paul turned it into a bigger question and the jailer accepted God's salvation through Jesus (Acts 16:33,34)
- *Are we ready to look to God for salvation, not make do with physical protection or human comfort: do we look for God's saving work in and around our lives*

... with God's message? (sword of Spirit, Word of God)

- Strengthened by God, Paul spoke words that:
 - encouraged others (vs.25,40)
 - brought others to faith (v.34)
 - and which ensured things were put right (vs.37-39)
- *Are we ready to be messengers of God, filled with his Spirit, speaking his Word (from his Word) into people's lives?*

Be Ready!

- How can we be ready for whatever happens to us?
- Like Paul and Silas we can draw on "the mighty strength of the Lord" (Eph 6:10)
 - we put on the armour of God
 - act of will - and of dependence, asking God
 - (fuller exploration at end of Ephesians series in the evenings!)