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**Dear heavenly Father, we worship You this morning with our tithe and offerings. We pray for the courage to put You first in our lives. In the name of Jesus, amen.**

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**MARCH 13, 2021**

## **When Paul put God First**

Putting God first can be difficult. What can we learn from Paul that will help us put God first in our lives today?

Paul had always put God first but, as he persecuted the followers of Jesus, Paul could not see what was right in front of him. It was only when Paul fell to the ground, blinded by the light of Jesus, that he began to truly see. For Paul, putting God first meant humbly questioning his assumptions and going back to scripture.

After three years in Arabia, Paul returns with a renewed conviction that God had not given up on the world. Jesus was the saviour who wanted to reach every human being. Paul continued putting God first as he travelled from city to city and village to village to announce Jesus. Nothing would deter Paul from putting God first, including the many times people tried to kill him.

On one occasion, Paul and his companion Silas had their clothes ripped off in the middle of the city square. They were beaten and put in the inner cell, with their feet clamped in the stocks. Still bleeding and bruised, Paul and Silas did the unthinkable:

instead of complaining, they worshipped Jesus. If you are at your lowest moment right now and everything seems to have gone wrong, there is no better time to worship than today.

Then God sent an earthquake. Assuming the prisoners had escaped, the officer in charge picked up a sword to kill himself. Paul and Silas remembered the beatings, torture and humiliation that officer put them through. For Paul and Silas to have revenge, all they needed to do was wait for the officer's body to hit the ground.

But Paul and Silas were the kind of men who put God first. In that split second, they decided to forgive the officer and shouted for him to stop. That officer and his family met Jesus and, by the end of that night, they were also worshipping the King of Kings.

Paul and Silas put God first. Their example compels us to do the same. As the deacons collect the tithe and offerings, we are challenged to put God first.