

**STORY**

Paul and the Jailer at Philippi - Acts 16:9-40

**TEACHER PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, who came to Paul in a vision--to steer him to people whom he could help bring home to You--let my vision of You be strong and helpful to me so that I can carry You to others; and let me help bring them home to You also. Thanks. Amen.

**OUTER AIM**

God used Paul to bring Jesus to a prison warden and then to his family.

**INNER AIM**

God sends believers into the world with the Gospel message in order to rescue those lost in sin.

**BACKGROUND**

*(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol.2, pp. 557-566)*

By now we have skipped over Paul's first missionary trip (chs. 13-14), the first convention of the Christian Church (ch.15), and part of the second missionary trip (15:36-16:30), which was a revisiting of congregations founded on the first trip. The Spirit kept steering them down to Troas (Troy), where He sent Paul the vision of the Macedonian person pleading for Paul to sail over to Greece to preach the gospel of salvation to him and his countrymen.

v.9

- ▶ With this vision God guided Paul to Europe across the Adriatic to bring the Savior to gentiles there, and He did it with the plea: "Come over and help us!"
- ▶ We would no more turn our back on perishing souls than ignore a drowning person's frantic cries: "HELP! HELP!"
- ▶ *Macedonia* was a country north of ancient Greece, homeland of Alexander the Great, a northern portion of the modern country of Greece. (cf. maps)

v. 10

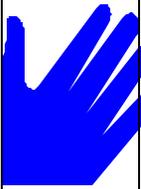
- ▶ Paul never hesitated to obey Jesus, so with Luke, Silas, and Timothy, they got a coastal sailor going to Europe because someone there needed help.

v.12

- ▶ Philippi was the "county seat" of the eastern division of Macedonia, at that time a Roman colony; so Paul's Roman citizenship would be an advantage in such a place.
- ▶ Foreign governments often restrict or revoke passports and visas; many heathen countries especially with Muslim heritage do not welcome Christians, whether as tourists or missionaries.

v.13

- ▶ The normal place to make contact would be the local Jewish synagogue; since there was none, they found a prayer group having Sabbath service at Riverside Park.
- ▶ As a rabbi in his own right, Paul got their attention and guided them into a conversation about the Messiah.
- ▶ We have no Synodical rule book for "How to start a mission." When we speak of our Savior with neighbors, at school, at work, at sports events--or invite people to share our church worship of Jesus, God's Son and Savior of sinners--we are doing what Jesus wants.



v.14

- ▶ Lydia, whose livelihood came from selling purple dye, worshiped the true God but had not yet heard that Jesus was the Messiah who had already finished the work of redemption.
- ▶ *"The Lord Jesus opened her heart to heed the things (gospel) spoken by Paul."*
- ▶ So simple sounding, but the greatest marvel in all God's creation that the inner sanctuary of the human soul is made to open at the message of God's surpassing love, is moved to contemplate this wondrous revelation and becomes convinced of its truth and integrity!

v. 15

- ▶ Because she had been brought to faith in Jesus' blood and righteousness, she received holy baptism for the assurance that her sins had been washed away, that she was adopted by God into His family, and that she was included in the fellowship of believers in Christ.
- ▶ Others in the household (whether children or servants we do not know) who were converted were also baptized, and thus a new Christian congregation was formed and already growing!
- ▶ It was a fruit of her faith and love for Jesus that she was eager to serve her new friends by offering free housing and meals.
- ▶ Serving the Lord is a two-way street for Christians; as we freely give, we receive freely from others. Jesus knew this from His own experience and encourages us to discover it also. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:38
- ▶ What a contrast to the next event--God's way of getting Paul into contact with the warden of the local jail (perhaps the man of the vision).

v. 16-24

- ▶ The next step in God's plans was to get Paul into prison, for from that position he could unlock the warden from a worse prison, his fear of God's punishment for his sins.
- ▶ Paul certainly spoke from personal experience, "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!?" (Rom.11:33) We discover that when one door is shut, another opens to a corridor we didn't notice, and thus to another door that awaits our hand. What you and I do today is part of a pattern that God is weaving for you and me and the salvation of others.
- ▶ So in order to get Paul into an advantageous position for serving the warden, God put this slave girl into Paul's path.

v.16

- ▶ She was a psychic, whose skill at fortune-telling (if it was a gift from God that she misused we do not know) was at the time under the control of a satanic spirit, a demon.
- ▶ People who don't allow God to direct their lives try to manipulate their own future, sometimes by use of psychics. Today's psychics have capitalized on television's power to spread their cult. Christians will beware of this Satan-sponsored attraction, rather relying on their loving Father in heaven to be in control of their future.

v.17

- ▶ When Paul and company came within range, God took temporary control of her demon so that it was forced to tell the truth: *"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.*
- ▶ The name she used is one that the gentiles could grasp, even though the *LORD Jehovah* is a title more meaningful to Bible people.
- ▶ The Muslims have invented one-hundred-and-one names for their deity (Allah), some of which they have smuggled over from our Scriptures. What is the name you use for God when you pray--or when you speak of Him to others? We note that the demon did not preach the gospel message, just identified the messengers and the general purpose of their message. From this we deduce that Jesus does not authorize anyone but His disciples to serve souls with

the gospel. In other words, God does not enlist anyone but the Christian to represent Him with His saving Word.  
v.18

- ▶ After a few days of observing her torment, Paul decided he should exorcize the spirit that was victimizing her, an action that would get him into trouble with her masters, but he knew he had to come to her aid.
- ▶ Thus the Lord Jesus with His superior power (Mark 3:27) got rid of the evil spirit so that her soul could respond to the Holy Spirit's influence.
- ▶ We gladly recognize that Jesus has control over the worst of demons, including Satan; our lives and future are secure if we abide in Him.

v.19

- ▶ These businessmen had no heart for the girl, but only for their own profit.
- ▶ They saw Paul and Silas as either business competition or agents of a superior demon.

v.20

- ▶ Hoping to put a good face on their wickedness, they accused Paul of causing civil unrest.

v.21

- ▶ This was a misrepresentation, of course, for God's servants do not incite civil disobedience (Rom.13).
- ▶ The calling of Christian missionaries is spiritual, to deliver souls from Satan's dominion into God's kingdom of grace and salvation.
- ▶ In foreign countries controlled by Muslims, the government is protective of Mohammedanism but hostile to Christianity. We must be "harmless as doves, but wise as serpents" in our efforts to reach such people.

v.22-23

- ▶ Soon the mob coerced the magistrates to come down hard on the "foreigners."
- ▶ Romans were brutal in dealing with Jews, so our innocent missionaries were whipped with (bamboo?) canes, probably until they collapsed.
- ▶ Thus deprived of his legal rights, Paul the Roman citizen was unjustly arrested, condemned, punished, and imprisoned.
- ▶ Paul might wonder how all this could serve to help the man in the vision who had begged them to come to his aid.

v. 24

- ▶ Handled like the most dangerous criminals, they were dumped into a cell block with the tightest security; in addition, they were immobilized in stocks designed for restraint and torture.

v.25

- ▶ Despite their pain they considered the whole ordeal in the light of God's love for them and for the other prisoners, so the disciples loudly rejoiced in being on God's side and at His disposal. "No such sounds had ever before been heard in that prison."

v.26

- ▶ At midnight God gave a little shove to the foundations under the prison, the walls shifted enough to dislocate doors, and the chains that fastened every prisoner were pulled apart.
- ▶ Thus God created a way for the warden's heart to be opened and delivered from the chains of Satan.

v.27

- ▶ The earthquake jolted the warden awake, and seeing that the lock-up system was ruined, the deduction hit him that the prisoners were gone.
- ▶ By Roman standards he was responsible, so he was ready to take his own life as self-punishment, the "honorable and heroic" thing to do.

v.28

- ▶ His suicide attempt was seen and stopped by Paul with a loud shout, for Paul was hoping to intervene in the man's soul-life and bring him to the Savior for eternal life.
- ▶ Comment here on the horror of suicide--the sin from which you can never return to God, the sin from which you can never return to the love of other humans; the self-murder from which there is no opportunity to repent.

v.29

- ▶ The warden welcomed the reprieve, and when he discovered Paul had something to do with everybody being still safe in jail, he realized that somehow Paul was in control of what had just happened.
- ▶ Impressed by Paul's concern for his well-being, he "*fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.*"
- ▶ God had done everything necessary to prepare his heart for this moment when he could throw himself on the mercy of a man who obviously had some close connections with the Almighty.

v.30

- ▶ His question, "*What must I do to be saved??*" was not a concern for his mortal body--for the prisoners were all in custody--rather, he was concerned for his immortal soul, and so...

v.31

- ▶ Paul directed him to Jesus the Messiah for the salvation of his soul; "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*"
- ▶ Paul's doctrinal position on the principles of salvation was always the same: a) by grace alone, without human meriting; b) by faith in Jesus alone, without adding human good deeds; c) at Luther's time the third plank had to be nailed down also: by Scripture alone, without human additives or subtractions.

v.32

- ▶ Paul also perceived that the warden held his family dear, and so assured the whole household that God loved them one and all and had secured their eternal salvation as well.

v.33

- ▶ When there was a lull, the warden fed and gave home-care medical aid to his new-found spiritual brothers.
- ▶ Baptism naturally followed, as Paul wanted them to have the blessed assurance that their sins were indeed washed clean, and that as gentiles they were welcomed into the Christian fellowship.
- ▶ This membership matter did not have to be cleared with the "front office" in Jerusalem, for God had already cleared them one-hundred percent.

v.35-40

- ▶ This aftermath deserves some attention: we see that Paul took legal advantage of his Roman citizenship to put the city officials on the defensive for having robbed him of his rights.
- ▶ Out of concern for the Christians he would leave behind, Paul wanted the magistrates to realize that he could return at any time and make a federal case against them if he so chose.
- ▶ Unintimidated, our Christian friends revisited Lydia and all the other Christians of the city, encouraging them with the assurance that (also by softening the hostility of the magistrates) the Lord Jesus would support them and bless them, and they could get on with their new lives in His service. Hallelujah!

## **APPLICATIONS**

1. We should be ready and willing to answer the plea for help from those calling out from the darkness of unbelief just as Paul answered the plea, "Come and help us!"
2. We have no Synodical rule book for "How to start a mission.?" When we speak of our Savior with neighbors, at school, at work, at sports events--or invite people to share our church worship of Jesus, God's Son and Savior of sinners--we are doing what Jesus wants.
3. Because Lydia had been brought to faith in Jesus' blood and righteousness, she received holy baptism for the assurance that her sins had been washed away, that she was adopted by God into His family, and that she was included in the fellowship of believers in Christ. Others in the household (whether children or servants we do not know) who were converted were also baptized, and thus a new Christian congregation was formed and already growing.
4. Serving the Lord is a two-way street for Christians; as we freely give, we receive freely from others. Jesus knew this from His own experience and encourages us to discover it also. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:38
5. People who don't allow God to direct their lives try to manipulate their own future, sometimes by use of psychics. Today's psychics have capitalized on television's power to spread their cult. Christians will beware of this Satan-sponsored attraction, rather relying on their loving Father in heaven to be in control of their future.
6. By Roman standards the jailer was responsible for the prisoners and thus for their suspected escape, so he was ready to take his own life as self-punishment, the "honorable and heroic" thing to do. His suicide attempt was seen and stopped by Paul with a loud shout, for Paul was hoping to intervene in the man's soul-life and bring him to the Savior for eternal life. Comment here on the horror of suicide--the sin from which you can never return to God, the sin from which you can never return to the love of other humans; the self-murder from which there is no opportunity to repent.

## **STUDENT PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, here I am again, this time to tell You thanks for being my Savior. Besides, I need You to fill me up so full with love for You and with concern for other people that I will speak as You wish, and do as You desire. Thanks in advance for this blessing. Amen.

## **PRESENTATION**

Tell the story with the same emotion and excitement as if you were there. Tell the story in your words, but be faithful to the account that God recorded in Acts.

## **PASSAGES**

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

### Lower

Mt.28:18 - All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mt. 5:11 - Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

### Middle any of the above and...

I Jn.2:2 - And he Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Gal.6:6 - Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Rom. 2:15a: - Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.

### Upper any of the above and...

Rom.5:3 - We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance.

I Pet.4:14 - If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Rom.3:19-20 - Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

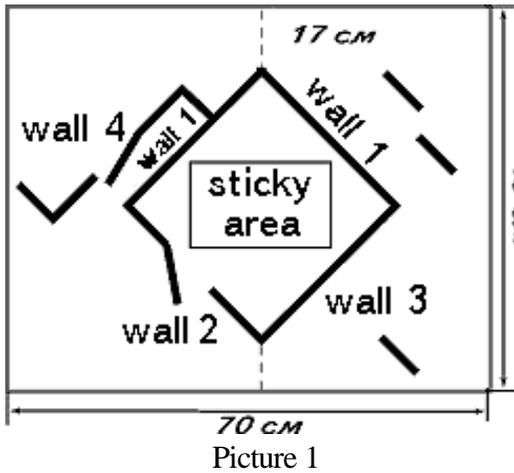
## **HYMN CHOICES**

"Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now" TLH #3

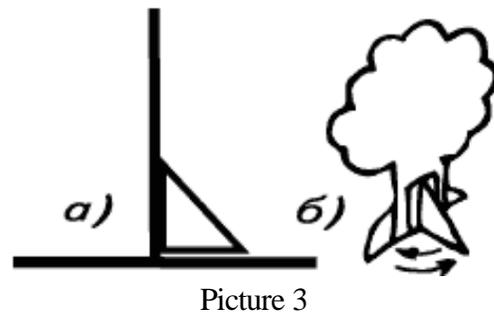
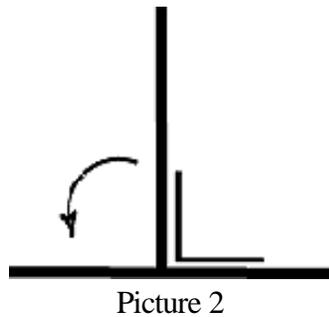
"Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear" TLH #5

"On My Heart Imprint Thine Image" TLH #179

Things Needed: a sheet of cardboard (70x45 cm), half-finished crafts of the scenery, scissors, glue, colors, wide Scotch transparent tape, 2 threads 50 cm each, thick needle.



1. Glue fragments of the scenery and figures of people on cardboard, color them and cut them out. Cut out the door in wall 2 and bend this door so that it would open outside.
2. Redraw scheme from Picture 1 to the sheet of cardboard (70x45 cm) which will be the base for the craft.
3. Bend wall 1 in its middle and glue the trees and the bush together;

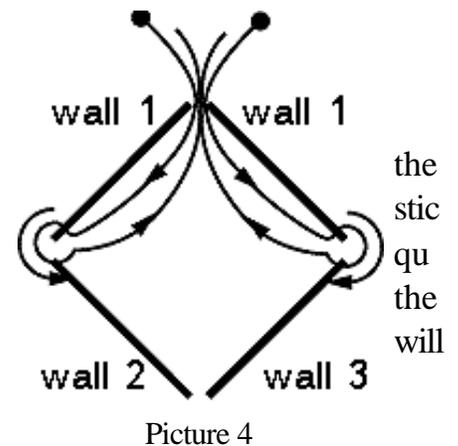


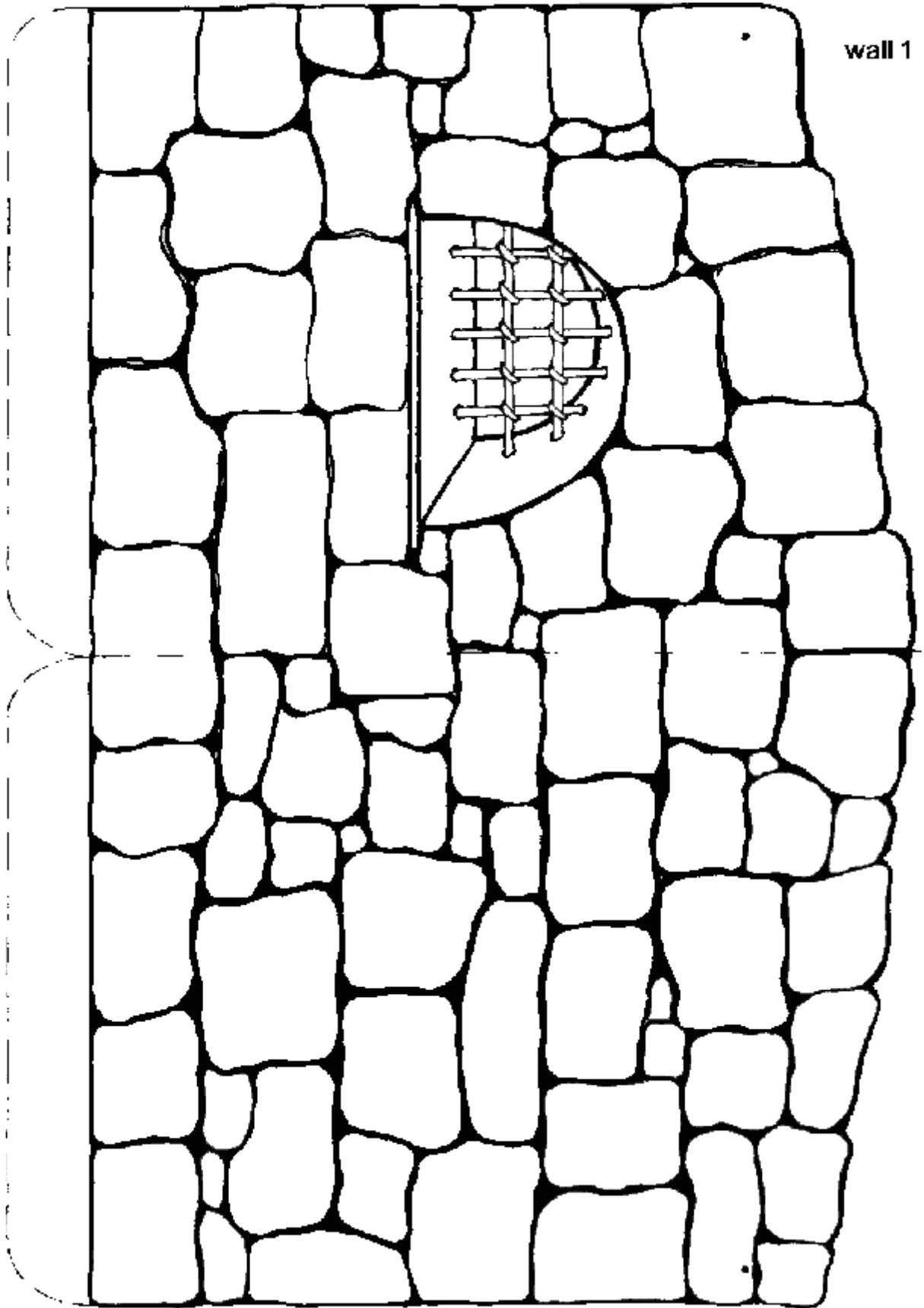
4. **"Falling" walls 2 and 3** glue to the inner side of the prison by wide Scotch transparent tape so that they could easily fall outside (Picture 2). Fortify the trees and the bush with triangles so that they don't fall (see Pictures 3 a,b). You can also add one more supplementary wall.

5. Color the base of the craft. Use some Scotch tape to make a sticky area inside of the prison.
6. Make holes in walls 1, 2, and 3 with a thick needle (see Picture 4). Take 2 needles (preferably of the same color of the walls), make knots at the end of each needle, run the other ends through the holes in the walls (Picture 4). Fasten all the ends of the needles with a clip so that the walls stand firm.

When you are telling about Paul and Silus being arrested open door of the prison, bring the apostles inside, put them on a key area and tightly close the door. Telling about the earthquake, start shaking the craft, insensibly take the clip off and pull knotted ends of the needles. The walls will fall down, and you see the apostles standing in the middle of the prison.

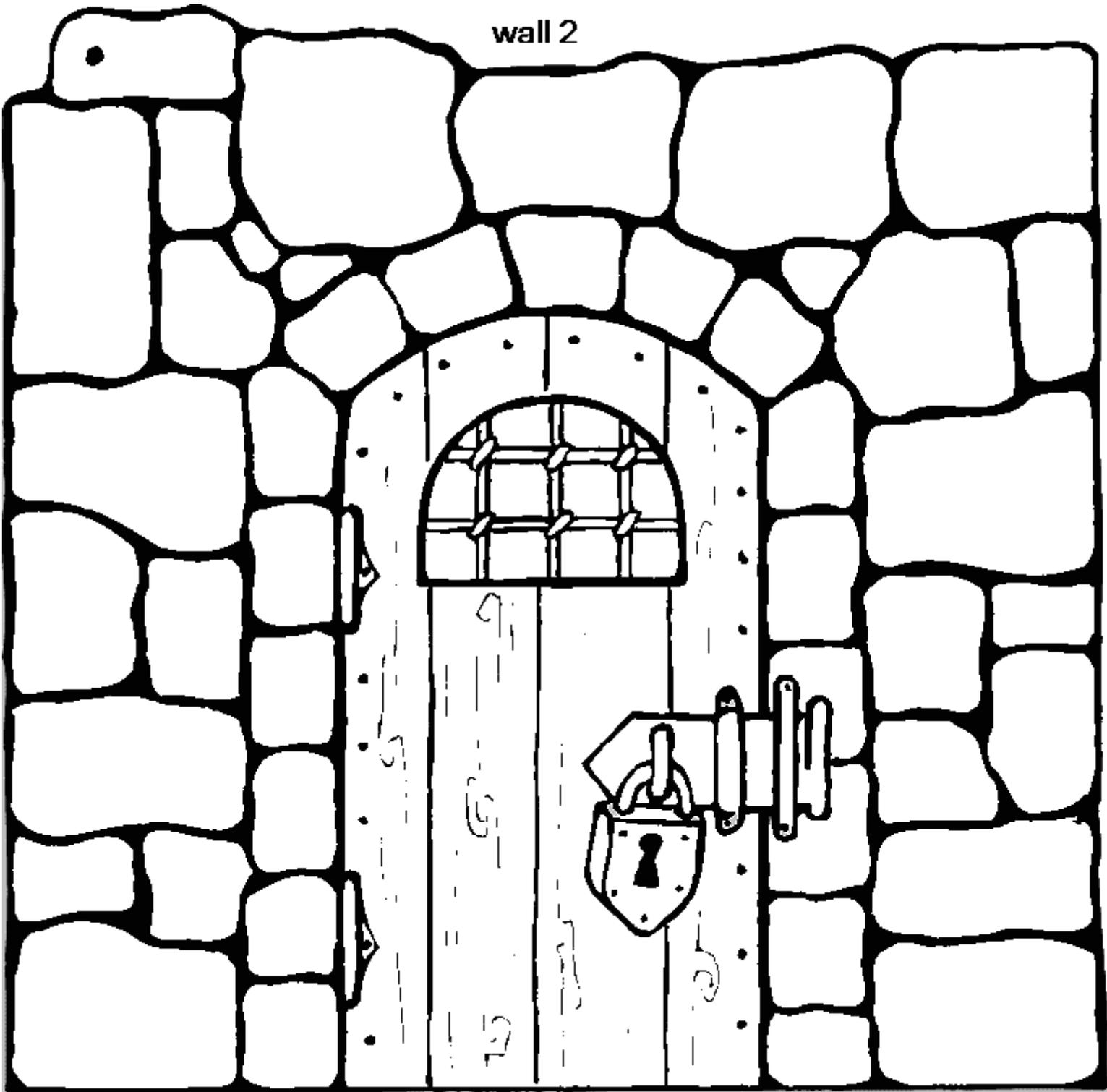
You can keep the craft folded.





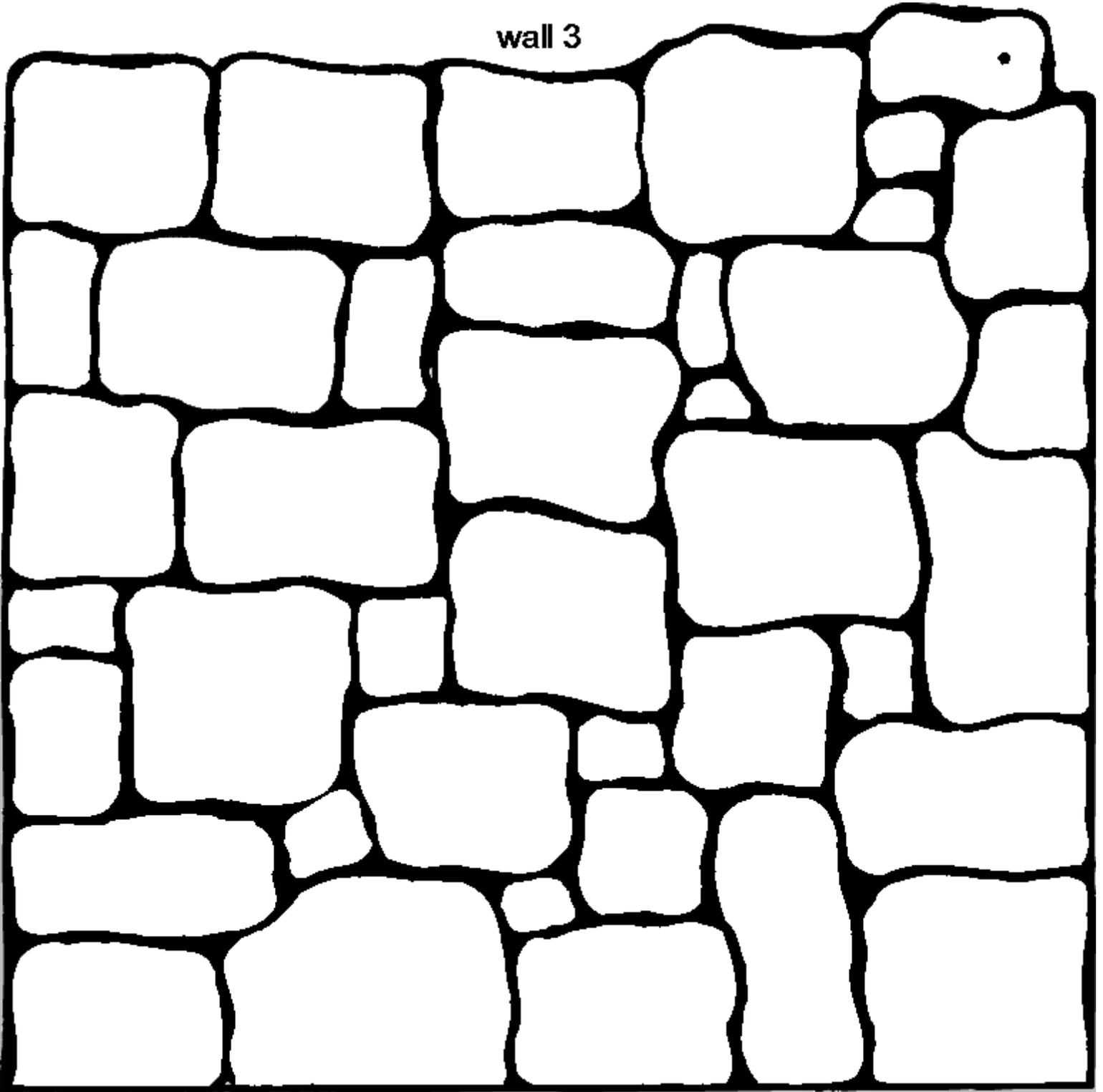
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wall 2



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wall 3



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