

# Who Opened the Prison Door?

By Inez Brasier

Hadewyck smiled as she hurried home along the cleanest street of the cleanest town in Holland. "Jesus will make our hearts as clean as our town," she whispered to her friend Elizabeth. "I wish all our neighbors would learn to love Him as we do!"

But in the town of Leeuwarden 400 years ago there weren't many people who loved Jesus. In fact most of them scowled at Christians and would not listen when Hadewyck and her friend tried to tell them of His great love.

One day rough soldiers arrested Hadewyck. They grabbed her arms so tightly that they hurt. "Help me, Jesus," she prayed as the cruel men rushed her along the street to jail.

"We'll see if you'll keep talking about your Jesus," the jailer said. "I vow you'll stop when you feel the thumbscrews!

The key clicked in the lock, and Hadewyck was all alone in the prison cell. "Thank You, Jesus," she prayed. "Thank You that they did not kill me. "

Sounds from the streets seeped through the keyhole, and Hadewyck counted the days by those noises. She knew when the heavy carts of wheat and corn were being hauled to the weigh bridge. She knew from the noise of the cattle when they were being driven to the market. And often she prayed.

One day as she was praying, a voice called her name. "Hadewyck!"

She looked around. There was no one in the room. Hadewyck kept praying, happy that no one could keep her from talking to Jesus.

"Hadewyck!" There was the voice again!

She looked at the door. It was shut, and there was no one in the room. She closed her eyes to talk to Jesus some more.

"Hadewyck! You must leave here!"

There had been no click of the key in the lock, but the door was open!

Hadewyck quickly drew her cloak around her shoulders and stepped into the street. But which way should she go? Where would she hide before anyone saw her?

She stepped into a large church near the jail and walked up and down the aisles with the crowds of other people who were walking there. Then she heard the town drummer calling in the street, and her face turned pale.

"A female heretic has escaped!" the drummer shouted.

"The town gates have been shut," the excited crowd whispered. "She'll soon be caught!"

"She'll feel the thumbscrews!" said a passerby on the street.

"But how did she get out? She must have been a witch to have opened the door!" said the jailer.

Hadewyck was sure from all the talk that she would soon be found in the church. She quietly slipped out.

The town drummer was going past. "A hundred guilders to the man who finds the heretic!" he shouted. "One hundred fifty guilders fine if anyone hides her!"

Surely now someone who knew her would see her and claim the hundred guilders! Where could she go? "Jesus, show me where to hide!"

The priest's tall house stood beside the church. Hadewyck remembered that the maid who worked there was her friend. She stepped inside. No one heard her as she climbed the stairs. No one heard her as she opened the attic door and closed it softly behind her.

She peeped through the window and saw soldiers rushing about. She quickly stepped away from the window, afraid that someone might look up and see her. She leaned against a chest to think.

"Thank You, Jesus, for keeping me safe so far," she prayed. "Show me what to do next."

A sound drifted through the attic door. "Maybe my friend is coming. I will listen for her."

After a while she heard the girl cleaning the hall below. Hadewyck slowly went down the attic steps, stopping often to listen.

"Little one," she whispered. "Little one!"

The girl looked up and smiled. Hadewyck had always been so good to her.

"Listen carefully, little one. I want you to go to my sister's home. Please tell her husband to bring a boat to the back of this house for me tonight."

The girl nodded and scurried down the stairs Hadewyck heard the slam of a door and listened to the quick steps as they grew fainter.

The afternoon went by. At last it was dark outside, and the streets were quiet. Hadewyck crept down the stairs so carefully that her feet scarcely touched the steps. She walked lightly along the hall to the door that opened on the canal.

Her sister's husband was waiting in the boat. He reached up his hand to help her in the seat. Dipping his oars without a sound, he rowed to a place of safety.

"Jesus opened the prison door for me as He did for Peter," Hadewyck told him. "He kept people from recognizing me in the church, and He kept me safe in the priests' house until you came. I do thank Him tonight."

For many years Hadewyck told people about Jesus' love, and Jesus always kept her from harm. She lived until she was an old woman, and then she went peacefully to her rest to wait for the coming of her Lord Jesus, Whom she loved.