

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### Acts 16:25- | Session 42 | What Must I Do to Be Saved

Paul and Silas have been thrown into prison in Philippi for casting a demon out of a young girl who had been trafficked for economic gain. The prison jailer was instructed by the magistrate to keep them in confinement, which he did by placing them in the inner prison and securing their feet in stocks.

Verse 25—

The activities of man never frustrate God. As we walk closely with him, when man persecutes us, the book of Job says, God “giveth songs in the night.” **Paul and Silas** had no time for sleep, rather they **prayed, and sang praises to God**. Psalm 119:55 states, “I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night.” The Psalmist, Aspah wrote, “Offer unto God thanksgiving...and call upon *him* in the day of trouble” (Psalm 50:15). Today, when we sing, we too offer up our songs unto the Lord. **And the prisoners heard them**, I have a feeling these songs brought comfort and hope even to the other prisoners in the jail. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs can be a remedy for a sad and discouraged heart.

Verse 26—

**A great earthquake...all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed.** This is obviously not a standard earthquake; it was a supernatural event. There is no mention of the city being destroyed as it apparently shook only the **foundations of the prison**. God will decide, in his timing, to release us from bondage. Later, Paul was not released from prison, near the end of his life in Rome. Tradition records he was beheaded.

Verses 27-29—

There are many details Luke leaves out such as when he mentions **the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep**. What was it that woke him? Where was he sleeping? Was he at home in another location and a guard reported to him? Were his living quarters attached to the prison? Did he hear the singing? Did he feel the earthquake? Regardless, when he arrived at the prison cell where Paul and Silas were held, he **Saw the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled**. This was serious for the jailer, seeing no one and assuming all had escaped he was ready to take his own life. We have seen the consequences in guards losing their prisoner (See Acts 12:19; 27:42). Ironically, Paul saves the jailer from suicide. A question that arises in Luke’s narrative is *how did Paul know or see the jailer was about to kill himself?* It isn’t until the next verse that he calls for a light to be brought into the cell. Did Paul have some supernatural knowledge that the jailer was about to thrust his sword into his own belly? Also, why did the other prisoners not escape? Was it because they had been listening to Paul and Silas singing and praying? Had they become believers who were ready to trust God? What happened to them we do not know. The jailer was terrified (**trembling**) and **fell down before Paul and Silas**.

Verse 30—

**And brought them out...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?** What salvation is the jailer thinking of at this moment? He is aware of the exorcism (we may assume), and the apparent supernatural ability of these men. It is doubtful he knows anything at all about salvation by grace through faith at this point. The demonic girl had testified these men were preaching *a way of salvation*. Paul is about to tell the jailer *the way of salvation*.

Verse 31, 32—

**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.** There is no indication the jailer knows who Jesus Christ (Messiah/Anointed One) is at this time. Paul is merely giving the simple grace message. He is not saying the jailer’s belief will save his family, rather, if he **believes on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and his household believes, they too will be saved. Nevertheless, Paul and Silas take time to **spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house**. Here Luke does not state Paul explained the Scriptures to the jailer and his family, rather **the word of the Lord**, which we may assume was the grace message given to Paul and was a mystery, hidden in God, and was not found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the next chapter, when Paul enters the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica, he *reasoned with them from the Scriptures*.

Verse 33,34—

The jailer **took them...and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway**. Baptism was always associated with Jewish ritual cleansing. Since the jailer was most likely a Gentile, this baptism appears to be used outside of Jewish life. Baptism was not one of the points the Jerusalem council had made in their declaration to the new Gentile believers. But neither was circumcision, and Paul had made sure Timothy was circumcised. Timothy, however, was part Jew. Did Paul have the jailer baptized so that he might have more fellowship with the new Jewish believers in Philippi, like Lydia? Remember Paul’s statement to the Corinthians, “To the Jew, I became as a Jew; that I might gain the Jews” (1 Corinthians 9:20). Paul was a Jew, but he became “as a Jew” that is, participating in Jewish things if it meant saving them. Could it be the jailer was baptized to “become as a Jew.” The ritual of baptism is never required since the kingdom offer of salvation is off the table, and only the ‘body of Christ’ exists, where there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 1:14,17 “I thank God that I baptized none of you...For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” Paul did not connect baptism with belief, if he had, he would not have made that statement. As for baptism today, it is certainly never commanded by Paul, but it is also never prohibited. Baptism in the body of Christ today needs to be explained very carefully. So often those who are baptized believe it has something to do with their salvation or brings them closer to God. If one was to be baptized today, it should be fully understood that it is merely a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is not a step of discipleship as is so often taught today. The Jailer and his family, now understanding the gospel and **believing, rejoiced**