

ACTS 16:26-40

Introduction:

1. Paul and Silas have been thrown into the inner part of the prison, a dungeon. Their backs are ripped open, and they do not know when they will be released. What do they do? They pray, sing, and praise their God. There's no complaining, groaning, or wanting revenge.
2. Music calms the nerves, changes our focus to Him. Christianity has this unique expression-experience of worship. Other religions may chant, hum, and recite music, but they cannot truly worship the true God of Scripture like Christians do.

*The men in this prison had never heard anything like this. Personally, I believe that good godly music can have an impact on the forces of evil. David would play and sing music to Saul in his depressions and the evil spirits would leave.

3. In our trials, as we pray, sing, and wait on God in faith, our focus is on God's greatness. It is at that time that our problems come back into perspective, our faith soars, and we understand God is in control of our circumstances.

- A. 1. As Paul and Silas are being faithful and having a good testimony for God, a powerful earthquake hits.

Acts 16:26 - And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

It is so strong that all the prisoners' doors fly open and their shackles are loosed (chains-stocks released).

2. No doubt this earthquake was a divine intervention by God.

- B. 1. Paul's and Silas' testimony of prayers, songs, and praising their God had been heard by the prisoners.

Acts 16:27-28 - And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
Acts 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

It affected them, in that they did not even make an attempt to escape! Perhaps they had grasped that these messengers' testimony and the earthquake supernaturally went together. They stayed transfixed, frozen, and not going anywhere.

2. With the earthquake, the jailer in charge was awakened. As he sees what has happened, he assumes all of the prisoners had left/escaped. This Philippian jailer was responsible for each prisoner under Roman law. If any escaped, he could be put to death.

Example: Acts 12:19 - And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and *there* abode.

* So it is not strange to find the jailer here drawing his sword to commit suicide. Better that than
* facing disgrace and cruel execution.

3. Just as the Philippian jailer was about to carry out the decision to end his life, Paul cries out for him to not harm himself and that not one prisoner had fled.

C. Acts 16:29-34 - Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, Acts 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Acts 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

1. The jailer calls for some torches to see exactly how many prisoners had actually escaped. Upon observing that he had lost **no** prisoners, he puts two and two together. He understands that no prisoner fled because they had been hearing Paul and Silas praying and singing earlier. His response **proves** all of this had to be supernatural.
2. As the jailer locates Paul and Silas, he takes them out of the inner prison. The jailer is so **overwhelmed** by all of these events that he just falls down at God's servants' feet, crying out and asking how could he and his family be saved. Amazing!
 - a. Probably most in Philippi had heard about the salvation these men were preaching. Knowing Paul, he may have even witnessed to this jailer as he put his feet in stocks.
 - b. Whatever it was: the testimony, singing, praying, praising, the earthquake, no prisoners escaping - he was brought under **strong** conviction that the most important thing to him was to get the question of his soul settled. [Sirs, what must I do to be saved?]

*Paul's answer, at this time, was amazingly **simple**: [Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, (Who He is and His D.B.R.) and thou shalt be saved, and thy house] if they believe also.

3. In verse 32, no doubt, was where Paul and Silas taught what believing on Jesus Christ really meant (also to his house, family and employees). There has to be an **understanding** about sin and God's remedy with the gospel (I Cor. 1:17-18; I Cor. 15:3-4). **This is the core-heart of the grace message.
4. Notice the difference in messages:
 - a. When people (Jews) asked John the Baptist what to do to be saved?

Mark 1:4-5 - John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Luke 3:3, 8 - And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; Luke 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.
 - b. When a lawyer asked Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life"?:

Luke 10:25-27 - And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Luke 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? Luke 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

- c. When the convicted Jewish crowd at Pentecost asked Peter and the apostles: "What shall we do?"

Acts 2:37-38 - Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- d. But here, through Paul's new dispensation of grace message, he tells the Philippian jailer:

Acts 16:31 - [And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.]

** That shows the **change** in programs. In the gospels and Acts 2, they were under the Law and Kingdom program. But now, through Paul, they are no longer under Law but under grace. Paul can say to this Philippian jailer, who is a Gentile, "Believe"! Believe that everything that needs to be done has **been** accomplished through the gospel (D.B.R.). Just believe with your heart (Romans 10:10).

5. Do we see the difference? Salvation involves regeneration, becoming **new**, and we cannot help but immediately see this truth in the jailer (II Cor. 5:17).

- a. *One moment he is a hardened jailer who is accustomed to dealing with harsh, vulgar, violent men, robbers, murderers and criminals. Then, the next moment, he is a compassionate, gentle nurse, bathing the torn backs of Paul and Silas! He bound up their wounds, even though that put him at risk with the authorities.

- b. Next, no doubt after telling Paul and Silas his apology and **regrets** of their treatment and after giving genuine proof of **his** conversion, the Philippian jailer and his household (who also had believed on Christ) were baptized.

- c. It is important to note that Paul had not **required** this baptism [for the remission of sins] as in the 12's commission (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). This baptism was completely **separate** and "believing in Christ alone".

It would not be long before the "one** baptism" by the Spirit into Christ would be taught by Paul (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:5).

- d. Paul and Silas are treated to a meal in the jailer's **home**! Likely his home was on the same grounds as the prison. They all feasted and fellowshiped together, rejoicing in the jailers' and others' newly found faith. Imagine this setting?

D.

Acts 16:35-40 - And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. Acts 16:36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. Acts 16:37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. Acts 16:38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. Acts 16:39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city. Acts 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

1. We are not told why the magistrates decided to **re**lease Paul and Silas. No doubt, they knew about the earthquake and perhaps about what happened at the prison. But for some reason, they were in a **hurry** to let them go. Perhaps they had a guilty conscience for not having an inquiry or investigation as to what had actually happened. Perhaps they might have suspected one of them might be a Roman citizen and wanted to dispose of them as quickly as possible.
2. The jailer is thrilled over this news, since Paul and Silas are now brothers in Christ. However, he is totally **surprised**, along with the magistrates, when Paul and Silas **refuse** to go!

Paul simply said: "They have beaten us publically, uncondemned men that are Romans, and have thrown us into prison. Now they want to throw us out secretly. **No indeed, let them come themselves and lead us out (verse 37)."*
3. They were beaten, being Jews, and thrown into prison as if having **no** rights. They were not only Jews, but also Roman citizens and Paul wants to hold them **accountable** for their illegal action. A secret pardon will not do and the apostle demands a formal, public vindication.
 - a. The judges, magistrates, are now accused and could be in danger of violating Roman Law. They were afraid, so they **personally** and publically go to Paul and Silas, apologizing, yet still requesting them to leave the city.
 - b. Paul and Silas graciously comply with the request, but did not flee in **haste** from the city. They maintained their dignity and went to Lydia's house, perhaps to pick up a few of their belongings and to say goodbye. They met some of Philippi's believers there, **com**forted them, then left.

Lessons:

1. **Music** does help in times of trials.
2. In times of difficult circumstances, God wants us to maintain a good testimony so He can **use** us.
3. The answer to man's sin dilemma is **simply** the gospel alone.
4. When one is truly converted, there is a difference - a **change** in one's life.
5. Living for the Lord and sharing the gospel often brings persecution and **attacks**.
6. Sometimes, it is okay to have a sense of humor and **stick** it to our adversaries.
7. We can see the dispensations changing with Paul's new message getting **stronger** with each story.

Note: When Paul deals with Jewish people, he is **con**siderate of where they are coming from. When he is dealing with the Gentiles, Body Church truth is emerging and becoming stronger and **clearer**. This back and forth will continue through Acts, the transitional book (from Israel-Law-Kingdom on earth to the Mystery Body Church, with the gospel of grace).

When the book of Acts ends, Paul goes full blast with Body truth to the Gentiles mainly.

Acts 28:28 - [Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.]