

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 53 | ACTS 16-25-40

ACTS 16:25-40 | THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY: THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR

- Verse 25 –
 - It takes deep confidence and joy to purposefully change despair by singing and praising God, but that is exactly what Paul and Silas did. It is likely that this approach may be the best “medicine” for despair.
 - Both the Christian and Jewish faiths have a strong musical heritage. These two faiths are likely the most musical of all faith groups, and perhaps the only groups that sing consistently, in individuals and groups, as part of worship.
- Verse 26 –
 - While this is likely a supernatural event, nothing in the text requires it, and one who interprets it as natural would not do damage to the text. What makes it appear supernatural is that **all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed**. This *could* happen in a natural earthquake but sounds more like a supernatural work.
- Verses 27-29 –
 - The word for **keeper** (v. 27) and **jailor** (v. 23) is the same.
 - The roman jailers were held liable for the release of any prisoners.
 - It is unknown how many prisoners this particular jailor was responsible for. There were certainly other prisoners, but it is possible that this jailor was only concerned with Paul and Silas.
 - If Paul and Silas were the only two, and they were in the **inner prison** and their feet were **in the stocks**, it makes sense that this jailor could have been sleeping while on duty.
- Verses 30-31 –
 - This is certainly one of the most famous questions of the Bible. It is famous likely because of its clarity: **what must I do to be saved?** With the combination of the circumstances of the imprisonment, the singing and praise, and the answer, it is hard to build a case that the jailor means anything beyond a spiritual salvation.
 - The answer had already been spoken by Jesus (Jn 3:16, 6:47, Mark 16:16) however, that was always to a Jewish audience and under the context of the law. This is to a gentile man outside the nation of Israel and with no reference at all to the law nor the covenants of Israel.
 - The fact that **thy house** is mentioned is not to say that this man's belief would save his household, but that the entire household was invited to this belief, as indicated in the next verse.
- Verse 32 –
 - The Gospel is not fully contained in verse 31, and this is evident in verse 32. The instruction to believe required greater knowledge, so Paul and Silas **spoke unto him the word of the Lord**, along with his household.

- Note that some argue that this verse proves infant baptism as appropriate, because they presume the jailor had infant children. Such a presumption is far-fetched. But verse 32 says that Paul and Silas taught **all that were in his house**, giving the appearance of a household that could accept theological teaching.
- Verse 33 –
 - The jailor ministered to Paul and Silas, and either Paul or Silas (we are not told) baptized **he and all his**.
 - While baptism began as a Jewish ritual of cleansing and repentance, it appears that at this time it is being used outside of Jewish life, unrelated to the Jewish faith, and associated with the Gospel of the uncircumcision (Gal. 2:7).
 - Where were they baptized? Very possibly the same river at which Lydia was found praying, but it could have been any pool of water.
- Verse 34 –
 - Remember that this jailor was given responsibility for Paul and Silas when the magistrates sent the prisoners to him, **charging the jailor to keep them safely** (v. 23). Now the jailor keeps his charge but also ministers to their physical needs.
 - The jailor continues with his charge, thus fulfilling his duty, and thus not incurring punishment (see v. 35-36).
 - Note that in verse 27-28 we speculated that this jailor was only in charge of these two prisoners. This verse supports that speculation.
- Verses 35-36 –
 - By morning there is no further mention of the earthquake, and life seems to be going on in a usual manner.
 - The earthquake must not have been devastating which is more evidence for a supernatural event which was very localized.
 - The instruction comes from the court to **let those men go**, with no explanation. We can speculate that the magistrates recognized that they did not have a legal case.
- Verses 37-40 –
 - The jailor reported, but the serjeants must have been present, for **Paul said unto them** (plural) that the magistrates would have to **come themselves and fetch us out**.
 - Notice that Paul uses his Roman citizenship to the full degree, something which Christians should not be hesitant to do.
 - Furthermore, he does not at all “turn the other cheek,” as Christians are often expected to do by their enemies. Either Paul is living in sin by not living under Christ’s commands, or he is not living under Christ’s commands because he recognizes that the words of Christ must be taken in context, not haphazardly applied to all people of all dispensations.
 - The magistrates themselves came and **desired them to depart out of the city**, which they did, stopping for a time at Lydia’s home.