

Acts 16b
26-45

26-26 This region is known for earthquakes, which were more severe in that century. Was it a coincidence that the earthquake took place at this moment? If so it was great timing. What is unusual is that the leg stocks came loose. When Paul writes to the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," that church had context and an example to know he lived what he preached. Philippians 4:4-7

27-28 The punishment for a Roman guard losing a prisoner was the same as the prisoner's. The jailor didn't want to face that fate, so he was about to take his own life. I assume that he looked into the cells and saw the leg stocks had come open. This leads me to believe the prisoners had gathered in the inner cell to hear from the men who were singing in spite of their beaten bodies. What an impact Paul and Silas must have had on the prisoners that night to keep them all there when the doors and shackles were opened! Paul was sharing with them a greater freedom than that from bars and leg stocks. John 8:36

29-30 He needed light to go down into that nasty inner cell where the prisoners must have all gathered around Paul and Silas. His reaction was the same as the prisoners. How can I be saved? When one contemplates suicide, the question of eternity and judgment finally becomes an urgent matter. Perhaps the jailor overheard their singing or witnessing to the other prisoners and sensed they had the answer. Or he may have heard the woman that they delivered who kept shouting that they were declaring the way of salvation. When God moves in a powerful way, those that witness it are usually in awe and stirred to consider what their response should be. Acts 2:37; Luke 3:10

31-32 The message of salvation was presented. Romans believed in various gods, including the Caesar. When Paul told the jailor to believe in the Lord Jesus, the jailor would take that to mean that the one true God is Jesus. Paul and Silas went on to preach the whole message of salvation to the entire household.

33-34 A change of heart results in a change in actions. The jailor treated them as respected guests. The whole family was baptized that night. The jailor was filled with joy because he and the family had come to believe in God. A change from the unpredictable Roman gods to believing in the Creator God who loves us enough to send His only Son should make any heart glad. 2:46; 13:48,52 The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

35 That was a long eventful night, but they can't sleep yet. Why did the magistrates order their release early in the morning? Perhaps they heard the whole story of the possessed woman and what she said and connected it with

the earthquake. They didn't want the "gods" to be angry and so ordered their release. Greeks and Romans saw earthquakes and other natural disasters as signs from the gods.

36-37 Now Paul can let it be known that they are Roman citizens. It was against the law to punish Romans as they had been punished without an appeal. To break that law demanded a heavy penalty. The trial was hasty and one sided, and so now Paul is calling them to recognize the error of their ways.

38-39 They got the royal escort that they demanded. I wonder if it was so that they could share the Gospel with the town leaders?

40 They stopped by Lydia's house to encourage the new believers and no doubt tell them there were more converts in the jail system. Encouragement is what we do because it is what God does for us. 2Corinthians 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:25

Apparently Luke stayed here to help establish the church. Notice in this verse he does not use "we" as he has through the last few chapters. We'll see him again in Philippi in chapter 20.