

Show Courage in the Face of Those who Oppose You...

Philippians 1: 28

The Journey into – and out of---a Philippian Jail

Acts 16: 16-42

Context: What kind of city thinks it's normal to have someone walking the street, with her Delphic pimps, shouting mind reading and fortune telling?

Originally named Krenides (Fountains) in 360 BCE (ish) by its Thasian colonists, the village must have been desirable enough that Philip of Macedonia renamed after himself four years later. It was desired for its nearby gold mines and was part of the royal route than ran east –west across Macedonia.

Philippi shows up in Roman documents around 43-42 BCE when Caesar's heir Mark Antony and Octavian confronted Brutus and Cassius in the final battle of those who represented a Roman republic. It was then designed to be a miniature Rome and governed by two military officers appointed directly from Rome.

In the first century the population was about 10,000. Twenty percent of those people were slaves.

Our story begins about 100 years after the death knell of the Republic. Since many of here are “over thirty”, we can have a sense of how recent a 100 years can feel.

Thinking about the Fortune Teller

1. What was it about Philippi that allowed for this “business”?
2. Why do you think it took Paul several days before he used his position as a representative of Creator sets Free to cast out the evil spirit?

The word used for spirit in verse 16 is **Python**, the serpent who protected the Oracle at Delphi. There is an interesting parallel in Hebrew *nahas*. This word for serpent (also used for bronze or copper) has as its root the mythical creature of chaos who is opposed to God. It is the same word used in the Sinai desert for the vipers that attacked the children of Israel. It is the same word to describe the brass of the serpent put on the pole for the children of Israel to *see and live*.

3. Do you think there is any significance in the Paul using the “name of Jesus Christ” to cast out Python?

Paul and Silas Arrested and Imprisoned

1. I cannot imagine the kind of response described in verses 20-23 happening in London, Edinburgh, Sydney, Perth or Los Angeles. How do you account for the fervor of the village council?
2. What do you think the jailor’s reasons for putting Paul and Silas (with no history of violence) in the depths of the prison in shackles?
3. Why do you think God allowed it?
4. What do you think were some of the benefits of Paul and Silas choosing to sing?
5. This being me, I clearly think there is metaphoric significance/ parallel to God using an earthquake to free Paul and Silas from the depths of a prison. What do you think?

Vs. 30 – One of the translations of this verse is “What must I do to be set free and made whole?” The response in that version is “Believe in Creator Sets Free; He will make you whole and set all your family free”.

1. In Hebrew culture concepts are concrete; actions, people or objects. How will the jailor change if he believes and is made whole?
2. What do you think is the point Luke was making for his readers?

The Council Releases Them

1. What do you think are the mix of reasons Paul wanted their release to be public?
2. What do you think happened to the other prisoners?
3. From the text, it seems that Lydia, her friends by the river, along with the jailor and his family are the core of the church at Philippi. What do you think are the qualities they will bring to the new church?

US

1. What are the lessons of this story for us?

I wish for you unexpected blessings,

Catherine

