



The Philippian Jailer Is Saved

Acts 16:16–40



LESSON GOAL

Students will have the joy that only comes from knowing Christ.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Tell why Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned.
- Describe what happened while Paul and Silas were in prison.
- List the ways the jailer demonstrated he had believed.
- Explain how the magistrates had acted unjustly.

KEY VERSE

“..and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.” —Acts 16:34b

APPLICATION

- Repent of the times that you were unthankful last week.
- Make a list of reasons why someone who knows Christ can rejoice.
- Show a thankful heart by singing to God.
- If you have believed in God, demonstrate that belief through joyful obedience.

NEXT WEEK

Paul Preaches the Gospel in Athens
Acts 17:16–34

Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

Following the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch where they continued to teach and preach (Acts 15:35). After spending some time in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas decided to return to the cities in which they had established churches (15:36) on their first missionary journey (recorded in Acts 13:1–14:26). Because of a sharp disagreement over whether Mark should be taken, Barnabas and Paul “parted from one another” (15:37–39). Barnabas returned with Mark to Cyprus (15:39) while Paul took Silas and strengthened the churches throughout Syria and Cilicia (15:40–41). After ministering in Derbe and Lystra (where Paul and Silas were joined by Timothy) (16:1–5), the missionaries attempted first to go west and then north but were prevented both times by God (16:6–7). In Troas, Paul learned God’s plan that they preach the Gospel in Macedonia, the region located across the Aegean Sea on the mainland of Greece (16:8–10). (For the first time in Acts, the second person “us” is used, suggesting that Luke began to accompany Paul in Troas.)

After crossing the Aegean Sea, Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke came to Philippi, “the foremost city of that part of Macedonia” (Acts 16:11–12). After only a few days, God revealed why he wanted Paul to come to Macedonia—God had people to be saved! Because the city’s Jewish population was too small to support a synagogue, the Jews met alongside the river on the Sabbath for prayer (16:13). When Paul shared the Gospel to the group of “women who met there,” the Lord worked in a Gentile woman named Lydia and “opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul” (16:14). Following her conversion, Lydia’s house became the center for

Paul’s Ministry in Philippi (Acts 16:15, 40)

The salvation of Lydia and her household (16:15) marked just the beginning of God’s work in Philippi. God would open the hearts of more people through Paul and Silas’ ministry in a Roman jail. Those saved would share in Paul and Silas’ joy of knowing Christ.

The Persecution and Imprisonment of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:16–24)

Paul’s ministry in Philippi was first challenged by a disturbing source, a demon–possessed slave girl. The slave girl met Paul and his companions when they were going to the river to pray (16:16). The demon inside her recognized that Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were his enemies because they were “servants of the Most High God” (16:17). Luke records that the demon–possessed girl did the most destructive thing she could to discredit the Gospel: “She followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation’” (16:17). Although what she said was true, the

demonic testimony to the truth was damaging to the saints' effort to proclaim Christ. Paul was striving to clarify the Gospel for the Gentiles in Philippi, but the demon-possessed girl was only muddying the truth by pretending to be an advocate of Paul's message. After being followed by the demon-possessed girl for many days, Paul finally commanded that the demon to leave the girl (16:18). The demon submitted to the name of Jesus Christ and left the girl.

When the demon left the slave girl, the girl's masters were furious with Paul and Silas. The demon-possessed slave girl was a huge advantage to her masters because they made "much profit by fortune-telling" (16:16). The girl was a mouth piece for the demon who claimed to reveal people's future. With the demon was cast out, "her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone" (16:19). They "seized Paul and Silas and dragged them" before the magistrates (16:20), the two men responsible for keeping peace in each of the Roman colonies. (Luke does not record what happened to either Timothy or himself during the rest of their time at Philippi.)

In order to get revenge on Paul and Silas, the girl's masters brought trumped-up charges before the magistrates: "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe" (16:20-21). The men pointed out that Paul and Silas were Jews in order to stir up anti-Semitism in the crowds. They also falsely accused Paul and Silas of troubling the city, a charge which was designed to concern the magistrates to whom was given the responsibility of keeping order in Philippi. The last part of their charge was technically true because it was illegal for Roman citizen to practice any religion which had not been sanctioned by the state.

The plot worked just as the slave girl's masters had hoped. The crowd which had gathered was swayed by the false charges and "rose up against" Paul and Silas (16:22). In order to placate the crowd, the magistrates circumvented the normal procedure of investigating the charges and conducting a hearing. They quickly tore off Paul and Silas' clothes and "commanded them to be beaten with rods" (16:22). Even though the punishment was illegal because Paul and Silas had not been found guilty of any crime, they were still struck with the bundles of rods. After Paul and Silas received "many stripes," they were unjustly thrown into prison (16:23). The jailer was given strict orders "to keep them securely," so he put them in the most secure part of the prison and placed their feet in wooden stocks (16:23-24).

The Prison Ministry of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25-34)

Because their joy was not based on their physical well-being but on their knowledge of Christ, the wounded Paul and Silas could still rejoice even while their backs were bloody and their legs were bound. Luke records that "at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God" (16:25). The other prisoners naturally listened to Paul and Silas (16:25). They had probably never seen anything as strange as these innocent men who praised God even though they were unjustly beaten. No doubt Paul took advantage of the situation and proclaimed the Gospel to his fellow prisoners.

While Paul and Silas sang praise to God, God miraculously intervened, not to provide a way for Paul and Silas to escape but to lead a man and his family to salvation. God sent an earthquake so strong "that the foundations of the prison were shaken" (16:26). God also opened the prisoners' doors and caused the chains to be loosed. When the jailer responsible for the security of the prisoners was awoken by the earthquake, he was mortified to see the prison doors hanging open. He naturally assumed that the prisoners had escaped. Because he would be executed for his failure, the jailer "drew his sword and was about to kill himself"

(16:27). Looking through his open cell door, Paul saw what the jailer was about to do and “called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here’” (16:28). While an unregenerate man would have been gladdened at the jailer’s death, Paul desired his jailer to live that he might come to know the Lord.

When he realized that he had no reason to kill himself, the jailer was humbled by the full weight of the miracle God had performed in sending the earthquake, opening the prison doors, and loosening the prisoner’s chains. After calling for a light (and perhaps securing the other prisoners), he “fell down trembling before Paul and Silas” (16:29). He was willing to listen to whatever God’s messengers had to say. He asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30). Having come so close to death and having seen God’s power displayed, the jailer realized that he needed to be saved, not from execution, but from something far worse, the penalty his sins deserved. Paul and Silas were quick to answer, “Believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (16:31). Although the simple answer succinctly sums up the only hope a lost man has, Paul and Silas explained that truth as they “spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (16:32). (Luke does not tell when the jailer’s household arrived. Perhaps after hearing that God’s promise of salvation applied to his household as well (16:31), the jailer brought both his family and servants to hear Paul and Silas tell them how could they be saved.)

After believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the jailer immediately demonstrated a transformed life. The jailer took care of the most pressing need first. At that “same hour of the night,” the jailer cleansed Paul and Silas’ wounds (16:33). Next, both “he and all his family were baptized.” Those who had just placed their faith in Jesus were eager to obey their new Lord, even if it meant being baptized at midnight! Following his baptism, the jailer brought Paul and Silas, officially still his prisoners, “into his house” and “set food before them” (16:34). Finally, the jailer “rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.” A few hours earlier the jailer had likely heard Paul and Silas singing praise to God as they rejoiced in their Savior, but that rejoicing was unknown to him. Now, because of God’s miraculous work of grace, the jailer and his household had believed in God. Like Paul and Silas, they were also able to rejoice that they knew the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Public Release of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:35–40)

Perhaps out of concern for their newly saved brother, Paul and Silas spent the rest of the night in prison. The surprising fact that God’s miraculous activity did not lead to Paul and Silas’ escape is followed by another surprise. When the magistrates told Paul and Silas the next morning that they were free to go, Paul and Silas still stayed in prison (16:35–36). Paul revealed that both he and Silas were Roman citizens (16:37). It was unlawful for the magistrates to punish “uncondemned Romans” who had not been tried. To add insult to injury, the magistrates were trying to release Paul and Silas secretly, without apologizing for what had been done. Paul resisted and said, “No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out” (16:37). Paul’s motivation that the magistrates apologize was not pride. The Christians had unjustly gained a reputation as being trouble causers. By standing up now, Paul could both emphasize that he and Silas had not been convicted of the false charges and ensure that the Christians who remained in the city would be treated more judiciously than they had.

The magistrates were afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens (16:38). They could potentially be removed from office for the failure to uphold Roman law. If the emperor wished, he could even punish the whole city of Philippi. The magistrates brought Paul and Silas out like Paul had asked

(16:39–40). Unable to force Paul and Silas to leave, the magistrates begged them to leave the city, most likely to prevent any more mobs from forming. Paul and Silas left Philippi only after they returned to Lydia’s house where they encouraged the brethren (v.40).

Conclusion

When God brings salvation through the Gospel, He gives those He saves a true knowledge of Him. Because Paul and Silas knew God’s sovereignty over their imprisonment, His mercy in their salvation, and His grace in allowing them to suffer for the name of Christ, they were able to rejoice in the Lord and sing songs to Him, even while in prison. When the Philippian jailer understood the Lord’s forgiveness toward sinners, His compassion on the repentant, and His faithfulness to save those who believe, the jailer also rejoiced in the Lord. Whether it’s the joy of a new believer, like the Philippian jailer, or the joy of mature missionaries, like Paul and Silas, believers should continue to rejoice in the Lord when they dwell on His attributes and actions in their lives.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Who was hearing the Gospel and being saved?
The Gentiles.

What were the Jews saying about the Gentile’s salvation?
The Jews were saying that the Gentiles were not really saved because they had not kept the Law.

Could any of the Jews ever keep God’s Law perfectly?
No, no one except for Jesus was ever able to keep the Law perfectly.

What did Peter ask the Jews?
Peter asked why the Jews were making the Gentiles keep the law when the Jews couldn’t even keep the law.

How did is someone saved?
By faith in Jesus Christ’s salvation of us.



Difficult Concepts

Spirit of Divination: Demons are bad angels. They used to live in Heaven, but because they rebelled against God they were kicked out of Heaven. Demons can take control of people, affecting their minds and actions. A demon lived inside the slave girl and gave her some kind of ability to tell the future. People paid much money to listen to the demon-possessed girl.

Why was the prison guard going to kill himself?: Prison guards were responsible to make sure their prisoners did not escape. If a prisoner did escape, the guard would receive the same punishment the escaped prisoner was receiving. If any of the prisoners were to be executed, the guard would be killed. Because the prison guard saw the doors were open, he assumed all the prisoners had escaped. Rather than facing shame and possible execution, he was going to kill himself. Ask the students if any of them have pets. Have them imagine being responsible for their pet. If the pet escapes, the student would have to take their place. They would live in the dog house or eat the fish flakes or run on the hamster wheel.

Unlawful Trial: Paul was a Roman citizen. Rome had laws that gave rules for how to have a trial and how to punish Roman citizens. None of those rules were followed for Paul. It was against the law to beat a Roman citizen without a trial. Have the students imagine being punished by a teacher at school without even being asked if they had done anything wrong. Ask if it would be fair to be punished in Sunday school for talking when they really hadn't.



What Is Joy?

Begin by asking the students what makes them happy. Collect a variety of answers, from food to their favorite toy to their family. Then ask what makes them sad. From getting hurt to a mean neighbor, have them provide examples of circumstances that make them sad. Explain that joy is not a feeling or a result of good circumstances. Even sad people can have joy. Joy is an internal choice to have a trusting and happy heart in happy and sad times. The sun always shines, even when it is raining; it's just hidden. We can always be joyful, even if we don't show it with smiles and laughs.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Passage Outline

The Persecution and Imprisonment of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:16–24)

The Prison Ministry of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25–34)

The Public Release of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:35–40)

Reading of the Text

Read Acts 16:16–40.



Introduction

Have you ever been so happy that you wanted to sing and shout? We can and should have joy in our lives as the Bible tells believers to do. Our joy shouldn't be determined by our circumstances or how we feel but because we have been saved from the punishment and consequence of sin, which is separation from God. Although there will be times in our lives when situations don't look hopeful, we are to look to what Jesus has done on the cross for us. In today's lesson we will see the joy in the lives of Paul and Silas and the Philippian jailer.

Lead-off Questions (LOQs)

LOQ: Who did Paul and Silas meet as they were going to the place of prayer?

Answer: Paul and Silas came in contact with a slave girl who was possessed by a demon. This slave girl was able to tell fortunes because of the evil spirit that was in her. Her masters would use that ability to make a lot of money. She followed Paul and Silas for many days.

LOQ: What did Paul think about what this girl was doing?

Answer: Paul was really annoyed with her and what she was saying so Paul cast out the demon from her. The demon left the girl and so did her powers to tell fortunes.

LOQ: What did the slave girl's owners think of what Paul had done?

Answer: Her owners were very upset with Paul because he had destroyed their means of making money with her. They were so angry that they dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates. They wanted to get back at Paul and Silas for what they had done so they accused them of bringing trouble to the city and for teaching customs that were not lawful for Romans to observe.

LOQ: What was done with Paul and Silas because of these charges?

Answer: The crowd was swayed by what the men were saying and they became angry. The city leaders didn't even investigate the charges but rather beat Paul and Silas and put them in prison.

LOQ: What did Paul and Silas do as they were in prison?

Answer: Although being in prison would seem like a place to be sad, Paul and Silas prayed and sang songs of praise to God. The other prisoners were listening to them sing and pray.

LOQ: What great event happened as Paul and Silas were praising God and praying?

Answer: There was a great earthquake and the prison's foundation was shaken. All of the prison doors opened and everyone's chains fell off.

LOQ: What did the jailer do when he saw the prison door open?

Answer: The jailer thought that all of the prisoners had escaped. He knew that he would be killed if anyone had escaped so he was about to kill himself. Then he heard Paul's voice from inside the prison. Paul told him not to harm himself because they were all still there. Then the jailer ran into the prison with a light and fell down at Paul's feet. He asked Paul, "what must I do to be saved?"

LOQ: What did Paul say that the jailer must do to be saved?

Answer: He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Both the jailer and his family had the chance to believe on Jesus and be saved.

LOQ: What did the jailer and his family do?

Answer: Both the jailer and his family believed and were baptized. They took care of Paul and Silas's injuries and gave them food. Then they rejoiced because he and his family had believed and were saved from eternal punishment.

LOQ: What did the city leaders do the next morning?

Answer: They sent a message to the jailer that Paul and Silas should be released from prison. But Paul would not go because he wanted them to come and apologize by taking them out of the prison themselves. The city leaders apologized and then begged them to leave the city.

LOQ: What did Paul and Silas do before leaving the city?

Answer: Paul and Silas went to the home of Lydia and encouraged the other believers who were there. Then they left the city.

Summary

As Paul and Silas went to a place to pray a slave girl who had a demon in her followed them and Paul became very annoyed with her. So Paul cast out the demon from the girl. The girl's master's became very angry because they would no longer make money from the powers that she had previously had so they wanted revenge on Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas were arrested and put in prison. This could have been a very difficult circumstance for most people to be in. The situation wasn't one that most people would have rejoiced in. But Paul and Silas had a different point of view. Paul and Silas realized that where they were did not change their salvation or God being in control. In the darkest point of their lives in the middle of the night they raised their voices in prayer and praise to God for His goodness. God used this situation for His glory and for the jailer's good by bringing he and his family to salvation and the joy of the Lord.

Application

Joy is not dependent one's circumstances. Joy comes from knowing that Jesus has saved someone from his/her sins. Many times throughout the Bible believers are called to have joy and rejoice. It is to be a way of life and an expression of thankfulness for God's wonderful gift of salvation. When we have this thankfulness, joy will be the natural result.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Rejoicing in Difficult Times

Act out someone rejoicing in a difficult time. Have someone come in with their arm in a sling who is joyful even though they broke their arm in a bike accident. Or have someone talk about their sick dog, which makes them feel sad. But they still have joy that never goes away. Make the point that joy is not based on circumstances. Joy is a choice and in internal attitude, caused by belief and not by good circumstances.

Prayer Time

Use prayer time as an opportunity for praise. Turn the students' requests into praises when reasonable. For instance, thank God that a sick grandmother loves Jesus and has family to take care of her. Rejoice that a skinned knee was not a more serious injury.



Repetition

Write "Circumstances are not the enemy. Circumstances are never the enemy. Circumstances are what make us more like Christ." on the board. Have the students read it out loud together. Point to it at timely occasions throughout the lesson and have them read it together again.



Joy that Lasts

To demonstrate what brings true joy, blow up several balloons. Ask the students for things that make them happy for a little while and write those answers on the balloons. Write "salvation" on the last balloon. Have students bring the balloons to you one at a time. Ask if they think what is written on the balloon will bring lasting joy. Before the object lesson starts, put a tack through the inside of a Band-Aid and put the Band-Aid on a finger on your left hand. When the student hands you the balloon, hold it with both hands and unobtrusively pop it with the concealed tack. When you get the "salvation" balloon, be sure to hold it only with your right hand. Explain that only salvation brings joy that lasts.



Earthquake box

Place chains and padlocks in a box. Have a student simulate an earthquake by shaking the box as hard as he can. Pull out the chains and lock and show that the chains are not broken and the lock is not open. Explain that an earthquake shakes the ground, but God must have miraculously opened the locks and doors to free the prisoners.



Singing in the Dark

To imitate what Paul and Silas were doing in prison, turn out the lights of the classroom and sing and pray.

Praise and Worship

Shout To The Lord

Great Is The Lord

Change My Heart O God

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



What Would You Do?

Ask the students what they would do in an earthquake. Have them imagine one is happening, and have an earthquake drill. Or, bring in a large cardboard box. Put one student in it, then simulate an earthquake by rocking it and shaking it.

Ask the students what they would do if someone beat them up, then tied them up. Collect answers like fight them or call the police. Then discuss Paul and Silas' reaction—singing and praising God.

Scavenger Hunt

Set up four stations around the class where children, or teams, have to go and collect items from the lesson. Each team gets the following list: 1) Marketplace—get basket, 2) Jail—get chains, 3) Midnight—team members cover their eyes and sing a praise song together, 4) Jailer's home—get a snack!

Verses on Joy

Prepare a list of verses on joy. Have the students look them up and then read them. You could assign verses to each student, or do it as a Bible "Sword drill." You could include the following: 1 Sam. 2:1; Ps. 5:11; Ps. 13:5; Ps. 32:11; Ps. 100:1, 2; Is. 61:10; Luke 10:20; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16; James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:13

"The Philippian jailer is saved"

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. It is located at the back of this lesson.



Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take it home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" —Acts 16:31

The Philippian
jailer
is **saved**



Acts 16:16-40

Name _____

1. How did the slave girl earn her masters money? _____

- a. juggling c. dancing
b. telling fortunes d. real estate

2. Fill in the blanks from Acts 16:18 with what Paul said to the spirit inside the little girl.

"I _____ you in the name of _____ Christ
to come _____ of her."

3. True or False: Paul and Silas deserved to be beaten and thrown in prison.

4. What were Paul and Silas doing at midnight in prison? _____

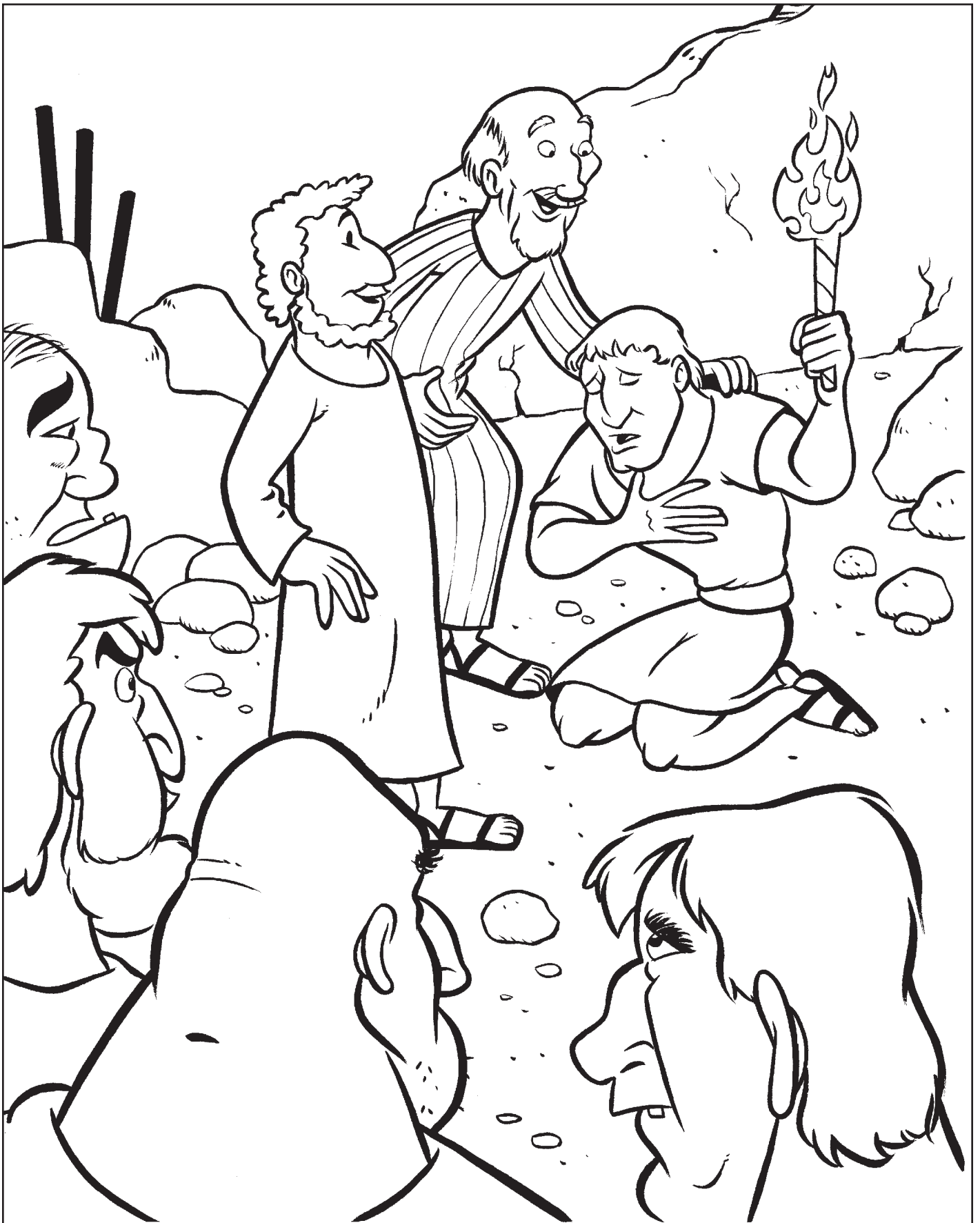
5. How were the doors of the prison opened? _____

6. True or False: Paul was more concerned about the guards' salvation than escaping from prison.



"...But Paul greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour.

—Acts 16:18b



**“Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.
And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”**

—Acts 16:29–30

