

# An Earthquake in the Soul

Acts 16: 16-40



# The Location – the Roman provincial city of Philippi

The Date: about 49-50 AD



Then



Today



Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.



It was a place to meet interested people.

How did she know where to go? Slavery was everywhere in the Roman empire.

This poor girl had real powers, but how she came to have them we are not told.

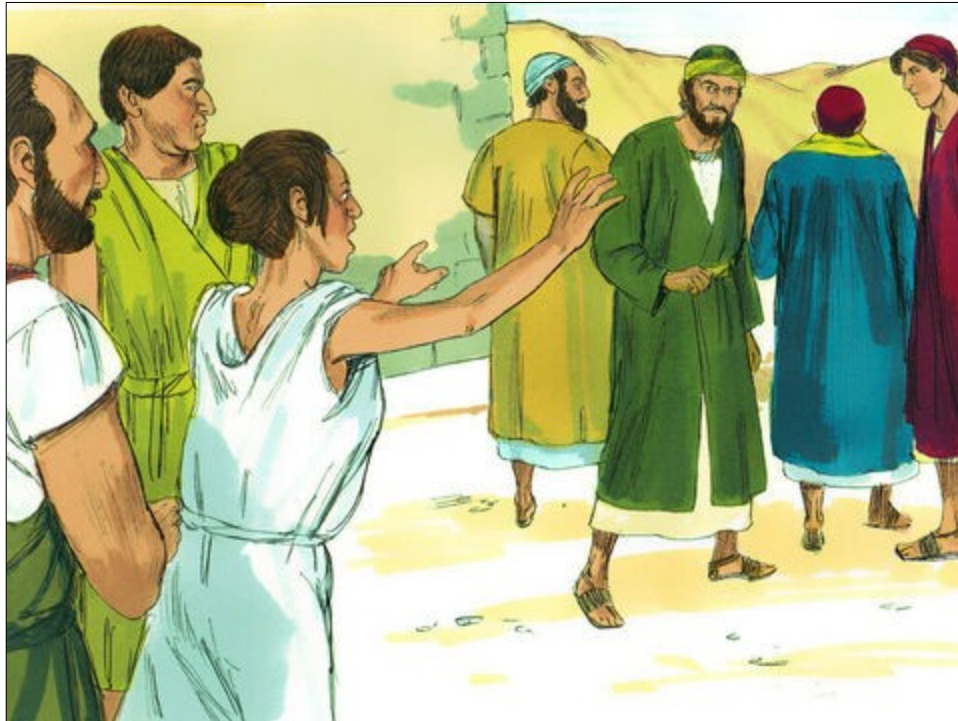
Can spirits predict the future?

She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.



Exploitation and trafficking still goes on.

This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting,  
"These men are servants of the Most High God,  
who are telling you the way to be saved."



Shouting for everybody to hear.

She didn't get this information  
by herself.

She was telling the truth,  
so was there anything wrong  
with that?

She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!"



This turned out to be more than a one-off complication for the missionaries.

The Name of Jesus Christ is the highest authority. The spirit had to obey as Paul commanded.

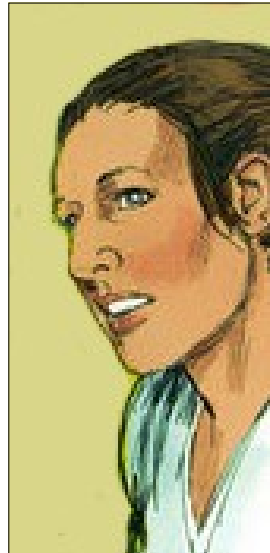
Why didn't he expel the spirit at first?

At that moment the spirit left her.

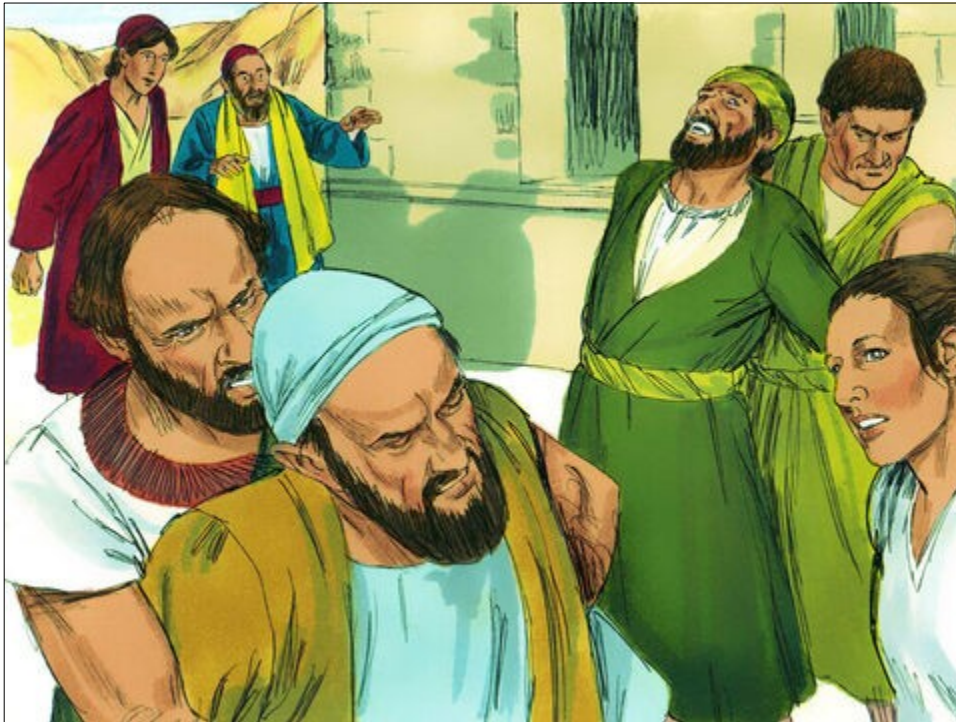
An instantaneous result.  
What happened?

She was set free from this spirit.

What became  
of her later?



When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.



The issue wasn't theological – it was financial.

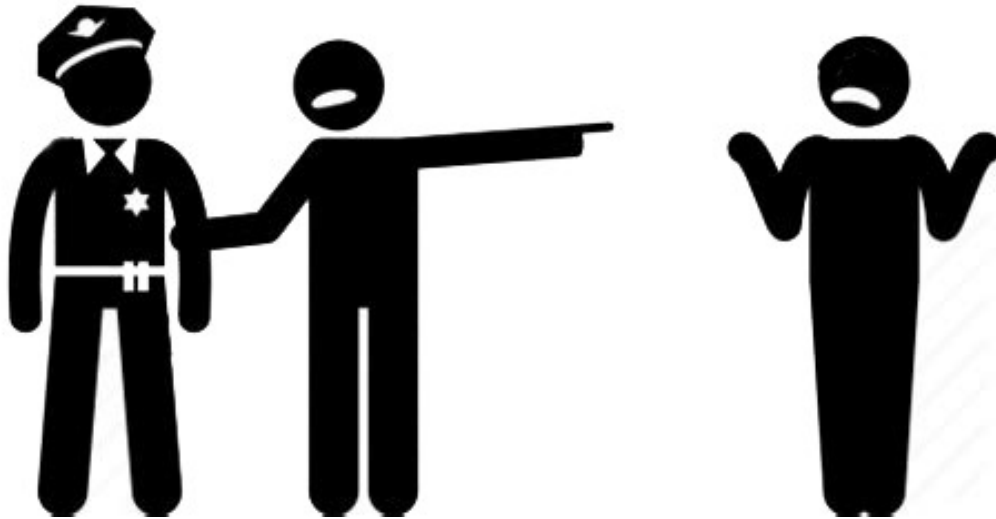
Their income-stream had just dried up.

Rough treatment was probably their way of working.

Was this a 'citizen's arrest'?



They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."



Notice how the accusers make it a political issue, just as Jesus' accusers did.

The 'THEM vs. US' issue with the Jews would add to the hostility.

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas,



They may have not had any idea what it was all about.  
Crowds can sometimes be stupid and easily led

and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.



The Romans used rods as well as whips.



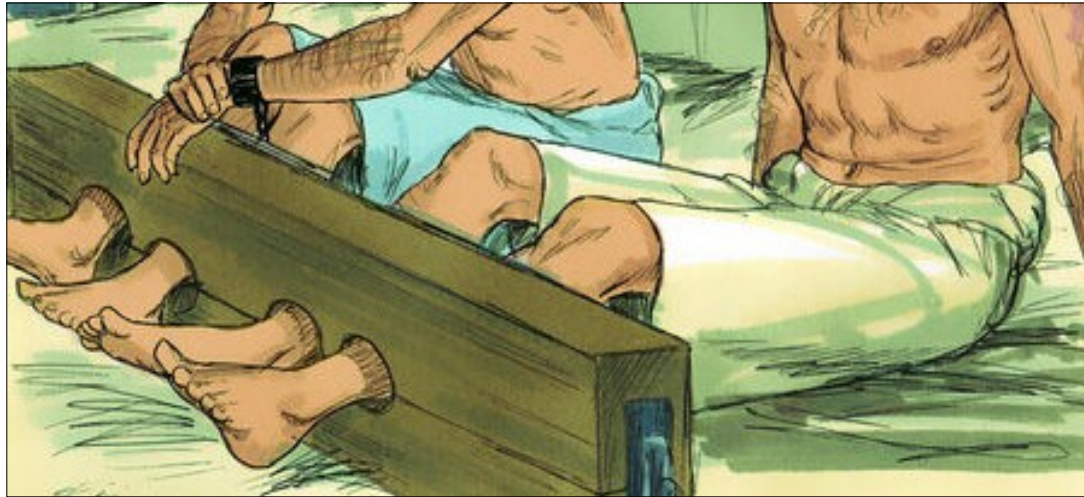
After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison,



Suffering for their faith.

*Galatians 6:17 I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.*

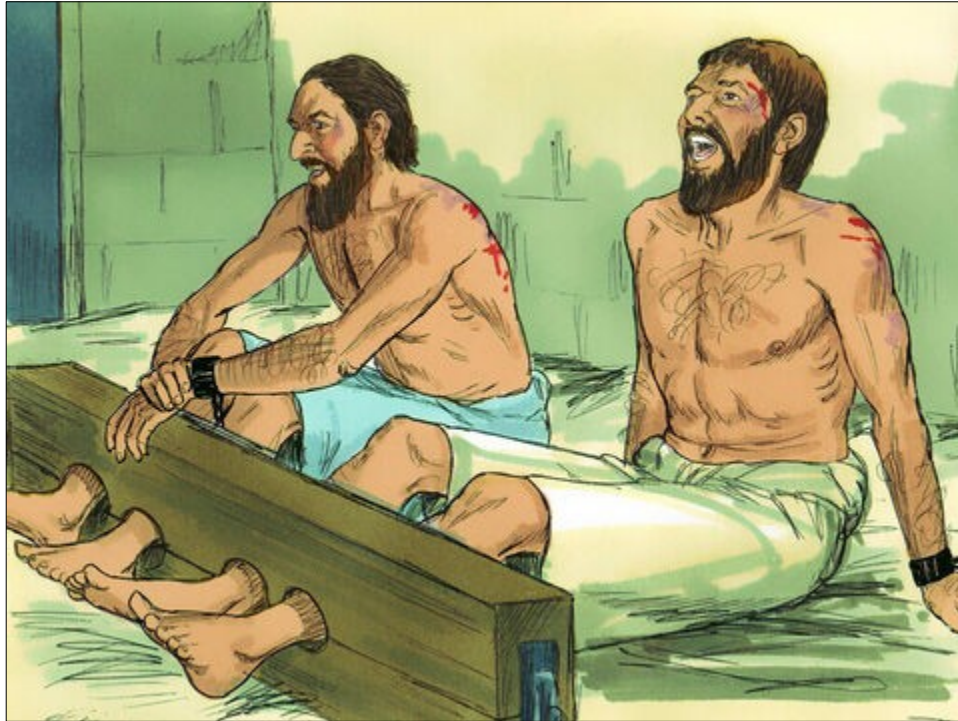
and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.  
Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell  
and fastened their feet in the stocks.



The inner cell AND  
stocks.

Top security  
and top discomfort.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.



This was not a natural thing to do!

Perhaps they were too sore to sleep, but not too sore to worship. Two make good company.

The other prisoners were listening (not complaining)  
A 'captive' audience.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.



It was an earthquake, but we could call it a 'precision strike' since no one was injured and only the chains were loosened.

What was the connection between their praying and the earthquake?

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.



Things looked bad for the jailer.  
He would be held responsible if his prisoners escaped.



But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"



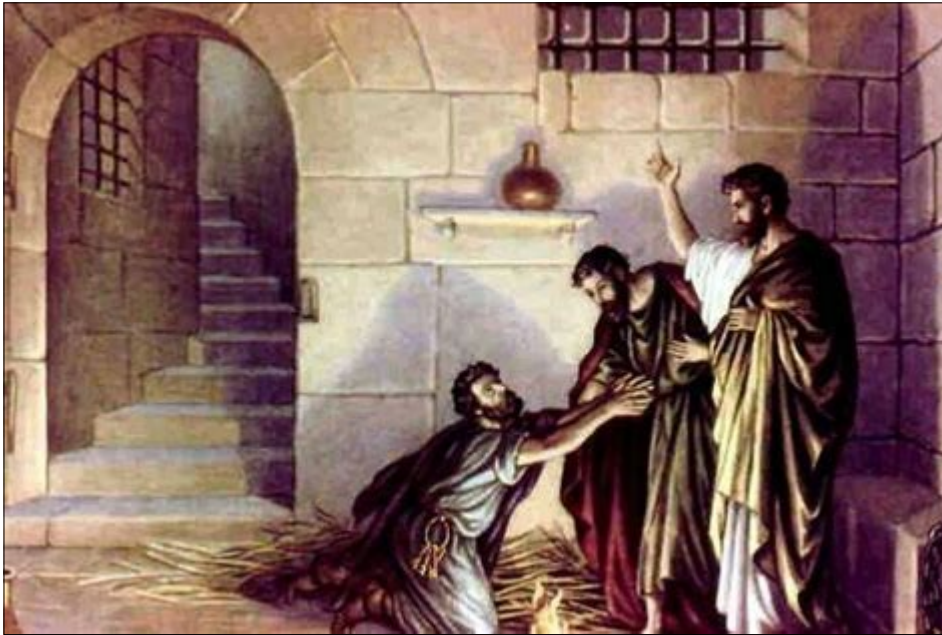
Paul and Silas chose not to escape.

Why didn't the other prisoners go?  
How did they manage to see the jailer?

He was shocked, wondering what was going on.

He connected what had happened with Paul and Silas

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"



Why did he ask that question?

Had he heard about Paul?

He was under deep conviction.

He saw himself as a lost man in great danger.

What must I do to be saved?

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved  
--you and your household."

**it's that simple.**

Salvation is available now.

Salvation is certain (you WILL be)

The promise is for many

The only 'DO' necessary is  
'believe in the Lord Jesus'

Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him  
and to all the others in his house.



They then explained to everyone  
what it meant to “believe in the  
Lord Jesus”:-

ie. Who he is – God’s Son

What he has done -born a  
perfect man and made a perfect  
sacrifice and rose again.

What God promises for those  
who believe. - forgiveness and  
eternal life.

At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds;  
then immediately he and all his family were baptized.



An immediate response.  
His kindness showed that he  
had believed.

This was believer's baptism,  
for all those who had  
responded to the gospel.

The Philippian church had  
more new members.

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them;  
he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God  
--he and his whole family.

let's  
Celebrate



When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order.. "Release those men."

Perhaps the rejoicing continued until the morning, but it looks like Paul and Silas went back into the prison before the officers arrived. That would have protected the jailer.

The magistrates must have thought that they had been punished enough and that they would behave now, or they were worried that they hadn't followed the proper procedure.



The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

It's official !





But Paul said to the officers.. "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

**Not so fast!**

Roman citizens had rights. There could be trouble. Why didn't they say that before?

Paul had a purpose in doing this now— for the benefit of the Philippian Christians.

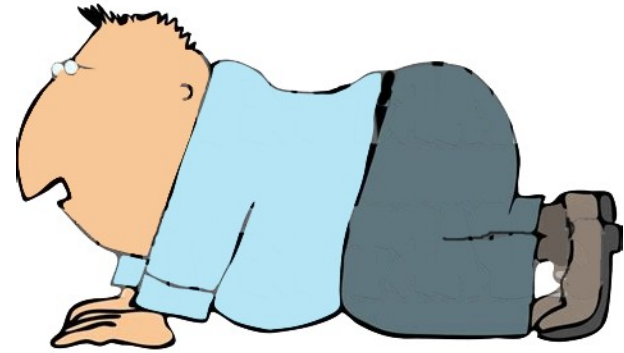
The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.



Philippi was a Roman colony where Roman rules were meant to apply.

If what they had done was reported to the authorities they would be in serious trouble.

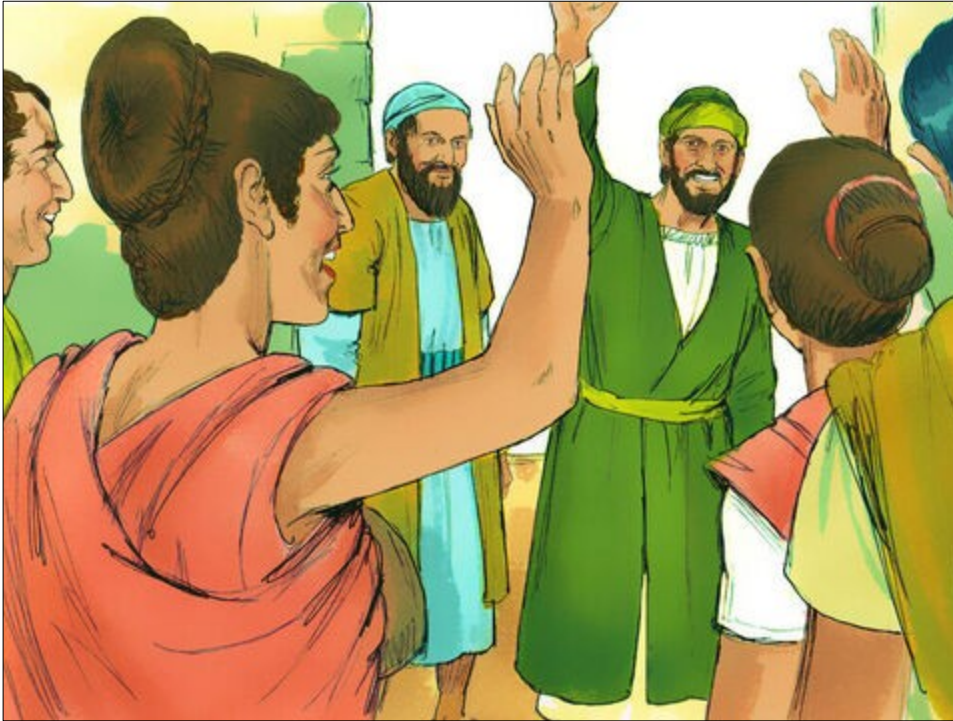
They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.



This was a public display – every one would see that Paul and Silas were to be respected.

Their ‘repentance’ wasn’t genuine, but only in order to avoid trouble, otherwise they would have asked Paul to stay!

After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them.



As a result the church associated with Paul and Silas would be protected a little more.

No doubt, they introduced the jailer and his family to the other believers.

Then they left.



The narrative changes from “us” in verse 16 and it doesn’t reappear until chapter 20 verse 5. It seems that Luke and probably others stayed in Macedonia to help these new believers.

The accounts in this chapter illustrate the power of the gospel  
and the Name of Jesus Christ

a wealthy God-fearing woman - Lydia,

the demon- possessed slave girl,

and the hardened jailer

It really was good news for these individuals.

It also show us the price that Paul and Silas were prepared to pay  
in order to share this