

***What does MIDNIGHT
feel like?***

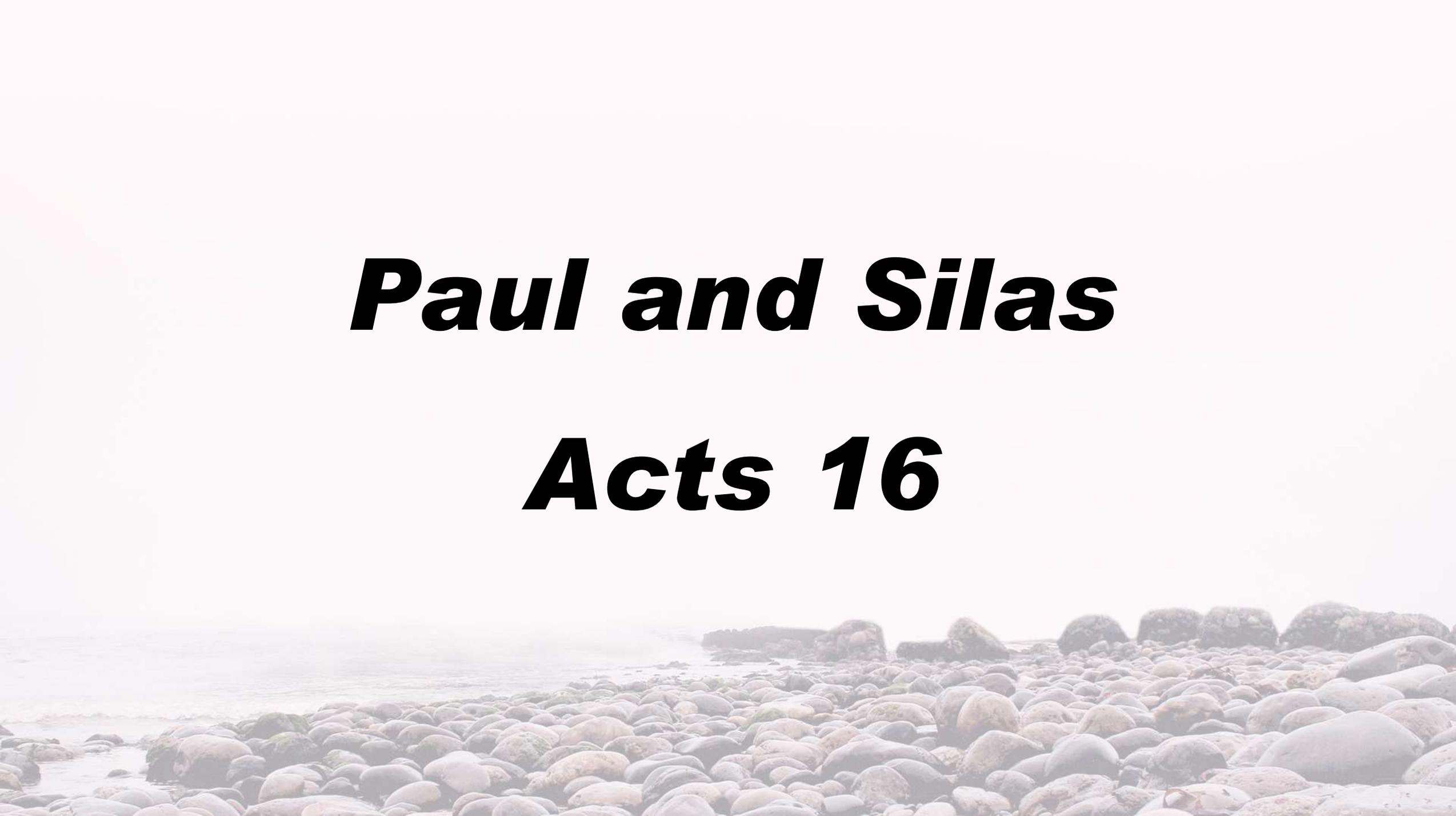


RELEARNING ANCIENT BIBLE STORIES IN A BRAND-NEW WAY

EPIC TALES

TOO





Paul and Silas

Acts 16

World of the New Testament, Around A.D. 50



City of Philippi

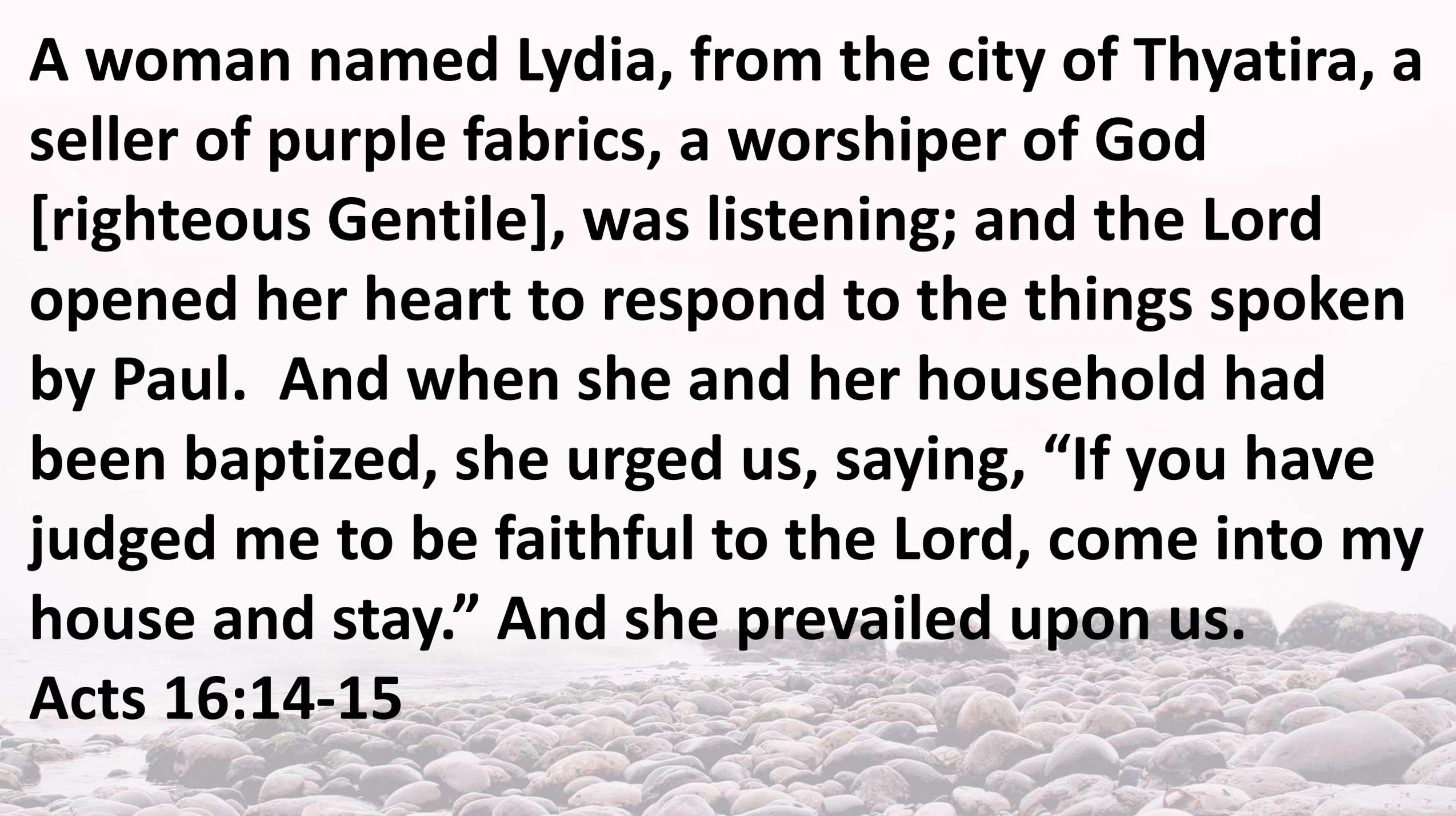
- Philip of Macedonia fortified the old Thracian town of Crenides, and called it after his own name Philippi (BC 359–336). In the time of the Emperor Augustus this city became a Roman colony, i.e., a military settlement of Roman soldiers to control the district recently conquered. Under the municipal law of Rome, it was governed by military officers who were appointed directly from Rome. - Easton's Bible Dictionary
- Despite such strong Roman influence, the variety of Philippi's religious life suggests that its inhabitants, noncitizens included, were more mixed in their backgrounds. Roman gods such as Jupiter and Mars had their cults, but the Thracian goddess Bendis remained very popular, and sanctuaries to gods from Egypt and to Cybele, a Phrygian goddess, are also known. A Jewish synagogue was apparently located just outside the city walls (Acts 16:13). The apostle Paul came to Philippi ca. AD 50 and founded here his first European Christian community (Acts 16:12–40; 1 Thess. 2:2). This church, always one of Paul's favorites, received his Letter to the Philippians ca. AD 54 and one or more further visits from him ca. AD 55 (1 Cor. 16:5–6; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5; Acts 20:1–6). - Harper's Bible Dictionary

And on the Sabbath day we [Luke, author of Acts, was also present] went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer [not enough Jews to form a synagogue]; and we sat down and began speaking to the [Jewish] women who had assembled. Acts 16:13



A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God [righteous Gentile], was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

Acts 16:14-15



World of the New Testament, Around A.D. 50



Thyatira

Located in the west of modern Turkey, hometown of Lydia, first European Gentile to follow Jesus as Savior

It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination [demon possession] met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation [σωτηρία soteria].” She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it [the demon] came out at that very moment. Acts 16:16-18

***Powerful and remarkable as they are, demons must submit to the authority of Yeshua. - Jewish New Testament Commentary**

Fortune Telling Businesses Booming During COVID-19 Pandemic



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December 5, 2020



(CBSDFW.COM) – Many businesses have been closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but fortune tellers appear to be doing quite well. So why are more and more people turning to psychics during this health crisis? In a world of uncertainties, people are looking for predictability. “With the covid and everything,...

“With the covid and everything, I was stuck in a bubble,” McKinney resident [REDACTED] said. She finds that predictability at SoulTopia. And she’s not the only one who is looking for assurance. The New York Times recently highlighted increased online traffic for horoscope and psychic consultations. Astrologers and tarot card readers have also reported an increased demand in their services. “Since the pandemic, it’s just been an explosive amount of people coming in our stores and also through Zoom and on online and also on the phone,” [REDACTED] said.

[REDACTED] said her business has gone up over 70% since the beginning of the pandemic.

But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion, **being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, **being Romans.**” Acts 16:19-21**

***The accusers failed to mention their financial inconvenience** – New Bible Commentary

Why were Paul and Silas arrested?

- **The charge of the slave girl's owners against Paul and Silas was obviously prejudicial. Shortly before this incident the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2). Philippi, a Roman colony, would have caught this flavor of anti-Semitism. This also helps explain why Timothy and Luke were not taken before the authorities. Timothy was a half-Gentile (Acts 16:1) and Luke was probably a Gentile. – Bible Knowledge Commentary**
- **Roman law permitted Jews to practice their own religion, but it forbade the propagating of foreign religions among Roman citizens. Paul and Silas were not recognized as Christians but as Jews who followed Jesus and who transgressed the prerogatives that Roman law allowed them. – Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them [Paul and Silas] into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison [most secure location, possibly a dungeon] and fastened their feet in the stocks. Acts 16:22-24

***Paul and Silas were seized not because they were preaching the Gospel but because they had disrupted a profitable business. No careful investigation was made of these charges. Mob action was roused, to which the magistrates yielded.** – Wycliffe Bible Commentary

But about **midnight** [Greek μεσονύκτιον mesonuktion] Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; Acts 16:25

What do we do in our “midnight”?

What should we do in our “midnight”?



***What does MIDNIGHT
feel like?***



What does “midnight” feel like?

- **Lonely**
- **Dark**
- **Frightening**
- **Hopeless**

Paul and Silas were probably borderline hypothermic from a lack of clothing, they had deep wounds that were festering, probably had some broken bones or at least damaged body parts, and they were stuck in a smelly, disgusting, germ-infested prison cell. – Steven Hill

How do we respond to our “midnight”?

- Hide
- DVR
- Netflix
- Social media
- Substances

We avoid, ignore, pretend, refuse to learn AND choose not to seek God.

What should we do in our “midnight”?

- **In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered; in You they trusted and were not disappointed. Psalm 22:4-5**
- **Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. James 5:13**
- **Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1**

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; Acts 16:25

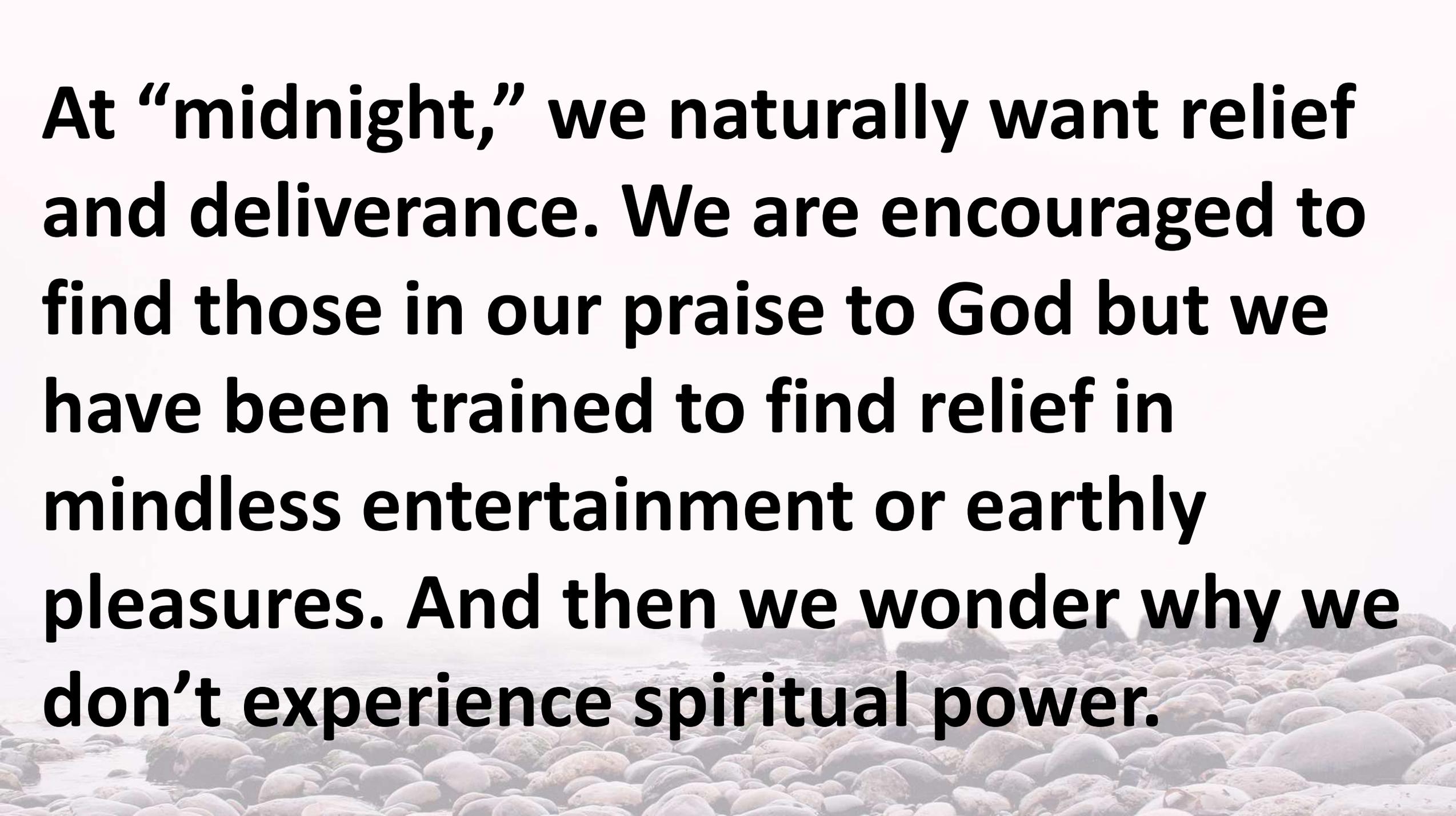
The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; and His song will be with me in the night, a prayer to the God of my life. Psalm 42:8

and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

Acts 16:26

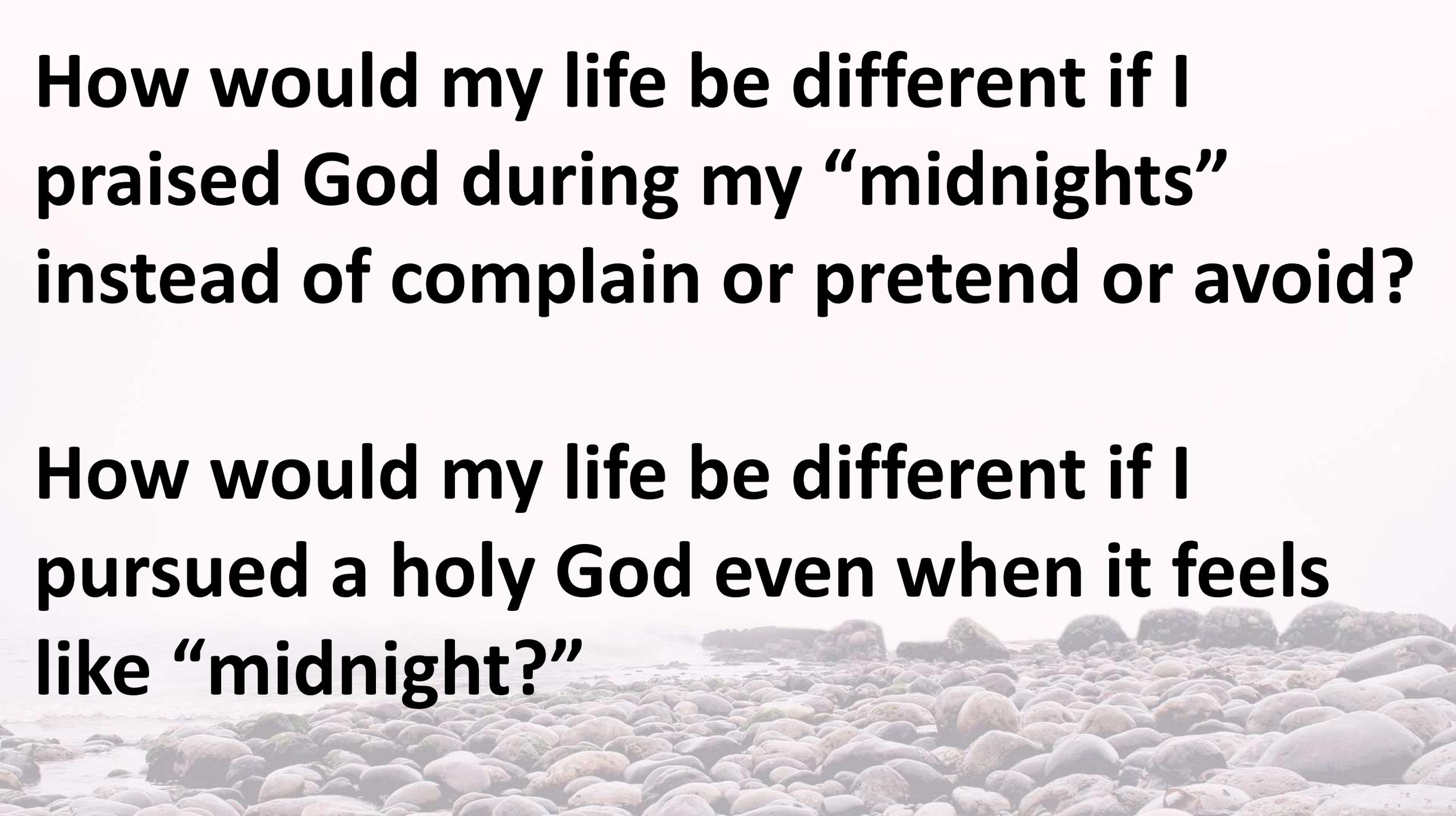


At “midnight,” we naturally want relief and deliverance. We are encouraged to find those in our praise to God but we have been trained to find relief in mindless entertainment or earthly pleasures. And then we wonder why we don’t experience spiritual power.



**How would my life be different if I
praised God during my “midnights”
instead of complain or pretend or avoid?**

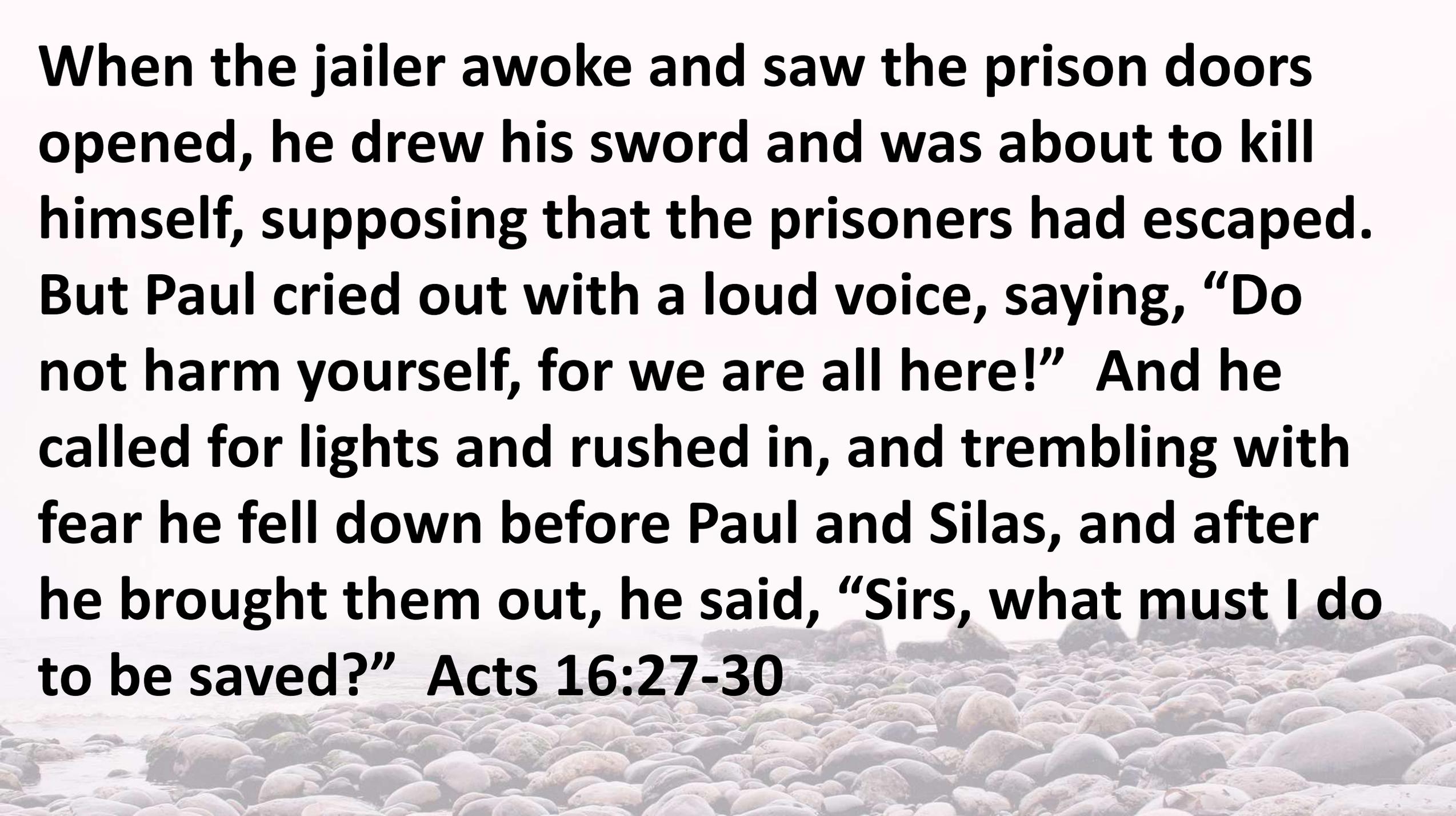
**How would my life be different if I
pursued a holy God even when it feels
like “midnight?”**



Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten, and placed in stocks in the inner cell. Despite this dismal situation, they praised God, praying and singing as the other prisoners listened. Did they "feel" like worshiping? Probably not. They were likely aching, tired, and scared. But they were determined to give glory to God, who they trusted was in control of their situation. They clung to the hard-to-understand truth previously announced by Jesus: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me" (Matthew 5:11). The radical response to worship was a decision of their will. No matter what our circumstances, we can choose to praise God. Others may even come to faith in Jesus Christ because of our example.

- Jordan Ivey

When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Acts 16:27-30



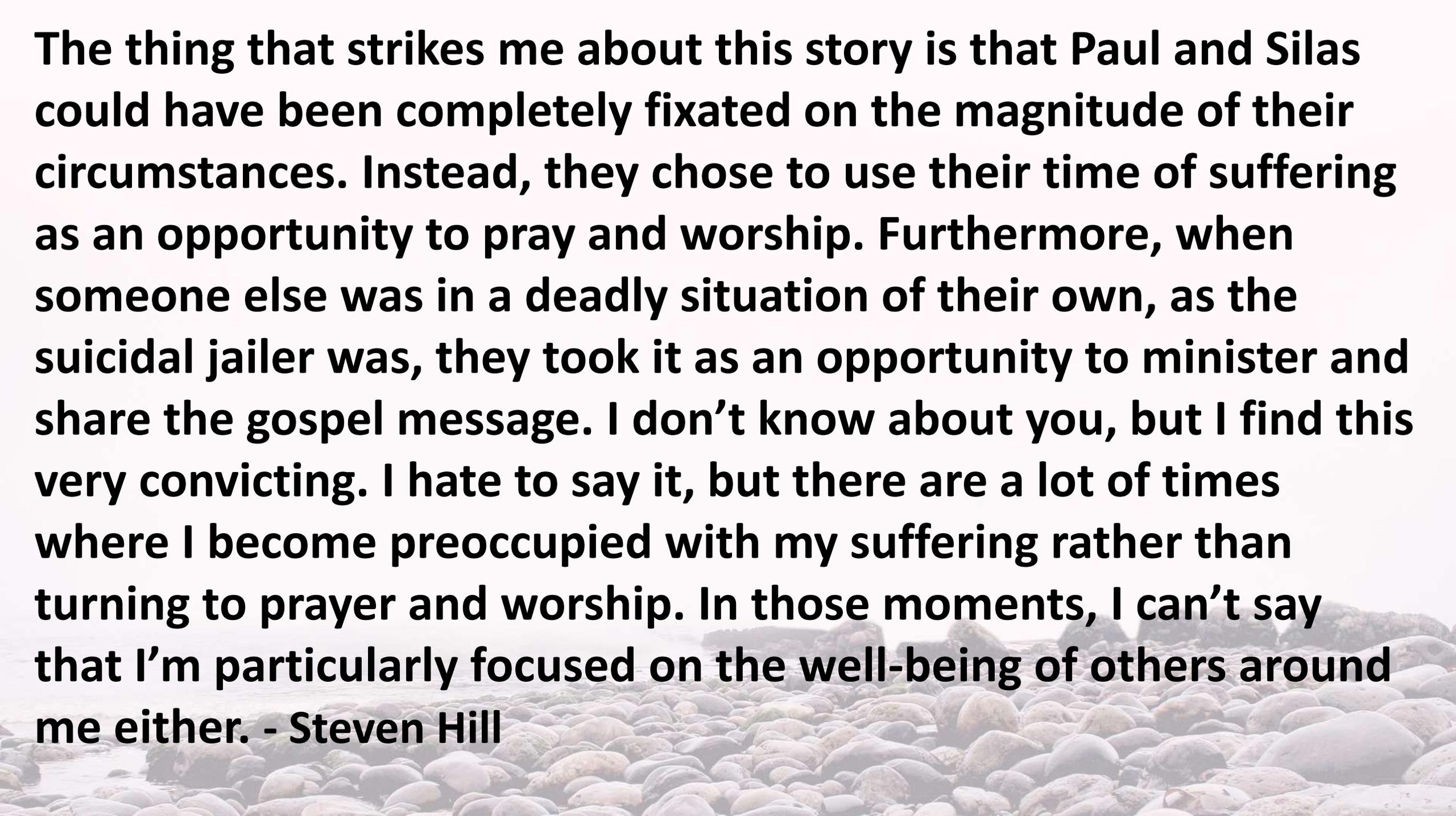


“What must I do to be saved?” This question was filled with significance. He must have understood what he was asking. Undoubtedly he had heard the story of the slave girl and how she had announced these men to be servants of God with the message of salvation (Acts 16:17). Possibly also the prayers and singing of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25) had reached his ears. The awesome earthquake with the subsequent opportunity for the prisoners to escape and Paul’s reassuring words all moved him to ask for the way of salvation.

They said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,** you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. Acts 16:31-34

* A Roman jailer was free to treat his prisoners as he desired so long as he produced them upon demand. This jailer now received Paul and Silas as his guests. – Wycliffe Bible Commentary

The thing that strikes me about this story is that Paul and Silas could have been completely fixated on the magnitude of their circumstances. Instead, they chose to use their time of suffering as an opportunity to pray and worship. Furthermore, when someone else was in a deadly situation of their own, as the suicidal jailer was, they took it as an opportunity to minister and share the gospel message. I don't know about you, but I find this very convicting. I hate to say it, but there are a lot of times where I become preoccupied with my suffering rather than turning to prayer and worship. In those moments, I can't say that I'm particularly focused on the well-being of others around me either. - Steven Hill



Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out." Acts 16:35-37

*** Because Roman citizens were immune from certain forms of punishment, Paul now pointed out that his legal rights as a Roman citizen had been flagrantly violated.** – Wycliffe Bible Commentary

The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed. Acts 16:38-40

***The magistrates were smitten with deep concern for their improper conduct, for it could conceivably have disqualified them from holding office. They therefore apologized to Paul and Silas; and although they realized that they could not expel these Roman citizens from the city, they begged them to depart. The apostles accepted the apology, and after visiting the believers in the house of Lydia and encouraging them, they took their leave. Timothy accompanied Paul and Silas, but Luke remained in Philippi. - Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

**How would my life be different
if I pursued a holy God and
sang praises to Him even when
it feels like midnight?**



One major difference... the people around us would see and hear our praises instead of our complaining or obsessing over our daily struggles or the worthless things in our culture. (Acts 16:25)

If we need a miracle, if we need an earthquake to open a door for us, why don't we receive one? Maybe it is because we don't praise God at midnight.

Not only can the people around us hear our praises (16:25) they too can experience the earthquake of deliverance (16:26).

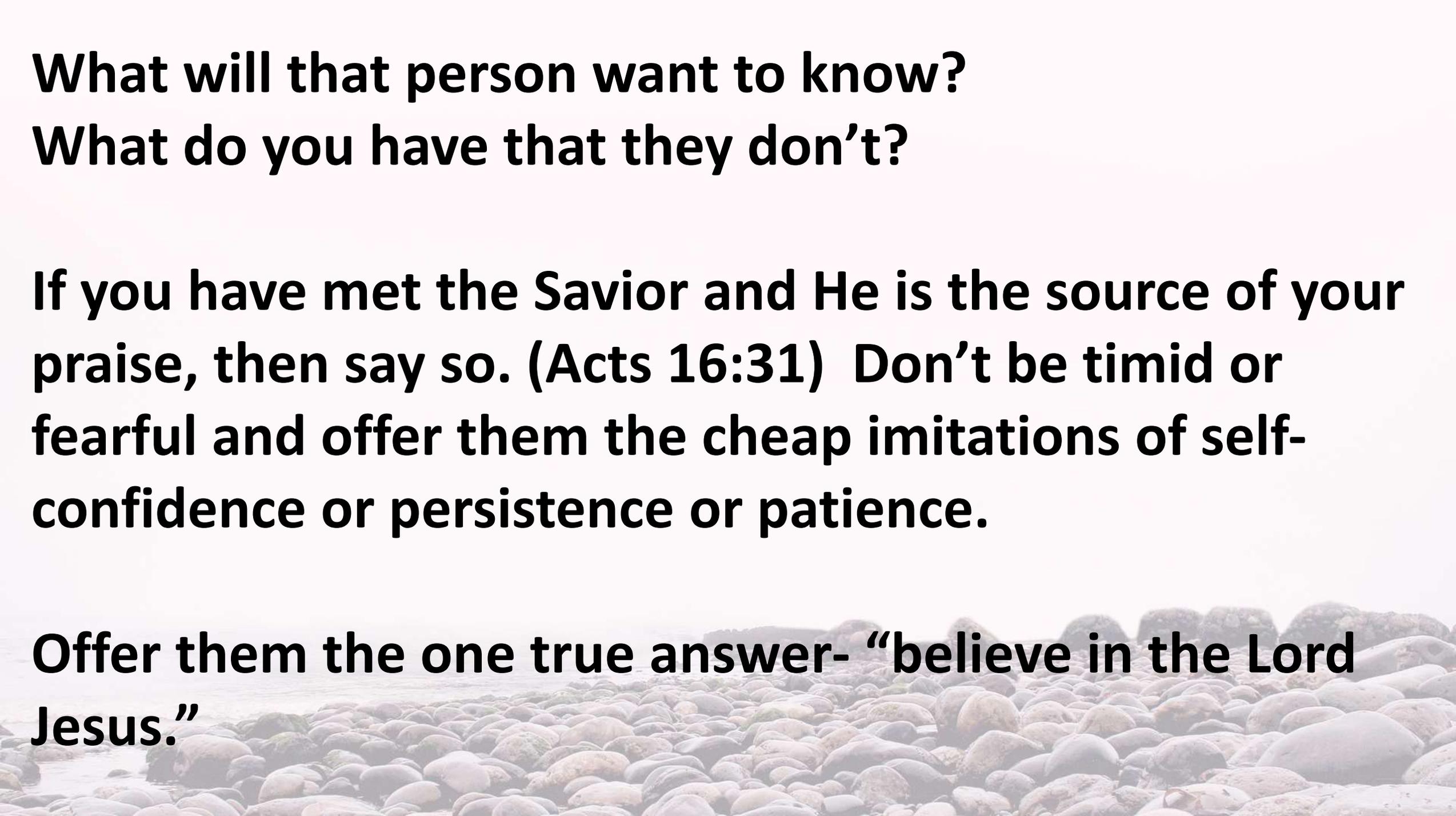
And those who don't understand earthquakes or praise, we can show them the way to spiritual life (16:27-28).

What will that person want to know?

What do you have that they don't?

If you have met the Savior and He is the source of your praise, then say so. (Acts 16:31) Don't be timid or fearful and offer them the cheap imitations of self-confidence or persistence or patience.

Offer them the one true answer- "believe in the Lord Jesus."



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