

Cindy Cottone

# The Bible Corner



## The earthquake at Philippi Part I

Claudius strutted pompously through the main square of Philippi. The streets of the city were always crowded at this hour, but the ordinary citizens were bound to step aside in deference to Roman authority. Macedonia was, after all, a Roman colony, and Claudius wore his soldier's uniform proudly. Geographically, the Adriatic Sea may have separated Philippi from the city of Rome, but a Roman soldier's authority was not to be taken lightly here. The laws were strictly enforced. And for those who may have foolishly questioned Rome's given right to rule, there was always prison to reinforce this point in their minds. Claudius was on his way to this prison now. It was located on the outskirts of Philippi, and he served as the chief officer there.

Life in Philippi may have been less than happy for the ordinary citizen, but Claudius had achieved a state in life here that was envied by many. When he had first been assigned to a post here, his wife hadn't liked the idea. Once in Philippi though, they had settled into a wealthy man's house complete with servants and respect that was reserved for the ruling class.

As Claudius rounded the corner, he was accosted, as he was everyday, by a beggar. "Move along, old man," Claudius said

gruffly. "We don't allow loitering in the streets." The beggar turned and muttered something and, as he shuffled away, Claudius added, "Unless of course, you prefer to accompany me to prison."

Claudius frowned visibly at the thought of the prison. It was a dreadful place; everything about it spoke of despair. Claudius, on the other hand, had carefully planned out his future. His whole life had been centered around his career in the Roman military. He was advancing steadily through the ranks and that, he supposed, was a very fitting goal indeed.

Claudius was passing the river as he continued toward the prison. The river banks seemed more crowded than usual. Two men were preaching to the people who had gathered there. "They are Jews, no doubt," he thought to himself. There were actually few Jews living in Philippi. Most of the people were Greeks, and they worshipped a whole variety of gods. Since there was no synagogue in Philippi, the Jews had made it their custom to meet and worship at the place of prayer by the river.

Claudius watched as the two men laid hands on some of the people and blessed them with water from the river. "Makes no difference to me," he said, "so long as they

keep the law." Claudius had little use for these outward signs of religion. His own life revolved around his duties as a Roman soldier.

As the prison came into view, Claudius shuddered slightly. He hated these times when he worked as the officer in charge at night. He felt as though the prison walls were closing in and suffocating him. Sometimes, he would doze off and have terrible nightmares. In the worst of these dreams, he was no longer a privileged member of the ruling class, but one of the prisoners locked away deep in the innermost part of the dungeon. It was in this dungeon that the most dangerous criminals were kept. Not only were these prisoners chained to the wall, but their feet and hands were placed in stocks — wooden blocks to further restrain them. The stocks were more of a punishment because they made the prisoner feel uncomfortable. There was never any chance of escape from the inner dungeon. Claudius had heard that prisoners sometimes died there. It was in this dungeon that Claudius always found himself in his nightmares.

Still, a few times a month of night duty was a small price to pay for the life he enjoyed in Philippi. Besides he felt certain that he would be promoted soon, and it was with these thoughts in mind that he entered the prison.

"How's it going today?" he greeted the other soldier on duty. "Any trouble?"

"No, it's been pretty quiet all day. Just the usual complaints," he answered. "Say, did you come by way of the river?"

"Yes, I did," Claudius answered. "Why do you ask?"

"I heard they had some kind of trouble down there. Some people were arrested for

disturbing the peace."

"It looked pretty quiet to me," Claudius returned. "Just some Jews having some sort of religious ceremony."

"Well, maybe I got the wrong information. Sleep tight, Claudius," he said grinning. "See you in the morning."

"Don't be funny," he said smiling. "Good night."

A couple of hours later, some Roman soldiers did bring in two men. The prisoners had been beaten badly, and Claudius felt a strong sense of pity for them when he recognized them as the two men he had seen preaching by the river. But he quickly checked himself since this was not suitable behavior for a Roman officer. "What charges have been made?" he said sternly.

"Disturbing the peace," one of the soldiers said. "These men caused a near riot."

"Well they won't be causing any trouble here," Claudius replied, eyeing the two prisoners.

"I hope you are sure of that," the second soldier said. "The chief magistrate will deal with these two criminals tomorrow. And he sent a warning for you, too. If for any reason they escape, you will also be brought up on charges."

"Escape," Claudius laughed nervously, "there's no chance of that where these two prisoners will be staying."

Continued next week.

### For Discussion:

1. Who were the two men preaching by the river? (See Acts 16:13-36)
2. What were these two men doing with the water from the river?
3. What did Claudius center his whole life on? What do you think he should have based his life on?

### Bishop Hickey to celebrate Knights' annual field Mass

The 67th annual field Mass of the Knights of St. John will be Sunday, June 29, at 10 a.m. in Holy Sepulchre cemetery. Celebrant for the Mass will be Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Rochester.

The service will take place in front of the cemetery's All Souls Chapel on the east side

of Lake Avenue, or in the chapel in the event of bad weather. Those attending should bring chairs.

Following the Mass, a motorcade will proceed to the side of the Resurrection Garden Mausoleum, where Bishop Hickey will conduct a short liturgy, which will include the dedica-

tion of the fourth addition to the original building (built in 1978), and a blessing of all those entombed there. All those attending the

### Meals on Wheels needs help for residents of Irondequoit

Volunteer drivers, servers and substitutes are urgently needed to pick up hot, nutritious meals at Seneca Towers, 200 Seth Green Dr., Rochester, and deliver them to home-bound, disabled residents in the Irondequoit area.

field Mass are invited to participate in the service.

Those who are free during lunchtime and would enjoy becoming involved in the Meals on Wheels program should call Christine Wallington at (716) 482-0120.

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