

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



The earthquake at Philippi Part II

The heavy prison door banged noisily behind the two Roman soldiers as they exited. As Claudius prepared to deal with the two new prisoners, the words of the chief magistrate echoed a warning in his thoughts: "If for any reason these men escape, you will also be brought up on charges."

Claudius took no chances with the two men. They had been chained together, and he secured this chain to his arm. Taking a torch, he led them down the narrow hall to the inner dungeon. When they reached the cramped, dirty quarters, he fastened the chain to the wall, and then he put both prisoners into the wooden stocks. The two men offered no resistance, and they watched Claudius in silence as he locked the prison door behind him. As he prepared to leave, Claudius turned and said gruffly, "So what were you disturbing the peace about?"

One of the prisoners said calmly, "We were preaching about the new life that is to be found in Jesus Christ. You could have this life, too."

Claudius offered no reply as he started back down the hall to the guard station. The ventilation in this part of the jail was so

poor that he felt winded and light-headed. A musty, rotten odor permeated everything, and even the air he breathed seemed foul. Claudius stopped for a moment to catch his breath and the words came into his mind again: "You too will be brought up on charges."

By the time Claudius reached the guard station, he felt very tired, and in a few minutes, he was sound asleep. Around midnight, he awoke and thought he heard singing coming from the dungeon area. He listened intently for a few moments, but his eyes were so heavy, he fell asleep again. In his dream, Claudius seemed to be descending into a deep, black hole. It was so dark that he could barely see. All at once, he realized that he was in the narrow passage that led to the dungeon. He tried to go back, but he was powerless to change things.

Claudius awoke to a rumbling sound. His dream had left him shaking and weak. Suddenly, every wall in the prison began shaking and he was thrown off the chair by the earthquake. When the tremors finally subsided, Claudius saw in horror that all of the prison doors had been flung open. Quickly, he started running toward the

dungeon. In his haste, he forgot the torch and stumbled several times. There was no noise from anywhere in the prison.

When Claudius reached the door to the dungeon, he could see nothing in the thick blackness of the horrible place. It was strange, but he felt as though he had also reached the end of his life and there was but one choice. Slowly, in the darkness, he drew out his sword to kill himself. The silver seemed to flicker for a brief moment in the darkness. And then, quite unexpectedly, he heard a voice say, "Do not kill yourself; we are all still here. Not one of us has escaped."

The voice had come from one of the prisoners in the dungeon. Claudius brought a torch and when he entered, he saw both prisoners sitting there even though their chains and the stocks had fallen away.

"There is no need for you to die. We will not try to escape," one of the prisoners said.

"Who are you?" Claudius asked, his voice trembling. "I am certain that this earthquake had something to do with your presence here."

"I am Paul," he answered, "and my companion is Silas. We are witnesses to the truth that Jesus Christ is the one true God."

Claudius hesitated for a brief moment and then slowly he knelt before the two men. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

"You must believe in Jesus Christ with all of your heart," Paul said, "and place your faith completely in Him. All other things in this world will not last."

"Yes, I do believe in Jesus," Claudius answered. "Please come to my house and stay."

Claudius treated both men's wounds

before they left the prison. As they walked along, Paul and Silas told Claudius many things about Jesus. When they came to the river, Claudius said, "I saw you blessing people in the river. What does it mean?"

"We were baptizing the new followers of Jesus as a symbol of their new life as Christians," Silas said.

"I want to be baptized, too," Claudius requested.

The sun was just coming up when Paul laid hands on Claudius and blessed him with water from the river. Later that day, the entire household of Claudius, his family members and all of his servants, were baptized, too.

Paul and Silas only stayed a few more days in Philippi before going on to Thessalonica and many other cities. But the Church in Philippi had taken root firmly from the few small seeds of faith that had been planted. A few years later, Paul was imprisoned again, this time in Rome. He wrote to the people in Philippi from prison, thanking them for their strong faith in Jesus and the help they had given to the new Church.

For discussion:

- 1) Why were Paul and Silas arrested?
- 2) Why did Claudius try to kill himself?
- 3) What did Paul tell Claudius to do to save his life?
- 4) Jesus changes our lives in very quiet ways. How do you think he worked to change Claudius?

For further reading:

- 1) The conversion of the Roman officer is found in Acts, Chapter 16:13-36.
- 2) Paul's letter to the Philippians is found in the New Testament.

United Cancer Council sets session for Camp Open Arms

Camp Open Arms, a day camp for children with cancer and related blood diseases, will open for its fifth season on July 7. One hundred and ten children ranging from age three to 15 will participate in the two-week camping session. Camp Open Arms is co-sponsored by the United Cancer Council, Inc.; Penfield

School District; Town of Penfield, and the Pediatric/Hematology/Oncology Unit at Strong Memorial Hospital.

The camp is staffed primarily by volunteers who have received training and orientation for work at camp.

Nurses interested in volunteering their time and skills may contact the United Cancer Council at (716) 473-8230.

Catholic Alumni Clubs set annual convention in August

Members of the Catholic Alumni Clubs International Inc., will gather in early August for their 29th annual convention. The week-long affair for single, Catholic professionals runs from August 3 through August 9 at the Le-Centre Sheraton in Montreal, Canada.

This year's seminars will be lead by Sister Maureen McCann, a well-known speaker on human relations.

Reservation forms and information can be obtained by calling (714) 957-0125 or by writing P.O. Box 20025, Louisville, Ky., 40220.

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