

# Acts 16:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

## Analysis

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'The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.' Roman law executed guards who allowed prisoners to escape. The jailor's suicide attempt shows both despair and sense of honor - death by his own hand seemed preferable to execution. His darkness contrasts with Paul's approaching light.

## Historical Context

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Roman military and prison guards faced execution for allowing escapes (cf. Acts 12:19). The jailor's immediate assumption reflects this harsh reality. His readiness to die shows the serious stakes.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does sin and law without grace lead to despair?
2. What does the jailor's situation teach about humanity's hopelessness apart from Christ?
3. How does the gospel intervene in moments of ultimate despair?

## Interlinear Text

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Ἐξυπνος δὲ γενόμενος ὁ δεσμοφύλαξ καὶ ἴδων  
out of his sleep And awaking G3588 the keeper of the prison and seeing  
G1853 G1161 G1096 G1200 G2532 G1492

ἀνεῳγμένας τὰς θύρας τῆς φυλακῆς σπασάμενος  
open doors G3588 the prison G5438 he drew out G4685  
G455 G2374 G5438 G4685

μάχαιραν ἔμελλεν ἐαυτὸν ἀναιρεῖν νομίζων ἐκπεφευγέναι  
his sword and would himself have killed supposing had been fled  
G3162 G3195 G1438 G337 G3543 G1628

τοὺς δεσμίους  
G3588 that the prisoners  
G1198

## Additional Cross-References

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**Acts 12:19** (Parallel theme): And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.