

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

'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

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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

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

ἔξυπνος	δὲ	γενόμενος	ὁ	δεσμοφύλαξ	καὶ	ἰδὼν
out of his sleep	And	awaking	G3588	the keeper of the prison	and	seeing
G1853	G1161	G1096		G1200	G2532	G1492
ἀνεωγμένους	τὰς	θύρας	τῆς	φυλακῆς	σπασάμενος	
open	G3588	doors	G3588	the prison	he drew out	
G455		G2374		G5438	G4685	
μάχαιραν	ἔμελλεν	ἑαυτὸν	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

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.