

A Miracle and National Rights

This article is from the "Among Friends" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's website, churchofgodbigsandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of July 11, 2020.

By Dave Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—In last week's article, I talked about "International and National Worldviews." At the end of the article, I used a subhead titled "Paul and his rights" and mentioned two sections of verses in the book of Acts.

In this article, I want to show how the apostle Paul was delivered from trouble by a miracle and his national rights. The historical account is found in Acts 16.

The trial

- Acts 16:12—The apostle Paul went to the town of Philippi.
- Acts 16:16-18—Paul cast a spirit of divination out of a slave girl who brought her masters much profit through her divination.
- Acts 16:19—Her masters became upset when they saw that their hope of profit was gone, and they dragged Paul and Silas to the authorities in the marketplace.
- Acts 16:20-21—The masters accused Paul and Silas before the magistrates.
- Acts 16:22-24—The mob rose up against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates commanded that the two men be beaten with rods and thrown into prison (into the inner prison with their feet fastened in the stocks).

The miracle

- Acts 16:25-26—While Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns, a great earthquake opened the doors of the prison and loosened the chains of the prisoners.
- Acts 16:27—The keeper of the prison assumed that the prisoners had escaped and was going to kill himself.
- Acts 16:28—Paul comforted the keeper of the prison.
- Acts 16:29-34—Paul baptized the keeper of the prison and his family.

His national rights

- Acts 16:35—In the morning, the magistrates sent officers to the keeper of the prison with the message to release Paul and Silas.

- Acts 16:36—The keeper of the prison relayed the message to Paul and Silas.
- Acts 16:37—When Paul heard the message, he wanted the magistrates to come and to treat Paul and Silas with respect.
- Acts 16:38—When the magistrates heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were concerned.
- Acts 16:39—When the magistrates went to see Paul and Silas, they treated Paul and Silas with respect and asked them to leave the city.

Notice how Paul was aware of his rights and utilized his rights to navigate through this specific incident.

Acts 16:37-38—“But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.’ And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.”

A later episode

Notice how Paul was aware of his rights and utilized his rights to navigate through a later episode.

Acts 22:25-29—“And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, ‘Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?’ When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, ‘Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.’ Then the commander came and said to him, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ The commander answered, ‘With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.’ And Paul said, ‘But I was born a citizen.’ Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.”