



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 16:16–40

“What Must I do to be Saved?”

TRANSCRIPT

For some who may not have been here recently, we are now in that part of Acts in which Luke is describing the second missionary journey of the apostle and he has made his way across the Aegean Sea to the land of Greece. He has come to Philippi and there, through the ministry of the Word, Lydia, a seller of purple, has had her heart opened by the Lord, has responded to the things spoken by Paul, and has been baptized in confession of her faith. And now, the Apostle is still in Philippi, and Luke continues the account of the things that happened there.

“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe,

being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 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.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

You'll notice, incidentally, that Luke as he records this says that the Lords—that Paul's answer to the Philippian jailer was “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved—and thy house.” It has sometimes been thought that that additional phrase, “and thy house,” in verse 31, indicates that when an individual—for example, a man—who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may on the basis of this promise, count on the salvation of his children. But, that is not what the apostle and others meant, when they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved

and thy house.” What they meant by that was that an individual who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ may be saved, and his house may be saved if they, too, believe on our Lord. And you can see that from the statement in verse 34. “And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

So, all his house—they were not infants but they were individuals who were of an age that they could, consciously and personally, rest their eternal destiny upon that which Christ had done. So, this text is no comfort for an individual who thinks that by his faith, his children are guaranteed salvation. We must all, personally, believe in Jesus Christ, if we are to have eternal life.

Now, Luke continues the account:

“And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. (Now, you can see that Paul was not going to let them get off of the hook so easily; so, he asks that they come and fetch them out.) And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.”

And I can imagine Paul listened with a great deal of enjoyment, to these men who had thrown them in prison, now begging them, please, to go, and not raise the question of how they had treated the Romans to the Romans, themselves. And so, Paul, I can just imagine him saying, “Well, I hope you have learned a little bit of a lesson. You shouldn’t treat Romans the way you have treated

them.” And then he said, “We are going to go. We will do you that favor. We will go. But we’re going to go see some of the brethren while we’re here.”

Now, this, incidentally, is evidence of the fact that others had been converted, as well. In addition to Lydia, there was Euodia and Syntyche, and there were men who were also converted through the ministry of the Apostle and Luke and Silas and Timothy. And so, the 40th verse concludes the chapter:

“And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.”

May God bless this reading of His Word.

[Message] We had in our passage today, in the exposition of the book of Acts, a statement of one of the most important questions in life.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

With different phraseology, this is the question that we often find in the New Testament, expressed by various individuals. For example, the lawyer in Luke chapter 10, expresses it this way.

“Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

And then, the rich young ruler expresses it this way, as he, too, was with our Lord Jesus Christ. “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

Even Nicodemus had this upon his mind, it seems; for when he came to the Lord Jesus and said, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” And then, he never got a chance to answer—to ask his question—because our Lord answered it, recognizing that this was upon his mind, and so, He said,

“Nicodemus, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” It seems from that quite plain that he intended to ask a question like, “How can I enter into the kingdom of God?”

And then, in the book of Acts, we’ve seen it also asked in other words, by the congregation of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, when after he had come to the climax of his message, they under the conviction of the Holy Spirit said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” And then Peter answered it with his great statement, in Acts chapter 2, in verse 38.

So, the question was something like: What must I do to be saved? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? Or, we know you’re a teacher come from God, how may we enter into the kingdom of God?

It’s striking in one sense that the 1st century individuals were not ashamed of the word saved. That’s a good biblical word. There’s no reason in the world why we should be ashamed of it. I think the reason, sometimes, that we are ashamed of it is simply because we are spiritual cowards. And when the world expresses its distaste for the term saved, instead of doing what we ought to do—reminding them even more often of the fact that it’s found in Scripture and is a useful term—we tend to use other expressions like alienation, maladjustment, or finding one’s true identity, or gaining self-esteem. But those are expressions that do not cover man’s need. Man’s need is deliverance from sin, its guilt, its penalty and its condemnation. Our need is far deeper than the 20th century it seems, at least in our day, recognizes.

What we need is deliverance from sins, guilt and condemnation and penalty. And the word “saved” is a beautiful word, it’s a word that is found all through the Word of God, and if Heaven is not ashamed of it, we must not be ashamed of it.

So, when the jailer asked, “What must I do to be saved?” the Apostle answered the question, for he understood it as a question arising out of the need of the heart. The answers of our age are lessons in irrelevance. Salvation is found in church union, racial integration, deliverance from poverty, even urban renewal—or, perhaps, going the other way, all out revolution and violence—these are as relevant to the need of man and the removal of evil as are Band-Aids to cancer. For relevance to the needs of our world today, we must turn to the divine revelation found in Holy Scripture.

As you read the book of Acts, you notice how Luke’s story of the progress of the Gospel is so remarkably arranged and edited by him, for I’m sure there were many, many things that he could have written but did not write, in the light of his purpose. And you’ll notice, for example, as the ministry comes to Europe, there are three significant conversions that take place. First there is the conversion of the rich Jewess, Lydia. Now, whether she was a proselyte to the Jewish faith or a Jewish woman, it does not say. I have just simply called her rich, Jewish woman, since we don’t have any statement that she was a proselyte. But, at any rate, she was attached to Judaism, and the Lord opened her heart and she attended to the things spoken by this Jewish apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name was Paul.

And then, there is the exploited Greek slave girl, and evidently, though this is not specifically stated, evidently, when Paul turned to her, after she had been following them over the city saying, “These are servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” Paul turned to her and cast out the demon that was within her. So, we’ll just assume that she was therefore a converted, exploited, Greek slave girl.

Now, we will see that a Roman official is converted. It’s almost as if Luke has constructed this in order to impress upon us the fact that the gospel is for all classes; for Jewish women and men, for exploited Greek slave girls and other Greeks, and for Romans, as well. For the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who responds in faith.

So, there are three significant conversions, evidently, for significant reasons.

Now, Luke continues his story in verse 16, by mentioning: “As it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying...” Evidently, a demon-possessed ventriloquist; because that is the usage lying back of the description that is given her, as possessed of a spirit of divination. And she made these involuntary utterances under the power of the spirit that was within her. And, as often was the case, in those days—and particularly in the land of Greece, the home of the Delphic oracle—those utterances involuntary though they were, were thought often to be the voice of a god.

And she followed them over the city, shouting out, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation.”

Well, Paul stood it for a little while, but finally it got so he really didn't appreciate her unsolicited commercials, because the apostle knew that alliance with evil can become a more dangerous antagonist than direct opposition from evil. In fact, Christians ought to refuse all alliance with evil, even when they may be giving true testimonies, because the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation when it is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. To go around stating the gospel, when it comes from the lips of evil men, is something that is displeasing to the Lord God. And one finds this same attitude in the Lord Jesus, for when he cast out demons, they came out crying, “Thou art Christ, the Son of God.” He, rebuking them, “Suffered them not to speak for they knew that he was Christ.”

You might think that he would be happy to have the testimony of those who were saying, “This is the Christ of God.” But when the testimony comes from evil men, that's not pleasing to the Lord God. That, too, has some lessons for us today. The fact that the gospel comes from the lips of an individual whose life does not conform to the truth, is no testimony to the gospel of Christ. How important it is that there be a measure of identification, truly, with the truth that we proclaim.

Well, the result was when the demon was cast out of her, since there were men who were her masters, who were making money out of her, well, they saw that the hope of the profits that they derived from this poor woman, are now going to be gone, and so they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, brought them to the magistrates. And then, in thorough harmony of the evil of their hearts, they appeal to prejudice and pride of citizenship in order to have Paul and Silas and others put in prison.

Notice how they do it. They brought them to the magistrates and they said, so verse 20 says, “These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.” So, they advanced the thing that has troubled so many people all over the world, they appealed to the spirit of anti-Semitism, that rested in the city of Philippi, saying, “These men are Jews and they exceedingly trouble our city. They teach

customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, we being Romans.” So, they appeal to prejudice, and then they appeal to the pride of citizenship, which people in Philippi had. One of the New Testament professors has called this, “All sound and fury.” But the devil is defeated when he imprisons Christians.

So, we read, “And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely...” Now, to be in jail in those days was not a very happy experience. And, we are told in our newspapers today that to be in prison is not a very happy experience either. But I just have a feeling, from what I know of the prisons in Greece, in these days, that the prisoners there had far more reason to talk about prisoners’ rights than prisoners do today. And so, this was the place where they were subject to the brutality of Roman jailors, which was no fun at all. So, it was a very, very difficult situation physically for the Apostle and Silas.

But, nevertheless, in spite of the fact that it was as difficult as it was—and don’t you know also, I should say, that they had opportunity to go back over their experiences—I can just imagine that one of them, whether it was Silas or Luke, if he was there, or Timothy, I don’t know. Maybe they were all there. They, probably, in a quiet moment, one of them spoke up and said, “Paul, you told us you had a vision in Troas about a man in Macedonia who said, ‘come over and help us’ are you really sure that you saw a vision from God, because this doesn’t look like the fulfillment of ‘come over to Macedonia and help us?’”

And I can imagine that someone else might say, “You know, when we—I believe Paul, that you had that vision, all right. I’ll accept that. You are very reliable. But, you remember, we sat down in Troas and we tried to put everything together about how we tried to go into Asia and we were prevented from doing it. And how we tried to go into Bythinia and we were prevented from doing that. And we were—we felt like we were forced down to Troas, but do you think that maybe we made a false decision? Should we have stayed for a little while? Should we have had more indication that we ought to have come over to Macedonia?”

Because, remember, Luke said that they had thought it over and they had assuredly gathered that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in Europe. And, don't you know, they would have said, “The prison in Philippi is not the most ideal place for preaching the gospel. So, have we gone astray?”

Well, there were many reasons why that may have been thoughts that would come to ordinary people. But these men are not ordinary people.

And so, we read in the 25th verse, “At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners were listening to them.”

That verb in the Greek text is a verb that is rarely used in the New Testament; and it's a word that seems to suggest the idea of rather careful listening to them. Anyone can sing outside of prison, when he's in good health, but as Mr. McLaren said, “These birds could sing in a darkened cage; singing in the Stir; or caroling in the Klink. Can you imagine that? [Laughter]

Well, what did they sing? Well, we don't know what they sang, but we can believe in the light of the description that they were probably singing some of the psalms of the Old Testament. Now, we know, well, we sang one this morning, did we not? Psalm 23, put to music—it's possible they sang just such a song, because later on, this Philippian jailor will be one who set a table before them. And even that exact phrase is in the 23rd Psalm.

So, they sang psalms that expressed the care and concern of God for the saints of God; and it's possible, also, that they sang some of the little hymns that appear in the New Testament.

New Testament scholars, as you probably know, think that there are reflections of some of the hymns of the early church in some of the things that the Apostle Paul writes. For example, in Colossians chapter 1, when he gives that great passage on the Lord Jesus as the image of the invisible God, it is arranged in such a way as to be compatible for singing, as in a hymn. And then, it's almost universally believed among New Testament scholars that 1 Timothy 3:16 is probably the remnant of an early Christian hymn because it's composed in phraseology—and we would say, in beat—that

would suggest a hymn. Where Paul writes, “God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

So, maybe they sang things like that. But, at any rate, they were singing praises to the Lord God. And then, as Campbell Morgan says in his commentary, “The Lord touched the land and it trembled. O the things that happen when the saints of God in the midst of the trials of life do pray and sing praises unto God.”

Once before, in the book of Acts, in the midst of the prayer of the saints, there came something like an earthquake, and the prison doors are opened. So, we read, while they were singing praises and praying, “Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed.”

Now, you must remember one custom in ancient times, to appreciate this most fully I think. Romans had a very nice little way of keeping their jailors solicitors for their prisoners. Solicitors in the sense of being sure that they were safely ensconced in their cells all the time. And their simple remedy was this: if anyone escapes while you’re the jailor, you lose your life. So, that ordinarily made jailors quite faithful in their service. They kept a pretty good idea on the people who were in their cells, since their own life depended upon it.

And that’s why we read here, when the earthquake came and the doors were opened and everyone’s bands were loosed, the keeper of the prison—and, evidently, he lived in the same building—his house was probably just above the prison, it has been thought—and, thus, when he was converted, he was able to bring these men right into his house very quickly. So, when that happened, he awakened out of his sleep; “and, seeing the prison doors open as he rushed down to take a look, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.” For, after all, it’s better to commit suicide than to have the Romans do away with you.

So, I can just imagine this tremendous shaking took place. He jumped out of his bed. He rushed down. He saw the prison doors were open. And he said, “Oh, Zeus! They’re gone!”

[Laughter]

Now, that’s not in Scripture, you understand. I just feel like that’s probably something like what he said. And so, he ran for his sword, because he wanted to kill himself before others had a chance to do it. But he was interrupted by the apostle’s cry.

Because, Paul, evidently, sensed what was going to happen, And he, “cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: we are all here.”

Now, that’s the first response this man had ever had from his prisoners; and, probably, the first response of this kind that he had ever even heard about. And so, he called for lights. The Greek text has “light” in the plural.

“He called for lights, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas...” How did these marvelous words come out of this Roman jailor? This brutal Roman jailor?

Well, in one sense, it probably was the cry of dim consciousness, lying dormant in all men’s hearts. The fact that there is a God and that we need healing of spiritual diseases.

Now, the Scriptures make it very plain that every man has the knowledge of the existence of God; now, the knowledge that we have is corrupted by the fact that our minds and our hearts and our wills are affected by sin, but every man has implanted deep down within him the knowledge that God exists.

Now, I know you might think, well, there is a minority in our population that insists they do not believe in God. Yes, I admire the strength with which they try to keep that fundamental conviction from touching their minds and hearts and being expressed. But they are only suppressing what God has put in the hearts of men. Men are created in the image of God; in the image of God created He them, Moses said.

Everyone has an innate conviction that God exists. Isn’t it a strange thing that wherever any kinds of polls are taken, belief in the existence of God, the percentage is always something like 95% of people. Many who have never darkened the door of any church, or who do not now darken the door of any church, nevertheless have the conviction that God exists. It is something implanted in the heart of every man.

Isaiah expresses it so much—so often—in the latter part of his book, when he speaks about this very fact; the Apostle Paul speaks of it in Romans chapter 1. It is there. Men seek to suppress it, but it is, nevertheless, there.

This man, also, has obviously been subjected to some of the pre-salvation work of the Holy Spirit, called in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, in verse 13 and 14, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. That’s not the sanctification that takes place after we have become Christians, when we are fashioned by the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Christ, ultimately. But this is the work of the Spirit in bringing us to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, for Paul puts it, “By the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.” So, this is something that precedes faith in Christ.

So, this man—perhaps Paul had already spoken to him about the way of salvation, or he may have heard those masters of that persecuted little girl, who was going over the city saying, “These are men who have come from the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation.” But that word was in his mind and in his heart, and he had thought about it—perhaps, unconsciously—but, nevertheless, God had been working in his heart. And so, coming down, and trembling before him, he calls out his need of healing.

Now, of course, we know, in Believers Chapel—or, at least, most of us here—that human misery is not solved by social and economic change. I do not think that any Christian—true Christian—can be opposed to social and economic changes that affect our society for good. But, what we say—and we say it constantly, because so many are not saying it when they ought to be saying it—is that the fundamental need of the human heart is divine redemption; and that the change of a man’s heart is that which is the greatest force for change in our society that is ultimately for our good.

But here is a man who says, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Now, the Apostle Paul reached into his flowing garment and pulled out the four spiritual laws [Laughter] and handed it to the Philippian jailor. Well, that wouldn’t have been all bad—don’t misunderstand me—but he even was more—he was simpler than that.

His simple response is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” In one sense, as someone has pointed out, this answer of Paul is more amazing than the earthquake itself. And, thrilling through it, like an anthem, is the infinite music of the Gospel. They had been singing hymns of praise to the Lord God, but no hymn of praise is more beautiful than the phrase here, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”

I am so thankful that in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, we have things done for us that can be done for no other person. Sometimes we think that what we need is an outlook on life from some outstanding philosopher, that will enable us to identify with the kinds of things that we are experiencing, and thus, we can find some salvation from the hands of philosophers, and psychologists, and psychiatrists and others, but let me assure you, it is only apostles and prophets and men of God who use the Scriptures who can help us in our basic need.

Voltaire, when speaking of philosophers, said, “We’ve never cared to enlighten cobblers and maid-servants. That’s the work of apostles.” And what a glorious work it is! Thank God for the Apostles and for their teaching. There is the supreme difference between all philosophy, apart from Christ, and the Christian gospel.

Here is Paul, just around midnight, before the flush of dawn upon the sky, taking time to teach a brutalized jailor the way of salvation. No philosopher would do that! But the answer from the apostles is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And then he got this man, with all of his house, and he taught them sufficiently so that they all believed with their house. And the result is that we have this brutalized jailor as a tender man of God.

Only God, through the Gospel, can do that! Philosophers cannot do it.

And, in fact, this man is so much like God already, that he prepares a table before the apostles, in the presence of the apostles’ enemies in that city. It’s a magnificent work of God that took place here.

Now, sometimes, I hear people say—and Christian people, incidentally—evangelical people—this is the most amazing thing to me. How is it possible for evangelical people to object to

the exposition of the Word of God. That is most amazing. It's one of the miracles of the 20th century that evangelical people can object to the exposition of the Word of God; and, particularly, to the exposition of the Pauline doctrine of salvation.

How often do we have people saying, Let's talk about the practical thing. Let's not talk about the theoretical things, parenthesis, equal Christian doctrine. Let's not talk about that. Let's talk about the practical things, the things that are applicable to us where, to quote the language of evangelicals today, where the rubber meets the road.

Well, let me assure you, where the rubber meets the road is the doctrine of Christian theology. That's where the rubber really meets the road.

James Denny was one of the great scholars of the earlier part of this century, a Scottish professor. He said, “To say that Paul is unintelligible, or that he presents Christianity in a way that does it every kind of injustice and is finally unacceptable to us, is to fly in the face of history and experience. There have always been people who found Paul intelligible and accepted the gospel as he preached it. There are such people still,” Professor Denny said. “If not in theological classrooms, then in mission homes, at street corners, and lonely rooms.”

It's not historic scholarship that is lacking, for the understanding of Paul, nor is it the insight of genius. It is despair. That's why men sleep in church. That's why individuals are not interested. It's they have no sense of need. It's despair.

And Professor Denny is absolutely right. It is despair that opens up Paul.

“Paul,” he says, “didn't preach for scholars. He didn't preach for philosophers. He preached for sinners. He preached for individuals who sense their need and who wanted deliverance; and who were concerned enough to seek to find it. And, just as he spoke to the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved and thy house,” so his language ministers to those whose hearts have been prepared by the Holy Spirit of God and have a sense of despair.”

When a man has the simplicity to say, with Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish church leader and theologian, “What could I do if God did not justify the ungodly?” He has the key to the Pauline gospel of reconciliation in his hand.

Now, this Philippian jailor, he didn’t have any preparation but despair. He sensed his need. He fell at the feet of the apostles and asked the fundamental question of life. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Now, I’d like to compare, just for a moment, this answer that Paul gave with the answers that might be given today—the answers of godless philosophy, for example.

“Saved?” Calm yourself. Forget it. What you have is a superstitious guilt complex and you need to be rid of your guilt complex in order that you may live a happy kind of life.

And then, the answer of those who live in Bunyan’s town of Morality, if you’ve gone wrong, do your best from now on. Save yourself. Sufficient grace has been given to all men. Respond. Change your ways and you’ll be all right.

Perhaps the answer of some wild dissipated individual: Eat, drink and be merry. Hang Puritanism and the Calvinism of Dr. Johnson and people like him!

Well, by the way, did you all notice the thing in the paper this past Monday or Tuesday? I thought this was very interesting.

Urban critic, William White, made a recent survey of downtown street life in Dallas, and this quotation was found in the *Washington Post*. And John Anders, in a column that he writes in the *Dallas Morning News* entitled, “Civic Pride in Dallas—A Bit Off Center,” makes reference to this quote which appeared in the *Washington Post* recently, describing Dallas.

You might expect it, it has quite a few snide remarks about Dallas; but also, some good remarks. America’s—this is the way Mr. White defined the city—“America’s tidiest of tidiest, most self-conscious, most aspiring, most adolescent, in the sense that it is still figuring out what kind of a city to be and most Calvinistic big city.”

I took all the credit for that. [Roaring laughter]

But then, as I thought about it afterwards, I said to myself: Now, what man on the staff of the *Washington Post*—that great conservative daily—[more laughter] would possibly know what a Calvinist was? So, then, I took all of my credit back to myself and said: I guess they don’t understand what it’s all about still.

But, I thought that was very interesting and I can just imagine the kinds of responses that might be given to, “What must I do to be saved?” by those who are very much opposed to Puritanism and Calvinism, and anything that smacks of the great doctrines of the faith, understood from the standpoint of the sovereignty of divine grace. The Ecclesiastics? Well, they would have answered, “Well, come, be baptized, receive the grace of regeneration and then sit at the Lord’s Table constantly and feed upon Christ through the bread and wine.” The apostle’s answer is so different. It’s authoritative, because we read, “And they said...”

This is not simply the answer of Paul, although, that would be sufficient for me. But Paul associates the others in the early church with him as well. In this case, Silas, Timothy, Luke—they said! I can see them all answering the question of the Philippian jailor, chiming in together and saying, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and those who stand in true apostolic succession are those who follow the Apostle in his teaching.”

And, after all, this is not anything different from that which Peter said in the Jerusalem council when, in chapter 15 in verse 11, it is reported that he said, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

So, Peter and Paul and the others all unite in this authoritative message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

And, notice, it is so simple that “believe” is the term that gains for us the blessings of eternal life. It’s not believe and be baptized; it’s not believe and repent—or even repent and believe—for the man who believes and who is so convinced of his lost condition through the despair that comes when he realize that he is lost and commits himself to the Lord Jesus Christ is obviously a person who has been given the gift of repentance. That’s why in the New Testament we read, the apostles

will say, “It was said of them they preached repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” But when a man believes, truly believes, he has repented.

So, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” There is no contradiction between repent and believe and the simple believe. Simple belief comprehends that and must include that.

So simple I want to wring the changes on this for just one more minute. In the Westminster Confession’s shorter catechism—that’s what we need, incidentally, the shorter catechism in the 20th century—not the catechism, the shorter catechism, because we’re all eligible for Theology 101, in the 20th century. We have so little of theological thinking in our minds, even those who attend evangelical churches.

I had a call this morning, while I preaching at 8:30, from an Orthodox Jewish man of this city, who was objecting to some of the things that I was saying concerning Acts 5. I went out after the meeting and called him, because he had called and had accused me of misrepresenting some truth. And we had a very interesting conversation and a very nice conversation. And I hope I am able to make further contact with him.

He told me that he had studied the New Testament and, after we got to understand each other a little bit, I think we understood each other to realize there was a possibility of some friendship. But, he had some interesting comments to make. He said, “I suppose that you’re a Calvinist?” And I said, “Well, yes, I am a Calvinist.” And he said, “I’ve never liked Calvinists.” [Laughter] I think that was it—I don’t hear everything over the telephone by a person whose voice I’m not familiar with but I think that’s what he said.

And then he said, “And I suppose you don’t believe in free will?” That was very interesting too. And I said, “Well, no, I don’t.” And I mentioned that my understanding of theology goes back to Augustine and to Luther and Calvin and others. And he said, “Well, I don’t think Luther believed that.” And I said, “Well, yes, I think he did.” He said, “Well, I admit it was very nice. You don’t ordinarily find people who admit they haven’t read something. But it so happened that was

something I had read and I said, “I think it would be helpful to read Luther’s, *The Bondage of the Will*, on that particular point.”

So, we made plans to contact each other again, but I thought it was so interesting that he was knowledgeable enough to realize what some of the issues were from a Christian standpoint, which does indicate that he had, as he said, been studying the New Testament.

Now, in the Westminster “shorter” catechism there is a beautiful little definition of faith and it’s simply this. “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for our salvation.” Saving faith! Faith is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for our salvation. It’s not surrender to Christ, it’s simply resting upon Christ for our salvation.

Resting upon Him as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who has offered an atoning sacrifice. It’s not praying through, it’s not being a good citizen, it’s not being properly education, it’s not understanding the issues of life, it’s simply resting upon Him alone for our salvation.

Upon what are you resting? What is your hope for eternal life? Is it the fact that you attend church? Or, you have some comprehension of Christian doctrine? Or, that you’re a good citizen and pay your taxes? That you’ve been properly educated?

Are these the things in which you trust? Is it your baptism? Or the fact that you may sit at the Lord’s Table? Well, if what Paul says is true and it is true, it’s faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. As simple as that!

Now, notice, it’s an exclusive faith; it’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—not in the church—but in the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s personal; it is on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, ultimately, our faith through doctrine rests upon this person as He is revealed in the teaching of the Word of God.

It’s individual; thou shalt be saved. No one is saved by the faith of his friend, or her husband or his wife or parents. It’s “thou” shall be saved. But it’s certain. When we rest upon Christ, we shall be saved.

And, there is a universal offer for it is offered to all. As he says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” if they believe.

Well, this man responded, the night before—hard, calloused, brutal—now, gentle, tender, godlike, serving the apostle and the men who were with him.

And, let me say to you, my dear friends, sitting the audience this morning, the one final unanswerable evidence of Christianity is that it does change the heart and life of a man; and nothing else can do that.

And here is the jailor; now one of the saints, now one of the people that I look forward to meeting one of these days when we are in glory together.

The gospel then we learn is not only for religious people, like Lydia, or like those at Pentecost, or like the Ethiopian Eunuch, but it's also for hard, brutal men and women, for both are lost and both classes are alienated. Methods vary. The Holy Spirit opened quietly the heart of Lydia as she listened to Paul. It took an earthquake to save the jailor. But, nevertheless, he was saved.

In both cases, the Lord is working—sometimes quietly, sometimes majestically and dramatically—but, it's the same Lord who is continuing the work that He did when He was here in the days of His flesh. And the means is always the same; it is the Word of God.

He called for light on life's deepest need; and Paul answered with, “There is no cause for alarm. Calm yourself. Do good works. Cool it.” No. No even, “Change your ways.”

But, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” That's the answer to the problems of your life and the problems of my life. And may God give us grace to come to Christ and, as the shorter catechism says, “Rest upon Him for our salvation.”

If you are here this morning and you have never believed, by God's grace, through the working of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, come to Christ. Believe in Him.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours. We ask, Lord, that by Thy grace Thou wilt minister to any of us who have this fundamental need to have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. O God, give us a sense of despair that will cause us to flee to Christ. Stop

“What Must I Do To Be Saved?” by S. Lewis Johnson
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our mouths from boasting and open our hearts so that we may with our mouths sing praises to Him
who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Go with us now, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.