



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 16:16-40

“What Must I Do To Be Saved?”

TRANSCRIPT

[Audio begins] Will you turn with me to Acts chapter 16, and I'm going to read beginning with the 16th through the 40th verses. The Scripture reading: Acts chapter 16 and verse 16. Some of you will remember that two weeks ago I spoke to you on the subject of Lydia, a businesswoman whose heart the Lord opened in Philippi. And now we're going to just pick up that account at verse 16 and read today of the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

The apostle, remember, is on his second missionary journey. He had said to Barnabas: Barnabas, let's go out and see how the churches that we have established are doing. And so, as a result of some dissension and contention that arose between the two, Paul took Silas and made his way through Asia Minor. He attempted to go into Asia, a province of Asia. The Holy Spirit forbade him doing that. Then he went north and attempted to go northeast into the province of Bithynia, and the Holy Spirit suffered him not to go into that territory. He was forced, it seemed, by the guidance of God to come down to the coast of the Aegean Sea at Troas, and there he received a vision. A man of Macedonia appeared in his vision and said to Paul, Come over into Macedonia and help us.

And the apostle, as he thought of the ways in which God had guided him over the past weeks, came to the conclusion that all of the guidance of the Holy Spirit had been designed to bring him to Europe. And so he and his small company had made their way across the Aegean Sea. They had come to Philippi ultimately and went out to a little prayer enclosure on the outside of the city. And there God had worked mightily in the heart of a woman, whose name was Lydia. Her heart was opened. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." And she believed the gospel, and she was baptized in testimony to that fact, and the work of God began in the city of Philippi.

Now with the 16th verse, we continue the story.

"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 (She apparently was an ancient Jean Dixon, but she was much more under the influence of the devil, apparently, because this text states that there was an evil spirit within her, which Paul ultimately cast out): The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show 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. (They do not, of course, say that the real reason we're anxious to get rid of these men is that they are disrupting our business.) 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. (They did not use the kind of stocks that you see in Williamsburg, Virginia, in which you have two little holes for the hands and two for the feet, maybe one for the head. They had a long series of holes, so that they could put your hand in one that stretched your body. And so, they would finally reach the place where you would be sufficiently stressed and be in horrible pain, and they would put your feet in that hole and keep you there. So we can imagine that the apostles were not very happy physically. But we read in the 25th verse,) And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (And the Greek word that is used for "heard" there is a word that implies that they were attracted by the music that they heard. They heard them acceptably, pleasantly.) 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, (Join the church. [Laughter]) 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. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, 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. And the serjeants

told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans (for it was a very serious thing for the rights of Roman citizenship to be violated, even by Romans, and they were afraid now). And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 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. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the great privilege of listening to the word of God. And we thank Thee through the teaching of the Holy Scriptures that Thou dost work through Thy word. We thank Thee for the Spirit who takes the word and applies it to the hearts of men. And, Father, we ask for this audience, which is gathered here today, that through the preaching of the word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, spiritual things may be accomplished in our lives.

We pray for any who may be here without Christ, and we ask, oh Lord, that today they may come to know him and to know his life everlasting. And for those who do know Thee, oh Father, we pray that this is a day of spiritual growth, that this be a day of spiritual growth for them. Guide and direct through the word. We pray for our country and ask Thy blessing upon President Nixon, his cabinet, the congress and others associated with him in the administration. We pray, oh God, that Thou wilt direct in such a way that this country may be useful in the great plans and purposes which Thou hast for men. We pray for the men in the armed services of this country and ask Thy hand upon them for their physical good. And may, oh God, our young men have an opportunity to hear the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We pray for each one in this auditorium and ask, Lord, that Thy blessing may rest upon them, for the young people and for all of the aspirations and ambitions and desires of their hearts. May they pass

under the judgment of our God and may, oh God, their relationship to Jesus Christ be such that he may become their leader and their guide and their Lord in their lives. And for those of us who are older, oh God, we pray for each one of us and ask that all of the needs of our hearts may be met. Wilt Thou comfort and encourage and strengthen? And we particularly remember some who are not able to be here with us. Oh God, may Thy hand be upon them for spiritual good. And now we commit this meeting to Thee. We pray that Thy hand may be upon it that we may recognize Thy voice. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

[Message] We have in our passage, which we have read for the Scripture reading this morning, a statement of the most important question in life. With different phraseology, it was often asked during the apostolic age. For example, a lawyer once came to Jesus and said to him, "Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" A rich young ruler came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

Nicodemus came to our Lord by night, and he too wanted to ask, apparently, the same question. He came and said, "Rabbi, 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 Jesus, anticipating his question gives the answer to that implicit question when he said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And so apparently Nicodemus intended to ask the question, Master, what shall I do that I may see the kingdom of God or enter the kingdom of God?

And then on the Day of Pentecost, the whole congregation that heard Peter give his magnificent exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures and their relationship to the sufferings of our Lord Jesus at the conclusion of that sermon stated, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" which was their way of saying, "What must I do to be saved?"

The twentieth century might phrase it this way, although it is essentially the same question: What is the cure for alienation? What is the cure for meaninglessness and purposelessness in life?

Some months ago, Mario Savio, the young leader of the Free Speech Movement on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, was addressing the Trotskyites' Young Socialist Alliance, which is an organization that is not on the right. And he was explaining student protest to them. And in the midst of his talk to them he said these words, "The most important concept for understanding the student movement is Marx's notion of alienation. His basic meaning is that the worker is alienated from his product, but the concept is applicable to students, too. Students are frustrated. They can find no place in society where alienation doesn't exist, where they can do meaningful work. Despair sets in, a volatile political agent. The students revolt against the apparatus of the university. This is the motive power of the student movement." So spoke Mr. Savio.

Now, that is an amazing thing, really, because what this brilliant young militant student leader is saying is the root problem of the young people with whom he associates is alienation, a sense of meaninglessness, a sense of purposelessness in life. It's almost as if he were drawing from Scripture and translating it into the language of the feelings of a young man in the twentieth century.

Now the answers that our age is giving to this great question: What must I do to be saved? or What is the cure for alienation? Though theologically that question does not really express the question as well as the Philippian jailer did. The answers that our age is giving are church union, racial integration, war on poverty, urban renewal or all-out revolution. These are as relevant to the removal of evil and the removal of the sense of alienation as a Band-aid is to cancer. For relevance, we need God's word. The language may vary, but the essence of the problem is still the same. What must I do to be saved?

I am not ashamed of that word "saved," for I think it expresses throughout the centuries precisely what men are trying to say not so well. For you see, when a man says

"What is the cure for alienation?" he does not really understand how deep is his plight. For the plight of man is not simply alienation, though that is part of his plight. For Paul himself said, remember, that those who are outside of Christ suffer from alienation from the life of God because of the ignorance of God which is in them. But essentially our need is more than the closing of the gap of alienation between man and God. Our need touches our guilt before God. And the question that the Philippian jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?", is a question which I find is very, very apropos and expresses it just about as well as it could possibly be expressed.

Now, the apostle has reached Philippi in Macedonia. He has begun a new stage of the missionary movement. He has come to the great continent of Europe, and greater things happened in Philippi when Paul came there than had ever happened there before. Students of history look back upon Philippi as the place where one of the most critical battles of all history was fought. We referred to that two weeks ago. But when men think of Philippi in the twentieth century, they do not ordinarily think of the battle that was fought there. They think of Paul and Silas and Luke and the little church that grew out of the evangelistic preaching of that great missionary statesman, the Apostle Paul.

There was converted, or there were converted, in Philippi three people, apparently, which were somewhat typical of the work of the message that Paul was proclaiming. One was a rich Jewess by the name of Lydia. Another, if we can believe that she was converted, was an exploited Greek slave girl. And the third is a Roman official, a jailer. And I am reminded of a text which Paul wrote in which he said that we are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And in Christ, there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all by the baptism of the Holy Spirit are made one in him. And it's almost as if in the city of Philippi there are three conversions that in a sense foreshadow all of the work of the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout this age in which we are living too.

When Paul came to Philippi and Lydia was converted, that did not end his ministry. He apparently went out to that little enclosure by the Gangetis river more than once to pray and to discuss the things of the Spirit. And it came to pass as he went one day, a certain damsel who was possessed with the spirit of divination met him and Silas and others, and she followed them with her soothsaying and in the midst of it uttered something that was extremely true. She said, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation."

She was apparently a demon-possessed ventriloquist. I need not go into all of the reasons for saying that, but I think that the Greek language used here supports it. She was a person who had this ability, and her involuntary utterances by ventriloquism under the power of the spirit that was in her became the source of gain for her masters, that is, those who owned her. And out of her, they made a great deal of money in that superstitious age, for she went around soothsaying, or making prophecies, some of which, no doubt, did come true. And out of her prophecies, her masters made quite a bit of money.

Those people thought that those involuntary utterances, which seemed very strange coming as they did out of a mouth that apparently was not moving, and yet voices were around her, those people thought that the voices that they heard were the voice of God. And so her masters became apparently enriched by the use of her. But when she began to follow the Apostle Paul day after day, the apostle, as the account indicates, did not appreciate her unsolicited commercials because he knew that the alliance with the devil, even when the devil is preaching the gospel, is far worse than the antagonism of the devil.

It's a rather striking thing, you know, that when Jesus came into contact with the spirits of Satan, the demons, and they began to shout out truths about him, he shut their mouths. They said, We know who Thou art, the Christ of God. Jesus did not say, Wait a minute, I'll get a little pulpit and let you preach that message. He would not allow them

to speak, for of course he knew that the motivation of those statements was not the desire to proclaim the glorious good news of the saving grace of the Messiah.

And so today, one of the greatest errors that the church has made is to think that when truth is proclaimed, it is good no matter who proclaims it. And the apostle was very much disturbed by this, even though she was stating truth. "These men are servants of the most high God, which show unto you the word of salvation." And as Paul went up and down the streets of Philippi, it became finally more than he could bear under the Spirit's guidance, and he turned to the spirit that was within her and commanded the spirit to come out. And the spirit did.

Now this offended her masters, and motivated by mercenary motives entirely, they go to the magistrates. And they do not express what is really upon their heart, but they appeal to the prejudice of the community by saying in the 20th verse, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city." And then they appeal to the pride of Roman citizenship by saying that they "teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans," when really back of it all was they were very much disturbed by the fact that Paul had taken away their source of supply monetarily.

A. T. Robertson said, "It was all sound and fury." And it surely was. But we're going to learn that the devil is defeated when he imprisons Christians. And the result of this little set-to that takes place is that Paul and Silas are put in the hands of the authorities who in turn commit them to a prison.

And there their feet made fast in the stocks, they probably wondered, Was it really the leading of God that we came to Philippi after all? Silas, when we were over there in Troas, and we had that magnificent vision and we looked back over the past, and we saw how we were forbidden to go into Asia and forbidden to go into Bithynia, and we received the vision and we assuredly gathered. We put two and two together and came up with four, Europe. Were we really right? For after all, all we've accomplished is the salvation of Lydia and a few men, as we read from the latter part of this chapter. And

now we find ourselves in prison, and it's just entirely possible that we might lose our heads. Well, that was the situation.

At midnight that night, the apostle and Silas began to sing. Anyone can sing out of a prison, and when he's in good health. "But these birds could sing in a darkened cage," Alexander MacLaren said. I looked in the newspaper on Saturday, and I was looking at some of the sermon titles. And one of the sermon titles that I noticed was "Singing in the Rain." Now here are individuals who sing in the stir. My sermon title could have been "Caroling in the Clink." [Laughter] There's what they do.

What were they singing? I would love to have been able to have heard that. You know, I would like to have a record of the voices of the past. Have you heard those records? The next voice that you hear will be the voice of. Now, I can only think of one which is a comedian. Now wouldn't you like to hear a record which said, Now the next voice that you hear will be the voice of Luke the physician who will introduce the singing of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail. And you can hear something like this. This is station Alpha Tau Omega, the city of Philippi, in the country of Macedon. And now we're going to take you to the clink, and we're going to let you hear the singing of two men who came into our city and have thrown the city into an uproar. And we'll also have some comments from one who knows them real well, a doctor Luke, or something like that. I would love to have heard that singing.

What did they sing? Well, they may have sung the one hundredth psalm. I believe, myself, they must have sung those psalms of the Old Testament. It's entirely possible, if the scholars are correct, and we have in the New Testament some fragments of early church hymns, it's entirely possible that the apostle and Silas were singing 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," which set to music would be a great deal better song than "Do, Lord" or something like that.

And so they were singing songs such as this. And apparently the prisoners, if I know prisoners, they must have at first been very much disturbed by what they heard. They probably made comments like, Those guys, they're singing tonight, but wait until they see the lictors in the morning. They'll be singing another tune then. But they were impressed by something spontaneous and real that came from the apostle and his companion. And soon, they were listening to music that they found very attractive. So the Greek text implies.

Now at that point, "the Lord touched the land and it trembled," someone has said. This is the greatest recognition of prayer and praise in any meeting that I have ever heard of. I know that God did answer prayers and shake the earth before. But here is an answer to a prayer and a praise meeting that is probably the most significant that has ever taken place. And so suddenly in the midst of the singing, there is an earthquake.

And the keeper of the prison who was nearby, perhaps in the house above the side of the cliff in which the jail was, and he was awakened out of his sleep, and he rushed to the door, and he looked and he saw the doors of the prison open. And knowing that he was liable to suffer the judgment of those who had escaped, according to Roman practice, he was just about ready to take a sword and kill himself having shouted no doubt something like, My Zeus, they're gone. And the apostle had been attracted to him. And seeing his silhouette in the darkness, he had shouted out as he was about to kill himself, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."

Now with this, the Philippian jailer apparently came to himself spiritually. He was not disturbed by the earthquake. That did not make him tremble for the earthquake was gone. He was not disturbed by the fact that the prisoners might be gone, for he has just heard them say, We're all here. What is it that has come over this man that has caused this coarse, brutal, calloused man to fall down before Paul and Silas trembling? Well, perhaps it's the cry of a dim consciousness that lies dormant in the heart of every man outside of fellowship with God.

The prophet Isaiah said, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." And when the Holy Spirit finally comes to a man's heart, and brings him to the sense of a conviction of what he really is before God, then, then he does tremble. And this man under the conviction of the Spirit of God trembles as he falls down before Paul and Silas and cries out in a message that thrills like an anthem with the infinite music of the gospel, "What must I do to be saved?"

Now the apostle replied, Surely Sir, you've heard of the four spiritual laws? Or perhaps the apostle has replied, There's no need really to get so excited, sir, cool it. No, the apostle's message is a message which obviously is important to him. He does not beat around the bush at all. He does not say, Now I wonder what will be suited to the culture of this Roman official, and how shall I word the phrases that I know from the Bible. No, the message comes forth forthrightly. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Voltaire once said about the philosophers that "The philosophers did not try to enlighten cobblers and maidservants. That is the work of apostles." And oh, how true he was. It is the work of apostles with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to enlighten cobblers and maidservants and anyone else who has reached the place where he wants to have an authentic word from God that meets his basic spiritual need. And I thank God for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

I sometimes read a passage to my students over at the seminary written by Professor James Denney of the University of Glasgow. It's really a great statement. And in it, he has a word to say about Paul. It's quite common in the twentieth century for people to say, I like Jesus and I like the message of Jesus, but the message of Paul, the message of Paul is the message that is a theological message and extremely complicated. Some have even put it this way, I like the simple teaching of Jesus, but the teaching of Paul is the mystification of a professional theologian, and so I bypass Paul for Jesus.

Now there are people who appreciate Paul. Professor Denney, one of the most learned men of his day said, "To say that Paul is unintelligible or that he presents Christianity in a way which 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've found Paul intelligible and accepted the gospel as he preached it. There are such people still, if not in theological classrooms, then in mission homes, at street corners, in lonely rooms. It is not historical scholarship that is wanted for the understanding of him. And neither is it the insight of genius. It is despair. Paul did not preach for scholars, nor even for philosophers. He preached for sinners. He had no gospel except for men whose mouths were stopped and who were standing condemned at the bar of God. They understood him, and they find him eminently intelligible still. When a man has the simplicity to say with Dr. Chalmers, 'What could I do if God did not justify the ungodly?', he has the key to the Pauline gospel of reconciliation in his hand."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

What are the answers that men give today? Well, the answer of godless philosophy is: Saved, did you say saved? Forget it. You have a superstitious guilt complex. Or cold morality: If you've gone wrong, jailer, do your best from now on and everything is going to be alright. Or wild dissipation: Eat, drink and be merry. Hang Puritanism; forget salvation. Or ecclesiasticism: Come, be baptized. Receive the grace of regeneration and sit at the Lord's table in the church that is the successor to the apostles, and you shall find peace of heart and mind.

The apostle's answer is, oh, how different. Notice, it is authoritative. "And they said." Not an I say unto you, or in my opinion, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. It is the current viewpoint, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. It is the considered opinion of New Testament scholarship today, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But, "And they said." They, this is

apostolic succession to stand and answer the question, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Oh, how simple.

Not surrender. Who can surrender who has not already received the ministry of the Holy Spirit? No man can surrender to God until he has been by the Holy Spirit enlightened and brought to faith and trust in Christ. And it is to those who have been brought to faith in Christ, that the message comes, "I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice."

Believe, rely upon the message concerning the Lord Jesus. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says on faith: "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for our salvation." It is difficult to put it better than that. It was simple.

Not only that, but it is also exclusive. "Believe on the Lord Jesus," not believe in the church. Not believe in good works. Not believe in the ordinances, baptism or the Lord's Supper. Not believe in confirmation. Not believe in reformation. Not believe in culture. Not believe in just being a good citizen. But, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Exclusive.

And it's personal. It is not just a doctrine. The apostle does not say, Now I want you to accept the doctrine that Jesus died for sins and that he has been raised and that he has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and if you hold that doctrine, every thing's going to be alright. That's essential. That's essential. We do not say doctrine is unimportant. Oh listen, we cannot believe anything without committing ourselves to doctrine. When we say "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," if that is all, we already have committed ourselves to a doctrine. But we also want, besides the doctrine, the personal relationship. And this is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," it is a committal to a person.

It is individual. "And thou shalt be saved." We must believe for ourselves. Not father for child, or mother for child, or father for mother, or mother for father, or father for grandfather. It is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (singular), and thou (singular) shalt

be saved." You stand before God on your own, and you who are children in this audience, we're so happy to have you here. I love to have you here, but I want to impress upon you the fact that your responsibility is personal to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the results are certain, "Thou shalt be saved." And Paul adds, "And Thy house," as if to assure us that there is a universal offer of the gospel. It is addressed to all who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Well, this story has a very good ending. We read that "They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." By the way, this text does not mean that the faith of the Philippian jailer brought within the household of the family of God all who were his family, as if they were saved by his faith. The apostle means when he says "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," he means if they believe. As we go on to read in the context here, he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house, " for all did believe.

We are not to think of the Philippian jailer's house as cluttered up with a lot of infants who are baptized on the basis of the faith of the father. That is not what Paul says. We are to think of a man who had a family and had children who could believe. And other people in his family. And they all believed in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, here this hard, calloused, perhaps brutal, Roman jailer, that's what he was before this great experience, but now we find him gentle, tender, and even God-like. For we read that he washed their stripes. He was baptized, he and all his, and he brought them into his house and he set a table before them. That's the way the Greek text puts it. He set a table before them.

I don't want to pass by that word "baptized." I say it again, as I've said before, when we read that he was baptized, we read that he gave the scriptural response to the saving grace that had come to him. When a person puts his faith and trust in Jesus Christ,

he does not raise his hand in a meeting. He does not come down the front. He does not join the church. The scriptural way to express your faith in the Lord Jesus is to be baptized in water. Lydia was baptized. The Philippian jailer was baptized. This is the way to express our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. And he did.

And they all gathered around the table, which he had set before them. And you know, it's just possible that the apostle had sung Psalm 23 in that prayer and praise meeting beforehand. And he might with Silas have called out in praise to God "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." And now the Philippian jailer prepares a table for the apostles and for his whole house in the presence of the enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the city of Philippi. And the apostle, as he looked on the face of the Philippian jailer, said, You know, God has so worked in your heart that you are doing for us the very thing that we were singing about in the praise meeting that preceded. You're doing things that God does. You've prepared a table for us in the presence of our enemies. And so this hard, brutal, calloused Roman jailer has now become gentle, tender and God-like.

And this is the one final unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity. It changes the hearts of men, and it is the relevant answer to the problems of our day, for it is not like a Band-aid for cancer. It is something that deals with the root of the problem. And it makes a man different.

Well, we learned the gospel is. (Don't worry, we're going to close in time for you to get out for that 1:30 kick-off.) The gospel is not only for religious people, such as at Pentecost, the Ethiopian Eunuch, or Lydia, but it is also for the hard and for the brutal. Both are lost. Both are alienated. Their conditions may vary, but their basic need is the same.

The methods vary. God came and opened the heart of Lydia quietly. He shook the earth for the Philippian jailer. But in both, it was our Lord who worked, and that's the message of the Book of Acts. It is the continuation of the words and the teaching and the

deeds of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is no longer in the midst of men but at the right hand of the Father, glorified and through his Spirit is working in men bringing Lydia, bringing the jailer, bringing that Greek slave girl, bringing the thousands on the day of Pentecost down through the centuries, and who has brought a great number of you in this audience to faith and trust in him who is your Lord and Savior. Our Lord Jesus is still alive and still working.

And the means is always the word. This man came rushing in, calling for lights, and God gave him light on the basic need of his life. Paul did not say there's no cause for alarm. He said there is cause for alarm. He did not say change your ways, though that man, of course, does change his ways. But he said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That's relevant. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." That is relevance. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. That is relevance. And it meets the needs of the hearts of men.

If you have listened to me this morning, and you have deep down in your heart been stirred because you know that you're not in right relationship with God, the message of the word of God is very simple. There was a man who loved you who gave himself that you might be saved. And if you turn to him and say, Thank you, Lord, for dying for me. I take you as my personal savior. That moment, God will come into your life and transform it, will begin to bring you into a relationship to him that is purposeful and meaningful and that does satisfy the deepest need of the human heart. May you be responsive to the Spirit's ministry and turn to him.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit who enlightens and communicates the life of Christ, the great sovereign God and Father who has planned it

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all, be and abide with all who know him in sincerity. And oh Father, give no rest nor
peace until we rest in him. For Christ's sake. Amen.