

We Speak, God Saves

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- [0 : 0 0] And we will continue our worship with the reading and preaching of God's Word. It's so good to see.
- A lot of people are, I think, away for Labor Day weekend and other things, but it's also good to see some faces we haven't seen in a really long time that have come back from break and long extended COVID break and for some students, grad students and whatnot.
- And it's such a joy to worship with you. My name is Sean. For those of you who are new, I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church. It's my joy and privilege to preach God's Word to you this evening.
- Please turn with me to Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 40. Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 40.
- This is when Paul and his missionary companions are in Philippi. After seeing the vision of the man of Macedonia, they are heading over there.
- [1 : 1 3] And let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, we know that your Word is living and active, that your Word never fails to accomplish its purposes.
- It never returns void. Your Word is truth. And so we quiet our hearts and incline our ears before your Word this evening.
- Address us. We are your people. You are our God, our King. Shape us with your Word. Fill us with faith, hope, and love.
- Make us more like your Son, Jesus. Exalt your Son and captivate our hearts with Him. We ask in His precious name.
- Amen. Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 40. So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.
- [2 : 5 1] We remained in this city some days, and on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer. And we sat down and spoke to the woman who had come together.
- One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
- And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.
- And she prevailed upon us. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.
- She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation. And this she kept doing for many days.
- [3 : 5 2] And Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her. And it came out that very hour.

But when our owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.

They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice. The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

And when they had afflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. And the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

[5 : 0 0] And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in. And trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas.

Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, Let those men go.

[6 : 1 1] And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace. But Paul said to them, They have beaten us publicly uncondemned.

Men who are Roman citizens and have thrown us into prison. And do they now throw us out secretly? No. Let them come themselves and take us out.

The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them, and they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed. This is God's holy and authoritative word. If you look around yourself, you'll notice that church is a ragtag bunch of people from all kinds of backgrounds and experiences.

And we are, as a group, we might have never been friends otherwise, apart from the fact that we've been brought together by our common brotherhood and by the blood of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 2 6] That's because God has ordained to save a people from every tribe, nation, and tongue. And so in this passage, missionary work takes Paul and Silas and his companions to all kinds of people, to a wealthy female merchant who was a Gentile God-fearer, to a demonized slave girl, and also to a Philippian jailer.

But despite their wildly different socioeconomic, religious, and likely even ethnic backgrounds, Paul proclaims the same message of salvation to them all.

And from this, we learn that as we faithfully speak the word of the Lord, God powerfully acts to save. That's the main point of this passage. We're going to look at the profiles of the three different people we encounter.

In turn, first, the seller of purple goods. Second, a demonized slave girl. And third, a jailer of the inner cell. Following God's redirection from the preceding passage, Paul and his companions sail into Philippi, which is described in verse 12 as a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

In every city Paul visits, it's his custom, if you look at the book of Acts, it's his custom to enter into the city and then to go first to the Jewish synagogue where he'd encounter Jews who are already familiar with the Old Testament and he'd proclaim the gospel to them, tell them that the promised Messiah has come.

[8 : 52] However, his routine in Philippi is a little bit different. In those days, a Jewish community was required to have a minimum of 10 Jewish men to constitute a synagogue.

And in places that did not have an official synagogue, Jewish people and Gentile God-fearers preferred to meet near a body of water where they could ritually cleanse themselves before prayer.

So here it seems that there weren't enough Jewish heads of household to constitute a synagogue, and so the women met on their own outside the city gate by the riverside so that they might pray.

And so Paul and his companions, supposing that there is a place of prayer there, go and indeed they find a group of women praying and they begin to teach that gathering about Jesus and his good news.

Verse 14 says this, One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God. Lydia was a seller of purple goods, which was a luxury good in the ancient days.

[9 : 57] And since, as verse 15 tells us, that Lydia was wealthy enough to host Paul and his companions as a patroness, a hostess, she was likely a well-to-do woman.

But even more relevantly, Lydia was a worshiper of God. We are not told that she was a Jew, they would have told us that, but we're told that she is a worshiper of God, which is another way of saying that she is a Gentile God-fearer.

Someone who was sympathetic to Judaism and prayed to Israel's God but was not yet a full Jewish convert. And verse 14 tells us that the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

We see both Lydia's human response and God's sovereign grace at work here in what's happening with Lydia. Verse 14 tells us that Lydia heard Paul.

She's the one who gave Paul a hearing. But it also says, the Lord opened her heart to pay attention. People would never believe in Jesus apart from God opening up their hearts to believe.

[11 : 03] But in order for them to believe, someone also must speak the good news of Jesus Christ to them. As we faithfully speak the word of the Lord, God powerfully acts to save.

So Paul spoke the good news of Jesus and God opened Lydia's heart to believe. Lydia had been learning about Israel's God, but she was not yet aware that the promised Messiah had come.

She thought that she needed to become Jewish in order to be saved. But Apostle Paul declared the good news that by Jesus' death on the cross for our sins and by His resurrection, the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles has been torn down, and that now all people who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus for forgiveness of sins may be saved by grace through faith alone.

Some of you here may not yet be a follower of Jesus. Maybe you are like Lydia. You've been searching for the truth. You've been seeking God.

And God is opening your heart to pay attention to the good news of Jesus Christ that you are hearing even now. And if that's the case, you must respond by believing in Jesus for salvation and by getting baptized.

[12 : 18] That's what Lydia did. It says in verse 15, and after she was baptized and her household as well, she urged us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

And she prevailed upon us. Lydia, along with her household, was baptized. And later the Philippian jailer, along with his family, will also come to faith in Jesus and get baptized.

Baptism is an outward profession of an inward faith. It's the initiatory right by which we attest to the faith that we have in Jesus. It's a public profession of that faith.

So then, as a newly initiated Christian, Lydia jumps right into serving God's people. She will not be denied the opportunity to show hospitality to God's servants.

So it says she urges them. She insists on serving them, hosting them. She prevails upon them. And in doing so, she becomes not only the first European convert to Christianity, but also the hostess of the first church in Europe, as we see in verse 40.

[13 : 28] Especially as we move into our new location next week, and as we relaunch community groups and children's ministry next week as well, there will be a lot of opportunities for us to serve God and His saints.

But I pray that God will give all of us Lydia's heart to serve, to see it as a privilege and a blessing to serve, for it's better to give than to receive.

And then verse 16 transitions us to a new scene. It says, The phrase, A spirit of divination, in Greek, is literally a spirit of Python, or a Pythian spirit.

In Greek mythology, Python was an enormous female snake that the god Apollo repeatedly killed near Delphi. And Apollo is the god of prophecy, among other things.

And it was believed that the priestess of the temple of Apollo at Delphi was, the priestess was known as a Pythoness, and that it was believed that she would inhale the fumes that were coming out of the decomposing corpse of the Python, and as she was doing that, she would be possessed by Apollo himself and start to prophesy.

[14 : 47] That woman came to be known as, famously, the Oracle of Delphi. She was one of the most powerful women in the classical world, and her divinations were considered to be the most prestigious and authoritative among all kinds of divinations for the Greeks.

And this slave girl had a Pythian spirit, which suggests a powerful evil spirit that enabled her to practice divination, much like the Oracle at Delphi.

And this brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. The girl is not unlike the psychics, mediums, and witch doctors that still proliferate throughout our country and throughout the world.

Some of those people are also possessed by evil spirits at different times. And verse 17 says that this demon-possessed girl followed Paul and his fellow missionaries around, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation.

Now, on the surface, what the Spirit is saying through this slave girl is true, isn't it? These men are servants of the Most High God. They are proclaiming the way of salvation.

[15 : 59] So you might think that Paul would have welcomed such free publicity, right? They're new to the town. This girl is well-known in the area. Come on, keep going. But eventually, it says in verse 18, Paul became greatly annoyed and he casts out the Spirit from the slave girl.

There may be several reasons for Paul's annoyance. First, while for Jews the expression Most High God would have referred unambiguously to the one true God, to the Gentiles, it would have not been so clear.

The phrase Most High God was commonly used by the Greeks to refer to Zeus as the highest deity in the Greek pantheon. Second, in the original Greek, the phrase the way of salvation is actually indefinite.

So it is better translated as a way of salvation, which is exactly how the New American Standard Bible and the Common Standard Bible. That's not Common Standard, but CSB.

What does that stand for? It might be the Common Standard Bible. Translated. So that's the, moreover, the Greeks often understood the term salvation in material ways and not in terms of that's described in Scripture as forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

[17 : 17] And so for these reasons, even though what the slave girl is saying is true, it's also misleading. It's not wholly true in light of the context. Who is this Most High God?

Is it the God that the Jews worship? Or is it Zeus? And are Paul and Silas proclaiming only a way of salvation?

Or are they proclaiming the way of salvation? And what is this salvation after all? Is this just some good fortune? Or is it forgiveness of sin and eternal life?

Not only that, the medium affects the message, doesn't it? Even if the demonized slave girl did speak fully truthfully, not everyone is a suitable messenger for the gospel.

Think about it this way. In 2020, last year, when Joe Biden was running for president, Richard Spencer, a prominent neo-Nazi, endorsed him. But the Biden campaign quickly tweeted out saying, quote, what you stand for is absolutely repugnant.

[18 : 20] Your support is 10,000% unwelcome here. 10,000%. So why did they repudiate his endorsement?

Because there are some endorsements that you just don't want. Because it actually paints your reputation. It hurts your credibility.

It compromises your message. Paul didn't want the gospel of Jesus Christ to be associated with a pagan psychic medium.

If Paul legitimized this slave girl's pronouncements, then people may continue to listen to her after they are long gone. So he had to make it abundantly clear that they had nothing at all to do with this slave girl and the demon that possessed her.

So Paul speaks this spirit in verse 18. I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. This teaches us several things. First, the evil spirit is inside the slave girl, which is why Paul must command it to come out.

[19 : 25] Second, the slave girl is controlled or possessed by this spirit, which is why Paul speaks to the spirit and not to the girl. Third, Paul commands the demon in the name of Jesus Christ.

You can't exercise a spirit unless you have higher authority than that spirit. And to speak in the name of Jesus Christ is to speak with His almighty authority.

Ephesians 1, 20-21 tell us that because Jesus was raised from the dead and has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, He is, quote, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

In exorcism, back in those days, they would always name something in order to exercise a spirit, name another God or another more powerful spirit. But there is one who has a name that is higher than every other name in past, present, and future and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

So with that authority, Paul commands the spirit of Python and the serpentine spirit has no choice but to obey. In many human civilizations, there are mythologies of snake deities or monsters that embody evil which are then slayed by a hero god or a demigod.

[20 : 47] For example, Norse mythology has the thunder god Thor slaying Jormungandr, the monster serpent that wraps around the entire world with its tail. Hinduism has Brahma banishing the serpent deity Naga.

The original Chinese legend of the white snake before it evolved into a romance story was a story of good and evil with the white snake demon an embodiment of evil ensnaring a human and then a Buddhist monk Fahai saving his soul by defeating the serpent.

Greek mythology has Perseus slaying Medusa, Zeus slaying the serpent monsters Typhon and Echidna, Hercules killing the snake monster Hydra and as I already mentioned, Apollo killing Python.

But all of these are but faint distorted echoes of the truth. The Bible in various places calls the devil and Satan the great dragon or the ancient serpent.

He's the original snake in the Garden of Eden who lured Adam and Eve to rebel against God and cause the fall of humanity. And in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, God said to this serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

[22 : 07] He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. This promise is fulfilled by Jesus, the promised son of man, the offspring of the woman.

The serpent bruises Jesus' heel. Jesus dies on the cross but little does the serpent know that it is by his death that Jesus destroys the one who has the power of death that is the devil.

He says in Hebrews 2.14, Jesus by his death and resurrection lands a fatal blow on the serpent's head. It's Jesus, not Apollo, who is the one who crushes the python's head.

And he alone for that reason can offer us eternal life, resurrection life, and as Christians who have been baptized in the name of Jesus therefore have authority over the python and over all other evil spirits under him.

Paul spoke in Jesus' name and it's the authority of Jesus that cast the demon out. We don't know if the slave girl became a Christian or not, it doesn't tell us, but she was certainly delivered from the bondage and control of this evil spirit.

[23 : 21] So as we faithfully speak the word of the Lord, God powerfully acts to deliver. Some of you may be like this slave girl or her owners who are enmeshed in occult practices.

Maybe you have also dabbled in other religions. You may not have done it for financial gain like they did, but you still got something out of it. Maybe you're seeking moments of euphoria or transcendence or peace or power.

Maybe you're just trying to make sense of things or understand the world. Maybe you, like Paul's Greek audience, think that there are many ways of salvation. You see Christianity as just one option among many.

Or maybe you conceive of salvation in an entirely different way. For you, salvation is not being forgiven the sins and being reconciled to God and having eternal life. For you, salvation is getting rich or famous, getting loved and married and enlightenment, a career breakthrough, leaving a mark for progeny.

Whatever the case might be, the Word of God teaches us here that what you need most, what all of us need most is to be saved from sin and its unavoidable consequence, death.

[24 : 38] There's only one Savior who is up to that task and His name is Jesus. If you want to escape the deadly grip of that ancient serpent, you must throw your lot in with Jesus.

The casting out of the spirit of divination starts a chain reaction that will eventually land Paul and Silas in prison where God has ordained that they will meet and minister to a jailer.

The owners of the slave girl, recognizing that a lucrative revenue stream has been cut off by Paul's exorcism, forcefully seize Paul and Silas and drag them into the marketplace before the rulers.

But notice the charges that the owners bring against Paul and Silas. So Luke, the narrator, tells us the reason why they were upset because they lost some income, potential income. That's the real reason.

But they bring these charges in verses 20 to 21. These men are Jews. They are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.

[25 : 42] their charges have nothing to do with the actual reason for them bringing this trial, bringing this lawsuit.

This was not the first time, nor would it be the last time, that pursuit of material gain would be couched in terms of patriotism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

They are Jews. Oh, but we are the Romans. They're advocating unlawful customs that are unacceptable for us Romans.

They're disrupting our way of life. If you let them alone, they will overrun our city and everything we know and hold dear. These, the owners of the slave girl were shrewd.

They knew exactly what buttons to push. The result was popular outrage. It says in verse 22, the crowd joined in attacking them and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

[26 : 45] The crowd is now also inveighing against the missionaries and the magistrates undoubtedly motivated in part by their fear of the mob, by the throw justice by the wayside and order them to be beaten with rods.

We learn later in verse 37 that it was actually illegal for them to publicly beat and imprison Roman citizens before their condemnation under due process.

After their release, Paul demands that the magistrates personally come and escort them out of the prison likely as a way of public vindication and rehabilitation so that the church in Philippi might be shielded from the shame and dangerous precedent that was set by them being imprisoned and beaten without due process.

But at this point of the story, Paul and Silas don't appeal to their Roman citizenship in order to get out of this predicament. It's possible that everything just happened too quickly, but it's also possible that Paul and Silas didn't want to legitimize the Philippians' Roman civic pride and their anti-Jewish sentiments by appealing to their Roman citizenship.

Doing so would have undermined their proclamation of the Jewish Messiah who brings salvation to all peoples. So they instead endured the pain and shame of being stripped of their clothes and being flogged in public.

[28 : 12] And after this, it says in verses 23 to 24, the magistrates threw them into prison ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The inner prison in modern terms would be the maximum security cell. that's where you put people you really don't want to get out. And they were bound with wooden stocks on their feet so they can't even move around the prison.

Try to put yourself, pause for a moment and put yourself in Paul and Silas' shoes here. I mean, they haven't done anything wrong. All they were doing was faithfully proclaiming the gospel in the power of Jesus' name and here they are beaten, now in prison, under trumped up charges.

Their backs are flayed and bleeding so they probably can't even lie down to sleep because it hurts. That's probably why they're awake at midnight even though they had a really long day.

In the darkest, dankest part of the prison with not only their freedom but their mobility taken away, they're surrounded by the suffocating smell of blood and sweat with the pain of fresh wounds on their backs and the pain of wounded pride on their hearts.

[29 : 25] they're facing an uncertain future not knowing what awaits them the next day. They don't even know if they'll live past the next day. What do you think was going through Paul and Silas' minds?

Paul and Silas were men of faith to be sure but they were not stoic robots. They were going through some serious pain and heartache here. They must have had questions on their minds too.

What went wrong? Could we have done something differently? But Paul and Silas decide that they can't hang their heads in despair. Perhaps they remember Psalm 42.

Why are you cast down O my soul? Why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God for I shall again praise Him my salvation and my God.

And so though they are physically exhausted and emotionally drained it says in verse 25 about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them.

[30 : 34] Brothers and sisters you know well that Christians are not immune to sin and suffering. God will preserve us till the end and we who persevere in faith and obedience will be saved in the end.

We will share in the glory of God forever but here on earth we will have our share of tribulations. but in the midst of that let us not languish like those who have no hope.

Whether you have a terminal cancer diagnosis or crippling anxiety whether you're dealing with unemployment or family drama or religious persecution if you're going to be beaten down if we're going to be beaten down let's go down praying and singing hymns to God.

look at what it says at the end of verse 25 and the prisoners were listening to them. When you pray and sing to God in the midst of your suffering I assure you brothers and sisters your unbelieving family members friends and neighbors they are listening to you.

You're bearing witness to Jesus and the inextinguishable hope that we have in him. Now in the book of Acts whenever you see mentioned a prayer that's when you should start grabbing holding onto your seats because you should expect to see God move in response in a powerful way.

[32 : 03] That's the pattern we see throughout this book and throughout this passage in verse 13 it's at the place of prayer that Paul meets Lydia whom God saves. Her house then becomes the gathering place for the church in Philippi and in verse 16 it was on one of Paul's regular journeys to the place of prayer that he exercised the slave girl who had a spirit of divination and finally here in verse 25 it says Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God that God intervenes.

It says in verse 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake so the foundations of the prison were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. The jailer's living quarters was apparently connected to the prison we see that in verses 32 and 34 the commotion caused by the earthquake wakes up the jailer and then he rushes in to see what's happened and then the prison doors are wide open and so it says in verse 27 he drew his sword and was about to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

If the prisoners whom he had been specifically charged to guard safely in verse 23 have escaped the jailer would have been punished severely perhaps even executed.

We saw earlier in Acts chapter 12 that the guards under whose watch Peter, Apostle Peter escaped prison were executed by Herod. But Paul interrupts him with a loud voice in verse 28 do not harm yourself for we are all here.

Paul has been in the dark lightless prison so his eyes are already adjusted to the dark so he can see everything that's going on but the guard wasn't able to see it and so he calls them calls for the lights to come in and they rush in and then he says in verse 29 trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

[33 : 56] It's not hard to imagine why the jailer is trembling with fear. He was literally seconds away from taking his own life. Many nights have gone by uneventfully at the prison on his job but who are these new prisoners Paul and Silas that heaven would move earth to break them out?

Who are these prisoners who instead of scrambling to escape as the doors are open remain calm and collected concerned not for their own welfare but for the life of the jailer that put the stocks on their feet?

Who are these people? the jailer is overwhelmed and is trembling with fear and falls down before Paul and Silas. Perhaps the jailer had heard of what the demonized slave girl was saying about Paul and Silas that they are servants of the Most High God proclaiming to you the way of salvation.

It says in verse 30 the jailer brought them out and said sirs what must I do to be saved? Maybe he's concerned that he the just jailed men who clearly have the power of a deity behind them the jailer knows that he is not saved and that he needs salvation and there's something that Paul and Silas know something that Paul and Silas have that he does not know and he does not have and so he implores them sirs what must I do to be saved?

This is likely a typical Roman pagan expectation behind the jailer's question what must I do to be saved? Should I make a sacrifice to this God to appease him?

[35 : 42] Should I become a Jew like you? Paul and Silas' answer in verse 31 would have totally upended the jailer's expectations believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved you and your household this salvation that we offer is not what you must do it is about believing in who Jesus is and what he has already done the lordship of Jesus entails the death and resurrection of Jesus because it is by his resurrection that Jesus was proclaimed to be the Lord Paul says in Philippians 2 7-11 that because Jesus obeyed his father unto death even death on the cross that God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of

God the father Jesus is Lord because he is the only son of God exalted at the right hand of God Jesus is Lord because he is the only person who has defeated sin and death on the cross Jesus is Lord because he is the only one who has been raised from the dead forever believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved that is the one thing you must do in order to be saved salvation is not something you attain by accumulating enough good works or karma points salvation is not found in any other philosopher or religious teacher Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through him it is by pledging our allegiance to Jesus alone by trusting in him alone for the forgiveness of sins that we are saved let me ask you how would you answer that question sirs ma'am what must

I do to be saved John Taylor Smith was a 20th century Anglican bishop and military chaplain he served as the chaplain general of the British army during World War I and as chaplain general it was his responsibility to interview candidates for chaplaincy and he would ask all of them this all important question quote now I want you to show me how you would deal with a man we will suppose I am a soldier who has been wounded on the field of battle I have three minutes to live and I am afraid to die because I do not know Christ tell me how may I be saved and die with the assurance that all is well if the applicant began to beat around the bush and talk about the true church and ordinances and so on the good bishop would say that will not do I have only three minutes to live tell me what I must do and as long as bishop smith was chaplain general unless a candidate could answer that question he could not become a chaplain in the army a message of salvation that cannot help a dying man is no good news at all but our

Lord Jesus is able to save to the uttermost believe in him entrust yourself to him and you will be saved verse 32 tells us that Paul and Silas went on teaching at length they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house it's not only the jailer but his entire household that hears the good news of Jesus Christ earlier in verse 31 Paul and Silas told the jailer believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved you and your household this does not mean that the family members of the jailer will be saved through the jailer's faith there's no such thing as a proxy faith you cannot be saved by your parents faith no one can believe in Jesus for you but Paul and Silas were exhorting not only the jailer but his entire household to believe and the fact that they did come to believe is seen in their response in verses 33 to 34 and he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds and he was baptized at once he and all his family then he brought them up into his house and set food before them and he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in

God when God acts in power there is immediate effect we saw that with Lydia God opening her heart we saw that with the demon coming out of the slave woman we saw that here with the earthquake and the prison doors being opened immediately immediately at once at that hour things happen and likewise here that same hour of the night the jailer washes their wounds and he is baptized at once immediately he and all his family evil spirits are subject to God's authority earthquakes are subject to God's authority and we too are subject to God's authority and when God commands us and when you hear the message of salvation you should emulate their response with obedience and faith previously the jailer threw Paul and Silas into the maximum security cell put their feet in stocks but now he brings them up into his own house previously the jailer didn't give

[41 : 37] Paul and Silas any food prisons back then didn't provide food for inmates that was the responsibility of the inmates the prisoners friends and family members but now the jailer personally sets food before Paul and Silas as honored guests previously the jailer was about to take his own life at what he thought would be his punishment he feared what would happen to him but now he lets the prisoners out himself and invites them into his house this was obviously not appropriate or legal to do but that's the amazing thing he now cares less about the possible harm that might come to him because of this even though previously he was so scared he almost took his own life now the salvation that has come to him and his house is more real more immediate more relevant more captivating than even the fear of punishment fear of death that's my prayer for us pray for church whatever you're going through whatever pain and struggle you're in the midst of that the salvation that has come to you because of

Jesus would be more real to you than any of those things and remember that it was the Lord who did all the heavy lifting the Lord opened up Lydia's heart the Lord cast the demon out the Lord brought the earthquake all Paul and Silas did was speak speak God's word verse 13 it says Paul and companions spoke to the woman verse 18 says they said to the spirit verse 32 says they spoke the word of the Lord it's as we faithfully speak the word of the Lord that God powerfully acts to save there are many sayings you know popular sayings proverbs along the lines of talk is cheap actions are expensive don't talk unless you can back it up with action but as Christians whenever we tell the good news of

Jesus Christ we don't need to worry about following through on that good news ourselves we don't need to worry about backing up that good news ourselves because Jesus has already done it we speak God saves we don't need to die on the cross for anyone we don't need to defeat sin and death for anyone we don't need to give the Holy Spirit to anyone God does all of that we don't need to open up people's hearts God does all of that God backs up with power when we proclaim his word faithfully so why would we not then speak the truth about Jesus God would we not tell our neighbors this good news of salvation we can freely share the gospel because God has already paid the price for it so let's faithfully speak the word of the Lord and expect

God powerfully to save let's pray together oh Lord give us faith in your word give us faith that you will act that you will save as we proclaim your gospel make us a people who are governed by and captivated by the good news of Jesus Christ make us a people who are possessed by controlled by ruled by your Holy Spirit in Jesus name we pray amen