***Belief in Philippi***

**Summer 2022, Acts 16:16-40 July 31, 2022**

***“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved –   
you and your household”*Acts 16:30-31**

**The bigger picture: Now God opens doors for the gospel**

16 *Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.*

*19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”*

*22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

*25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”*

*29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

*31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.*

*35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: “Release those men.” 36 The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.”*

*37 But Paul said to the officers: “They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.”*

*38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. 39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. 40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.*

Acts 16:16-40

**That’s a lot about a house**

*29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

*31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.*

Acts 16

1. The passage begins and ends with the belief of an entire household – saved not from a sword but   
by the “word of the Lord”

2. Baptism is about who gets “citizenship” in this new Philippian community

3. This is the second “new believer” meal in Philippi – no wonder there was such joy!

**Lessons from a Philippian jail**

1) Paul remembers the sanctifying power of his suffering and citizenship

17 *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body . . .*

Philippians 3

2) Ten years later, the Philippians were still rejoicing!

*4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

Philippians 4

**Resources for further studies in Acts**

The Bible Project team has great stuff on Acts at [*https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg*](https://open.life.church/items/179224-poster-jpg)

Spurgeon has fewer sermons on Acts available than I would hope at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r\_ac.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r_ac.htm) *.* His sermons on Acts 16:30-34 are at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1019.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1019.htm)and [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0293.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0293.htm)

Tim Keller has said much on the topic of mission. See “5 Practices” at [*https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/*](https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/)and [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/gospel-culture-and-mission-an-interview-with-tim-keller/)

Kim Riddlebarger has an interesting article on Acts 15 at [*https://www.kimriddlebarger.com/the-riddleblog/three-take-aways-from-the-jerusalem-council-acts-15*](https://www.kimriddlebarger.com/the-riddleblog/three-take-aways-from-the-jerusalem-council-acts-15)

Deffinbaugh has a helpful introduction at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts*](https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-contribution-book-acts )  
His Acts series is at [*https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts*](https://bible.org/series/studies-book-acts)His sermons on this text are at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/22-great-debates-acts-161-10*](https://bible.org/seriespage/22-great-debates-acts-161-10) and [*https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40*](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40)

John Stott’s *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (IVP, 1990) and F. F. Bruce’s work: *New Testament History* (Doubleday, 1980) and *The Book of the Acts* (Eerdmans, 1984). For this passage, I also like Kistemaker’s commentary (Baker Book House, 1990).

Harry Boer, *That My House May Be Filled* (Eerdmans, 1957)

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# 5 Practices of a Missional Church

### Tim Keller at [*https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/*](https://brave.is/5-practices-of-a-missional-church-tim-keller/)

In the West, for nearly a thousand years, the relationship of European Christian churches to the broader culture was a relationship known as Christendom. The institutions of society “Christianized” people and stigmatized non-Christian belief and behavior.

British missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, went to India [in 1936]. When he returned to England, some thirty years later, he discovered that the Western church now found itself in a non-Christian society, but it had not adapted to its new situation. While most traditional evangelical churches can win the temperamentally conventional and conservative to Christ, American author Michael Wolff notes that this market is shrinking. If evangelical churches settle the decline in numbers, with the remaining Christian body not becoming missional, they will decline and die. This has instituted an even greater need for “missional” churches, which adopt the following practices:

**1. Speak in the vernacular**

In Christendom, technical biblical terms are well known inside and outside of the church. In a missional church, however, these terms must be explained.

The missional church:

* avoids “tribal” language, stylized prayer language, and evangelical jargon that seeks to set a spiritual tone.
* avoids “we-they” language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs
* avoids sentimental, pompous, “inspirational” talk
* avoids talking as if non-believers were not present

**2. Enter and retell the culture’s stories with the Gospel**

In Christendom, it is possible to simply exhort Christianized people to do what they know they should. There is little or no real engagement, listening, or persuasion. Often, along with exhortation, there is a heavy reliance on guilt to motivate behavior change.

In a missional church, preaching and communication always assume skeptics are present and consequently engages their stories. To enter the culture’s stories mean showing sympathy towards and deeply acquainting with literature, music, theatre, and other arts expressing the existing hopes, dreams, heroic narratives and fears. To retell the culture’s stories is to show how only in Christ can we have freedom without slavery and embrace-of-the-other without injustice.

**3. Theologically train laypeople for public life and vocation**

In a missional church, laypeople need theological education to “think Christianly” about everything and work with Christian distinctiveness. They need to know three things: (a) which cultural practices manifest common grace and are to be embraced, (b) which practices are antithetical to the Gospel and must be rejected, and (c) which practices can be adapted/revised.

Christians will have to use the Gospel to demonstrate true, biblical love and tolerance in the public square towards those with whom we deeply differ. This tolerance should equal or exceed that which groups with opposing views show towards Christians. The charge of intolerance is perhaps the main “defeater” of the Gospel in the non-Christian West.

**4. Create Christian community that is countercultural and counterintuitive**

In Christendom, “fellowship” is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support, and accountability.

In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a counterculture, showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.

* *In sex*. We avoid both the secular society’s idolization of sex and traditional society’s fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life-patterns are different from ours.
* *In money*. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, and the economically and physically weak.
* *In power*. We are committed to power sharing and relationship building among races and classes that are alienated outside of the body of Christ. A missional church must be deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice and deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion.

**5. Practice Christian unity as much as possible on the local level**

It is very important that we do not spend time bashing and criticizing other kinds of churches. That criticism simply plays into the common “defeater” that Christians are all intolerant. While we align ourselves in denominations that share many of our distinctives, at the local level we should cooperate with, reach out to, and support the other congregations and churches in our area. This will raise many thorny issues, of course, but our bias should be in the direction of cooperation.

# Acts Timeline (ESV Study Bible)

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# A Closer Look at Open and Closed Doors (Acts 16:11-40)

Deffibaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40*](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40)

6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to do this, 8 so they passed through Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul during the night: A Macedonian man was standing there urging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” 10 After Paul saw the vision, we attempted immediately to go over to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them ([Acts 16:6-10](javascript:%7b%7d)).[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P10_796)

11 We put out to sea from Troas and sailed a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days. 13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. 14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. 15 After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us.

16 Now as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit that enabled her to foretell the future by supernatural means. She brought her owners a great profit by fortune-telling. 17 She followed behind Paul and us and kept crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” 18 She continued to do this for many days. But Paul became greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out of her at once. 19 But when her owners saw their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. 20 When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion. They are Jews 21 and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans.” 22 The crowd joined the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be beaten with rods. 23 After they had beaten them severely, they threw them into prison and commanded the jailer to guard them securely. 24 Receiving such orders, he threw them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the rest of the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly a great earthquake occurred, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open, and the bonds of all the prisoners came loose. 27 When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, because he assumed the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul called out loudly, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” 29 Calling for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell down trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them outside and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house. 33 At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household.

35 At daybreak the magistrates sent their police officers, saying, “Release those men.” 36 The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent orders to release you. So come out now and go in peace.” 37 But Paul said to the police officers, “They had us beaten in public without a proper trial - even though we are Roman citizens - and they threw us in prison. And now they want to send us away secretly? Absolutely not! They themselves must come and escort us out!” 38 The police officers reported these words to the magistrates. They were frightened when they heard Paul and Silas were Roman citizens 39 and came and apologized to them. After they brought them out, they asked them repeatedly to leave the city. 40 When they came out of the prison, they entered Lydia’s house, and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and then departed.[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P15_5045)

### Introduction[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P17_5949)

The last verses of chapter 15 and the first verses of [Acts 16](javascript:%7b%7d) describe the commencement of what we know as Paul’s “Second Missionary Journey.” Barnabas took John Mark and set out for Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas to replace Barnabas, and passed through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening these churches as they made their way to the Galatian churches founded on the “First Missionary Journey.” When Paul came to Lystra, he encountered a young disciple named Timothy, who was highly regarded by the Christians in the area. Timothy was circumcised and then taken along with Paul and Silas. They passed through the Galatian cities, delivering the decrees from the Jerusalem church leaders. The churches were strengthened and experienced continued growth.

Initially, the plan was simply to revisit the churches that had been founded on the “First Missionary Journey,” but having completed this task, Paul and his companions sought to preach the gospel in Asia, but they were “**forbidden by the Holy Spirit**” ([Acts 16:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). Next they sought to go into Bithynia, but the “**Spirit of Jesus**” would not permit this either ([Acts 16:7](javascript:%7b%7d)). When they reached Troas, Paul had a vision in the night. A Macedonian man[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P20_7735) was urging Paul to “**come over to Macedonia and help us**” ([Acts 16:9](javascript:%7b%7d)). The next morning, they set sail for Macedonia.

In verses 5 and 6, we find two occasions when the Spirit of God “closed the door” on preaching the gospel in a particular place. In verses 9 and 10, we find an “open door.” I believe it will be beneficial to consider the difference between closed doors and open doors in this chapter. In addition to this, we will learn how the church at Philippi was born. This is one of the truly great churches in the New Testament, one that gave Paul great cause for rejoicing.

In our text, Luke chooses to focus on three different individuals: Lydia, the seller of purple; the demon possessed slave girl who was a fortune teller; and the Philippian jailer. I do not believe that these are the only folks with whom Paul and Silas dealt on this visit,[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P23_8690) but somehow these give us a flavor of what the ministry was like.

#### Down by the Riverside [Acts 16:11-15](javascript:%7b%7d)

11 We put out to sea from Troas and sailed a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for some days. 13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. 14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. 15 After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us.

Samothrace was little more than a mountain jutting out of the sea to a height of about 5,000 feet. There was a port there, and it may well be that they made port for the night, sailing on the next day to the Macedonian port city of Neapolis. From here, it was only a ten-mile walk to Philippi. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke would spend a number of days here before moving on.

On the Sabbath day, they went to the river because there was no synagogue in Philippi, and this is where they expected to find any Jewish worshippers. Apparently no men were present, but there were some women with whom they spoke. One of these women was named Lydia, a God-fearer from Thyatira. She listened, and God opened her heart to respond to the news that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. After she and her household were baptized, she prevailed upon these missionaries to stay in her home while they were in Philippi. And so the first Gentile convert in Macedonia is a woman.

#### Paul Liberates a Slave Woman, and It Costs a Fortune [Acts 16:16-24](javascript:%7b%7d)

16 Now as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit that enabled her to foretell the future by supernatural means. She brought her owners a great profit by fortune-telling. 17 She followed behind Paul and us and kept crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.” 18 She continued to do this for many days. But Paul became greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out of her at once. 19 But when her owners saw their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. 20 When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion. They are Jews 21 and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans.” 22 The crowd joined the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be beaten with rods. 23 After they had beaten them severely, they threw them into prison and commanded the jailer to guard them securely. 24 Receiving such orders, he threw them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Paul seems to return to the place of prayer just as he would have the synagogue, had there been one. On the way to the place of prayer, a slave girl confronted[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P32_12175) them. She was demon-possessed, and the spirit that controlled her enabled her to foretell the future as a fortune teller. This woman was owned by others, and she made a fortune for them. It may be puzzling for some to hear what this demonized young woman constantly shouted as she followed Paul and the others:

“These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation” ([Acts 16:17](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Her words were true, but why would she say them? Let us first of all remember that similar things took place during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus:

“Leave us alone, Jesus the Nazarene! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!” ([Mark 1:24](javascript:%7b%7d))

I am indebted to James Montgomery Boice[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P37_13247) for pointing out that references to God as the “**Most High God**” can be found in these Old Testament texts.

18 Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (Now he was the priest of the **Most High God**.) 19 He blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by the **Most High God**, Creator of heaven and earth ([Genesis 14:18-19](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I raise my hand to **the Lord, the Most High God**, Creator of heaven and earth, and vow ([Genesis 14:22](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

“I will climb up to the tops of the clouds; **I will make myself like the Most High**!” ([Isaiah 14:14](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine)

The words of Melchizedek in [Genesis 14:19](javascript:%7b%7d) inform Abram that the God who called him, the God whom he serves, is the sovereign Creator of both the heavens and the earth. He is God of all gods and Ruler of all rulers. The next occurrence ([Genesis 14:22](javascript:%7b%7d)) indicates that Abram grasped this fact, and that he conveyed this by his own words to the king of Sodom. When Satan rebelled against God, it was his foolish attempt to assume this exalted position as God Most High. Why, then, would one of his minions introduce the preaching of the gospel by testifying to the sovereignty of his sworn enemy, the God of the universe? Let me suggest a reason.

You remember the Old Testament story about Balaam, the (false) prophet who was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites as they were about to enter the Promised Land ([Numbers 22-25](javascript:%7b%7d)). Balaam really did want to earn the fee for doing so, but every time Balaam opened his mouth to curse the Israelites, he ended up blessing them (see [Numbers 23:1-13](javascript:%7b%7d)). The fact was that Balaam could not curse the Israelites because God had blessed them.

I seriously doubt that this slave girl intended to say what she did, but she was unable to say anything else. All she could do was speak the truth about Paul and his colleagues and the gospel they had come to preach. The problem does not seem to be what she said, but rather the distraction she created by saying it over and over again. She became, in effect, a heckler, whose presence was annoying, to say the least.

Paul put up with her distractions for a good while. One may wonder why Paul did not act sooner. I am inclined to think that Paul was not quick to confront the powers of hell. This is not because he lacked the power (in Christ) to do so, but simply because this kind of spiritual warfare is something that he never took lightly. Unfortunately, I have heard some Christians speak lightly of Satan and his power:

8 Yet these men, as a result of their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and insult the glorious ones. 9 But even when Michael the archangel was arguing with the devil and debating with him concerning Moses’ body, he did not dare to bring a slanderous judgment, but said, “May the Lord rebuke you!“ 10 But these men do not understand the things they slander, and they are being destroyed by the very things that, like irrational animals, they instinctively comprehend ([Jude 8-10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Eventually this young woman’s opposition became too much to bear, and Paul spoke to the spirit, commanding it to come out of this woman in the name of Jesus Christ. The spirit instantly obeyed. I find it interesting to note how eager some of the commentators are to believe that this young woman, like Lydia and (soon) the jailer, came to trust in the Lord Jesus. But I see absolutely no evidence that she did trust in Jesus. We are not told that she believed, though we are clearly told that Lydia and the jailer did. We are not told that she was baptized, but we are told that Lydia and the jailer were (with their households). We are not told that she wanted to show these missionaries hospitality, as did Lydia and the jailer. This woman was delivered from demon possession, and so far as I can tell, that is all.

Apparently it did not take long for this slave woman’s owners to realize that Paul had cost them a fortune, literally. They were greatly enraged, and so they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them to the city officials. Their accusations sound familiar to anyone who is familiar with the Gospels and Acts. The accusations were designed to play upon the anti-Jewish sentiments of the citizens of Philippi (no wonder there were few Jews in Philippi). As Jesus was accused of misleading the people so as to violate Roman law, so Paul and Silas were accused of persuading people to oppose Roman law in Philippi. As the opposition stirred up the crowds against Jesus in Jerusalem, so they persuaded the crowds to oppose Paul and his associates in Philippi:

1 Then the whole group of them rose up and brought Jesus before Pilate. 2 They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man subverting our nation, forbidding us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar and claiming that he himself is Christ, a king.” 3 So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He replied, “You say so.” 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.” 5 But they persisted in saying, “He incites the people by teaching throughout all Judea. It started in Galilee and ended up here!” . . . 14 and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. When I examined him before you, I did not find this man guilty of anything you accused him of doing” ([Luke 23:1-5](javascript:%7b%7d), 14).

At that moment Jesus said to the crowd, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me like you would an outlaw? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple courts, yet you did not arrest me?” ([Matthew 26:55](javascript:%7b%7d))

20 But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed ([Matthew 27:20](javascript:%7b%7d)).

20 When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, “These men are throwing our city into confusion. They are Jews 21 and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us to accept or practice, since we are Romans.” 22 The crowd joined the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be beaten with rods[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P52_19437) ([Acts 16:20-22](javascript:%7b%7d)).

We know that the beatings inflicted on Paul and Silas were illegal.[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P54_19606) In [Acts 22](javascript:%7b%7d), Paul asserted his rights as a Roman citizen and thereby escaped a beating.[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P55_19721) We must wonder why Paul endured such a beating here. He may not have had the opportunity to stop these (illegal) proceedings. His opponents were certainly not in a reasonable mood. He may have objected but was simply ignored, or his claim assumed to be false. He does not fail to claim his legal rights at the end of this chapter.

I am inclined to think that Paul’s words in [1 Corinthians 7](javascript:%7b%7d) may apply here:

20 Let each one remain in that situation in life in which he was called. 21Were you called as a slave? Do not worry about it. But if indeed you are able to be free, make the most of the opportunity ([1 Corinthians 7:20-21](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Paul is encouraging the Corinthian Christians to be content in whatever circumstances they were called to faith in Jesus. This applies to circumcision ([1 Corinthians 7:18-19](javascript:%7b%7d)), as it applies to slavery ([1 Corinthians 7:20-21](javascript:%7b%7d)). One who is saved as a slave should not agonize about his (or her) condition, because they can glorify God as a Christian slave. But, if the opportunity should arise where they could purchase their freedom, then they should do so.

I think this principle applies to Paul’s beating in Philippi. If he cannot, for one reason or another, escape from the beating, then he must suffer for the sake of Christ. He can endure this patiently, rejoicing in the privilege of suffering for Christ (see [1 Peter 1:18-25; 4:12-14](javascript:%7b%7d)), which is evident by the hymns they were singing to God while in that prison ([Acts 16:25](javascript:%7b%7d)). For whatever reason, the beating could not be avoided in a way that would honor Christ.

Luke informs us that “**the crowd joined the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off Paul and Silas. . .**” (verse 22). This was far from what we would consider “due process of the law.” This was a virtual riot, with the entire crowd out of control. Any objections would have been futile.

The jailer seems to enter the story at this point. Paul and Silas were beaten severely and then cast into prison. The jailer was instructed to guard them securely. The jailer took this charge seriously and placed (threw) them in an inner cell. In other words, they were in maximum security. When I worked in a prison, they called this “the hole.” To make doubly sure they could not escape, their feet were put in the stocks. One can only imagine the pain these two heroes of the faith endured on this occasion.

#### Beyond Escape [Acts 16:25-34](javascript:%7b%7d)

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the rest of the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly a great earthquake occurred, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open, and the bonds of all the prisoners came loose. 27 When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, because he assumed the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul called out loudly, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” 29 Calling for lights, the jailer rushed in and fell down trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them outside and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house. 33 At that hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized right away. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set food before them, and he rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household.

Escape from prison is nothing new in the Book of Acts. In chapter 5, Peter and John were arrested and placed in jail. During the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison gates and instructed the two apostles to go and preach publicly in the temple. The officers who went to retrieve the apostles to stand trial before the Sanhedrin found only an empty cell, securely locked and under guard. In chapter 12, Herod arrested Peter with the intent of executing him after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On that final night, an angel of the Lord personally escorted Peter from the prison, while the guards slept soundly. In this instance, Peter made a brief appearance at Mary’s home, where the saints had gathered to pray, and then he escaped to a place where he would not be found. We might expect something similar here in [Acts 16](javascript:%7b%7d), but even when every door is opened and every chain is loosed, neither Paul nor Silas (nor apparently anyone else) left. Escape was made easy, but no one fled. The question is obviously, “Why not?”

Some strange things were about to take place in that prison on this particular night. Can you imagine being incarcerated in that prison and hearing the sounds of singing echo through those stone corridors? I’m sure the sounds of cursing were often heard, as badly beaten men expressed their wrath toward God and man. But these were the sounds of men rejoicing, not men singing some mournful dirge. This was not something akin to “Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen . . . .” This was much more like “Amazing Grace.” Luke tells us that “**the prisoners were listening**” (verse 25). I’ll bet they were listening.

I can remember the time that I was sharing my faith with a group of prisoners. One of the inmates said to the other, “Ain’t that something, man? Ain’t that something?” I’ll bet that’s what some of these prisoners were saying to each other. Prisons are very noisy places, and I suspect that every word of every song was heard, not to mention the prayers these two joyfully offered up to their God.

Suddenly there is a great earthquake. I don’t think a prison cell is the safest place to be when such a thing happens. These inmates must have thought they were goners. Every door flew open, and every chain fell loose. There was nothing to keep these men in their cells. They could easily escape under cover of darkness (and in the panic of the moment).

From what I know of prisons in that day (and even some jails today), the jailer probably lived in the upstairs part of the building while the prisoners were kept in the basement (or dungeon). The jailer was probably ejected from his bed. It would have taken him only a moment to realize what had happened and to comprehend the magnitude of this crisis for him personally. Luke tells us that the jailer saw all the prison doors opened. There was no way on earth that these doors could be wide open unless the prisoners had escaped. The jailer took out his sword and prepared to take his own life.

Luke tells us that Paul called out to the jailer in a loud voice. It is possible that in the darkness of that inner prison Paul might have seen the silhouette of the jailer, about to kill himself. That would be a very human, a very believable explanation. But it is also possible that God somehow made Paul aware of the jailer’s intentions, even without seeing him. This would explain why Paul called out to the jailer in a loud voice. Hearing Paul assure him that the prisoners were all present, the jailer called for lights to be brought so that he could see the status of things inside the prison.

How could he believe what he was seeing? Everyone was there and accounted for. One could at least expect the other inmates to have fled the prison, but all were present and accounted for. Why would the pagan inmates remain behind? I think it was because they realized something really big had just happened. The words they had heard sung and prayed were no empty claims. Their words had a ring of authority, now that they had rejoiced in their afflictions, and now that God had miraculously provided “**a way of escape**” (see [1 Corinthians 10:13](javascript:%7b%7d)). They were as eager to know that answer to the jailer’s question as he was.

Rushing into the inner prison where Paul and Silas remained, the jailer fell down before them and asked, “**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**” Who told him he needed to be saved? Had he heard the slave girl calling out that these men were “**servants of the Most High God who are proclaiming . . . the way of salvation**”? Had the jailer overheard their singing and the praying in the prison below him while he lay in his bed, listening to what was going on below? Somehow, God had prepared the heart of this jailer so that he was eager to hear what Paul and Silas had to say. Paul and Silas immediately responded with the “short version” of the gospel: “**Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household**.”

It is clear that this was but a summary of the gospel, and that much more was said as they talked on into the night. In addition to Paul’s abbreviated gospel in [Acts 16:31](javascript:%7b%7d), the very next verse reads, “**Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, along with all those who were in his house**” (verse 32). No doubt Paul and Silas were explaining the gospel as the jailer washed their wounds. Then, the jailer was baptized, along with his entire household.

Verse 34 is fascinating and informative. *First*, we read that the jailer “**rejoiced greatly that he had come to believe in God, together with his entire household.**” His joy, I take it, was the joy of his salvation, but also rejoicing in the fact that his household had come to share the faith with him. Luke is not telling us that the jailer’s faith was sufficient for his own salvation, and for that of his household. His faith was sufficient for his salvation, but it didn’t save others. Some are confused by the wording of the gospel as we find it in [Acts 16:31](javascript:%7b%7d):

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household” ([Acts 16:31](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The confusion may be caused by the wording of this verse in the King James Version:

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house ([Acts 16:31](javascript:%7b%7d), KJV).

Paul and Silas are answering the jailer’s question, which is, “**What must *I* do to be saved?**” (emphasis mine). The answer goes somewhat beyond the question. Paul and Silas (“**they**”) reply that the jailer need only believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved. But they add that this offer of salvation by faith is also extended to his entire household. They can all be saved as each one believes in the Lord Jesus. This is clear from what follows. In verse 32, we are told that Paul and Silas proclaimed the gospel to the jailer “***and”*** all those who were in his house. In verse 33, Luke tells us that this jailer “***and”*** all his family were baptized. In verse 34, Luke writes that the jailer rejoiced greatly because he believed “***together with”*** his entire household. Thus, the offer of salvation by faith was offered to all, explained to all, and received by all. The jailer’s faith saved him; the salvation of each family member came as each of them believed in the Lord Jesus.

*Secondly*, we are told that the jailer “**brought them into his house and set food before them**.” I believe this is an important detail to note. In the early chapters of Acts, we find that new believers practiced “table fellowship”:

Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts ([Acts 2:46](javascript:%7b%7d)).

When Lydia came to faith, she promptly invited Paul and his colleagues to stay in her home:

After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house.” And she persuaded us ([Acts 16:15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Now, when the Philippian jailer comes to faith, we find Paul and Silas at his table, sharing a meal in the early hours of the morning ([Acts 16:34](javascript:%7b%7d)). Sharing a common faith seems to be expressed by sharing a common meal. I wonder if observing communion isn’t related to this (see [1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-34](javascript:%7b%7d)). No wonder God made such a point of revoking the Old Testament food laws (see [Mark 7:14-23](javascript:%7b%7d); [Acts 10-11](javascript:%7b%7d); [Galatians 2:11-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

#### Freedom Offered, but Not So Quickly Accepted [Acts 16:35-40](javascript:%7b%7d)

35 At daybreak the magistrates sent their police officers, saying, “Release those men.” 36 The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent orders to release you. So come out now and go in peace.” 37 But Paul said to the police officers, “They had us beaten in public without a proper trial - even though we are Roman citizens - and they threw us in prison. And now they want to send us away secretly? Absolutely not! They themselves must come and escort us out!” 38 The police officers reported these words to the magistrates. They were frightened when they heard Paul and Silas were Roman citizens 39 and came and apologized to them. After they brought them out, they asked them repeatedly to leave the city. 40 When they came out of the prison, they entered Lydia’s house, and when they saw the brothers, they encouraged them and then departed ([Acts 16:35-40](javascript:%7b%7d)).

When the police officers arrived with their message from the magistrates, the jailer surely saw this as good news. He had already given these two men freedom within the confines of the prison by taking them into his dwelling. Now they were free to go. What could be better news than this?

But freedom from that prison was not of primary importance to Paul. When the prison gates were all flung open by the earthquake and every chain loosed, Paul and Silas could have easily escaped. But that was not what God had in mind. They could have escaped, but then they would have been fugitives from justice. The church in Philippi would be subject to government oppression, and further ministry in Philippi would have been restricted. It was by remaining in the prison that God “opened the door” of the jailer’s heart.

Now, once again, there appears to be an “open door,” which would have granted Paul and Silas a legal release. But at what price? Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. They had been deprived of their rights as citizens of Rome. The beating they received, and their imprisonment, were illegal. The magistrates were undoubtedly hoping that Paul and Silas would silently slip out of town, never to be seen again. But that was not going to happen. Paul is not just “standing up for his rights;” he is standing up for what is right, and for what is best for the gospel, and for the new church.

In the future, Roman officials might feel the freedom to abuse Roman citizens who were Christians. They could beat them, and then let them go, just as they had done to Paul and Silas. The end result would be detrimental to the spread of the gospel. No. They were wrong to mistreat Roman citizens. Now they must publicly acknowledge their wrongdoing by making a public apology. This would leave Paul and Silas (and others who were Roman citizens) the right to travel freely among the churches in the empire. It would protect the church in Philippi from governmental oppression. Paul would not accept “freedom at any price.” He insisted that the officials obey the laws they were also charged to enforce. He took his beating well, but he did not tolerate injustice. I suspect that word of Paul’s actions made its way to other cities, and this may have given those officials pause. If they treated Paul and Silas illegally, they would be held responsible. Let me say it again; Paul’s “rights” are not primary here, but what *is* right, especially for the advance of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

Paul and Silas did not hastily leave town either. When the magistrates had made their apology, Paul and Silas made their way to the home of Lydia. They would have needed to regroup with Timothy, and they also needed to use this as an opportunity to encourage the believers in this new church. What Paul would write to these saints at a later time was also relevant on this occasion:

12 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel: 13The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ ([Philippians 1:12-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### Conclusion

#### The Gospel

Our text does a marvelous job of portraying the gospel. We are informed that the gospel begins with God. It is not we who seek God (see [Romans 3:9-18](javascript:%7b%7d)), but it is God who seeks and saves us, opening our hearts to respond to the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf ([Acts 16:14](javascript:%7b%7d)). Salvation is not about the works that we do; salvation is about what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on the cross of Calvary. We are saved by believing on Him, on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sinners who deserve God’s eternal wrath (hell). God sent Jesus to earth as the Promised Messiah, fulfilling the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. By believing on the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life, we are saved.

#### The Church at Philippi

Let us remember that the church which is founded here in [Acts 16](javascript:%7b%7d) is the church to which Paul has written the Book of Philippians. This is a marvelous church. They were the only church to support Paul financially after Paul departed from Macedonia ([Philippians 4:10-16](javascript:%7b%7d)). They not only sent money to support Paul while he was in prison; they sent Epaphroditus ([Philippians 2:25-30](javascript:%7b%7d)). It is no wonder that the church at Philippi would stand with Paul in his imprisonment in Rome; it was Paul’s imprisonment in Philippi which God used to bring some of them to faith.

#### God’s Strategy

*Paul’s missionary journeys reveal a divine strategy.*We have come far enough in the Book of Acts to realize that there is a strategy behind Paul’s missionary journeys. Paul and his colleagues tend to visit major cities, located on major transportation routes. Paul travels are all within the Roman Empire, and he is a Roman citizen. Thus Paul’s missionary activities fall under the protection of Rome.

We know that Paul follows the practice of going “**to the Jew first**.”

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek ([Romans 1:16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

One can (and should) understand this from a theological point of view. The gospel was to be offered first to the Jews, and then (when rejected) it should be taken to the Gentiles:

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they began to contradict what Paul was saying by reviling him. 46 Both Paul and Barnabas replied courageously, “It was necessary to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘*I have appointed you to be a light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth* ([Acts 13:45-47](javascript:%7b%7d)).’”

But there is also a practical and strategic dimension to this principle of “**the Jew first**.” This was what made it possible to reach a large number of people and cover a broad geographical area with the gospel. The Jews had been dispersed throughout the known world, and thus Paul sought to reach them first, wherever he traveled. Wherever Paul went, he went first to the synagogue (or, when there was none, to a Jewish place of prayer). The Jews who attended the synagogue believed in one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They read and believed in the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God. Thus, they believed the messianic promises and prophecies. Paul could go to a city and, in a short period of time, demonstrate that the Promised Messiah must be rejected, crucified, and then raised from the dead. All that was necessary (as though this was not a miraculous thing – see [2 Corinthians 3](javascript:%7b%7d) and 4) was to show that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. Jesus was the key that unlocked the entire Old Testament.

One need not start at the beginning (where Genesis starts), for the Jews believed these things. One need only go to Christ. And this made it possible for new Jewish converts to mature much more quickly than a raw pagan, whose entire theological system had to be cast aside. No wonder Paul could return so soon to churches he had planted and appoint elders (see [Acts 14:23](javascript:%7b%7d)). Paul could move rather rapidly from one city to the next and leave healthy, thriving churches behind. He would revisit them, of course, and write to them. But he need not remain for great lengths of time. And when he left these churches behind, the work of evangelism among the Gentiles (and Jews) could flourish. Thus, the principle of “**the Jew first**” was a very strategic one, one that greatly advanced the proclamation and progress of the gospel.

#### About Open and Closed Doors

For the near future, our church has chosen to embrace these words from our Lord to the church at Philadelphia:

7 “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write the following: ‘This is the solemn pronouncement of the Holy One, the True One, who holds the key of David, **who opens doors no one can shut, and shuts doors no one can open**: 8 ‘I know your deeds. (**Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut.**) I know that you have little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name’” ([Revelation 3:7-8](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

We desire to recognize the open doors that God has placed before us, and to respond in such a way as to make the most of these opportunities for the preaching of the gospel to the glory of our Savior. If we are to do this, we must be able to recognize those doors that our Lord has opened. I believe that our text instructs us regarding the characteristics of “closed doors” and of “open doors.” Consider the following principles.

*(1) God is the doorkeeper.* He is the One who opens and closes doors. This is clearly stated in [Revelation 3:7-8](javascript:%7b%7d). It is also evident in [Acts 16:6-7](javascript:%7b%7d). It is God (perhaps through His Spirit) who informs us that a door is open or closed. As we see in our text, God may open a door for the gospel in a way that we would never expect (like getting arrested, and being beaten and imprisoned when it is against the law).

*(2) An “opportunity” is not necessarily an open door.*When we speak of open and closed doors, we are referring to hearts that are prepared, and thus are open to the Word of God. An open door is a door that is open to the gospel. When Paul and Silas were in prison, God caused a great earthquake which opened every door and loosed every chain ([Acts 16:26](javascript:%7b%7d)). There was an opportunity for Paul and Silas to escape, but this was not the “open door” God had indicated for Macedonia. The “open door” was the occasion to stay in the prison and to proclaim the gospel to the jailer and his household (and perhaps others in prison). When the magistrates sent the officers to inform the jailer that he could release Paul and Silas, this may have looked like an “open door,” a door through which to escape. But Paul would have none of this. He and Silas stayed in the prison until the magistrates came and apologized. Paul’s concern was for the advance of the gospel and for the well-being of the church. Thus he stayed until those responsible acknowledged their failure to administrate justice.

*(3) One can only know a closed door by first trying it.* Have you ever had a boy or a girl come to your door and ask, “You don’t want to buy any cookies, do you?” Some Christians conclude that a door is closed before they have even tried to open it. Paul and Silas attempted to go to Asia, and then to Bithynia. They learned that God had closed the door when they tried to open it. *We discern God’s direction by attempting to fulfill our calling, and thus we will know when a door is truly closed.* Many Christians excuse their inaction by calling it a closed door, but they have never tried to enter it.

*(4) An open door may only become evident after one has experienced some closed doors.* It was not until after God had closed two doors that God revealed Macedonia as an open door. Some people are tempted to give up at the first closed door. God expects us to persevere until the open door is made known to us.

*(5) Opposition is not necessarily an indication of a closed door:*

1 The same thing happened in Iconium when Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a large group of both Jews and Greeks believed. 2 But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3 **So they stayed there for a considerable time, speaking out courageously for the Lord, who testified to the message of his grace, granting miraculous signs and wonders to be performed through their hands** ([Acts 14:1-3](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

5 Now when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul became wholly absorbed with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. 6 When they opposed him and reviled him, he protested by shaking out his clothes and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am guiltless! From now on I will go to the Gentiles!“ 7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went to the house of a person named Titius Justus, a Gentile who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8 Crispus, the president of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his entire household, and many of the Corinthians who heard about it believed and were baptized. 9 The Lord said to Paul by a vision in the night, “Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent, 10 because I am with you, and no one will assault you to harm you, because I have many people in this city.“ 11 So he stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them ([Acts 18:5-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I have heard John Piper say something like this:[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P116_45394) “There is no closed door for anyone who is willing to die for their faith.” I agree with what I understand Piper to be saying. Some people interpret opposition or difficulties as an indication of a closed door. Therefore, if preaching about Jesus looks dangerous, we assume that it is a closed door and we move on (to safer places and people). The Scriptures make it very clear that Christians will suffer for their faith.[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P117_45881) There are some doors that God has closed, perhaps to open at a later time. But let us not assume that opposition, danger, or suffering are absolute evidence that God has closed the door. The Philippian jailer and his household were an open door, but it cost Paul and Silas dearly to seize this opportunity for the gospel.

*(6) Our suffering may actually open a door of opportunity for the gospel.*The suffering of our Lord on the cross of Calvary certainly “opened the door of salvation.” So, too, it may be our suffering (unjust suffering, that is) that opens the door for evangelism. The suffering of Paul and Silas opened the door for evangelizing the Philippian jailer and his household. Paul could write the Philippians that his circumstances (read, sufferings) promoted the gospel ([Philippians 1:12](javascript:%7b%7d)ff.). Peter says something similar:

14 But in fact, if you happen to suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. ***But do not be terrified of them*** ***or be shaken****.* 15 But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess ([1 Peter 3:14-15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I often hear Christians praying that they, or their fellow believers, might be delivered from sickness, pain, and suffering. I understand. I’ve prayed the same things myself, many times. But should we not be careful when we do so? Should we not rather pray that God would be glorified, and that sinners might be drawn to faith in Jesus, whether through our sufferings or through our deliverance? Should we not ask God to give us the grace and hope we need in times of suffering, so that we will stand apart from the lost, who have no hope? When suffering unavoidably comes our way, let us look for open doors that are created by suffering in a godly way:

18 Slaves, be subject to your masters with all reverence, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are perverse. 19 For this finds God’s favor, if because of conscience toward God someone endures hardships in suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is it if you sin and are mistreated and endure it? But if you do good and suffer and so endure, this finds favor with God. 21 For to this you were called, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in his steps. 22 He ***committed no*** sin ***nor was deceit found in his mouth***. 23 When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly. 24 He ***himself bore our sins*** in his body on the tree, that we may cease from sinning and live for righteousness. ***By*** his ***wounds*** ***you were healed***. 25 For you were ***going astray like sheep*** but now you have turned back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls ([1 Peter 2:18-25](javascript:%7b%7d)).

When suffering leads to salvation, it is an open door.

*(7) Closed doors may only be closed temporarily.*We have recently seen how the Holy Spirit forbade Paul and his associates from preaching the Word in Asia ([Acts 16:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). Before long, Paul and Silas will come to Ephesus, where they will proclaim the Word for at least two years, impacting all Asia:

8 So Paul entered the synagogue and spoke out fearlessly for three months, addressing and convincing them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were stubborn and refused to believe, reviling the Way before the congregation, he left them and took the disciples with him, addressing them every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. 10 This went on for two years, **so that all who lived in the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord** ([Acts 19:8-10](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Likewise, the Spirit did not permit them to enter Bithynia, but we know that God eventually did bring the gospel to these people:

1 From Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those temporarily residing abroad (in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia) who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by being set apart by the Spirit for obedience and for sprinkling with Jesus Christ’s blood. May grace and peace be yours in full measure! ([1 Peter 1:1-2](javascript:%7b%7d))

*(8) An open door leads to open hearts.* God had temporarily closed the door to Asia, and to Bithynia, but He opened the door in Macedonia. We are thus not surprised to read that God was opening hearts to the gospel that was proclaimed:

13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate to the side of the river, where we thought there would be a place of prayer, and we sat down and began to speak to the women who had assembled there. 14 A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, a God-fearing woman, listened to us. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying ([Acts 16:13-14](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I greatly appreciate what Colin McDougall of Church of the Open Door shared with our church some time ago. He said that when his family moved from a remote area in Africa to Southern California, he concluded that his efforts should be focused on prayer. He would pray that God would open the hearts of people around him, and that He would reveal those people to him. Open hearts are an open door. We need to pray much that God would prepare the hearts of those whom we encounter, and that we would have the sensitivity to recognize these open doors and take advantage of them.

May God grant us open doors of opportunity, so that the gospel may be proclaimed and lost sinners may be saved. May God grant us the perseverance to find those open doors, and the faith to enter them, by His grace and to His glory.

[1](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P10_797) I am citing these earlier verses in [Acts 16](javascript:%7b%7d) because they provide essential background for our lesson.

[2](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P15_5046) Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible. The NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION, also known as THE NET BIBLE, is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It was completed by more than twenty biblical scholars who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. The translation project originally started as an attempt to provide an electronic version of a modern translation for electronic distribution over the Internet and on CD (compact disk). Anyone anywhere in the world with an Internet connection will be able to use and print out the NET Bible without cost for personal study. In addition, anyone who wants to share the Bible with others can print unlimited copies and give them away free to others. It is available on the Internet at: [www.netbible.org](http://www.netbible.org).

[3](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P17_5950) Copyright © 2006 by Community Bible Chapel, 418 E. Main Street, Richardson, TX 75081. This is the edited manuscript of Lesson 23 in the *Studies in the Book of Acts* series prepared by Robert L. Deffinbaugh on May 7, 2006. Anyone is at liberty to use this lesson for educational purposes only, with or without credit. The Chapel believes the material presented herein to be true to the teaching of Scripture, and desires to further, not restrict, its potential use as an aid in the study of God’s Word. The publication of this material is a grace ministry of Community Bible Chapel.

[4](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P20_7736) I can’t help but wonder what this “**Macedonian man**” looked like. Did he look like the jailer?

[5](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P23_8691) We know that there were those in the households of both Lydia and the jailer who came to faith in Jesus as well.

[6](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P32_12176) The NET Bible, along with most other translations, renders this term “**met**,” but I believe this is too neutral a translation. This term often means “to oppose.” Luke uses this term twice in his Gospel ([Luke 8:27; 14:31](javascript:%7b%7d)), and in both instances the encounter is hostile. This slave girl was on the attack, as I understand the text.

[7](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P37_13248) James Montgomery Boice, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), p. 279.

[8](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P52_19438) This was not the only time Paul suffered such a beating (see [2 Corinthians 11:25](javascript:%7b%7d)).

[9](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P54_19607) [Acts 16:35-40; 22:22-29](javascript:%7b%7d).

[10](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P55_19722) [Acts 22:22-29](javascript:%7b%7d).

[11](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P116_45395) I confess that I cannot cite a specific reference here.

[12](https://bible.org/seriespage/23-closer-look-open-and-closed-doors-acts-1611-40" \l "P117_45882) See [Acts 14:21-22](javascript:%7b%7d); [2 Corinthians 11:23-29](javascript:%7b%7d); [Philippians 1:29](javascript:%7b%7d); [2 Timothy 3:12](javascript:%7b%7d).

# Household Salvation

November 5th, 1871  
by C. H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)  
at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1019.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1019.htm)

"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."—Acts 16:32-34.

It sometimes happens that a good man has to go alone to heaven: God's election has separated him from the midst of an ungodly family, and, notwithstanding his example and his prayers, and his admonitions, they still remain unconverted, and he himself, a solitary one, a speckled bird amongst them, has to pursue his lonely flight to the skies. Far oftener, however, it happens that the God who is the God of Abraham becomes the God of Sarah, and then of Isaac, and then of Jacob, and though grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet doth it very frequently—I was about to say almost always—happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to himself. He calls an individual, and then uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the gospel net. John Bunyan, in the first part of his "Pilgrim's Progress," describes Christian as a lonely traveler, pursuing his road to the Celestial City alone; occasionally he is attended by Faithful, or he meets with a Hopeful; but these are casual acquaintances, and are not of his kith or kin: brother or child after the flesh he has none with him. The second part of Bunyan's book exhibits family piety, for we see Christiana, and the children, and many friends, all travelling in company to the better land; and, though it is often said that the second part of Bunyan's wondrous allegory is somewhat weaker than the former, and probably it is so, yet many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former, and it has given to many a loving heart great delight to feel that there is a possibility, beneath the leadership of one of the Lord's Greathearts, to form a convoy to the skies, so that a sacred caravan shall traverse the desert of earth, and women and children shall find their way, in happy association, to the City of Habitations. We rejoice to think of whole families enclosed within the lines of electing grace, and entire households, redeemed by blood, devoting themselves to the service of the God of love. I am sure any of you, who yourselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are most anxious to bring others into reconciliation with God. It is an instinct with the Christian to desire that his fellow-men should, as he has done, both taste and see that the Lord is good. Judaism wraps itself up within itself, and claims a monopoly of blessing for the chosen nation. The heir after the flesh gnashes with his teeth when we declare that the true heirs of Abraham are born after the Spirit and are found in every land. They would reserve all heavenly privileges to the circumcised, and keep up the ancient middle wall of partition. It is the very genius of Christianity to embrace all mankind in its love. If there be anything true, let all believe it: if there be anything good, let all receive it. We desire no gates of brass to shut out the multitude; and if there be barriers, we would throw them down, and pray eternal mercy to induce the teeming millions to draw near to the fountain of life. It will not be wrong, but, on the contrary, most natural and proper, that your desire for the salvation of others should, first of all, rest upon your own families. If charity begins at home, so, assuredly, piety will. They have special claims upon us who gather around our table and our hearth. God has not reversed the laws of nature, but he has sanctified them by the rules of grace; it augurs nothing of selfishness that a man should first seek to have his own kindred saved. I will give nothing for your love for the wide world, if you have not a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here; we are to "do good unto all men, but specially unto such as be of the household of faith;" so are we to seek the good of all mankind, but specially of those who are of our own near kindred. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Solomon, let Andrew find first his brother Simon, and Eunice train her Timothy: they will be none the less large or prevalent in their pleadings for others, because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood.  
  
To allure and encourage you to long for family religion, I have selected this text this morning. God grant it may answer the purpose designed. May many here have a spiritual hunger and thirst, that they may receive the blessing which so largely rested upon the Philippian jailer.  
  
Note in our text five things. We have *a whole household hearing the word, a whole household believing it, a whole household baptized, a whole household working for God,* and then, *a whole household rejoicing.*  
  
I. Observe, first, in the passage before us, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD HEARING THE WORD. I do not know whether they had ever heard the Gospel before: perhaps they had. We have no certain proof that the jailer heard the name of Jesus Christ for the first time amidst the tumult of the earthquake; he may have listened to Paul in the streets, and so have known something of the Gospel and of the name of Jesus Christ; but this is hardly probable, as he would then have scarcely treated the apostle so harshly. Most likely the word of God sounded at midnight in the ears of the jailer and his household for the first time, and, on that remarkable occasion, they all heard it together. The father first, in his alarm, asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" and received personally the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and then it appears that all the family gathered around their parent, and the two holy men, while Paul and Silas spake unto him the word of the Lord, and also to all that were in his house. We do not know whether there were children there, but if so, and we will assume it for this occasion, all were hearers that night. There was not a solitary exception, no one was away from that sermon in a jail. His wife, his children, his servants, all that were in his house, listened to the heavenly message. It is true, he who preached was a prisoner, but that made the word none the less powerful, for he was to them an ambassador in bonds. Prisoner as he was, he preached to them a free gospel, and a gospel of divine authority. He erred not from the truth in what he taught; he preached unto them the "word of God." Would to God that all preachers would keep to the word of God, and, above all things, would exalt The Incarnate Word of God. This were infinitely better than to delude men's minds with those "germs of thought," those strikingly new ideas, those metaphysical subtleties, and speculations, and theories, and discoveries of science, falsely so called, which are now-a-days so fashionable. If all ministers could preach the word, the revealed mind and will of God, then hearers would in larger numbers become converts; for God will bless his own word, but he will not bless anything else. The jailor's household all heard God's word faithfully declared, and there was the main cause of blessing, for, alas! with many hearers, the Sabbath is utterly wasted; for, though they are attentive listeners, they are left without a blessing, because that which they hear is not the gospel of Jesus Christ.  
  
I have myself heard sermons which, I am persuaded, God Almighty himself could not bless to the conversion of anybody. He could not, because it would have been a denial of himself. The discourses were not true, nor according to his word; they were not such as were calculated to honor himself, and how can he bless that which is not to his own honor? and how can he set his seal to a lie? The word of God must be preached, and then the place, the hour, or the garb of the preacher will matter nothing. The minister may have been led up from a prison, and the smell of the dungeon may be upon him, but when he opens his mouth with the glad tidings, the name of Jesus will be as ointment poured forth.  
  
I began my remarks on this point by noting that they all heard Paul; and observe the need of this, as a starting-point, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is not all who hear theft will be saved, but the ordinary way with God is for men first to hear, then to believe, and so to be saved. "Being in the way, God met with me," said Obadiah; and the road which a soul should follow to be met with by God is the way of hearing. Though it may seem a very trite thing to say, it is nevertheless exceedingly important, if we are to have household conversion, that there should be a household hearing of the word. This is the chosen instrumentality, and we must bring all under the instrumentality if we wish them to obtain the blessing. Now, in this City, many *fathers* never hear the word of God, because they regard the Sabbath Day as a day of laziness. They work so hard all the week, they say, that they are not fit to rise from their beds in the morning, and then, after a heavy dinner, the evening must be spent in loitering about, and chatting away time. Brethren, if you want to see your fellow-workmen saved, you should earnestly endeavor to bring them under the sound of the gospel. Here is a very useful occupation for many of you. You cannot preach, but you can gather a congregation for those who do. A little persuasion would succeed in many cases, and once bring them here, we would hope to hold them. If I could not be the instrument of converting a soul by preaching the gospel myself, I would habitually addict myself to the bringing of strangers to listen to those whom God has owned to the conversion of souls. Why, our congregations need never be thin—I speak not now for myself, for I have no need—but in no place where the gospel is preached need there be a thin audience, if those who already appreciate the Gospel would feel it to be a Christian duty to bring others to hear it. Do this, I pray you. I believe it to be one of the most important efforts which a Christian man can make, to endeavor to bring the working men of London, and, indeed, all classes of men everywhere, to listen to the Gospel of Christ. The men, the fathers, the heads of households, we must have.  
  
If we are to have the household saved, however, the *mothers* must hear the word as well as the fathers. Many of them do, but I know cases, and, perhaps, there may be such present, and I wish to speak what is practical; where a man comes to hear the word himself, but his wife is detained at home with the children. Perhaps she is not converted, and has not much care to go to the service; perhaps she is a Christian woman, and though she would wish to go she must look after the children; in either case it is the duty of every such father, if he does not keep a servant to attend to the children, to take his turn with the wife and let her have her fair share of opportunity for hearing the gospel. He meanly shirks the duty of a husband, who, being a working man, does not take his turn at home and give his wife as good an opportunity of learning the way of salvation as himself. This may be a new suggestion to some, I only hope they will carry it out. It is plain that if we are to have whole households saved, we must have whole households hearing the word, and if the mother cannot hear the word, we cannot rationally expect the blessing to come to her.  
  
Then the *children* also must be thought of. We desire to see them converted as children. There is no need that they should wait until they are grown up, and have run into sin as their fathers did, that they may be afterwards brought back; it would be infinitely better if they were preserved from such wanderings, and early brought into the fold of Jesus. The blessing which God gave to the jailor's children by hearing, he gives in the same way to other children. Let the little ones be brought to hear the Gospel. They can hear it in the Sabbath School, end there are special services adapted to them; but, for my part, I like also so to preach that boys and girls shall be interested, and I shall feel that I am very faulty in my style if children cannot understand much that I teach in the congregation. Bring all who have reached years of understanding with you. Suffer none to be at home, except for good reasons. Bring each young Samuel to the house of the Lord. Let it be said of you, as it is written in the Book of Chronicles, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." If nothing else shall come from children's attending our worship, the holy habit of going up to God's house will be a perpetual heritage to them; and who knows but while they are yet young their hearing the word shall be the means of their salvation.  
  
Then there are the *servants,* and by no means are they to be overlooked. To have all that are in the house saved, all that are in the house must hear the Gospel. Do you all make such opportunities for your servants on the Sabbath as you should? I do not know, of course, how you conduct your family arrangements; but I know of some who do not think enough of their servants' hearing the Gospel. Servants frequently are sent out in the afternoon, when there is no preaching worth the hearing. It may be unavoidable in many cases; but I would ask, What is the use of their going out at an hour warn no preaching is to be found? If we give them only opportunities of going out when there is nothing to hear, we certainly have not given them a fair portion of the Lord's-day. By some contrivance or other, perhaps with a little pinch and self-sacrifice, our servants might hear our own minister. You cannot pray God to save your household, and be honest, unless you give the whole household an opportunity of being saved, and God's way of saving souls, we repeat it, is by the preaching and the hearing of the word. Oh! let every one of us be able to say, as masters and as parents, "I cannot save my children, and I cannot save my servants, but this I have done, I have directed them to a man of God who preaches the gospel faithfully; I do not send them to a place merely because there is talent or fashion there, but I have selected for them a ministry which God blesses, and I do my best to put them all in the way of the blessing, praying and beseeching the Lord to call them all by his grace." I anticipate the many difficulties you will urge, but would again say, if we love souls, we should try to meet these difficulties, and if we cannot do all we would, we should at least do all we can, that we may have all our households every Sabbath-day hearing the glorious gospel of the blessed God.  
  
II. We now turn to the next, which is a most comfortable and cheering sight. Here is A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BELIEVING. We know that the whole household believed, for we are told so in the thirty-fourth verse; "Believing in God with all his house:"—all, all, all were powerfully affected, savingly affected by the gospel which Paul preached to them. I have already remarked, that they were very probably new hearers. Certainly, if they had heard the word before, it could not have been many times; and yet they all believed. Is it not a most sad fact that many of my old hearers have not believed? The battering-ram has beaten often on their walls, but it leas not shaken them yet; wooing invitations of the gospel have been presented to them again and again, accompanied by the soul-piercing music of a Savior's dying cries; and yet, for all that, they remain unconverted still. Oh I the responsibilities that are heaped up upon gospel-hardened sinners! Take home to yourselves that warning word, I pray you. This household heard the gospel probably but once, certainly only once or twice, yet they believed, and here are some of us who have heard it from our youth up, and remain rebellious still.  
  
Of this family it may be said that as they were new hearers, so they were most unlikely hearers. The Romans did not select for jailers the most tender hearted of men. Frequently they were old legionaries who had seen service in bloody wars, and been inured to cruel fights; and, when these men settled down as, in a measure, pensioners of the empire, they were allotted such offices as that which the jailer held. In the society and associations of a jail there was very little that could be likely to improve the mother, to benefit the children, or elevate the servants. They were, then, most unpromising hearers. Yet how often are the most unlikely persons convinced of sin, and led to the Savior. How true is it still of many who are most moral and excellent, and even outwardly religious, that "the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them." This is an encouragement to you who work in lodginghouses and in the slums of this vast city, to bring all kinds of people to hear the word, for if a jailer and his household were numbered among the first fruits unto God at Philippi, may we not hope that others of an unlikely class may be converted too? Who are you, that you should say, "It is of no use to invite such a man to hear, for he would not be converted?" The more improbable it seems to be in your judgment, perhaps the more likely it is that God will look upon him with an eye of love. How happy a thing it was for the jailer that, in the providence of God, his hardened but probably honest spirit was brought under the influence of the earnest apostle. Bring others, like him, into the place of worship, for who can tell?  
  
Note, that though they were thus unlikely hearers, yet they were immediately converted, there and then. It took but a short time. I do not know how long Paul's sermon was; he was a wise man, and I should not think he would preach a long sermon in the dead of the night, just after an earthquake. I have no doubt it was a simple exposition of the doctrine of the cross. And then Silas talked too; perhaps, when Paul had done, Silas gave a little exhortation, a brief address to finish up with, and fill up anything which Paul had left out. The teaching was soon over, and at its close the jailer, his wife, his children (if he had any), his servants, and indeed all that were in the house, avowed themselves to be believers. It does not take a month to convert a soul. Glory be to God, if he wills to do it, he can convert all here this morning, in a moment. Once hearing the gospel may be sufficient to make a man a Christian. When the eternal word of God comes forth with omnipotent energy, it turns lions into lambs, and that in a single instant of time. As the lightning flash can split the oak from its loftiest bough to the earth in a single second, so the ever blessed lightning of God's Spirit can cleave the heart of man in a moment. Our text shows us a whole family saved at once.  
  
It is said particularly of them all that "they believed." Was that the only thing? Could it not be said that they all prayed? I dare say it could, and many other good things; but then faith was at the root of them all. It was the sneer of an old Greek philosopher against the Christians his day: "Faith," he said, "is your only wisdom." Yes, and we rejoice in the same wisdom now—faith; for the moment we receive faith we are saved. It is the one essential grace;—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The moment God gives a man faith—and that he can do at any time—the instant the heart casts itself into the arms of Jesus crucified, and rests there, whoever it is, he is saved in an instant: effectually and infallibly saved; he is, in all respects, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Faith is an instantaneous act at its beginning, and then it remains as an abiding grace; its first act, by the power of God, puts a man into the present possession of immediate salvation. I wonder if we preachers fully believe this as a matter of fact. If I were to go into a jail to-morrow evening, and were to preach to the jailer and his household, should I expect to see all saved there and then? And if they were, should I believe it? Most likely I should not see it, and the reason would lie because I should not have faith enough to expect it. We preach the gospel, no doubt, but it is with the slender hope that some may be converted, and they are converted, here and there; but if God would clothe us with the faith of the apostles, we should see far greater things. When he works in us a larger faith, he will also restore to us the hundredfold harvest, which, alas! is so rare in these days.  
  
Notice very particularly, that these persons though converted thus suddenly, all of them were, nevertheless, very hearty converts. They did that night, as I shall show you soon, abundantly prove how thoroughly converted they were. They were quick to do all that in them lay for the apostle, and for the good cause. They were not half converted, as many people are. I like to see a man renewed all over from head to foot. It is delightful to meet your hearty Christian, who, when he gave his heart to Jesus, meant it, and devoted his whole body, soul, and spirit to the good Lord who had bought him with his blood. Some of you have only got a little finger conversion, just enough to wear the ring of profession, and look respectable, but oh! to have hand and foot, lungs, heart, voice, and soul, all saturated with the Spirit's influence and consecrated to the cause of God. We have a few such men, full of the Holy Ghost, but, alas, we have too many other converts, who are rather tinctured with grace, than saturated with it, and to whom sprinkling is a very significant ordinance, for it would appear that they never have received anything but a sprinkling of grace. Oh, for saints in whom there will be a thorough death and burial to the world, and a new life, in the resurrection image of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the true baptism of the Holy Ghost.  
  
However, I must return on this head to the point, that they all believed. What a sweet picture for you to look upon. The father is a believer in Jesus, but he has not to kneel down and pray, "Lord, save my dear wife;" for see, and rejoice as you see it, she is a believer too. And then there is the elder son and the daughters; we know not, and we must not guess, how many there might be, but there they are all rejoicing in their father's God. And then there are the servants, the old nurse who brought up the little ones, and the little maid, and the warders who have to look after the prisoners, they are all of them ready to sing the psalm of praise, and all delighted to look upon those who were once their prisoners as now their instructors and their fathers in the faith. O brethren, if some of us should ever see all our children and our servants saved, we would cry like Simeon of old, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word." Many have seen it; the jailor's case is by no means an exceptional one, and I hope all of us are earnestly crying to God that we may gain the same unspeakable privilege.  
  
III. We have, in the third place, in our text, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED. "He was baptized, he and all his straightway." In almost every case in Scripture where you read of a household baptism, you are distinctly informed that they were also a believing household. In the case of Lydia it may not be so; but then there are remarkable circumstances about her case which render that information needless. In this instance they were all believers, and, therefore, they were all of them baptized. First, "HE" was baptised,—the jailor; he was ready first to submit himself to the ordinance in which he declared himself to be dead to the world, and risen anew in Christ Jesus. Then *"all his"* followed. What a glorious baptism, amidst the glare of the torches that night! perhaps in the prison hath, or in the impluvium which was usually in the center of most oriental houses, or perhaps the stream that watered Philippi ran by the prison wall, and was used for the occasion. It matters not, but into the water they descended, one after another, mother, children, servants; and Paul and Silas stood there delighted to aid them in declaring themselves to be on the Lord's side, "buried with him in baptism."  
  
And this was done, mark you, *straightway.* There was not one who wished to have it put off till he had tried himself a little, and seen whether he was really regenerated. In those days no one had any scruple or objection to obey; none advocated the following of some ancient and doubtful tradition; all were obedient to the divine will. No one shrank from baptism for fear that water might damage his health, or in some way cause him inconvenience; but he and all his, wishing, to follow the plain example of our Lord Jesus Christ, were baptized, and that straightway,—at once, and on the spot. No minister has any right to refuse to baptise any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, unless there be some glaring fact to cast doubt upon the candidate's sincerity. I, for one, would never ask from any person weeks and months of delay, in which the man should prove to me that he was a believer; but I would follow the example of the apostle. The gospel of Christ was preached, the people were converted, and they were baptized, and all perhaps in the space of an hour. The whole transaction may not have taken up so much time as I shall occupy in preaching about it this morning. How, then, is it with you, who wait so long? Where is the precept or example to warrant your hesitation? Permit me to remind you that duties delayed are sins. Will you take that home with you, you who have been believers for years and yet are not baptised? Permit me to remind you, also, that privileges postponed are losses. Put the two together, and where duty and privilege meet do not incur the sin and the loss, but, like David, "make haste and delay not" to keep the divine command.  
  
"Why say so much about baptism?" says somebody. Much about baptism! Never was a remark more ungenerous, if it is made against *me.* I might, far more justly, be censured for saying so little about it. Much about baptism! I call you all to witness that, unless it comes across my path in the Scriptures, I never go away from the text to drag it in. I am no partisan: I never made baptism my main teaching, and God forbid I should; but I will not be hindered from preaching the whole truth, and, I dare say, no less than I am now saying. The Holy Ghost has recorded the baptism here: will you think little of what he chooses to record? Paul and Silas, an apostle and his companion, dared not neglect the ordinance: how dare you despise it?  
  
It was the dead of the night, it was in a prison; if it might have been put off, it surely might have been then: it was not a reputable place to dispense baptism, some would have said; it was hardly a seasonable hour, but they thought it so important that there and then, and at once, they baptised the whole household. If this be God's command—and I solemnly believe it to be so—do not despise it, I beseech you; as you love Christ, do not talk about its being non-essential. If the Lord command, shall his servant talk about its being non-essential? It is essential in all things to do my Master's will, and to preach it; for hath he not said, "He that shall break one of the least of these my commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"? I hope it may be our privilege here to see whole families baptized. Come along with you, beloved father, if you are a believer in Jesus: come with him, mother: come with him, daughters: come with your mother, ye godly sons, and come ye servants too. If you have come to the cross, and all your hope is placed there, then come and declare that you are Christ's. Touch not the ordinance till you believe in Jesus Christ: it may work you mighty mischief if you do. The sacramentarianism, which is so rampant in this age, is of all lies I think the most deadly, and you encourage sacramentarianism if you give a Christian ordinance to an unconverted person. Touch it not, then, until you are saved. Until you are believers, ordinances are not for you, and it is a sacrilege for you to intrude yourselves into them. How I long to see whole households believe, for then I may safely rejoice at seeing them baptised!  
  
IV. Next, we have A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD AT WORK FOR GOD. Read the passage, and you will see that they all did something. The father called for a light, the servants bring the torches, and the lamps such as were used in the prisons. He took his prisoners the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. Here is work for himself, and work for gentle hands to do, to assuage the pains of those poor bleeding backs; to wash out the grit that had come there through their lying on their backs on the dungeon floor, and to mollify and bind up their wounds. There was suitable occupation for the mother and for the servants, for they set meat before the holy men. The kitchen was sanctified to supply the needs of the ministers of Christ. Everything was done for their comfort. They were hungry, and they gave them meat; they were bleeding and they bathed their wounds. The whole household was astir that night. They had all believed and been baptised, and their very first enquiry is, "What can we do for Jesus?" It was clear to them that they could help the two men who had brought them to Christ, and they did so affectionately. No Martha had to complain that her sister left her to serve alone. I am persuaded there was not one of the family who shirked the pleasant duty of hospitality, though it was at dead of night. They soon had a meal ready; and how pleased they felt when they saw the two holy men reclining at their ease at the table, instead of lying with their feet fast in the stocks in the prison. They did not take the food down to the prison to them, or wash them, and send them back to the dungeon; but they brought them up from the cell into their own house, and accommodated them with the best they had. Now, beloved, it is a great mercy when you have a family saved and baptized, if the whole household sets to work to serve God, for there is something for all to do. Is there a lazy church member here? Friend, you miss a great blessing. Is there a mother here whose husband is very diligent in serving God, but she neglects to lead her children in the way of truth? Ah, dear woman, you are losing what would be a great comfort to your own soul. I know you are; for one of the best means for a soul to be built up in Christ is for it to do something for Christ. We cease to grow when we cease either to labor or to suffer for the Lord. Bringing forth fruit unto God is, unto ourselves, a most pleasant and profitable operation. Even our children when they are saved can do something for the Master. The little hand that drops its halfpence into the offering box, out of love to Jesus, is accepted of the Lord. The young child trying to tell its brother or sister of the dear Savior who has loved it is a true missionary of the cross. We should train our children as the Spartans trained their sons early for feats of war. We must have them first saved, but after that we must never think that they may be idle till they come to a certain period of life. I have known a little boy take his young companion aside, and kneel down in a field and pray with him, and I have heard of that young lad's being now, in the judgment of his parents, a believer in Christ. I have seen it, and my heart has been touched when I have seen it—two or three boys gathered round another to seek that boy's salvation, and praying to God as heartily and earnestly as their parents could have done. There is room for all to work to help on the growing kingdom; and blessed shall that father be who shall see all his children enlisted in the brand army of God's elect, and all striving together for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom.  
  
V. That brings me to the fifth sight, which is A FAMILY REJOICING, for he rejoices in God with all his home. According to the run of the text the object of their joy was that they had believed. Believing obtains the pardon of all sin, and brings Christ's righteousness into our possession, it declares us to be the sons of God, gives us heirship with Christ, and secures us his blessing here and glory hereafter: who would not rejoice at this? If the family had been left a fortune they would have rejoiced, but they had found more than all the world's wealth at once in finding a Savior, therefore were they glad.  
  
But though their joy sprang mainly from their believing, it also arose from their being baptized, for do we not read of the Ethiopian of old after he was baptised that he "went on his way rejoicing." God often gives a clearing of the skies to those who are obedient to his command. I have known persons habitually the subjects of doubts and fears, who have suddenly leaped into joy and strength when they have done as their Lord commanded them. Not *for* keeping, but *"in* keeping his commandments there is great reward."  
  
They rejoiced, no doubt, also because they had enjoyed an opportunity of serving the church in waiting upon the apostle. They felt glad to think that Paul was at their table; very sorry that he had been imprisoned, but glad that they were his jailers; sorry that he had been beaten, but thankful that they could wash his stripes. And Christian people are never so happy as when they are busy for Jesus. When you do most for Christ you shall feel most of His love in your hearts. Why it makes my heart tingle with joy when I feel that I can honor my God. Rejoice, my brethren, that you have doors of usefulness set open before you, and say, now we can glorify the Savior's name; now we can visit the sick; now we can teach the ignorant; now we can bring sinners to the Savior. Why, there is no joy except the joy of heaven itself, which excels the bliss of serving the Savior who has done so much for us!  
  
I have no doubt that their joy was permanent and continued. There would not be any quarrelling in that house now, no disobedient children, no short tempered father, no fretful mother, no cruel brother, no exacting sister, no purloining servants, or eyeservers; no warders who would exceed their duty, or be capable of receiving bribes from the prisoners. The whole house would become a holy house, and a happy house hence forth. It is remarkable they should be so happy, because they might have thought sorrowfully of what they had been. They had fastened the apostle's feet in the stocks. Ah! but that was all gone, and they were happy to know that it was all forgiven. The father had beers a rough soldier, and perhaps his sons had been little better; but it was all blotted out, Christ's blood had covered all their sin, they were happy though they were penitent. It is true, they had a poor prospect before them, as the world would say, for they would be likely to be persecuted, and to suffer much. Here were two of the great ones of the church who had been scourged and put in prison: the humble members could not expect to fare better. Ah, never mind, they rejoiced in God. If they had known they would have to die for it, they would have rejoiced, for to have a Savior is such a source of thankfulness to believing souls, that if we had to burn to-morrow, we would rejoice to-day; if we had to die a thousand deaths in the course of the next month, yet, to find a Savior such as Jesus Christ is, is joy enough to make us laugh at death itself. They were a rejoicing family because they were a renewed family.  
  
In closing, regard these two words. That household is now in glory: they are all there—the jailer, and his spouse, and his children, and his servants; they are all there, for is it not written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved?" They were obedient to that word, and they are saved. Now, with some of you the father is in heaven, and the mother is on the road, but the children, ah, the children! With others of you, your little ones have gone before you, snatched away from the mother's breast; and your grandsire is also in glory; but, ah! husband and wife, your faces are turned towards the ways and wages of sin, and you will never meet your children and your parents. There will be broken households around the throne, and if it could mar their joy—if anything could—it would be the thought that there is a son in hell, or perhaps a husband in the flames, while the wife and mother sings the endless song. O God, grant it never may be so. May no child of our loins die an heir of wrath; none that have slept in our bosoms be banished from Jehovah's presence. By the bliss of a united family, I beseech you seek after it that you may have that united family in heaven. For this is the last question, "Will my family be there?" Will yours be there? Turn it over in your minds, my brothers and sisters, and if you can give the happy answer, and say, "Yes, by the blessing of God, I believe we shall all be there," then, I will ask you to serve God very much, for you owe him very much. You are deep debtors to the mercy of God, you parents who have godly children. You ought to do twice as much; nay, seven times as much for Jesus as any other Christians. But on the other hand, if you have to give a painful answer, then let this day be a day of prayer, and I would say to you, could not you, fathers, who love the Lord, call your children together this afternoon, and tell them what I have been talking about. Say to the boy, "My dear boy, our minister this morning has been speaking about a household in heaven, and a household being baptized because they believed; I pray that you may be a believer." Pray with the boys, pray with the girls, pray with the mother; and I do not know but what this very afternoon your whole household may be brought to the Savior. Who can tell?  
  
You, dear boys, just below me, who are a few out of my large family at the Orphanage, some of you have fathers in heaven, I hope you will follow them in the right way. The church of God tries to take care of you because you are orphans, and God has promised to be the father of the fatherless: O dear boys give him your hearts. Some of you have godly mothers, I know them, and I know that they pray for you. May their prayers be heard for you. I hope you will trust the Savior, and grow up to serve him. May it not be long before you profess your faith in baptism; and may we all of us meet in glory above, everyone without exception. The Lord grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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**Tony Capoccia  
Bible Bulletin Board   
Box 119  
Columbus, New Jersey, USA, 08022  
Our websites:** [**www.biblebb.com**](http://www.biblebb.com/) **and** [**www.gospelgems.com**](http://www.gospelgems.com) **Email:** [**tony@biblebb.com**](mailto:tony@biblebb.com) **Online since 1986**

# *The King's Highway Opened and Cleared*

January 8th, 1860, by C. H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)  
at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0293.htm*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0293.htm)

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—Acts. 16:31.

You will remember that when the children of Israel were settled in Canaan, God ordained that they should set apart certain cities to be called the Cities of Refuge, that to these the man-slayer might flee for security. If he killed another unawares, and had no malice aforethought, he might flee at once to the City of Refuge; and if he could enter its gates before the avenger of blood should overtake him, he would be secure. We are told by the rabbis that once in the year, or oftener, the magistrates of the district were accustomed to survey the high roads which led to these cities. they carefully gathered up all the stones, and took the greatest possible precautions that there should be no stumbling-blocks in the way which might cause the poor fugitive to fall, or might by any means impede him in his hasty course. We hear, moreover, and we believe the tradition to be grounded in fact, that all along the road there were hand-posts with the word "Refuge" written very legibly upon them, so that when the fugitive came to a crossroad, he might not need to question for a single moment which was the way of escape; but seeing the well-known word "Refuge," he kept on his breathless and headlong course until he had entered the suburb of the City of Refuge, and he was then at once completely safe.  
  
Now, my brothers and sisters, God has prepared for the sons of men a City of Refuge, and the way to it is by FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is needful, however, that very often the ministers of Christ should survey this road, lest there should be any stumbling-blocks in the path of the poor sinner. I propose this morning to go along it, and, by God's grace, to remove any impediment which Satan may have laid upon the path, and may God so help me, that this survey may be of spiritual benefit to all your souls, that any of you who have been made to stumble in the path of faith may now pluck up courage, and run joyfully forward; hoping yet to escape from the fierce avenger of your sins.  
  
Well may the minister be careful to keep the road of faith clear for the seeking sinner, for surely the sinner hath a heavy heart to carry, and we ought to make the road as clear and as smooth as we can. We should make straight paths for the feet of these poor benighted souls. It should be our endeavor to cast loads of promises into every slough that runs across the path, that so it may be a king's highway, and may be safe and easy for travelling for those weary feet that have to carry such a heavy heart. Besides, we must remember that the sinner will make stumbling-blocks enough for himself, even with our greatest and most scrupulous care to remove any others that may naturally lie in his way. For this is one of the sad follies of the poor desponding soul—that it spoils its own road. You have sometimes seen, perhaps, the newly-invented engine in the streets, the locomotive that lays down its own pathway and then picks it up again. Now, the sinner is the very reverse of that; he spoils his own road before himself, and then carries behind him all the mire and dirt of his own mishaps. Poor soul! he flings stones before himself, cuts out valleys, and casts up mountains in his own pathway. Well may the ministers, then, be careful to keep this road clear. And, let me add there is another weighty reason. Behind him comes the furious avenger of blood. Oh, how swift is he! There is Moses armed with all the wrath of God, and Death following hard after him—a mounted rider upon his pale horse; and after Death there cometh Hell with all the powers and legions of Satan, all athirst for blood and swift to slay. Make straight the road, oh ministers of Christ, level the mountains, fill up the valleys; for this is a desperate flight, this flight of the sinner from his ferocious enemies towards the one City of Refuge—the atonement of Jesus Christ.  
  
I have thus given the reasons why I am compelled in spirit to make this survey this morning. Come, O Spirit, the Comforter, and help us now, that every stone may be cast out of the high road to heaven.  
  
The road to heaven, my brethren, is BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is not by well-doing that you can be saved, though it is by ill-doing that you will be damned if you put not trust in Christ. Nothing that you can do can save you. Albeit that after you are saved it will be your delightful privilege to walk in the ways of God and to keep his commandments, yet all your own attempts to keep the commandments previous to faith, will but sink you deeper into the mire, and will by no means contribute to your salvation. The one road to heaven is BY FAITH IN CHRIST. Or to make it plainer still as the countryman said, there are but two steps to heaven—out of self into Christ, and, then, out of Christ into heaven. Faith is simply explained as *trusting in Christ.* I find that Christ commands me to believe in him, or to trust him. I feel that there is no reason in myself why I should be allowed to trust him. But he *commands* me to do so. Therefore altogether apart from my character or from any preparation that I feel in myself, I obey the command, and sink or swim, I trust Christ. Now, that is faith,—when with the eye shut as to all evidence of hope in ourselves, we take a leap in the dark right into the arms of an Omnipotent Redeemer. Faith is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being a leaning upon Christ; a casting of one's self upon him, or, as the old Puritans used to put it, (using a somewhat hard word) it is recumbency on Christ—the leaning of the whole weight upon his cross; ceasing to stand by the strength of one's own power and resting wholly upon the rock of ages. The leaving of the soul in the hands of Jesus is the very essence of faith. Faith is receiving Christ into our emptiness. There is Christ like the conduit in the market-place. As the water flows from the pipes, so does grace continually flow from him. By faith I bring my empty pitcher and hold it where the water flows, and receive of its fullness, grace for grace. It is not the beauty of my pitcher, it is not even its cleanness that quenches my thirst: it is simply holding that pitcher to the place where water flows. Even so I am but the vessel, and my faith is the hand which presents the empty vessel to the flowing stream. It is the grace, and not the qualification of the receiver which saves the soul. And though I hold that pitcher with a trembling hand, and much of that which I seek may be lost through my weakness, yet if the soul be but held to the fountain, and so much as a single drop trickle into it, my soul is saved. Faith is receiving Christ with the understanding, and with the will, submitting everything to him, taking him to be my all in all, and agreeing to be henceforth nothing at all. Faith is ceasing from the creature and coming to the Creator. It is looking out of self to Christ, turning the eye entirely from any good thing that is here within me, and looking for every blessing to those open veins, to that poor bleeding heart, to that thorn-crowned head of him whom God hath set forth "to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world."  
  
Well, having thus described the way, I now come to my real business of removing these stones.  
  
1. A very common impediment in the pathway of the soul that is desiring to be saved, is *the recollection of its past life.* "Oh," saith the sinner, "I dare not trust Christ, because my past sins have been of an unusually black dye. I have been no common sinner, but I have been one singled out from the herd, a very monster in sin. I have taken the highest degree in the devil's college, and have become a master of Belial. I have learned to sit in the seat of the scornful, and have taught others to rebel against God." Ah, soul, I know very well what this impediment is, for once it laid in my way, and very sorely did it trouble me. Before I thought upon my soul's salvation, I dreamed that my sins were very few. All my sins were dead as I imagined, and buried in the graveyard of forgetfulness. But that trumpet of conviction which aroused my soul to think of eternal things, sounded to all my sins, and oh, how they rose up in multitudes more countless than the sands of the sea! Now, I saw that my very thoughts were enough to damn me, that my words would sink me lower than the lowest hell; and as for my acts of sin they now began to be a stench in my nostrils, so that I could not bear them. I recollect the time when I thought I had rather have been a frog or a toad than have been made a man; when I reckoned that the most defiled creature, the most loathsome and contemptible was a better thing than myself; for I had so grossly and grievously sinned against Almighty God. Ah, my brethren, it may be that this morning your old oaths are echoing back from the walls of your memory. You recollect how you have cursed God, and you say, "Can I, dare I trust him whom I have cursed?" And your old lusts are now rising before you; midnight sins stare you in the face, and snatches of the lascivious song are being yelled in the ear of your poor convinced conscience. And all your sins as they rise up, cry, "Depart, thou accursed one! Depart! thou hast sinned thyself out of grace! Thou art a condemned one! Depart! There is no hope, there is no mercy for thee!"  
  
Now, permit me in the strength and name of God to remove this stumbling block out of your way. Sinner, I tell thee that all thy sins, be they never so many cannot destroy thee if thou dost believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If now thou castest thyself simply on the merits of Jesus, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." *Only believe.* Dare to believe that Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Take him at his word and trust him. And thou hast a warrant for doing it; for remember it is written "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from *all sin."* Thou art commanded to believe, therefore, be thou never so black a sinner, the command is, thy warrant—oh, may God help thee to obey the command. Now, just as thou art, cast thyself on Christ. It is not the greatness of the sinner that is the difficulty; it is the hardness of the sinner's heart. If now thou art conscious of the most awful guilt, thy guilt becomes as nothing in the eye of God when once he sees the blood of Christ sprinkled upon thee. I tell thee more, if thy sins were ten thousand times as many as they be, yet the blood of Christ is able to atone for them all. Only dare to believe that. Now, by a venturesome faith trust thyself in Christ. If thou art the most sick of all the wretches that ever this divine physician essayed to cure, so much the more glory to *him.* When a physician cures a man of some little finger-ache or some little disease, what credit doth he get? But when he heals a man who is all over diseased, who has become but a putrid mass, then there is glory to the physician. And so will there be to Christ when he saveth thee. But to put this block out of the way once for all. Remember, sinner, that all the while thou dost not believe in Christ, thou art adding to thy sin this great sin of *not believing, which is the greatest sin in the world.* But if thou obey God in this matter of putting thy trust in Christ, God's own Word is guaranteed that thy faith shall be rewarded, and thou shalt find that thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. By the side of Saul of Tarsus and of her, out of whom was cast seven devils, shalt thou one day stand. With the thief shalt thou sing of love divine, and with Manasseh shalt thou rejoice in him who can wash away the foulest crimes. Oh, I pray God there may be some one in this great crowd today, who may be saying in his heart, "Sir, you have described *me.* I do feel that I am the blackest sinner anywhere, but I will risk it, I will put my trust in Christ and Christ alone." Ah, soul, God bless thee; thou art an accepted one. If thou canst do this, this morning, I will be God's hostage that he will be true to thee and true to his Son, for never sinner perished yet that dared to trust the precious blood of Christ.  
  
2. Now let me endeavor to upheave and eject another stumbling block. Many an awakened sinner is troubled because of *the hardness of his heart and the lack of what he thinks to be true penitence.* "Oh," saith he, "I can believe that however great my sins are they can be forgiven, but I do not feel the evil of my sins as I ought:"—

"My heart how dreadful hard it is;  
How heavy here it lies!  
Heavy and cold within my breast,  
Just like a rock of ice."

"I cannot feel," says one, "I cannot weep, I have heard of the repentance of others, but I seem to be just like a stone. My heart is petrified, it will not quake at all the thunders of the law, it will not melt before all the wooings of Christ's love." Ah, poor heart, this is a common stumbling-block in the way of those who are really seeking Christ. Bat let me ask thee one question. Dost thou read anywhere in the Word of God that those who have hard hearts are not commanded to believe? Because if thou canst find such a passage as that, I will be sorry enough to see it, but then I may excuse thee for saying, "I cannot trust Christ because my heart is hard." Do you not know that the Scripture runs thus? "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, if thou believest, though thy heart be never so hard, thy believing saves thee; and what is more, thy believing shall yet soften thy heart. If thou canst not feel thy need of a Savior as thou wouldst, remember that when thou hast a Savior thou wilt begin then to find out more and more how great was thy need of him. Why, I believe that many persons find out their needs by receiving the supply. Have you never walked along the street, and looking in at a shop window have seen an article, and have said, "Why, that is just what I want." How do you know that? Why, you saw the thing and then you wanted it. And I believe there is many a sinner who when he is hearing about Christ Jesus is led to say, "That is just what I want." Did not he know it before? No, poor soul, not till he saw Christ. I find my sense of need of Christ is ten times more acute now than it was before I found Christ. I *thought* I wanted him for a good many things then, but now I *know* I want him for everything. I thought there were some things which I could not do without him; but *now* I find that without him I can do nothing. But you say, "Sir, I must repent before I come to Christ." Find such a passage in the Word if you can. Doth not the Word say? "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Doth not one of our hymns translate that verse into rhyme and put it thus?

"True belief and true repentance.  
Every grace that brings us nigh—  
Without money  
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Oh, these graces are not of nature's spinning. We cannot make these in the loom of the creature. If you would know your need of Christ, take him now by faith and sense and feeling shall follow in the rear. Trust him now for everything. Dare to trust him. Hard as your heart is, say, "Just as I am, without a plea, but that thou commandest me, and bid'st me come, I come to thee!" Thy heart shall be softened by the sight of Christ, and love divine shall so sweetly commend itself to thee, that the heart which terrors could not move shall be dissolved by love.  
  
Do understand me, my dear hearers. I wept to preach in the broadest manner I possibly can this morning the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone; that man is commanded to believe, and that altogether apart from anything in man, man has a right to believe. Not from any preparation that he feels, not from anything good he discerns in himself, but he has a right to believe simply because he is commanded to believe; and it; relying upon the fact that he is commanded, God the Holy Spirit enables him to believe, that faith will surely save the soul, and deliver him from the wrath to come. Let me take up, then, that stumbling stone about hardness of heart. Oh, soul, trust Christ and thy heart shall be softened. And may God the Holy Spirit enable thee to trust him hard heart and all, and then thy hard heart shall soon be turned into a heart of flesh, and thou shalt love him who hath loved thee.  
  
3. Now, for a third stumbling block. "Oh," saith some poor soul, "I do not know whether I believe or not, sir. Sometimes I do believe; but oh, *it is such little faith* I have that I cannot think Christ can save me." Ah, there you are again you see, looking to yourself. This has made many trip and fall. I pray God I may put this out of your way. Poor sinner, remember it is not the *strength* of thy faith that saves thee, but the *reality* of thy faith. What is more, it is not even the reality of thy faith that saves thee, it is the object of thy faith. If thy faith be fixed on Christ, though it seems to be in itself a line no thicker than a spider's cobweb, it will hold thy soul throughout time and eternity. For remember it is not the thickness of this cable of faith, it is the strength of the anchor which imparts strength to the cable, and so shall hold thy ship in the midst of the most fearful storm. The faith that saves man is sometimes so small that the man himself cannot see it. A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, and yet if thou hast but that quantity of faith, thou art a saved man. Remember what the poor women did. She did not come and take hold of Christ's person with her hand, she did not throw her arms about his knees; but she stretched out her finger, and then—she did not touch Christ's feet or even his dress—she touched but the ravelling, the fringe of his garment and she was made whole. If thy faith be but as little as that, seek to get more of it, but still remember that it will save thee. Jesus Christ himself compares Little-faith to a smoking flax. Does it burn? is there any fire at all! No; there is nothing but a little smoke and that is most offensive. "Yes," saith Jesus, "but I will not quench it." Again, he compares it to a bruised reed. Of what service is it? It is broken, you cannot bring music from it; it is but a, reed when it is whole, and now it is a bruised reed. Break it, snap it, throw, it away? "No," says he. "I will not break the bruised reed." Now, if that is the faith thou hast, the faith of the smoking flax, the faith of the bruised reed, thou art saved. Thou wilt have many a trial and many a trouble in going to heaven, with so little faith as that, for when there is little wind to a boat there must be much tugging at the oar; but still there will be wind enough to land thee in glory, if thou dost simply trust Christ, be that trust never so feeble. Remember a little child belongs to the human race as much as the greatest giant; and so a babe in grace is as truly a child of God as is Mr. Great-heart, who can fight all the giants on the road. And thou mays't be as much an heir of heaven in thy minority, in the infancy of thy grace, as thou wilt be when thou shalt have expanded into the full grown Christian, and shalt become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It is not, I tell thee, the *strength of thy faith,* but the *object* of thy faith. It is the blood, not the hyssop; not the hand that smites the lintel, but the blood that secures the Israelite in the day when God's vengeance passes by. Let that stumbling block be taken out of the way.  
  
4. "But," saith another, "I do think sometimes I have a little faith, but *I have so many doubts and fears.* I am tempted every day to believe that Jesus Christ did not die for me, or that my belief is not genuine, or that I never experienced the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Tell me Sir, can I be a true believer in Christ if I have doubts and fears?" My answer is simply this, there is no Scripture which saith, that "He that believeth, shall be damned, if that faith be mixed: with doubts." "He that believeth shall be saved," be that faith never so little, and even though it be intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that memorable story of our Savior, when he was on board a ship with his disciples. The winds roared, the ship rocked to and fro, the mast was strained, the sails were rent, and the poor disciples were full of fear:—"Lord save us or we perish." Here were doubts. What did Jesus say when he rebuked them? "Why are ye fearful"—O ye of *no* faith? No, "O ye of *little* faith." So there maybe little faith where there are great doubts. There is light at eventide in the air; even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if thy faith should never come to noon-day, if it do but come to twilight, thou art a saved man. Nay, more, if it doth not come to twilight, if thy faith is but starlight, nay, candlelight, nay, a spark—if it be but a glow-worm spark, thou art saved; and all thy doubts, and all thy fears, and thy distresses, terrible though they may be, can never trample thee in the dust, can never destroy thy soul. Do you not know that the best of God's children are exercised with doubts and fears even to the last? Look at such a man as John Knox. There was a man who could face the frowns of a world, who could speak like a king to kings, and fear no man; yet on his dying bed he was troubled about his interest in Christ, because he was tempted to self-righteousness. If such a man have doubts, dost *thou* expect to live without them? If God's brightest saints are exercised, if Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway, why how canst thou expect to live without clouds? Oh, my dear man, drop the idea that the prevalence of thy doubts disproves the truth of the promise. Again believe; away with all thy doubts; sink or swim; cast thyself on Jesus; and thou canst not be lost, for his honor is engaged to save every soul that puts its trust in him.  
  
5. "Ah," says another, "but you have not yet hit upon my fear." I used when I first knew the Savior, to try myself in a certain manner, and often did I throw stumbling blocks in my path through it, and therefore I can speak very affectionately to any of you who are doing the same. Sometimes I would go up into my chamber, and by way of self-examination, I used to ask myself this question—*Am I afraid to die?* If I should drop down dead in my chamber, can I say that I should joyfully close my eyes? Well, it often happened that I could not honestly say so. I used to feel death would be a very solemn thing. Ah, then I said "I have never believed in Christ, for if I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus, I should not be afraid to die, but I should be quite confident. I do not doubt that there are many here who are saying, "Sir, I cannot follow Christ, because I am afraid to die; I cannot believe that Jesus Christ will save me, because the sight of death makes me tremble." Ah, poor soul, there are many of God's blessed ones, who through fear of death, have been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. I know precious children of God now: I believe that when they die, they will die triumphantly; but I know this, that the thought of death is never pleasing to them. And this is accounted for, because God has stamped on nature that law, the love of life and self-preservation. And again, the man that hath kindred and friends, it is natural enough that he should scarce like to leave behind those that are so dear. I know that when he gets more grace he will rejoice in the thought of death; but I do know that there are many quite safe, who could die triumphantly, who, now, in the prospect of death feel afraid of it. I remember my aged grandfather once preach a sermon which I have not forgotten. He was preaching from the text "The God of all grace," and he somewhat interested the assembly, after describing the different kinds of grace that God gave, by saying at the end of each period "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." After each sentence there came the like, "But there is one kind of grace you do not want." And, then, he wound up by saying, "You don't want dying grace in living moments, but you shall have dying grace when you want it." Now, you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. If you are placed in the condition, you shall have grace enough if you put your trust in Christ. In a party of friends we were discussing the question, whether if the days of martyrdom should come we were prepared to be burned. Well, now, I must frankly say, that speaking as I feel to-day, I am not prepared to be burned. But I do believe if there were a stake in Smithfield, and I knew that I were to be burned there at one o'clock, that I should have grace enough to be burned at one o'clock; but I have not yet got to a quarter past twelve, and the time is not come yet. Do not expect dying grace, until you want it, and when the time comes, you may be sure you will have sufficient grace to bear it. Cast out that stumbling-block then. Rest thyself on Christ, and trust a living Christ to help thee in thy dying hour.  
  
6. Another most grievous perplexity to many a seeking soul is this: "Oh, I would trust Christ, but *I feel no joy.* I hear the children of God singing sweetly about their privileges. I hear them saying that they have been to the top of Pisgah and have viewed the promised land, have taken a pleasant prospect of the world to come; but oh, my faith yields me no joy. I hope I do believe, but at the same time I have none of those raptures. My worldly troubles press heavily upon me, and sometimes even my spiritual woes are greater than I can bear." Ah, poor soul, let me cast out that stone from thy road. Remember, it is not written "he that is joyful shall be saved," but "he that *believeth* shall be saved." Thy faith will make thee joyful by-and-bye, but it is as powerful to save thee even when it does not make thee rejoice. Why, look at many of God's people, how sad and sorrowful they have been. I know they ought not to be. This is their sin; but still it is such a sin that it does not destroy the efficacy of faith. Notwithstanding all the sorrows of the saint, faith still keeps alive, and God is still true to his promise. Remember, it is not what you feel that saves you, it is what you believe. It is not feeling but believing. "We walk by faith, not by sight." When I feel my soul as cold as an iceberg, as hard as a rock, and as sinful as Satan, yet even then faith ceases not to justify. Faith prevails as truly in the midst of sad feelings as of happy feelings, for then, standing alone, it proves the majesty of its might. Believe, O son of God, believe in him, and look not for aught in thyself.  
  
7. Then, again, there are many that are distressed because *they have blasphemous thoughts.* Here, too, I can heartily sympathise with many. I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a certain country town, along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Savior. On a sudden the most fearful oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my heart. I put my hand to my mouth to prevent the utterance. I had not, that I know of, ever heard those words; and I am certain that I had never used in my life from my youth up so much as one of them, for I had never been profane. But these things sorely beset me: for half an hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God. That temptation passed away; but ere many days it was renewed again; and when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thought would pour in upon me more than at any other time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it. He said to me, "Oh, all this many of the people of God have proved before you. But," said he, "do you hate these thoughts?" "I do," I truly said. "Then," said he, "they are not yours; serve them as the old parishes used to do with vagrants—whip them and send them on to their own parish. So" said he, "do with them. Groan over them, repent of them, and send them on to the devil, the father of them, to whom they belong—for they are not yours." Do you not recollect how John Bunyan hits off the picture? He says, when Christian was going through the valley of the shadow of death, "There stepped up one to him, and whispered blasphemous thoughts into his ear, so that poor Christian thought they were his own thoughts; but they were not his thoughts at all, but the injections of a blasphemous spirit." So when you are about to lay hold on Christ, Satan will ply all his engines and try to destroy you. He cannot bear to lose one of his slaves: he will invent a fresh temptation for each believer so that he may not put his trust in Christ." Now, come, poor soul, notwithstanding all these blasphemous thoughts in thy soul, dare to put thy trust in Christ. Even should those thoughts have been more blasphemous than any thou hast ever heard, come trust in Christ, come cast thyself on him. I have heard that when an elephant is going over a bridge he will sound the timber with his foot to see if it will bear him over. Come thou, who thinkest thyself an elephantine sinner, here is bridge that is strong enough for thee, even with all these thoughts of thine:—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven thee." Throw that in Satan's face, and trust thyself in Christ.  
  
8. One other stumbling-block, and I will have done. Some there be that say; Oh, sir, I would trust in Christ to save me *if I could see that my faith brought forth fruits.* Oh, sir, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Excuse my always bringing in my own feelings as an illustration, but I feel when I am preaching to tried sinners that the testimony of one's own experience is generally more powerful than any other illustration that can be found. It is not, believe me, any display of egotism, but the simple desire to come home to you, that makes me state what I have felt myself. The first Sunday after I came to Christ I went to a Methodist chapel. The sermon was upon this text: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ, and I knew that, when I sat in that house of prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and look; and I came up to that chapel groaning, because "when I would do good evil was present with me." The minister said that when Paul wrote the verse I have quoted, he was not a Christian; that this was his experience before he knew the Lord. Ah, what error, for I know that Paul was a Christian, and I know the more Christians look to themselves the more they will have to groan, because they cannot be what they want to be. What, you will not believe in Christ until you are perfect? Then you will never believe in him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust him with! Then you will never trust him at all. For rest assured you will never be perfect till you see the face of God in heaven. I knew one man who thought himself a perfect man and that man was hump-backed. This was my rebuke to his pride, "Surely if the Lord gave you a perfect soul he would give you a perfect body to carry it in." Perfection will not be found this side of the grave. Your business is to trust in Christ. You must depend on nothing but the blood of Christ. Trust in Christ and you stand secure. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." It is our duty to fight against corruption; it is our privilege to conquer it; it is our honor to feel that we are fighting against sin, it shall be our glory one day to tread it beneath our feet. But to-day expect not complete victory. Your very consciousness of sin proves that you are alive. The very fact that you are not what you want to be, proves that there is some high and noble thoughts in you that could not come by nature. You were content with yourself some six weeks ago, were you not? And the fact that you are discontent now, proves that God has put a new life into you, which makes you seek after a higher and better element in which to breathe. When you become what you want to be on earth, then despair. When the law justifies you, then you have fallen from grace; for Paul has said, "When we are justified by the law we are fallen from grace." But while I feel that the law condemns me it is my joy to know that believing in Christ, "There is no condemnation to him that is in Christ Jesus, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."  
  
And now though I have been trying to clear the way I feel conscious that very likely I have been putting a stone or two in the road myself. May God forgive me—it is a sin of inadvertance. I would lay this road as straight and clear as ever was turnpike road between one city and another. Sinner, there is nothing which can rob thee of *thy right* to believe in Christ. Thou art freely invited to come to the marriage banquet. The table is spread, and the invitation freely given. There are no porters at the door to keep thee out; there are none to ask a ticket of admission of thee:

"Let not *conscience* make you linger;  
Nor of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness he requireth  
Is to feel your need of him;  
*This he gives you;*'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Come to him just as thou art. But, ah, I know that when we sit in our studies it seems a light think to preach the gospel and make people believe in Christ, but when we come to practice, it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing you would do it; but simply, when it is, "Believe, wash and be clean!" you will not do it. If I said, "Give me ten thousand pounds," you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that was ever concocted; but this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit. Ah, sinner, art thou too proud to be saved? Come, man, I beseech thee by the love of Christ, by the love of thine own soul, come with me, and let us go together to the foot of the cross. Believe on him who hangs groaning there, oh, put thy trust in him, who is risen from the dead, and has led Captivity captive. And if thou trustest him, poor sinner, thou shalt not be disappointed; it shall not be trust misplaced. Again I say it, I am content to be lost if thou art lost trusting in Christ; I will make my bed in hell with thee should God reject thee, if thou puttest thy simple trust in Christ. I dare to say *that,* and to look *that* boldly in the face; for thou wouldst be the first sinner that was ever cast away trusting in Jesus. "But, oh," saith one, "I cannot think that such a wretch as I am can have a right to believe." Soul, I tell thee it is not whether thou art a wretch, or not a wretch; it is *the command* that is thy warrant. Thou art commanded to believe. And when a command comes home with power the power comes with the command; and he who is commanded, being made willing, casts himself on Christ, and he believes, and is saved.  
  
I have labored this morning to try and make myself as clear as I can about this doctrine. I know if any man is saved it is the work of God the Holy Ghost from first to last. "If any man is regenerate, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God." But I do not see how that great truth interferes with this other, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." And I would again, even to the falling down on my knees, as though God did beseech you by me, pray you "In Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." And this is the reconciliation, "That ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," that ye trust Christ. Do you understand me? That ye cast yourself on him; that ye depend on nothing but what he has done. Saved you must be, lost you cannot be, if you fling yourself wholly upon Christ, and cast the whole burden of your sins, your doubts, your fears, and your anxieties wholly there. Now, this is preaching free grace doctrine. And if any wonder how a Calvinist can preach thus, let me say that this is the preaching that Calvin preached, and better still it is the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. We have divine warrant when we tell you, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Added to Bible Bulletin Board's "Spurgeon Collection" by:

Tony Capoccia  
Bible Bulletin Board  
Box 314  
Columbus, New Jersey, USA, 08022  
Websites: [www.biblebb.com](http://www.biblebb.com/) and [www.gospelgems.com](http://www.gospelgems.com)  
Email: [tony@biblebb.com](mailto:tony@biblebb.com)  
Online since 1986