

What must I do to be saved?

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[0 : 00] O Lord, you see each of us. You see us just as we are. You see more about us than we can see about ourselves. Please use the meditation on your word, as you have said you will, to exalt Jesus Christ, to bring us to faith and repentance, to help us live the Christian life, and to bring glory to your holy name. Amen.

Well, the story is that we've got into Paul's second great missionary journey, and the other day we were looking at the fact that he couldn't go any further, and there was a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, well, what you need to do is cross this bit of water and come over and help us here.

That's a new Roman province. That's moving from here to here. They started off in Antioch, and they got to Troas, and now they're doing a remarkable thing.

They're crossing into Europe. That's a new continent they've entered. And if you think about it, that's a stupendous step, because if, this big if, if the gospel had not come to Europe, then things would be completely different.

There would be no Christian history of Europe. There would be no political systems that came from Christianity. There would be no Western democracy.

[1 : 38] The Catholic Church, with its huge reach across the world, there would have been no Catholicism, and there would have been no Protestantism, because there wouldn't have been a Catholicism for people to reform against, as it were.

Our landscape would be completely different, because instead of churches in every town and city, there would have been whatever, mosques, Roman temples, goodness knows what.

The university movement, much of which was started on a Christian impetus, would not exist.

Hospitals, much of which was started on a Christian impetus, would not exist.

In fact, things would be completely different. There would be no Bach B Minor Mass, because he wouldn't be a Christian to write it. He would be writing a hymn to Jupiter, or something else like that. Just think what a big step is taken when they cross over to Philippi, and how much followed from it. Of course, we would all be called something different.

[2 : 42] We wouldn't have Christian names. We would be called, I don't know, Jupiter, or Mars, or whatever. I know cultures are different, but Western cultures often have Christian names.

And you think, if you look at it that way, such a big step, how was it taken? What did it look like? What did it look like on the ground?

And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. So, in and around this chapter, we're in Philippi. I haven't got the map up there, but it was just crossing over the water. If you look at it, can you tell me, you have to go back into verse 11.

What does it tell us about Philippi? It does tell us something in verse 12. Shout it out, please. It's a Roman colony. Yeah, and something else?

It's a leading city in the district of Macedonia. So, it's a very Roman place, and it's a very important place. A leading Roman city. Now, looking at this last week, I think it was, there was a place of prayer, and it was, in verse 13, it was outside the city gate.

[3 : 56] So, outside the city was a place of prayer, and that's where Paul encountered this lady, Lydia. So, she's one of the main players in this story of what goes on in Philippi.

So, there's a photograph, actually, of Lydia. She looks exactly like that. And the purple is because what? She's a seller of purple garments.

That's quite an important, apparently, sort of like a royal colour. So, there she is with a purple garment. So, there's Lydia, dyer of purple cloth, something like that. And she's a wealthy woman.

I think we can assume she is a wealthy woman, because she has her own house. And household, an independent businesswoman. And at the end of where we got to last week, she'd invited, she, as a new Christian, had invited the other Christians into her house to stay there.

So, let's put her house. That's rather a nice house, isn't it? Now, as we come into our bit of the chapter, we meet on the way to the place of prayer.

[5 : 04] So, presumably, if the place of prayer was on the Sabbath, so they're on the Sabbath. On the way out of the city to the place of prayer, they meet this lady.

And what does she do for a living? She's a slave? Fortune teller.

Yeah, she's a fortune teller. I was quite interested in trying to visualise what she would be like. I mean, she's obviously not a shy person, because she goes around telling fortunes.

And we're told that she has a spirit which predicted the future. The underlying is a spirit of Python. Python, as we know, is a computer language, but it's also a snake. And so, there's a sort of snaky spirit enabling her to tell fortunes.

[6 : 05] So, I put that, whereas Lydia's got some purple cloth over her arm, this lady's got a snake over her arm. I don't know whether she had a real snake, but it says a snaky spirit.

And she tells fortunes, verse 16. Okay, so we meet her. And then the other person that's worth noticing, oh, of course, she makes money as well.

She makes a lot of money for her keepers. They're called her lords. So, they're sort of in the background. And we'll find out a bit more about them as we go on.

So, I don't know about her house, but I put a sort of fortune teller's tent there. Come and have your fortune told. And the next person to think of is what happens to them.

Long story short, they end up in jail. So, there's the jail. And here's the jailer. I'm not particularly pleased with that drawing. I could have done better, but I didn't want to make a big thing of it.

[7 : 12] Anyway, so here's the jailer. And I meant to put keys dangling over his arm, but I forgot to put them on. He's the jailer. And what a strange combination of people.

A very respectable businesswoman, Lydia. This rather bizarre, snaky, fortune telling woman, slave girl.

And I guess an ex-soldier, the jailer, who's all ready to kill himself, as we read in the story. And these three people are the people in the story.

What a combination of them. And I think we could say that they're in the story because God is at work. Would you agree with that? These are, what a little trio of people.

But God is at work. And so we are told what happens to these people. Okay, well, let's follow the story through. So, starting off in verse 16.

[8 : 16] Once we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her lords, her owners, by fortune telling.

She followed Paul and the rest of us. Notice an us. So, the writers including himself. And the rest of us shouting out. So, we, he says, we're going on the way to the prayer time, which is presumably a Jewish prayer time on the Sabbath.

She has a snaky spirit, a python spirit. And this is the woman. There was an old Jewish prayer which said, I thank you God, written by a man this prayer, that I am not a woman, a Gentile, or a slave.

And, of course, this woman is actually all of them. She is a woman, a Gentile, and a slave. And God likes her. God isn't put off by the fact that she's any of those things.

In fact, if anything, I guess the opposite. She was a good earner. And she shouts out. She's not shy, is she? She, verse 17, she follows 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.

[9 : 35] And this happened day after day. She kept this up for many days. So, we don't know exactly how long they were here, but they were in Philippi quite a while. They're servants of the Most High God telling you the way of salvation.

And for, this happens day after day. And in the end, something clicks inside Paul. And it's difficult to know quite what clicked.

But in the end, he was so annoyed, it says here, or so troubled, that he turns around and says, Enough of this. In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

And at that moment, the Spirit left her. So, there's a coming out. Come out of her. And so, you'd think, that's pretty good. However, not everybody thinks it is good.

Because there's an economic pushback. The woman has earned lots of money doing this fortune telling. I suppose because, in a sense, it works.

[10:39] I mean, there's a spiritual power at work there. But the owners are not at all pleased. Because they've now lost the income, or the percentage that it made from the woman.

They are... This means that Paul and Silas are not congratulated. But they're very, very unwelcome. And in verse 19, when the owners realized their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

They brought them before the magistrates and said, These men are Jews and are causing a problem. We'll look at the problem in a moment. One of the things about the apostles is that their ministry has more and more echoes of Jesus.

And, of course, this is an example of that. If you have your Bible and can find places in the Bible, would you like to look at Luke chapter 8? Which is not exactly the same, but is rather similar.

This is Jesus in the region of the Gerizines, across the lake from Galilee. Verse 26 of Luke chapter 8.

[12:00] I'll read it to you. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time, this man hadn't worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High?

I beg you, don't torture me. So here's another demonized person. Satan has really ruined this man. He's lost all his dignity and humanity.

But he, too, shouts out about the credentials of the person addressing them in relation to the Most High.

Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. So there's a very interesting parallel there. And Jesus, so there's a non-human power in his life.

He confessed Jesus is the Son of the Most High. He confessed the power of Jesus. And the demons came out of this man at the word of Jesus.

[13:04] And you remember this story went into the pigs. Do you remember this one? The demons go into the pigs, verse 33. And that's great for the bloke, but not so good for the pig owners.

Because the pig farmers have now lost all their pigs. If they were good Jews, they wouldn't have been keeping pigs anyway, would they? So something going on there.

And in verse 36 of Luke 8, the people who had seen it told, those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

And you think, hooray, he's been cured. He's been healed. But what happens in verse 37, all the people of the region of the Gerizines asked Jesus to leave them because they were overcome with fear.

And he went away. So it's a very similar thing, isn't it? A loss of income. And the messenger or the person bringing the exorcism was unwelcome. And the apostles fall into the same sort of pattern as the Lord Jesus.

[14:09] They experience the same sort of things as Christ himself. But the common theme is this, that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus came to set people free from the devil's influence.

The devil deceives. The devil kills. The devil makes humans subhuman. And Jesus came to put that all right.

And I think that's a jolly good thing, don't you? The devil is real. He can overpower. But he doesn't set people free.

He enslaves them. The devil may know the truth. But he is not set free by the truth. But Jesus sets people free. And I say amen to that.

He's a great saviour. He came to destroy the works of the devil. He sets people free from the devil. And here are the apostles joining in the ministry of Jesus.

[15:11] And I say amen to that. Let's follow the story on with the slave owners. Now then. They are complaining.

And we've got as far as about verse 20. Now the gospel of Jesus Christ does good. Full stop. No qualification.

The gospel of Jesus Christ does people good. Amen. And it's a prayer that as we come along to church today that the Lord would do us good. But doing good disturbs the patterns of evil. So as we see in verse 18 and 19, this particular source of economic activity is stopped. And the slave owners don't like it.

And they complain. They complain. Their complaint isn't quite accurate, is it? But this is what they say. Verse 20. These men are Jews.

[16:12] So there's a racist element in it. And are throwing our city into uproar. Well, that might in a sense be true. By advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.

They're being un-Roman, he says. They're destabilizing our society. They're doing subhuman things. And I don't know where they get that from. Or at least sub-Roman things.

They're getting at what we consider the heart of being Roman. Now I'm not sure how accurate that is. But that's certainly what their complaint was. The gospel brings peace.

It brings true humanness. It brings proper human dignity. It brings real order. And if you look at Psalm 119 in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew Scriptures, it's full of saying how good God's ways are.

I love your law. I love your ways. Your ways are perfect and right and faithful and honorable. There is nothing to apologize about, about what Christianity does to people and to society.

[17:25] It does people good. But they're complaining nevertheless. And the result is very unfair and mindless really. Verse 22.

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods, which seems completely disproportionate, doesn't it? What is going on here?

After they were severely flogged, they were thrown into prison and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. So here's all the crowd running after them.

You can imagine this sort of crowd, mob, mob mentality. Get them. Take them. Yeah. And they end up in prison.

It's unfair. It seems to have its own momentum. Perhaps there's a sort of satanic momentum behind it. There's no evidence given, as Paul is going to lay it on to say.

[18:22] There's no opportunity for a defense. And they end up, the wording is interesting. In verse 24, they fastened their feet in the stocks.

In the original it says they were tied to the wood. And that's a bit like Jesus too, isn't it? Because he was fastened to the wood when he died on the cross.

The gospel doesn't necessarily give an easy ride to people who proclaim it. And like Jesus, who was unfairly treated, these servants of Jesus are unfairly treated too.

And their reaction to that is quite interesting as we come along to see it. But Paul will say later on, maybe some decades later as he writes to the church in Philippi, the same church which is still going, he says, Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you, or only hear about you in my absence, I will know you stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. For it is granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

[19:47] Since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now here I still have. So just be truthful about Christian witness.

It doesn't always give us a pat on the back. They were unfairly treated, just as Jesus was. We shouldn't expect necessarily anything any better.

Anyway, let's go on now and go to the jail. So verse 25, About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake, that the foundations of the prison were shaken. All at once, the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

So there's the jailer. Sorry about the picture. But just think of it. Think of this scene. The town has been in uproar. What happened yesterday? Oh, we all marched down. There were a couple of blokes there.

[20:50] We got them beaten up, and we got them put in prison, as they jolly well deserved. What did they do? I don't know what they did, but we all... The town was in uproar. Paul and Silas are now in maximum security prison.

The city officials, who were part of this, I don't know, are they back home sipping some sherry, saying, well, at least we got rid of those troublemakers. I believe they were not like us. Whatever that... But they think, well, at least that's over now. They think it's finished. Nothing more is going to come of this. And what about the jailer? Poor man. What does he make of all this? I've been told to guard these prisoners. They don't look like terrorists. In fact, they asked me my name. They asked me how I was. Asked me whether I was married and whether I had any children. It was really quite nice of them, actually. And they don't seem at all bitter. A lot of prisoners here sort of curse and swear. But they've been extremely nice. They've got to know some of the other prisoners, which I think is amazing, given that they're wounds.

[21 : 55] So the jailer... I think you must have some sort of questions about what's going on. We're not told, are we? But just try and imagine what he would have been thinking.

And the slave owners, well, what are they thinking? They're thinking, well, we've lost our money, but at least we've got our own back on those troublemakers.

And what are Paul and Silas thinking? We've been beaten unjustly. Do you think they're thinking, I wish we'd never bothered?

I wish we'd never bothered coming to Philippi. I don't think they're thinking that at all. Are they regretful? No. Are they bitter? Are they sitting there thinking, I'll get back at those magistrates if it's the last thing I do?

Call themselves elected politicians? I don't think they're thinking that either. Are they depressed? Are they thinking, oh dear, it always turns out like this and we've got several more chapters of Acts to go.

[22 : 57] I mean, is that what they're thinking? No, I don't... I mean, they're human. They're probably not really enjoying being beaten up. But what we find them doing is praying and singing, which I think is such a surprise, isn't it?

Verse 25, about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them. I mean, maybe they're just extremely positive people or it may be that they're saying, what should we do?

I mean, it's a pretty miserable end to the day, isn't it? What should we do? Let's sing something, shall we? Let's ask the Lord into this situation. Give us a psalm.

What can we sing? I don't know quite the mood of the singing, but that's what they're doing. I mean, good on them, don't you think? There they are, having suffered all this and they're praying and singing to God and all the other prisoners are listening.

And I'm just thinking when Paul was in that shipwreck and the way that he must have related to the other people, this hasn't happened yet, this is in the future, on the ship. And I wonder whether he was being a personal evangelist all the time.

[24 : 15] What are you in for then? Oh, shoplifting. How did that happen? Whether he's been having a conversation with the other prisoners, what's your name then? How did you get here?

Oh, really? Where did you come from? Oh, I've been there. Why are you here? Oh, I'm telling people about Jesus. Go on, what's all that about then? I don't know whether he's been doing that in the prison, but the prisoners are listening and there's some sort of engagement between him and the prisoners.

I don't know how many prisoners there would have been. It says it was a leading city, so how many prisoners were there? I mean, hundreds? Tens? Fifteen? Half a dozen?

I don't know. I mean, the fact that he could tell that they hadn't escaped makes you think there was only perhaps half a dozen of them, but there he is in the prison, praying and singing. That's a surprise. And then an even bigger surprise, or perhaps not as big a surprise, an earthquake happens.

Wow! The whole place shakes. And it says quite significantly, the foundations of the prison were shaken.

[25 : 21] There's something foundational about what God is doing here. He is shaking the foundations. And so let's shake the prison. There it is in a funny sort of way.

And, you know, this is a chapter of surprises. Which is the more surprising thing, that Paul and Silas are sitting there singing and praying, or that there's an earthquake? I don't know. But both are surprising things, aren't they?

So what happens next? Well, the prisoners were listening, as we've already said. The jailer wakes up, verse 27. So he slept through this.

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. You remember when the guard of prisoners was set to guard the tomb of Jesus?

And the same sort of thing. If you let the prisoners go, your life is forfeit. And he's seriously worried. You know, I have... This is a disaster.

[26 : 27] This is a total disaster. Not only is my house in pieces, my jail's in pieces, my prisoners have run off, my livelihood's gone, I'm just in a total mess here, and the way out is to kill himself.

Poor guy. It's chaos and ruin all around, and he's about to kill himself. And Paul, interesting, I like the way he puts this, Paul shouts out, Don't do bad to yourself!

Don't harm yourself! We're all here! All six of us, or all 15 of us, or however many... We're all here!

No, no, no, no, no, no, don't do anything bad! Don't do anything bad! And the jailer calls for lights.

Really? Get some lights in here! What's going on? And he rushes in. I just want to notice, when Peter was in prison, and there was a miraculous intervention to open the gates, Peter went out, didn't he?

Do you remember that? And he turned up, and the church had been praying for him, and he got to the door, and knocked on the door, and Rhoda said, Who is it?

[27 : 36] And he says, It's Peter. And she said, You can't be, because we're praying for you, because you're in prison. But interesting here, Paul doesn't walk out. I mean, he could, couldn't he?

You could assume, I'll do the same as Peter did. But he said, No, we're not. We're staying here.

We're all here. We're all here. And, this rather, moving and dramatic thing, verse 29, The jailer calls for lights.

He rushes in. He falls, trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out, and asked, Sirs, same word, Lords, Lords, what must I do to be saved?

So dramatic, isn't it? Now, what does he mean? I doubt whether he has read Banner of Truth books telling him about that he's supposed to be saved from guilt and eschatological adjustment.

I mean, he hasn't got a lot of input, has he? He probably knows that Paul has been preaching about Jesus. So what does he mean by what must I do to be saved?

[28 : 43] I don't know. Save me from the mess my life's in. Save me from all my anxieties.

Save me from all the sins that I'm aware of that you probably don't know anything about. Save me from whatever it is. Whatever it is, the answer is still, believe in Jesus and you will be saved and all your household.

That's what he says. Believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved, you and your household. And there's a truth in that. Whatever this morning you are thinking, I'm in a total mess about this.

Maybe the mess shows in terms of your health or mess shows in terms of your past or the mess is in terms of your future or in terms of your situation. Whatever it is that you are saying, how can I get out of this mess?

The answer is always, believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved and anybody else with you who also believes in the Lord Jesus. And that could be you this morning.

[29 : 53] Whatever burdens and mess you have brought with you into church this morning, how can I be saved from it? The answer is Jesus. Put your trust in him, turn to him, give your life to him, believe in him and you will be saved.

I'm not saying that you will be instantly saved from whatever health situation it is or whatever it might be, but in principle, that is the way to get through life.

Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. not just in life, but in eternity. And actually your deepest need is the forgiveness of sins and a promise for the future and that's what you have in the Lord Jesus and everything else is wrapped up in that.

Amen. Amen. And this is true for Lydia, the businesswoman. It's true for this bizarre slave girl and it's true for the jailer.

And it's true for me and it's true for you. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. The thief on the cross saw that, didn't he?

[31 : 07] You know the story of right in the last few minutes of his life as he died on the cross and he looked across at Jesus and said, do you know, this man's done nothing wrong.

Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said, that's it. Today, you will be with me in paradise. It's as simple and straightforward and radical and brilliant as that. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you'll be saved. Let's go a little bit further then. So what happens next? Verse 31.

Believe on the Lord Jesus. Verse 32. They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Immediately, he and all his household were baptized.

The jailer brought them into his house, set a meal before them. He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. He and his whole household. And what a change comes over this.

[32 : 15] I mean, I'm assuming he was a rough, tough soldier, ex-soldier. And there's something real here. Sometimes theologians call it the marks of grace.

The things that mark out that God's grace has been at work in someone's life. And you can see them here. Well, one thing was the word of the Lord, which is what we said earlier, isn't it?

The apostolic gospel. Verse 32. They spoke the word of the Lord to him. So they're hearing the message of Jesus as authorized by Jesus to be spoken by his apostles.

They hear the word of the Lord. And it changes him. He, verse 33, at the hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds.

Well, he hadn't done that before, had he? Something has changed in his heart. I thought these, I thought these, these criminals were, I didn't really quite know what to make of them, but now I know they're telling the truth.

[33 : 16] They're showing me the way of salvation. And I want to honor them. Where's some soap and water? Oh dear, is that what they did to you? And he washes their wounds.

Anybody got any bandages around here? Anybody got any Savlon? He washes and looks after them. He starts to care for the people of God.

And then there's hospitality. He sets a meal before them. I know it's midnight. Get something out of the freezer. And these guys haven't had anything to eat. They've been, come on.

So they eat together. There's something rather profound about that, isn't it? And because of faith, he is filled with joy.

Verse 34, he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. Joy comes from believing. Joy and peace in believing as we believe the gospel, which is something, isn't it?

[34 : 17] To believe the gospel. Can that be true? Yes, it is. I do believe it. That is fantastic. The joy of sins forgiven. And it's all wonderfully new.

I know that joy doesn't always keep on the same level. But here, for the first time, he's just experienced what it is to know God, to know forgiveness, to be saved.

And he's filled with joy. This is amazing. I never thought anything could be like this. And he shares it with his near and dear because he mentions he and his whole household. Oh, go on.

Wake up. Wake up the girl who cleans the floors. She's got to come and hear this. Come on. Come. Come. Do you know what these guys have just been telling us? He and his whole household hear and, it would appear, believe.

And here's something about genuineness. When I was talking to the children, the genuineness of Christian experience, the genuineness of Christian faith, these are marks of real Christianity.

[35 : 21] Love for the brethren, a new care and compassion, an inner joy in believing the gospel. These are the marks of authentic Christianity.

And we have them in this chapter, don't we? Lydia showed the same thing when she was converted. Come and stay with me in my house. The sort of movement to hospitality and sharing. And, you know, it's my prayer that as a church we would be the real thing. You know, there's all pathways for being insincere and hypocritical and losing the plot.

I pray that we won't take those paths. Let us be a real church. Let us be real Christians that are really impacted by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let us be that. And I'll just say, you don't get that on YouTube and you don't get it on Zoom because you're not meeting real people.

[36 : 17] It is at best second best. You actually, Christianity is about meeting real people in real relationships. Actually sort of touching physically present.

That's what community is. And please, if you're watching on YouTube, don't make that your Christian church because that isn't, that's just a sort of shadow of the real thing.

The real thing is actually being here. And being with God's people. So, what are we left with? Well, it is interesting just to step back from the chapter a little bit.

This is, I call it, the invasion of Europe. It's the invasion of Europe by Christianity. Christianity coming into hostile territory and Christ beginning his victories as he wins this continent over historically.

what does it look like? Now, I find it very interesting that when we get to the end of the chapter, verse 35, when it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order to release those men.

[37 : 30] And the jailer says, we've got it. You know, the email's come through. You're to be released. Off you go and go in peace. But Paul says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

I'm not just doing that. These magistrates beat us publicly without a trial and we are actually Roman citizens. So, they can come and apologise and they can come and escort us out if they want us to go.

And the officers reported this to the magistrates and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were quite alarmed. Oh dear, we are in trouble. And they can say, so sorry, so sorry, your worship, your excellency, I'm so sorry, but we do want you to go.

And it's interesting that they go. I find that interesting because they could say, we're not going anywhere. But they do go. And I think they go because their job is done.

And God has something else for them to do in another place. And it's interesting that they think their job is done. What have they actually achieved? Now, Christians, I'm sure you're aware of this, they like to, Christian ministries, like to send out prayer letters saying what they've been doing.

[38 : 48] This would make a great prayer letter, wouldn't it? Or a news report or an Instagram story or something like that. Well, what happened?

There was a business woman converted. Well, that's pretty good. And there was an exorcism. Wow.

And there was an earthquake. Brilliant. You could put all that in the prayer letter and it would sound very, very impressive. But of course, all those things, well, certainly the exorcism and the earthquake are just things that are over in a moment.

They're over in a moment. And you can't really make that the basis of a ministry. It only lasted an instant. What is actually the abiding thing? What is the lasting thing that was achieved through this visit?

Well, it seems to me the lasting thing is the salvation of these, particularly these three, but, I mean, there were others as well. A jailer was converted to Christ.

[39 : 53] A slave girl was converted to Christ. A business woman was converted to Christ. There were others as well, their households. And as Paul and Silas move on, they leave behind them how many?

Three? Ten? Twenty? Twenty-five? Christians. Christians. They've planted a church.

And these people are now meeting in Lydia's house. Of course, she invited them in, didn't she? And what they've achieved is a little church full of some odd people, but it's a church of Jesus Christ, however big it was.

It wasn't thousands. I mean, maybe, let's say, twenty-five, thirty, forty people. And they say, that's it. Job done. We go somewhere else. I find that extremely interesting, isn't it?

There they are meeting in Lydia's house. The jailer, the python lady, Lydia and her household. It's a little church of Jesus Christ. So how did God invade Europe?

[41 : 05] How did God work so that a complete continent was changed? So the history of the West was changed as Christianity came into the continent of Europe?

How did he do it? Well, the Holy Spirit advances the kingdom of Jesus Christ by planting this odd little church with these odd people of twenty-five or thirty of them in Philippi.

That's how Christ advances his kingdom. kingdom. There it is. And I say, I'm quite surprised at this actually, but I think it's a proper take on this chapter.

And I say, don't underestimate! the spiritual significance of a little church. That's what God used as he advanced his kingdom into Europe, a little church in Philippi.

Don't underestimate the spiritual significance of a little church. We're a little church, statistically. But how precious it is to be part of Christ's little flock.

[42 : 15] How precious it is to be together, to do what Paul and Silas did. They were in prison, praying and singing.

How precious it is to share food together like we do from time to time and not least when we have a shared meal in the church. How great it is to be in a community which is looking for opportunities to share with household, with friends, with family, to tell them the word of the Lord because this is what God uses to spread his kingdom.

So I say, is this you? Are you part of this that God is doing? Are you involved? Are you joining in? Are you serving and supporting and praying and belonging and being part of this because that's such a precious thing to be? and I say maybe God has still more victories to win for Jesus Christ through his little churches across the world and even here in Brighton.

Amen. We're going to sing together what is our hope in life and death. ending ending Thank you.