

Acts 16:11-40 "The weakness needed for God to work through you"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

And you must bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that even before we were born, you loved us, and that there has never been a point in time in our lives that you have not loved us. We thank and praise you that you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, are the God. You are the God of love, of true, deep, eternal, universe-creating, salvation-giving love. And we ask, Father, as we open your word this morning, you know the anxieties and the fears of our hearts. You know the things which are troubling us. And we ask that your Holy Spirit would bring your word and your love, the person of Christ, deep into our hearts to form us and to comfort us. And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

Once again, oh, I guess we don't have many of them left. They've all been taken. Oh yeah, there are a few of these left if you want a scripture journal with the Book of Acts in it. There's some there if you'd like one for your own personal use. We're all familiar with the phrase, in fact, probably some of us have said it to other people sometimes, and probably some of us have had it said to us, it's not all about you. It's not all about you. Maybe if we don't say it to somebody, we think, you know, the problem with them is they think it's all about them, but it's not all about them. We think that. And, you know, that's, it's true. And a lot of times it's very needed. But, and there's a big but, one of the times when people say it to us, this is what we think.

Well, I might agree that it's not all about me, but you seem to think it's all about you. You, you're just saying it's not all about you to, to me, but inwardly I think you still think it's, it's all about you. And that's a problem. And sometimes as well, when people say this, or when we hear it, and I'm not saying there's never any truth in it. In fact, the point of my sermon is, in fact, that there's a very profound truth that it's not all about you, but it doesn't have these other features which make it very problematic, is that often it's said in such a way that it makes it sound as if the valid needs that you have and that I have, that my valid needs, my valid desires, and the justice that I think is required is going to be denied to me. And so we have some problems with that phrase and how it's used.

[4 : 04] The Bible text that we're going to look at today actually has a lot of wisdom about this whole situation. It's not about you. And some of the problems we have with either saying it, believing it, receiving it, the inconsistencies, all of that, there's actually great wisdom in the Bible about this. So if you would take your Bibles with me, we're preaching through the book of Acts, and today we're at Acts chapter 16, and we're going to be beginning at verse 11. Acts 16, beginning at verse 11. If you're using these, it's on page 94.

And just in terms of the context of the story, Paul and this man by the name of Silas, and a man by the name of Timothy, and later on there's going to be two books in the Bible named after him called

1 and 2 Timothy, and Luke. And later on Luke is going to write a gospel, and in fact this book, the book of Acts. And the four of them at least, they're on a missionary journey in what we now call of Turkey. And it's as if they've come from this way, doing their second, this is the second missionary journey for Paul, and they come to this situation where the Holy Spirit says no, they want to go this way, and the Holy Spirit says no, and then they think of going this way, but the Holy Spirit says no. And that's sort of interesting enough, and the Bible doesn't tell you how they know that it's no, but it's interesting enough that that happens.

But what is actually even more profound is that they walk for 400 miles, that's 640 kilometers, walking, constantly getting a no to go that way, and a no to go that way. It's almost as if they're the sheep and God is herding them down the road. They're not going to go back, they've already been there. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. They keep going, and finally at the end, they have a vision, Paul has a vision, and one of the things we then discover is that all along the line, there's been, it's not just been this one guy making these absolute decisions, but the four of them have been talking and thinking and praying about it, and they come to the conclusion after the vision that God is calling them to listen to the vision, to go to Macedonia, and they go. And that's now where our story continues. Verse 11.

So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony, we remained in this city some days. Now, okay, I'm odd. Odd things amuse me, and I think they're cool.

This is really cool. You know why it's really cool? When these four dudes step off of the boat onto the dock, the first Christians have entered the continent of Europe.

[6 : 55] That is cool. They don't come with armies. Just four guys. Now, Roman Empire, it's one of the things that's really neat that it's even recorded, because you see, for Romans, they didn't know about continents. It was just all part of the Roman Empire.

From a Roman perspective at that historical time, from Luke's point of view, they were just going from one province to another. But now we know that this is the very first Christians to come to the continent of Europe, and Europe is the first continent that would be massively evangelized.

And it starts with this. I think that's cool. Well, there's something else which happens which is just as cool. And if you're thinking, rolling your eyes, yeah, George, you're really lame.

Lame things amuse you. That's fine. I own that, okay? But look at what happens in verse 13. And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer.

And we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. And just sort of pause. What this is telling us is that there weren't ten Jewish men in the city, or if there were ten Jewish men, there weren't ten Jewish men who cared a hoot about being Jewish.

[8 : 07] So there's not enough people to form a synagogue, but there's a group of women, maybe the odd men, but it just looks like it's only women. And they're gathering to pray. And it continues, verse 14.

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. And what that means is that she's a pagan, but she's heard about the God of Israel, what we would call the Old Testament, our Jewish friends, the Tanakh.

And she now wants to start living her life according to what we call the Old Testament. And she wants to worship the God of Israel. But she hasn't officially become Jewish. So one of the people listening was a worshiper of God.

And then here's this really, really neat phrase. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. I'm going to return to that in a moment.

And after she was baptized, so the Lord opens her heart and she becomes a Christian. So Paul speaks. She's listening. And God does something silently in the very center of her to open up the very center of her to receive the message about Jesus and to become a Christian.

[9 : 21] Verse 15. After she was baptized and her whole household as well, she urged us saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

And she prevailed upon us. Now, here's what's really cool. Lydia is the first European Christian. You know what else is cool about that?

The scholarly research leads to the conclusion that not only is she a pagan, who's now become a Christian, she's a former slave, who has become a Christian, and she's a single mom, who's

become a Christian, because in Roman law, to enter into contracts without a man, you need to be a woman who's had four children.

So because she is a business owner and hence has to enter into business deals, she's probably a single mom. So she's a former pagan, a former slave.

She's a single mom, and she's an entrepreneur, and she is the first European Christian.

[10:33] I think that's really cool. We know her name. And here's a point. Actually, first, if you could put point number one, Claire, that would be very helpful.

Here's the overarching, sort of the big point. There's a second big point, which I'm just going to leave as sort of a reveal at the end. But it's this, as we're looking at this text, the true God.

See, that's what we Christians are claiming. This is the true God revealing himself. And we're going to look at a story where the true God can shake the planet, unlock shackles, remove demons, and open your heart to believe in the Lord Jesus and to be saved.

That's the big message of the text, one of the big messages of the text. The true God can shake the planet, unlock shackles, remove demons, and open your heart to believe in the Lord Jesus to be saved.

And the sub-point from this, just before we go any further, is this. If you could put up 1A, that would be helpful, Claire. 1A. The Lord who loves you asks you to speak to others about Jesus.

[11:42] And he asks you to speak knowing that he will open hearts. The Lord who loves you asks you to speak to others about Jesus knowing that he will open hearts.

You see, that's what a text, the text doesn't say, boy, Paul gave the most unbelievable speech. He told 10 jokes that they're still talking about today, years later. He gave this analogy and a metaphor that brought tears to people's eyes.

He was just on fire. His rhetoric, he was just fantastic. He was awesome. He doesn't say anything like that. He spoke. But actually, later on in the, if you go and look at his letters, you'll see that one of the complaints that people make about him, you know what one of the complaints that people make about Paul was?

That he wasn't very good at speaking. I'm not making that up. You know, a guy, he's not very good at rhetoric, hasn't been trained, he's untaught. What a doofus.

So it's not his rhetoric, but he just shares. This is really encouraging to us. Just tell people about Jesus. It's God's job to open hearts. Don't intentionally do a sucky job, but just, God knows you're weak.

[12:53] He knows I'm weak. Well, what happens? Well, something actually very dramatic happens, and before we go any further, the next bit of the story is going to talk about a demon.

And, you know, our country is divided into two classes of people, fundamentally. Well, I guess there's three types. There's one type that never think about anything that they can't eat, drink, or, you know, make more money, or they're just consumed, like, you know, with what's going on next. But apart from that, most people in our country either just find the whole idea of demons existing completely impossible. It's something they would treat with scorn. It would be something that if you were to say you believed in them, they, it would, even if they didn't say it to your face, they'd believe that it shows that you're an ignorant, foolish, uneducated person.

And on the other hand, there's many people in our culture who lean in when you hear about demons or angels or telling of fortunes. They're very curious about this. They have a fascination with it, and they definitely believe that it happens.

I'm not going to argue for the text. I'm just going to tell you that part of the text is that the Christian faith does believe that angels and demons exist. And as we're going to see, Christians believe because we've been taught ultimately by Jesus that demons can, in fact, influence human beings, can oppress them and harass them.

[14:18] And the text that we're reading, I'm not going to go into it very much, but one of the things which is very true of this text in all of the book of Acts is that Luke gets the titles right.

So later on, it's going to talk, I don't know if it uses in our version the word like police people or officers or whatever, but in the original language, he uses the right name for who would be doing that in that context.

They use agora. They use the right titles of officials. They use the right, he uses the right titles for magistrates and for cops. Everything he does, he does it completely accurate for that context.

So it's an historical account and the Luke's claim is this is what actually happened. And so we Christians believe that these things are real. And if you want, give me a call, I'll buy you a coffee, I can give you some reasons why it's reasonable to believe and important to believe that demons actually exist.

But let's see what this story does. It's going to talk about demons and here's what happens next. It's verse 16. As we were going to the place of prayer, that's so a little bit later, doesn't say it's a week or two weeks or three weeks or whatever, but sometime later, we were going to the place of prayer. [15:29] We were met by a slave girl, a young girl who's a slave, who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune telling.

Now this text actually is quite remarkably accurate. Some of the other versions to try to help us to understand it better aren't quite as accurate as this text is quite accurate. The one thing they don't say is, and I don't know why they said I don't say it.

I was saying to my wife the other day, like it's way cooler to you to be literal. In the original language, it doesn't say she has a spirit of divination, although that's what it means. She has a python spirit.

That's actually what it says in the Greek. She has a python spirit or the spirit of the python within her. That's possessing her and that spirit uses her for fortune telling.

So just so you know, a bit of an aside, Christians believe that no demon knows the future. The dead don't know the future. If you go to a seance or some other type of activity, which you shouldn't go to, it's opening yourself up to demons, and they will claim that they can tell you the future, but they are always lying.

[16:47] No demon can know the future. But it's just like if you've done any reading about how fortune tellers work. Fortune tellers work on preying on your anxiety and your pride, your ego.

And they use cues to read what you're like and they'll give ambiguous enough things that get you excited and allow them to point and confuse you into thinking that they're telling something about the future as if they have powers or they're open to powers that allow them to do that and it's all lies. And Christians should have nothing to do with it. But that's what's going on and she's making piles of dough for these owners. Okay? And it continues.

Verse 17. So she followed Paul and us crying out, these men are servants of the Most High God.

And by the way, actually this is not a good translation in the Greek.

There's no the. And so it's added because it doesn't make sense in English. These men are servants of Most High God. That's actually what it says in the original language which is terrible English.

[17:50] But you see, one of the things that the demon is saying partial truths and partial truths are a way to say, is a way of lying. And she's going after, shouting out very loud, these men are servants of the Most High God.

Those of you, oh sorry, who proclaims to you and, sorry, no, it does say the Most High God. I got that wrong. It does say that. These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you way of salvation. There's no the before way of salvation.

And those of you who've read the C.S. Lewis's science fiction trilogy, this is like Weston dealing with Ransom and keeping him awake by speaking all the time.

Those of you who haven't read it, everybody should read the science fiction books by C.S. Lewis. Anyway, this verse 18, and this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned, and look what he says, it says here, and he says, not to her, but to the spirit. He speaks to the demon. So he'd look at you in the eyes, but he's not speaking to you, he's speaking to the demon. And he says, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

[18:53] And it came out that very hour. Now, just sort of pause here. Remember, the big point is that the true God can shake the planet, unlock shackles, remove demons, and open your heart to believe in the Lord Jesus and to be saved.

But here we see, if you could put up 1B, Claire, that would be helpful. The Lord who loves you shows that you should cast out demons in the name of Jesus. The Lord who loves you shows that you should cast out demons in the name of Jesus.

Now, why did Paul not do it a bit earlier? Well, we're going to see why probably in a moment when we see what happens. Look what happens. And by the way, what's about to happen is something

that we should pray very, very, very deeply does not happen in Canada.

We all know that on one level it does happen in Canada, but we should pray that our country moves away from anything like this, that we should move to a, that we should be praying that our country develops just laws and those who enforce the laws not be corrupt.

We should pray into that. What we're going to see here in the next bit is how it is in much of the world and throughout much of history. Some of you have come from countries where what is being described next is a very normal occurrence.

[20 : 19] Look what happens. Verse 19. And just, by the way, the implication of the original language is that this young girl made lots of money for these men.

Lots of money. So these are rich, powerful men and they're citizens of the city. Paul and Silas are outsiders. They're outsiders.

So verse 19, but when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, and that's, by the way, a whole other thing. It's really interesting that, so it's not as if Jono and I, I don't know, Jono says he has a demon and I say I'm going to cast a demon out of him, but nobody sees any difference with Jono before or after.

Nobody sees anything. But we just both have a feeling that something's happened. And maybe something has happened. Not that you have a demon brother, but maybe something has happened. But one of the things which is interesting here is that everybody sees that something has happened and knows that something has happened.

That in a sense, the pagan slave owners are bearing witness that Paul has just cast out a demon. They don't describe what's been seen, but something's been seen.

[21 : 30] Something's changed. The one time I've been involved directly in an exorcism, one of the changes was that the person had spoken a radically different voice, which went away.

But that doesn't always happen. That's a whole other topic of conversation. Verse 19 again, but when our owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

What? They're not cops. They didn't break any law and they didn't do a bad thing. But the owners take it upon themselves to seize Paul and Silas, drag them, and the word for marketplace there is agora, so it's the center of the city.

Verse 20, it's where the court is, the municipal offices, the main temple, it's the center of the city where decisions are made. And that's where they drag Paul and Silas.

And it's literally dragged them. They overpower Paul and Silas and are dragging them. Paul and Silas aren't going willingly. In verse 20, and when they had brought Paul and Silas to the magistrates, they said, these men are Jews and they are disturbing our city.

[22 : 45] They advocate customs that are not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice. The crowd joined in attacking them.

And by the way, here attacking them, it's a crowd, but it's not a mob. And they're not attacking them by punching them. They're calling out extra reasons why these two Jewish men should be punished.

The crowd joined in attacking them and the magistrates tore the garments off them. The magistrates tore the garments off Paul and Silas, leaving them, if not naked, next to naked, and gave orders to beat them with rods.

That would have been their equivalent of police, to beat them with sticks. And when the officials, in a sense, had inflicted many, many, many, many blows, the implication of many is that you can almost translate it as many, many, many.

After they inflicted many, many, many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. In other words, don't let them go. Not keep them safely because, oh, no, no, we don't want them, we want them to be safe.

[23 : 56] No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Make sure they don't get away. And having received this order, verse 24, they put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. Now, here's what's going on in this text.

What I say, this is the world, folks. This is what we should pray. I'm sure it's happened in Canada, and every time it happens in Canada, it's things like this, an abuse of power, they should be punished.

We should pray that we have a society of laws, of just laws, and of freedom for people, and of innocent until declared guilty. That's what we should be praying for all of the time, that we don't slide into accusing people and saying, well, these people are powerful and respectable, and these people look like the type of people who do things wrong, and these are powerful, and these are weak, and these are us, and these are others, and so if they say bad things about the others, well, what the heck?

Let's beat the others and throw them in jail. That's what's happening. And we see here, like, it's, what happened in Amsterdam the other night is absolutely horrifying and despicable.

Despicable. And the French parliamentarian who praised it despicable. Despicable. But you can understand a mob getting caught up in the moment.

[25 : 21] What's harder is cultured, calm arguments to hate Jewish people. What is not acceptable is mainstream media when they have anti-Semites speaking calmly to millions and nobody corrects them.

That's vastly more evil. And some of you might say, George, you shouldn't talk about that from the pulpit. This isn't politics, this is morals.

I don't care if they vote conservative, liberal, NDP, green, or the rhinoceros party. This is, we have to speak against these types of things happening in our culture.

So one of the reasons probably that Paul and Silas are slow at dealing things is they can sense the rampant, amped anti-Semitism. anti-Semitism. And they can sense, you know what, it's been said many, many times by many people, one of the first things that tyrants want to do is to wrap themselves in the flag.

That's what these guys are doing, wrapping themselves in the flag and promoting hatred. So now here they are, they're in jail. And they're, later on we're going to find out that they've been so badly beaten that there's open wounds.

[26 : 42] And they're going to be profoundly uncomfortable because they can't move because their feet are in stocks. And they're in a jail which would not be very clean. And in those days the only food that would come would be if outsiders brought food into the jail because there's no obligation for the jailer to give any food.

And what happens next? Well it's very interesting, verse 25. And about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them. Now just pause. This verse has caused lots of anxiety for Christians throughout the years and it shouldn't. This makes Paul and Silas sound like they were supermen. And these blows just bounce off them. Now you know maybe that's what went on. Maybe the Holy Spirit really anointed them for unbelievable courage. But you know what it could also be? Jason and I are the ones who are beaten.

And we're in the jail. And you know Jason is going like this and I'm going like this to see if we've, you know, some of the tooth we lost, we've lost them and maybe we're seeing if we're going to lose that tooth.

[27 : 47] And we have open wounds and our feet are in stock and we're really uncomfortable and we're really, really hungry and we're feeling ashamed because we got stripped and beaten in public. And it starts to get dark and I say to Jason, I say, brother, can you sleep?

And Jason says to me, no brother, I can't sleep. Are you really? Yeah, that's pretty sore. I can't sleep. I said, you know what? Why don't we pray?

We're not going to sleep anyway. Why don't we pray and sing some hymns just to show them? Amen. Because we can't sleep anyway. We've got our stupid feet in these stalks.

We're all bleeding and all of that. So they sing and they probably are also praying for the salvation of the prisoners in the jail or the people who beat them. I mean, on one level, that's a supernatural work of grace that's possible for all, that we pray for our persecutors and our haters.

Anyway, verse 25 again, about midnight, after about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them and suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

[28 : 57] And then there's a separate thing. Immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. And once again, we note that it's actually quite a good translation here. Unfastened.

Not shaken loose but unfashioned. And when the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself supposing that the prisoners had escaped. Now just pause here. Why was he doing this? So first of all, there's a double miracle that goes on here and if there'd just been an earthquake, people could say, well, it's just a coincidence. But there's both an earthquake and at the same time their shackles, the doors open and their shackles are unfastened. And the jailer, woken up by the earthquake, goes out to see what's going on.

And by the way, the whole city would have been affected by this earthquake and he sees the jail doors open. Now, historically, the jailer was either one of two types of people. He was either a retired soldier or more likely, in those days, cities could own slaves.

[30 : 08] So he was actually very likely to be a slave, a senior slave in the municipal government. And later on, when I'm going to talk about his household, the implication of that is that he's a slave owner who also owns slaves.

The whole ancient world was unbelievably messed up. Right? You can be a slave and own a slave. You can, and anyway, but you see, in the ancient world, because he's a slave, but even if he was just a Roman soldier, but if he was a slave, if he lets these prisoners go under his watch, the punishment is crucifixion.

And from all of the accounts of the ancient world, if you have a choice of dying by crucifixion or a cutting of a sword in your body, you're going to pick the sword. You don't want to die over many days naked outside the city with birds landing on.

You know, I don't want to go any further. It's gruesome. But there's a surprise. Look at what happens in verse 28. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Here's this famous question.

[31 : 33] Many, many people are familiar with this text, even if they can't remember where it was. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.

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

Then he brought them into his house and set food before them and he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. So here you can see that the picture is of the true God is very big.

He's big enough that he can shake the planet, he can unlock shackles, he can remove demons, and he can open your heart to believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. Now here's the question.

And some of you might be wondering, George, why did you begin by saying what you said at the beginning of the sermon? Some of you can't remember, that's fine. If God is able to shake the planet and open hearts and cast out demons, why did he allow Paul and Silas to be beaten?

[32 : 45] Why did he allow it? Well, part of the answer is this.

Paul, it's not all about you. It's not all about you. If you could put up point 1c, that would be helpful. the Lord who loves you reassures you that you are not the center, that he is. It's not all about you, it's about him. You know one of the things that's really cool? This probably happened in the year 49. We're in the year 2024. There's still Christians in Philippi. There's still Christians in Philippi. almost 2,000 years later.

You see, one of the problems with it's not all about you, it's on one level we all know intuitively that that's very important advice. Like in a family, I need to know as a dad that it's not all about me.

[33 : 57] You know, the pastor of the church, I have to know that it's not all about me. Like some of the other organizations I'm involved with, it's not all about me. I need to hear that. I need to remember that. And I need to know how to understand.

But you see, the problem is is that other people say that to me sometimes in such a way that they're implying that it's really all about them. And if there's no, like if all of that, if we all do that, then there's like, we need something that holds everything together.

We still need a center. We need something, someone, that it is about. And the thing which is so wonderful about the gospel is that when Paul says, when the Lord says in a sense to Paul, Paul, it's not all about you.

Well, who's saying that to him? You know, it's not as if God is just, you know, one of the problems we have is like in many religions, like God is so big and a God who's so big is just going to crush us. And for all of the religions of the world, when they say it's all about you, that's something which isn't actually very hopeful or reassuring. The ancient gods created human beings to be their slaves. Allah is so, in a sense, it's almost as a little bit as if Allah is like the Matrix in the Matrix movies because Allah doesn't actually give the message directly to Muhammad.

[35 : 17] Did you know that? Because he can't have that direct contact with a human being. Allah gives the message to an angel who gives the message to Muhammad.

And in a sense, you know, when you have the religions of the East and even when you have in the religions of the East, it's a different type of the bigness of God, but the bigness of God is something that's going to swallow you, that you become part of and you lose you.

So even in all of those religions, when they say it's not all about you, it's something which ends up crushing you or denying you or denigrating you. But the same God who is able to shake the planets comes as Emmanuel, God with us in the midst of our mess, the midst of the muck of your life, the midst of your wounds, the midst of your weakness, and in love he dies for you.

I mean, one of the hopes for my marriage with Louise is that I understand it's not all about me, that Louise understands it's not all about her, but we do know that it's all about the Lord.

Our hope as a church is that it's not all about me, it's not all about the council, it's not all about the Sunday school teachers, but it's all about Christ. There's a type of both relativizing and an arms around us.

[36 : 44] Just a couple of truths that follow from this, just very briefly, that the last one is the big point, right? If the big point is this is revealing God, the true God shakes the planet and locks shackles, removes demons, and opens your heart to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you could put up one D, that would be helpful.

Since God is big and you are small, your weakness is not a bug, but a feature. You're all familiar with the idea of the bug, right? It's, you know, we have a couple of computer-type people here, they'll fix the bugs, things that aren't supposed to be there.

But me being weak, and a lot of my anxiety comes about either, because I'm wrestling with wanting to be the center, but I'm not, and I'm wrestling with others who think they're the center, and I know they're not, and I'm wrestling with that, and I also wrestle with weakness.

But it's really helpful to know that God is big and I am small, and that's not a bug that I have to fix. There's a brilliant text. Paul says that it's something that Jesus spoke to him, so he says it's something that came right from Jesus.

It's 2 Corinthians, I don't have it on the screen, 2 Corinthians 12, 9. Jesus says to Paul, this is a little bit later, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

[38 : 06] So here's the final point. Paul, you know, by the way, Paul's not going to be articulate with the Philippian jailer after having teeth missing potentially.

He's not already a good speaker to begin with. He's hungry. He hasn't slept. He's been beaten. He has open wounds, but he still shares the gospel about Jesus to this other guy. It's all in his weakness.

Here's the final point. If you could put it up, one E. And by the way, those of you who are familiar with the book, I think by Larry Ellison, I've tweaked his title. I've made it Christian.

In Christ, you have all the weakness you need for God to work through you. I can't forgive, I'm too weak.

In Christ, you have all the weakness you need for God to work through you. I can't tell other people about Jesus. My life is a mess. In Christ, you have all the weakness you need for God to work through you.

[39 : 10] I'm terrible at praying, and I'm not a very good Christian. In Christ, you have all the weakness you need for God to work through you. I'm weak and poor, I don't have any money to give to the work of the Lord.

I can't be generous, I have to wait until I have money. No, in Christ, you have all the weakness you need for God to work through you. Because he is big. Let's stand and bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know how a lot of our life, even as Christians, is all about trying to get stronger and stronger and better and better and shiny and shinier and more cleaned up and more cleaned up so that eventually you'll pay some notice to us or that we can do good things.

And you know, Father, how both the world, the flesh, and the devil beats us up about our weaknesses and our smallness. And so, Father, it's very freeing to hear in the context of salvation, the context of Jesus being Emmanuel, Emmanuel who dies for us, Emmanuel who on one hand can shake the planet, but on the other hand will walk amongst us and die on the cross for us, that our weakness is not something that is a bug, but a feature of who we are as human beings. I am small and I am weak, and that is not a bug to fix, but a feature of who I am. And it is, Father, very humbling to know that you are the one who opens hearts, you are the one who shakes the planets, you are the one who did everything that had to be done to save.

[41 : 00] You are the one whose son became poor that we might become rich, that Father, that every single one of us here, and not as an excuse not to repent of our sins, and not as an excuse not to learn and to grow, but that we already have, every one of us here, all the weakness that you need for us to work through you, through us, for your glory.

So we ask, Father, that you make the gospel more and more real to us, and help us, Father, to see our smallness and our weakness, and that we are not the center in light of this profound act that Jesus has done to save us, and to make us your children forever.

And we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior, and all God's people said, Amen. Amen.