

PM Acts 16:16-40 Faith Alone

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[0 : 00] Well let's turn now to that passage in Acts 16 and I'll read again verse 31 by way of text.

In 1737 the great American preacher Jonathan Edwards published a book entitled A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundreds of Souls in Northampton.

Usually abbreviated to a narrative of surprising conversions. It describes the revival that began in his church in Northampton, New England in 1734.

It's available in modern reprint from the Banner of Truth and it's well worth reading. Well the Acts of the Apostles could be described as a narrative of surprising conversions.

Right at the beginning there's the conversion of those 3,000 souls on the day of Pentecost.

[1 : 43] How surprising that is. Just seven weeks earlier the crowds in Jerusalem had been crying out for Jesus to be crucified.

And now here they are queuing up to be baptized. A little later in Acts 5 we're told a great many of the priests believed.

How surprising is that? The priests were at the forefront of opposition to Jesus. And here they are effectively voting for their own redundancy.

Then in Acts 8 there's the Ethiopian eunuch. Who would have thought that a court official from far away Africa would be converted on the desert road to Gaza.

Where all the trouble is now. Then in Acts 9 Paul himself. The chief persecutor becomes a preacher.

[2 : 54] That took everyone by surprise. Then Cornelius. Roman centurion in Acts 10. That was a surprise even to Peter who preached to him.

Well here in Acts 16 you have another amazing conversion. The Philippian jailer. Just a few hours earlier he had been fastening Paul and Silas' feet in the stocks.

Now he's down at their feet. Asking them what must I do to be saved. All these conversions show the mighty power of God.

Who can save anyone he wishes. At any time. And in any way. And they give us hope.

That surprising conversions are possible. Even today. Even today. And even here. In Dumfries. The unlikest of people.

[4 : 12] Can be saved. And our text shows us how. Simply. By faith. In Christ. Christ. I mentioned this morning.

Those five watchwords of the Reformation. Scripture alone. Christ alone. Grace alone. Faith alone. For the glory of God alone.

Well here is a vivid illustration. Of the fourth of them. By faith. Alone. I want us to.

Look tonight. At the Philippian. Jailer's story. And then come back. To that great principle. The one and only.

Way of salvation. Through faith. First let me. Remind you. Briefly. Of the background.

[5 : 13] Paul and Silas. Have come to Philippi. In obedience. To a vision. A man of Macedonia. Saying. Come over. And help us.

Luke is now with them. Making this. A first hand. A first hand. Account. Their first convert. Was Lydia.

Who we looked at. Last time I was preaching. The purple seller. From Thyatira. Converted.

Converted. By the riverside. Back in.

Verse 14. I described that. Last time. As a quiet. Conversion. Well now you have another conversion.

Which is anything but quiet. Lydia. And the jailer. Were the first and last. Converts. On this mission.

[6 : 13] And they're quite different. One quiet. One dramatic. And yet they are both. Saved by faith. So let's look then at the jailer's story. And it all begins with this slave girl. In verses 16 to 18. As we were going to the place of prayer.

We were met. By a slave girl. Who had a spirit of divination. And brought her owners. Much profit. By fortune telling. In the Greek.

It says she had a python. A snake. The spirit. Presumably. Wrapping itself. Around her soul. Gripping her. Controlling her. Satan. Remember. Is described as a serpent. In Genesis 3. Day after day.

[7 : 15] This girl followed Paul. Crying out. These men are servants of the most high God. Who proclaim to you. The way. Of salvation. You might think.

That Paul would be pleased. What she said was true. And to have. Even the devil. Acknowledging. That it was true. Surely.

That was a great victory. But no. He is greatly annoyed. Turns and says to the spirit. I command you. In the name of Jesus Christ. To come out of her. And it came out. That very hour. Why was he so annoyed? Well.

Because he didn't want. The testimony. Of Satan. That would only have. Caused confusion. People would think. That he was somehow.

[8 : 10] In league. With this slave girl. And with the evil spirit. Inside her. Jesus had. Refused. To let the demons. Testify of him.

Paul does the same. Now I hope this. Slave girl was pleased. I hope she was converted. But we're. Not actually told. Her reaction. What we are told. Is her. Owner's. Reaction. And they were annoyed.

They'd been making money. Out of her. Fortune telling. Is big business today. Isn't it? I dare say. There are fortune tellers. Down the road. At the moment. At the fair.

It was big business then. And this girl. Was a gold mine. That spirit. Being driven out of her. That was losing.

[9 : 10] Their money. And straight away. They take their revenge. Verse 19. They seized. Paul and Silas. And dragged them. Into the marketplace. Before.

The rulers. Marketplace. Marketplace. Of course. Not like our marketplaces today. Simply places. Of buying and selling. That was the very.

Center. Of civil society. And that was where. The magistrates. Courts. Would be held. And they. Lay.

A false. Accusation. Against them. These men are Jews. And are disturbing. Our city. They advocate. They advocate customs. That are not lawful.

For us as Romans. To accept. Or practice. There's maybe a little bit. Of anti-Semitism there. These men are Jews. The Jews have had to put up.

[10 : 07] With a lot of this. Down through the ages. They still do today. It's one of the most. Terrible things. About this. Past. Couple of years. With the whole.

Crisis in Gaza. Is the anti-Semitism. That it has churned up. Even in this country. But they're also charging them.

With being. Anti-Roman. Now it's quite true. Saying Jesus is Lord. As Paul does.

In his letter. To the Philippians. And as he did. No doubt. In his preaching. That could be seen. As a challenge. To Caesar. But they hadn't really.

Advocated. Any. Anti-Roman. Customs. This was just. A cover up. For their real motive. Which was. Revenge.

[11 : 05] The crowd. Join in. And the magistrates. Rather like. Pontius Pilate. Give way. They tore off.

Their garments. And gave orders. To beat them. With rods. Threw them. Into prison. Giving the jailer. A command. To keep them. Securely. It's all. Grossly. Unfair.

And it is. Rather reminiscent. Of the trial. Of Jesus. Remember. He too. Was. Accused. Of being. Anti-Roman. Among. Many. Other things.

The priest. Said to Pilate. If you let this man. Go. You're not a friend. Of Caesar. Caesar. Crowds. Joined in there. As well. Crying out.

Crucify him. And Pilate. Of course. Gave way. So Paul. Is. Very much. Walking. In his master's. Footsteps. Now.

[12:01] It's at this point. That we meet. The jailer. Probably. A Roman soldier. He dutifully. Does. As he's told. Puts them.

In the. Innermost prison. Fastens their feet. In the stocks. They're not getting out of this. Even Houdini. Couldn't escape.

From that prison. And he settles down. For a good night's sleep. Job done. Must have been a terrible experience.

For Paul and Silas. Bruised. And battered. Locked away. In a dark cell. I think. I would just slump down.

On the floor. Exhausted. And in despair. But not Paul and Silas. At midnight. Verse 25.

[12:58] Paul and Silas. Were praying. And singing. Hymns to God. And the prisoners. Were listening to them. In Job.

35. And verse 10. Elihu says. That God gives. Songs. In the night. And here is a literal.

Fulfillment of that. The context there. In Job. Incidentally. Is oppression. Well here are two.

Oppressed men. Singing songs.

In the night. It's interesting. At this point. To compare. With Peter's experience. When he was thrown.

Into prison. We read there. Earlier. How. He was imprisoned. And chained up. Between. Two soldiers.

[13:57] And he sleeps soundly. At perfect peace. God is able. To give us peace. Even in the most terrible. Of circumstances.

Paul and Silas. In contrast. They're not sleeping. They're singing. God can equally. Give us joy. In the darkest.

Of circumstances. Quiet faith. Songs of praise. God gives us both. Once again.

Singing like this. They're walking in the steps. Of their master. Do you remember. That he sang a hymn. Probably Psalm 118. At the last supper.

There he is. Knowing that he's about. To be crucified. And he sings. Praises to God. And even on the cross. Jesus did not.

[14:58] Sing on the cross. But he did quote the Psalms. Quoted Psalm 22. And Psalm 31. The Psalms always have been.

A great strength. In times of trouble. Jesus said. To rejoice. Jesus said. To rejoice. When men persecute you. Well.

Paul and Silas. Are doing. Precisely that. I wonder what the other prisoners thought. I wonder if any of them were converted. As they.

Heard them singing. The mighty works of God. God. But then everything changes. Suddenly there was a great earthquake.

So that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened. And everyone's bonds were unfastened. Again interesting to compare with Peter.

[15:58] When Peter was in prison. God sent an angel to deliver him. When Paul is in prison. He sends an earthquake. That's how powerful our God is.

He's not limited. By squads of soldiers. Or by stocks. Or any human devices. He liberates these prisoners.

No one could have escaped by themselves. But God has set them free. If they wish to go. Now that in itself.

Is a powerful picture. Of salvation. This earthquake. Broke the bonds. Of these prisoners. And likewise.

The earthquake of Calvary. Has set us free. From the prison house of sin. That same salvation.

[16:59] Is about to come. To the Philippian jailer. Now he hadn't been listening. To Paul and Silas singing. He'd been sleeping.

Completely indifferent to it all. But now he's woken up. Woken up. Woken up by an earthquake. And his first thought.

Is to kill himself. He thinks the prisoners have escaped. And he will be held accountable. And he would. When Peter escaped.

At the end of Acts 12. We read that. His jailers. Were actually executed. Paul's jailer.

Is saved. First thing Paul does. Is to stop him. From committing suicide. Cries out with a loud voice. Do not harm yourself.

[17 : 54] For we are all here. That by the way. Is. What our cry should be. When people are thinking. Of ending it all. Do not harm yourself.

Not helping them along. As the proposed new law. Would have us do. Jailer calls for lights. Rushes in.

Falls down before Paul and Silas. And asks that great question. What must I do. To be saved. Saved. On the day of Pentecost.

The crowds had asked. What shall we do. Here it's more precise. And more personal. What must I do. To be saved. The most important question. Anyone can ever ask.

[18 : 57] What did he mean by it. How much did he understand. There are people. Who have suggested. That he just wanted. To be saved. From the earthquake.

But the earthquake. Was over. Some people have suggested. That he just wanted. To be saved. From the consequences. Of being executed. By the authorities. But the prisoners.

Were still there. I think. He knew. Exactly. What he was asking. He knew.

What these men. Had been preaching. He may even. Have heard them preaching. He must certainly. Have heard about them. He may well.

Have heard. What was said. At the trial. He knew. That they were. Preaching. Salvation. And he wants. To be saved. He wants.

[19 : 55] To be saved. From his sins. He knows. He's a sinner. At the very least. He knows. That he's mistreated.

These prisoners. And how many. Hundreds. Of other prisoners. Before. He knows. That he's full. Of cruelty. And how many.

Other sins. Was he guilty. Of. That earthquake. Was telling him. That. God. Is on. Paul's. Side. Listen. To him. And it was. A warning. To him. God. Is powerful. And one day.

You will. Be judged. He wants. To be saved. Desperately. Wants. To be saved. And Paul. Tells him. How?

[20 : 49] Believe. Believe. Believe. On. The Lord. Jesus. Some translations. Have you. Believe. On. The Lord. Jesus. Christ. And you.

Will be saved. You. And your. Household. It's a wonderfully. Simple answer. And probably. Not what he was. Expecting. As a Roman.

He. Might have been. Expected. To. Go. And offer. Incense. To Paul's God. That's. What. Romans. Did. Or.

Maybe. Since. These men. Were Jews. He was. Expecting. To be told. To. Go. And keep. The law. Of Moses. He's.

Certainly. Expecting. To. Do. Something. Perhaps. Like. Naaman. The Syrian. He was. Expecting. To be. Told. To do. Something. Great.

[21 : 49] But. All. He's. Told. To do. Is. Believe. That's. All. Nothing. More. Christ.

Is. Our. Saviour. He. Has. Done. Everything. He. Died. On. The cross. For. Our. Sins. What. Are. You. Going. To. Add. To. That.

All. We. Have. To. Do. Is. Trust. In. Him. It's. A. Very. Simple. Answer. But. It. Did. Need. Explanation. Paul.

Doesn't. Like. Some. Modern. Evangelists. Just. Say. To him. Now. Repeat. After. Me. The. Words. Of. This. Prayer. And. You're. Saved. No. He. Takes. The. Time. To. Teach.

Him. To. Make. Sure. That. He. Understands. What. He. Is. Doing. That. He. Understands. The. Gospel. So. In. Verse. 32. They. Spoke. The. Word. Of. The. Lord. To. Him. And.

[22 : 45] To. All. Who. Were. In. His. House. It's. A. Wonderful. Picture. Isn't it? By now. It. Must. Have. Been. 1am. But. Here's. Paul. And. Silas.

Battered. And. Bruised. Preaching. The. Gospel. And. Here. Is. The. Jailer. And. All. His. Family. They. Must. Have. Got. Them. Out. Of. Bed. Must. They.

Eagerly. Listening. To. Him. Time. Doesn't. Matter. This. Couldn't. Wait. Till. The. Morning. This. Is. Too. Important. As.

With. Lydia. We. Don't. Know. Who. Was. In. That. Household. Probably. His. Family. But. Probably. Also. There. Would. Be. Some. Servants. But.

They're. Not. Saved. Notice. Simply. Because. They. Are. His. Household. Paul. Is. Not. Saying. If. You. Believe. Your. Family. Will. Be. Saved.

[23 : 41] As. Well. What. He's. Saying. Is. That. This. Gospel. Is. Both. For. You. And. For. Your. Family. And.

Therefore. They. Need. To. Hear. It. Obviously. The. Jailer. Wants. His. Family. Saved. That's. Why. He. Gathers. Them. Together. To. Hear.

The. Gospel. And. We. Ought. To. Be. Equally. Keen. Didn't. Wait. For. Our. Families. To. Be. Saved. And. I. Know. That. Those. Of. You. Who. Are. Parents. You. Are. Keen. For. Your. Children. To. Know. The. Gospel. And. You. Go. To. Great. Length. To. Ensure. That. They. Are. Taught. The. Gospel. And. That's. Right. The.

Whole. Of. This. Household. They. All. Hear. The. Gospel. And. They. All. Believe. Straight.

[24 : 33] Away. The. Jailer. Shows. The. Reality. Of. His. Faith. By. Was. Their. Wounds. And. Then. He. Himself. We. Might. Say. Is. Washed. He.

Is. Baptized. At. Once. He. And. All. His. Family. That's. What. The. Lord. Commanded. Make. Disciples. And. Baptize. Them. That's. What. Paul.

Did. They. Go. Up. Into. The. House. For. A. Meal. And. There's. Great. Rejoicing. A. Wonderful. Conversion. Has.

Taken. Place. An. Earthquake. Has. Taken. Place. In. This. Jailer's. Life. And. His. Life. Now. Was. Changed. Forever. And.

What. A. Change. This. Rough. Roman. Soldier. Washing. Their. Wounds. This. Brutal. Jailer. Offering. Them. Food.

[25 : 28] This. Former. Pagan. Rejoicing. In. God. Here. Is. A. Man. Who. Has. Been. Born. Again. The.

Sequel. Seems. Rather. Mundane. But. It. Is. Important. To. Show. Paul's. Sense. Of. Justice. Magistrates. Send. A. Message. To. Let. These. People.

Go. Paul. Says. No. They. Beat. Us. Publicly. Uncondemned. Romans. Now. They. Want. To. Send. Us. Away. Secretly. No. Let. Them. Come. And. Publicly. Set. Us. Free.

Injustice. Must. Never. Be. Swept. Under. The. Carpet. Either. Then. Or. Now. Magistrates. Are. Afraid. Now. Now.

That. They. Know. That. They. Are. Roman. Citizens. Paul. Had. Roman. Citizenship. Probably. Because. Of. Being. Born. In. Tarsus. Apparently. Silas. Did. Too. It.

[26 : 23] Was. Against. The. Law. To. Beat. A. Roman. Without. A. Proper. Trial. These. Magistrates. Were. Potentially. In. Big. Trouble. They.

Come. And. They. Apologize. And. They. Ask. Them. To. Leave. And. So. They. Depart. But. Only. After. Visiting. Lydia's. House. And. Encouraging. The.

Brothers. There. Brothers. Notice. Plural. Presumably. There. Had. Been. More. Conversions. In. The. Meant. And. No. Doubt. They. Had. Been. Praying. When.

He. Was. Set. Free. He. Went. To. The. House. Of. John. Mark. Where. Many. Were. Praying. The. Story. Began. With. A. Girl. Delivered. From. An. Evil. Spirit. It. Ends. With. Paul. And. Silas. Delivered.

[27 : 20] From. Prison. And. In. Between. The. Philippian. Jailer. Is. Delivered. From. His. Sins. But.

Now. Let's. Come. Back. Briefly. As. We. Draw. To. A. Close. To. Verse. 31. And. The. Way. Of. Salvation. Believe. On.

The. Lord. Jesus. And. You. Will. Be. Saved. How. Important. That. Is. Vital. That. We. Take. In. The. Meaning. Of. Those. Words. And. That's. Why. I. Want. To. Bring. Them. Those. Of. This. Service. Whoever. You. Are. Whether.

You're. A. Religious. Person. Like. Lydia. Or. A. Rough. Pagan. Like. The. Philippian. Jailor. Whether. You're. A. Jew. Or. A. Gentile. Or. Rich. Or.

[28 : 15] Poor. Or. A. man. Or. A. woman. Or. Young. Or. Old. There. Is. One. Way. Of. Salvation. And. One. Way. Only. And. That. Is. Through. Faith.

In. Christ. The. Bible. Teaches. Us. Plainly. That. Everyone. In. The. World. Needs. Salvation. Paul. Says. In. Romans. 3. 23. All. Have. Sinned. And. Come. Short. Of. The. Glory. Of. God. We're. All. Guilty. Before. God. We're.

All. Facing. God's. Judgment. And. No. One. In. The. World. Can. Save. Themselves. No. Matter. How. Hard. We. Try. With. Good. Works.

Rituals. Or. Whatever. But. God. In. His. Love. Has. Sent. His. Son. To. Die. For. Our. Sins. Laying. Down.

[29 : 10] His. Life. As. A. Sacrifice. For. Sin. And. Rising. Again. And. That. Salvation. Comes. To. Us. Simply. By.

Trusting. In. Him. Paul. Says. In. Romans. 3. 28. We. Are. Justified. By. Faith. Without. The. Works. Of. The. Law. Now.

You. May. Say. What. About. Repentance. I. Have. Made. Comparisons. With. Peter. Well. When. Peter. Was. Confronted. With. A. Similar. Question. His. Answer.

Was. Repent. And. Be. Baptized. Jesus. Himself. Preached. John. 1. 15. Repent. And. Believe. The. Gospel.

He. Commanded. In. Luke. 24. 46. That. Repentance. And. Forgiveness. Of. Sins. Be. Preached. To. All. Nations. Which.

[30 : 07] Is. It. Then. Repent. Or. Believe. Well. I. Would. Argue. That. There. Is. No. Contradiction. Because. Repentance. And. Faith. Inevitably. Go. Together.

They're. Part. Of. The. Same. Process. Repentance. Means. Turning. And. The. Most. Basic. Turning. Is. From. Unbelief. To.

Faith. On. The. Day. Of. Pentecost. Peter. Is. Preaching. In. Jerusalem. Where. Christ. Was. Crucified. He's.

Just. Said. God. Has. Made. This. Jesus. Whom. You. Crucified. Both. Lord. And. Christ. And. They're. Cut. To. The. Heart. Peter. Is. Calling. Them.

To. Repent. Of. Their. Past. Rejection. Of. Christ. And. Turn. To. The. Savior. As. For. Baptism. That. Was. Simply.

[31 : 00] An. Expression. Of. That. Faith. The. Philippian. Jailer. Was. Certainly. Penitent. He.

Had. Turned. From. Unbelief. To. Faith. He. Had. Turned. From. Cruelty. To. Kindness. There. Was. Repentance. In. His. Life. And. He. Of. course. Was. Also. Baptized. But. At. The. Heart. Of. It. All. Was. Faith.

Now. Paul's. Gospel. Is. Still. Our. Gospel. Today. Believe. In. The. Lord. Jesus. And. You. Will. Be. Saved. True.

Saving. Faith. Is. Of. course. More. Than. Just. An. Intellectual. Ascent. The. Slave. Girl. Knew. That. The. Gospel. Was. True. Merely. Knowing.

[31 : 58] The. Gospel. Won't. Save. You. The. Reformers. Used. To. Say. That. Saving. Faith. Had. Three. Elements. Knowledge. Agreement. And. Trust. There. Must.

Be. A. Wholehearted. Trust. In. Christ. And. In. Him. Alone. Not. In. Christ. Plus. Anything. Else. Christ. But.

In. Christ. Alone. This. Gospel. Is. A. Very. Personal. Gospel. The. Jailer. Asked. A. Personal. Question. What. Must. I. Do.

To. Be. Saved. And. He. Gets. A. Very. Personal. Answer. Believe. In. The. Lord. Jesus. And. You. Mr. Jailer. You. Will. Be. Saved. Even. You.

With. All. Your. Sins. Even. You. Who. Once. Fastened. The. Apostles. Feet. In. The. Stocks. And. We. Can. Give.

[32 : 51] That. Same. Answer. To. People. Today. Whoever. You. Are. Whatever. You. Done. Believe. In. Jesus. And. You. Will. Be. Saved.

God. So. Loved. The. World. That. He. Gave. His. Only. Son. That. Whoever. Believes. Even. You. Will. Not. Perish. But. Have. Everlasting.

Life. And. That. Promise. Is. Certain. You. Will. Be. Saved. Not. You. May. Be. Saved. But. You. Will. Be.

Saved. God. Gives. You. His. Word. For. That. Each. Of. Us. Knows. Our. Own. Heart. I.

Ask. You. As. We. Close. This. Service. Have. You. Responded. Personally. To. That. Gospel. Have. You. Personally. Trusted.

[33 : 45] In. Christ. Alone. For. Your. Salvation. May. Everyone. Here. Have. Faith. In. Christ. To.

Be. Saved. And. May. Many. More. In. This. Area. Of. Dumfries. And. Throughout. Scotland. Come. To. Faith. In. Jesus. And.

Know. This. Wonderful. Salvation. Amen. Thank. you.