

A Very Important Question

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[0 : 00] I want to extend a very warm welcome to everybody today and as we join together in worship, we pray that God will bless this worship to us.

We long to get back to God's house, but at the moment this is where we are and we pray that we will know God's spirit wherever we are as we listen and engage in his word today.

And in our call to worship, I'm going to read first of all from Psalm 122. This is from St. Sam's. May we now draw together.

In prayer and ask God to bless us. O Lord, as we gather together today in our own homes, we are also aware of the togetherness that belongs to your people.

Even although we might be separate physically, there is still a spiritual bond that binds our hearts together. We long to get back to church. We long to be fellowshiping one with another, just the way it used to be.

[1 : 55] But as things stand at the moment, we don't see that happening just immediately, although some congregations have managed to get back. And we pray, Lord, that it might please you, that it won't be too long until we'll be able to get back.

And help us, Lord, to remain patient and to be content, to have the spirit of patience and contentment in the face of where we're at just now. Realising that although the restrictions may appear to us sometimes not only frustrating, but sometimes we might even think unnecessary. Yet we have to realise that those in authority know what they're doing. And so we pray, Lord, that we will be given the spirit of compliance and be willing for the greater good to realise that this is a measure that we have to go through.

As we've heard it, when pandemics take place and throughout the history of this world, lockdown can happen very quickly. But the coming out of lockdown has historically taken a long time.

And we're a generation, probably, Lord, we have to confess that patience is not something we're good at. And so maybe we're having to learn patience in these things. And so we pray that you will bless us.

[3 : 14] Bless us each and every one in our bodies, minds and souls. And ask, Lord, that you will do us good. We need you. We need you every single day. We need you day and night. And we give thanks, Lord, for the knowledge that you put in our heart of our need of you.

And we give thanks, Lord, that we're not living. Maybe as some people do, not that we're in any way making ourselves any better than other people.

But we realise that some people never think about you. And even if they do, it is negatively. We give thanks, Lord, for what you have put in our heart. We give thanks for the ministry of your spirit.

We give thanks, Lord, for the way you have opened our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Because we have to confess, were it not for that, we would be blind as well.

We would be deaf as well. Our hearts would be hard. And we pray if there's anybody listening in today, And they have to say that their eyes are dim, that they do not see you, That they do not hear really your word, the life of your word, And that their hearts are cold to you.

[4 : 22] We pray, Lord, that you will change that. So that their hearts will be open to receive you. That their eyes will see the King. And that their ears will hear your word. Help us to remember that to your people you speak peace.

Oh, Lord, we pray then that you will bless us. Bless each and every one of us and all whom we love. What a privilege we have. We've been able to come to you and to bring all our needs and our worries, Our fears, our concerns, and to lay them before you.

And ask you, Lord, to do in us and for us, Far and beyond anything that we could ask or think. Lord, we pray your blessing upon all the various age groups in life. We pray for our young.

Pray for those, Lord, who might be just starting out at nursery and playgroup For the first time. Pray, Lord, for those who are going back to school. Maybe those who are starting school or just starting for the first time.

Lord, we pray that you'll be with them and help them to settle in. We pray, Lord, for those who are going through difficult times. Maybe those in school with health issues.

[5 : 25] And ask, Lord, that you will watch over them and be with them. And we pray, Lord, that you will be with our teachers. And we give thanks for them and ask, Lord, that you will encourage them.

It's been a difficult time for the whole education system throughout this pandemic. And we pray, Lord, that you will bless not only the young but the middle-aged And though the young people who are starting out into new jobs or had been expecting to.

We know, Lord, this is an incredibly difficult time. And so many people, their hopes and expectancies have been dashed. We pray that that will only be for a temporary stop.

And that things will soon get back to a greater degree of normality. We pray, Lord, for those who are going through difficult times. Maybe with the uncertainty of work. Their future is so uncertain, so bleak.

We pray for those who may have lost jobs. And what a crushing blow that is. Where everything changes. Where the normal income is depleted.

[6 : 35] And great worries and concerns come in. And it changes all the plans for the future when these things happen. And, O Lord, our God, we pray that employment will be found.

O Lord, our God, we were made to work. And ask, Lord, that you will provide work. Help us to see your hand in all things. And help us to realise when you speak to us.

Because sometimes you take away things in order that we may realise just what we had. And our dependence upon you. O Lord, we pray then that you will help us.

Bless the aged, those, Lord, who struggle with ill health. And those who are going through difficulties because of the advanced years. Who can no longer do for themselves.

But are virtually dependent upon others. They have reverted almost to babies. But we give thanks for all the provision that is made. And all the care.

[7 : 32] And we give thanks for all our carers, Lord. We are indebted to them for all that they do. And the loving way in which they care for the elderly and tend to them. And so we also remember our hospitals, our nursing staff.

And all doctors and consultants. And all who work tirelessly for the well-being and good of others. We remember all our emergency services.

The fire and the police and paramedics. The ambulance, the lifeboat, the coast guard. And all who are involved in rescuing and helping people in need.

We commit them to your care. We give thanks for them. We give thanks, Lord, for all the provisions that we do enjoy. And as the threat of the COVID-19 seems to be looming larger again.

We pray, Lord, that you will protect us. You have been good to us here in this island. We ask, Lord, that you will continue to be so. And we ask, Lord, also for our whole land.

[8 : 29] That you will protect us. That you will put a shield around us. We need you. Because we are powerless against this tiny little virus.

And so we pray that you'll be with us. As we come under your word now, we ask, Lord, that you will bless that word to our souls. That you will nourish us and strengthen us by it. And so we pray that you'll be with those who are ill.

Those who are seriously ill. Lord, we pray that you will prepare those who are facing death. Prepare them for death. And may you have mercy upon our souls.

That's what we pray for above all. We ask, Lord, for healing for those who are laid aside. Those who are going through difficult times. We pray for those who have received treatment of late.

And ask, Lord, that that treatment will really work. Sometimes it's difficult. And there are often things as a result of the treatment. But we pray that they'll come through all that.

[9 : 26] And that you will bless them. And be with those who sorrow. Their hearts are sore. All who believe, Lord. We commit them to your care. Or deal graciously and tenderly with them.

Forgive us then our every sin, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Now I'm just going to say a wee word to the young people.

Our grandson, Joshua, I think I mentioned this before. Joshua, he is absolutely digger daft. And I'm sure he's like a lot of little boys of that age.

He's two. He's two this weekend. And he is, as I say, like so many young boys at that age. Just diggers are the most wonderful thing in the world. After diggers, next after diggers, we come to the planes. Planes are wonderful. He loves to see a plane take off.

[10:24] He loves to see the planes speeding down the runway. He loves to see the planes land. And it's always the same as with diggers. It's diggers, wow, planes, wow, big sky.

He just, he loves planes. And after planes come the boats. And he loves to see a boat come into the pier. And he loves to see a boat go out from the pier.

And last week, one day we had Joshua, after I'd given him his two hour diet of diggers and planes and boats.

Where we, I think I know where every digger is, in Stornoway and all the way to Tung. And I think we saw three planes in the course of the day either taking off or coming in.

And we saw two or three boats come in or go out. So it was a pretty full two hours of diggers, boats and planes.

[11:28] Somebody said to me, it wouldn't be great if there was a transport museum here. Because you could then take him down. And you wouldn't need to be chasing all over the place looking at these things.

And I was thinking, well, yeah, that would be great. But what got me thinking was, he's much more interested in seeing diggers working.

And he's much more interested in seeing the planes coming in and taking off rather than just being parked. And he's much more interested in seeing the boats coming alongside the pier or moving away from the pier.

Rather than just being berthed at the pier. So he likes to see these things at work, doing what they're supposed to be doing. And I was thinking that about a transport museum.

There's a tremendous transport museum in Glasgow. And it's really, really worth a visit. Because I think you see everything there from roller skates all the way up to great big steam engines.

[12:31] And there are trams. There's trams and buses of different sort of ages.

And models of ships, steam cranes, right up to gypsy caravans. Cars of every age up to about 100 years old. But the one thing, and don't get me wrong, if you're in Glasgow, it's definitely worth a visit.

But the thing is, if you go there the next day and the day after the day, the cars will be in exactly the same place. They never shift. Week in, week out. Month in, month out.

In the exact same spot. And while they're great to see and to look at, we don't buy cars or we don't go on a bus simply to look at it.

It's to take us from one place to another. Because that's what they're for. And as it gives me back to saying exactly about Joshua, that he likes to see them doing things.

[13:32] What they're supposed to be doing. And it's the same, I suppose. I've always liked football. And throughout the years, since I was young, looking back, I've been in lots of different stadiums.

On tour, done a tour. I've been in the Aberdeen-Petordry Stadium. And Ibrox Stadium. And Hamden. And Villa Park.

And Old Trafford. And the Nou Camp in Barcelona. Done a tour in all these. Maybe there's more, but they spring to mind. And while it's great to see the different stadiums, and some of them are spectacular.

It's not a tour is great to see. But what you're wanting to see really is what happens within these stadiums.

And that is a game of football. It was all very well being in the Nou Camp. And yeah, it was great. Being in the dressing room and you say, this is where Messi puts on his football strip.

[14:39] But there was no sign of Messi. We didn't see him play. And that's what football stadiums are really about. It's to see football being played.

Lots of people enjoy going to churches. And there are a lot of magnificent churches in their own land. Particularly some great cathedrals. And I must confess, I also like going into great big churches and admiring what they're like.

Some of the cathedrals. There's a cathedral in Inverness. And it's beautiful. St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. And there are various abbeys and cathedrals and things.

And you go and you look at them and you say, whoa, it's amazing. The stonework and the stained glass windows and just the joinery and all the different things.

You say, what work went into this? But you know, churches haven't really been made just to be admired. The buildings aren't just there to be admired.

[15 : 42] Because a church building is for us to go to worship God. And the most beautiful thing that can happen in a church is when it's got God's people in it.

And they're worshipping and praising God. Indeed, a church full of people worshipping and praising God, I would say, is the greatest thing that is taking place in the world at the time.

Where people are gathered together. And they're praising the God of heaven and earth. It's a wonderful thing. I don't think there's anything greater that can be taking place at that time than when that is happening.

And that makes us just now realise just how much we miss church. I miss church and I believe that you do as well. And you miss your Sunday school.

Now, your Sunday school teachers, wonderfully, are going to try and give you work so that you'll be able to do it at home until we get back to Sunday school.

[16 : 46] Because they missed you. And you miss them. And they're thinking of you. And they're going to give you work so that your parents will be able to do your Sunday school work with you.

They'll set out what it is. And there'll be a wee teaching lesson come with it. And it's wonderful what they're planning for you. Until the day comes when we're able to get back again, back to church and back to Sunday school.

And I hope that you're really thinking about going back to Sunday school and going back to church. And I hope that when you do go back, that you'll be like what the first psalm that we read at the beginning, Psalm 122.

Because, well, in the metric, it says, I joyed when to the house of God and the sing-salms to the Lord's house they were calling.

And with joy, I went with them. I pray that that's how it will be when we get back. And I pray that all of us will get back. And we'll get back with joy. And we'll be able to meet together and to worship God.

[17 : 53] But right now, we're worshipping God in our own homes, which is also a wonderful thing. And I ask and I pray that every day, you will ask God to bless you.

And ask God that you might have praise for him in your heart. Thanking him for all that he has done in your lives. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Lines the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now we're going to read God's word from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16.

Acts chapter 16. And we're going to pick up our reading at verse 11. But prior to that, we find that Paul was wanting to head over to Asia, Paul and Silas with the gospel.

[18 : 59] But Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia who was standing urging Paul, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.

And so that's what we read about that. Paul, having seen that vision, he realized that this was from God. What he had seen was from God.

And so rather than go to Asia, they were heading off to Macedonia. So we pick it up at verse 11. So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Sam Thress 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. 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. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshipper of God.

[20 : 07] The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized and her household as well, she urged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.

And she prevailed upon us. And as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.

And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

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

[21 : 18] They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept our practice. The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

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

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.

And the jailer called for lights, and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sir, what must I do to be saved?

[22 : 35] And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds. And he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set foot before them.

And he rejoiced, along with his entire household, that he had believed in God. But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, Let these men go.

And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, The magistrates are sent to let you go.

Therefore come out now, and go in peace. But Paul said to them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison.

And do they now throw us out secretly? No, let them come themselves, and take us out. The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid, when they heard that they were Roman citizens.

[23 : 42] So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out, and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison, and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them, and departed.

Amen, and may God bless to us, this reading of his own holy word. And I want us to focus, really, on these words from verse 25, where we find that, about midnight, Paul and Cyrus were praying, and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake. So the foundation of the prison was shaken, and all the doors opened. And when the jailer awoke, and saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

And Paul, of course, he cried with a loud voice, not to harm himself, that they were all here. And of course, he then comes in, trembling with fear, he fell down before them.

And verse 30, he asked the question, excuse me, brought them out, and said, Sir, what must I do to be saved? And they said, believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and you're household.

[24 : 57] As we know, questions are a very important way of learning. When we're children, we're always asking questions. How? Why? Where?

When? But when we leave childhood, we don't stop asking questions. Nearly every day, we're asking questions. We ask about people, how they are, how this person is, how that person is.

Very often, when we go to a place that we've never been before, we ask directions. Excuse me, could you tell me, when we can't find where we're going, could you tell me where such and such a place is?

Often, we ask, can you show me how to work this, when we're not too sure about it? In life, we're always asking questions. It's one of the things we do.

We often ask questions when things happen in our lives that we don't understand. If we ask, sometimes we just ask it out loud, why?

[25 : 56] Why has this happened? Because it doesn't make any sense. Sometimes, we go further than just saying it out loud. We ask the Lord, Lord, why? Why did you allow this?

Why did such and such a thing happen? So that often, we're left perplexed and confused by the way things work out in life. Again, people often just ask in general, what is the purpose of life? Why are we here? What are we doing here? A lot of people are asking that. Because a lot of people have, they've lost a real sense of identity in this world.

They're more in existence mode than anything else. They just go through life without any sense of just what it's really all about.

And that's why the Christian faith really centres us in life in a very powerful way. Because it shows us primarily that we are here to glorify God and to enjoy Him.

[27 : 07] And there is no question whatever that the more your aim in life is to glorify God and the more that you come to enjoy God, the more fulfilled your life is here in this world.

There is a spiritual fulfillment that fills your whole being. It takes over so that that sense of fulfillment in God affects you physically and mentally as well as spiritually and affects your whole life.

And it's such a shame that so many people are void of this. That they never look for this. And so there are so many as I say so many questions going on.

And of course probably the greatest question that anybody could ask is the one that this prison officer the jailer in Philippi asked what must I do to be saved?

I hope that you have asked that question. If it's possible that you're here today and you're listening and you've never asked that question I hope that you'll come even before today is over to say to the Lord Lord I know I need to be saved.

[28 : 21] What must I do to be saved? And that Philippian jailer he came in a kind of a thundering way to realize that he was in a fearful situation before a holy God and he cries out what must I do to be saved?

I pray that you will ask that question as well because being saved is the most vital and important thing for your life for my life it's above anything else salvation transcends anything else it is the most important thing because the Lord Jesus said what will a person give in exchange for the soul?

He said nothing your soul is more important than anything else in this world it's more important than all the silver and all the gold and all the money in the bank it's more important than all the oil resources that there are more important than anything else it's of more value because this world is going to go but your soul won't so that's why Jesus says the soul is the most important thing what price can you put upon it it's priceless look after it and the way to look after it is to be saved to come to Jesus and to cast your life upon him you see the world promises so much but the world invariably fails to deliver might be along the way that a person can be very happy and things going well but you know at the end of the day chasing the world is like chasing a rainbow it's like trying to catch the wind or trying to find to touch as I used to say the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow it's trying to reach the rainbow's end you can't it's just it just goes and that's what this world is like everything in it just it just goes it melts it fades it vanishes it's gone it's here for a little but it goes whatever the world gives you ultimately it takes back because you have to leave it behind and maybe today some who are might be listening you know what it's like to have had your hopes built up in this world and to find them crashing down your dreams have been shattered the things that meant so much to you these things have turned around and they've hurt you and they've disappointed you and so often we put our trust in people we put our trust in systems and political systems and financial systems and so many different things and at the end of the day they turn around and they disappoint but you know the Lord will never ever ever disappoint and so it is so important that we look to Jesus and the thing is that today there are so many throughout our land hurting hearts empty hearts people are just so empty and you're just saying look the Lord alone can fill that void because we were made for him and if there's nothing in our soul then there's a fearful void in our life and the Lord says I'll give you what you need but people are prepared to look everywhere else to try to find that but there's only one place one place and that is in Jesus anyway we find Paul and Silas on their missionary journeys and it's very interesting how often in the Bible we find and particularly in the early church that it was in twos we find that they went in twos Paul and Silas before it was Paul and

Barnabas we often find Peter and John together when Jesus sent out the disciples sent them out on the mission it was in twos and it's I think there's a lot of value in that because the ministry is a very lonely job it's a very lonely work even though you're surrounded by people and you're interacting with people all the time because you're dealing often at a very emotional level it's emotionally draining you're often dealing with people at the sorest points in their lives and you carry a lot of things that you can't tell to anybody else there are certain things you can't share with other people that's personal that's private but that other people's concerns and worries that you can't pass on and sometimes it can be quite a burden and you can feel quite vulnerable and lonely in it and so I can see how there was method and in sending out in twos the Bible says two are better than one if one falls the other can lift them up and I thank the Lord that for a large part of my ministry that I have had a ministry as an assistantship

I had a year in Muir of Ford which I absolutely loved I was staying on my own as a minister and loved that but I have served here in Storm with the late Murdo Alec and I was with Kenny Stewart and I was Martin and I was James McKeever and I've really appreciated sharing in the ministry in my role as an assistant here and it's probably I've annoyed the living daylights out of them at times along the way because I annoy myself but there is something in having a twosome in the ministry in two together like that so here we have the early church and Paul and Silas they've been very keen to go to Asia but the Lord was redirecting them and he says not just now I want you to go to Macedonia I want you to head over to Macedonia just now and you know when we serve the Lord every Christian serves the Lord the moment you come to faith the moment you're saved you're saved to serve you've started to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and above all you must be always willing to do whatever the Lord wants you to do and you must be willing to go wherever the Lord wants you to go

[34 : 31] I remember when I became a Christian I said the Lord whatever you want me to do and there was at one point where I actually thought I was going to end up going to South America I was prepared to go but it didn't it didn't work out that the Lord closed the door but I was prepared I was ready to go because we can't and that's why I've always any time throughout my ministry that I've ever had a call or a congregation that's expressed I've always prayed about it because I don't make a decision based upon how comfortable we might feel or how how settled our family might feel or any of these things you have to ask Lord where do you want me to go what do you want me to do God is always our guide and he will show us God is far keener to show us than we are to learn what to do because often we don't want to do what God wants us to do that's a bottom line so Paul and Silas they were always ready to do just what the Lord wanted them to do and so they they head to Philippi and of course

Philippi as we know was a Philippi was a Roman colony Rome had certain strategic places within their empire which were made into little Roman colonies and Philippi was such a place and those living in the Roman colony like for instance Philippi benefited from living under Roman law because they got all the privileges and all the benefits of it and we find of course that that was one of the things that Paul who actually was a Roman citizen what they did to him where they stripped him and beat him up and put him into prison without a trial was straight against Roman law and that is why the magistrates and the beating authorities were terrified they were afraid when they discovered afterwards this was a Roman citizen and we didn't give him his rights they were afraid that the power of the law above them would come down on them so there was a lot of protection in the Roman system now in this chapter it would be it would be good to compare and contrast the two conversions that I mentioned we have first of all in verse 14 we have Lydia and her story is so different to the prison officer because it tells us very simply the Lord opened her heart it's just beautiful that

Lord opened her heart to hear Paul you couldn't have a more gentle description of how the Lord just by his spirit opened her heart to hear and to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ it was so it was so quietly done as Jesus said to Nicodemus the wind blows where it wants you hear the sound but you can't tell where it's coming or where it's going so is everyone that is born of the spirit born from above it's like God's spirit just blows and sometimes we know that it's a very warm gentle wind you go out sometimes in the summer and it's just the nicest gentle warm breeze and you say that's nice living up here as we do in rural sometimes it's anything but gentle and anything but warm sometimes it's a real blast in fact very often we know what the wind is like and sometimes it's like that in conversion as well that it's almost like a tornado it's like a full force gale storm in your life and

that's the contrast between the jailer the prison officer and Lydia Lydia's was gently done that might be how it has been for you and you know sometimes when it's gently done supposing and this is particularly for people who the Lord laid his hand upon them when they were young and they grew up with this love for the Lord Jesus Christ but they've always felt that they've never really been converted they've been waiting for this great experience within their life there's never going to be because it is already the Lord has gently opened their heart and here they are all these years later and they still love the Lord and they still serve the Lord and they want the Lord and they want to be about the Lord's work and the Lord's word is so important to them but they're still looking for something that they already have and if there's anybody like that today ask the Lord just Lord make it clear to me that I belong to you because it's difficult when you're waiting for something that you already have but for other people the experience couldn't be further from that so we said it's like a tornado you've gone through fearful conviction of sin maybe God's providence threw you upside down your world collapsed you were at the end of your show you didn't know what to do you were in agony of soul you were crying to the Lord Lord have mercy upon me help me I'm at the end but sometimes the way it is and that's why testimonies are so different the way that God works with one can be completely different to the other but the end result is always the same there is only one way of salvation and that is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ but the ways leading up to it can be so so different so anyway here we find that in Philippi as Paul and Silas making their way to the home we read of this girl who was being exploited by some men making money out of her because she had a spirit of divination in other words a new spirit within her and she was telling people her fortunes and they were making a lot of money out of her and she began to shout after Paul and Silas and Paul stopped her and he commanded that the evil spirit would come out of her and of course the result was there was uproar and when these men saw that their way of making money had gone they dragged [40 : 40] Paul and Silas along to the rulers and they turned everybody against them and the long and the short of it is that they were beaten up terribly and they were thrown into the prison and told the prison oftener these guys have to go into the inner prison into the maximum security wing of the prison and I love the attitude of Paul and Silas here because it would have been so easy to complain before God and say Lord look look my back it's pouring blood look at my feet I'm stuck in these with these chains on here and I've been doing your will we wanted to go to Asia but you sent us here and look at what happened is that the way they are no why because they knew that God had a purpose in what was happening and we must have that faith too because sometimes God touches you in order to get to somebody else you see there was a man in this prison the prison officer and he was going to have to be saved so Paul and

Silas have to end up in the prison in order that that salvation would come and so we must realise that some of the things that happen in our lives it's not about us it's about somebody else so we must have the faith to believe that God knows what he's doing in our life and our experience and so we've got to remember that there's a much bigger picture than just ourselves and rather than Paul and Silas being down and disconsolate we find that in verse 25 that they're singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them they were sharing their faith some of the prisoners were saying what these guys like they're in they're singing praise to God and they're witnessing and then as they sang and praised this great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison and the prison doors were flung wide open well the prison officer the man who was in charge when he saw what had happened he thought that's it

I'm a dead man walking because if you as a prison officer allowed the prisoner to escape you were put to death remember when Peter was released by the angel in the prison and they were searching for him Herod he ordered that all the prison officers who were there would be put to death but they would all be executed because they had allowed Peter to escape it was harsh so you can see the prison ward and he was that's it I've had it but Paul called out in the darkness don't do yourself any harm we're all here nobody's escaped so he called for a light and at that moment God dealt with this man and there must have been he was ready to plunge a sword into himself rather than be executed by the authorities and he realised he must have realised at that moment I'm on the very brink of death I'm on the brink of eternity I don't know what he had believed but God's spirit came upon him and convicted him with such power that this man who would have been a hard man he's trembling with fear and he falls down all kinds of thoughts would have flooded his mind he knew

Paul and Silas were different he had seen an attitude he probably had never seen before he had heard what he had the servant girl had been calling them the servant of the most high God he had heard their testimony he had heard their song he knew they were different and so in great distress he said what must I do to be saved and he's told believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved couldn't be simpler what does that mean two things we'll say first and foremost is you have to believe in your mind that's the first thing in other words you believe absolutely everything the Bible tells us about Jesus Christ we believe all the prophecies we believe all the Gospels we believe we believe the whole Bible we believe that because ultimately it's all an account of salvation of God's dealing with us in and through Jesus Christ so we accept all these things in our mind we have to but although we're not analysing what happened that is essential that we believe that Jesus Christ is who he is but we have to do more than that not just with our mind we have to believe in our heart we have to accept in other words what we have to do we have to give up on ourselves we have to stop thinking that somehow that we can make ourselves right with God that God is somehow going to accept us as we are no he's not it doesn't matter what we do Paul said that supposing you gave your body to be burned it wouldn't make you right with God only through in and through the Lord Jesus Christ it's where we come to the point where we are willing to hand ourselves over to the Lord and that is the hardest thing for any of us to do because we want to stay in control of our lives Lord Lord I don't want to give up on myself Lord says you have to and this is where we need his grace because we can't do it without his grace and we have to say Lord help me to give myself over to you

[46 : 14] I need you and you see this is why the Lord will so often take us to the very end of ourselves because it's when we reach the end of ourselves we've given up and we say Lord I can't do anything else here I am and you know this when you come to that place he will never give up on you because you will be saved guaranteed because that's what his word tells us those who call upon the Lord the name of the Lord shall be saved and you ask the Lord wherever you are today Lord please give me the grace to put myself to throw myself to cast myself entirely upon you him that cometh or her that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out it doesn't matter today who you are what you are what you've done in the past doesn't matter what your life is like the Lord will take you if you will believe in him he's saying to you today come to me come to me and you know the one and then it says you'll be saved on your household does that mean that when the jailer was believed and then that everybody in the household believed no but we what it means very simply is the salvation that is for you if you believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ so can everyone in your house and it would appear to us that the gospel flourished in the jailer house because you see the moment a person comes to faith something happens supposing there's only one person in the household right this man or this woman or this boy or this girl comes to faith in Jesus Christ what happens a light goes on in that home and there's a change in that home because of the Christian who is now in it and that means that in that home a prayer is being made all the time for the rest of the household there is a witness being lived there is a life being lived to and for the Lord things have changed I used to love the great Kenny MacDonald used to say you know when the Lord comes to a home he loves to linger I love that in other words you're often fine when God begins to work in a particular home that other members of the family also come in as well when the

Lord comes to a home he loves to linger one of the lovely statements I heard him make and so that's that's what Paul is saying here the gospel of Jesus Christ which is for you is for your whole household and it would appear as we read that his household were coming to faith as Paul shared the gospel with them all today this gospel is for you as well will you cry to the Lord we're going to conclude saying from Psalm 34 and sing Psalms and from verse 5 they look they look to him and shine with joy they are not put to shame this suffering man cried to the Lord from him deliverance came the angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually all those who fear and honour him he sets his people free so on psalm 34 verses 5 to 10 they look to him and shine with joy they are not good to shame this suffering man cried to the Lord from him deliverance came the angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually all those who fear and honour him he sets his people free come kiss and see the Lord is good who trusts in him is blessed oh fear the Lord who sings with me you will not be oppressed the the lions may grow weak and fail and hunger for their food but those who wake upon the

Lord will not they may they may they may the grace mercy and peace of God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forever more amen the evening service this evening will be at 6 30 so if you are able to tune in again when the Reverend James McKeever will lead the worship so if you are able to do so it would be great to tune in at 6 30 Saturday Thank you.