

(Acts) Unexpected Ministry

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon explores Paul's unexpected ministry in Philippi, highlighting the significance of individual contributions and the challenges of spreading the gospel in a new cultural context.

Duration: 59:35

Scripture: Acts 16:22-40

Topics: "Sin And Forgiveness", "Evangelism And Persecution"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the destructive nature of the pornography industry and how it is driven by greed for money. He shares a story about a pornography company sending videos to troops during a war, highlighting the contrast between the message of love and encouragement from sending Bibles and the harmful influence of pornography. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and acknowledging our own sin as the obstacle to a relationship with God. He also references a missionary couple who brought the message of God's salvation to people in the jungles of Ecuador, focusing on the need to address the issue of sin in order to receive God's forgiveness. The sermon concludes with a mention of the apostle Paul's experiences in Macedonia, where he faced opposition and persecution for spreading the gospel.

Transcript

Let's turn tonight to the 16th chapter of the book of Acts, and if you've been with us, you'll remember that in our previous study, Paul and his team, those men that were traveling with him and ministering with him, they were seeking direction from the Lord. They were looking to go into certain regions, and yet through whatever means were not told, the Holy Spirit was hindering them. Not because the Holy Spirit didn't want to do something in those particular places, but evidently it just wasn't the right timing for Paul.

And perhaps also God had someone else that he wanted to send. But as Paul was perplexed by this and really wondering what the Lord had in mind, he had a vision. And in that vision, he saw a Macedonian man.

And this man in Macedonia was crying out for help, asking for some to come over and help them. Now, up until this point, Paul had ministered from the area of Jerusalem up through Syria and then all around through what was known as Asia Minor. But he evidently had not really contemplated even crossing over the Adriatic into what would be known today technically as Europe.

Of course, then it was all part of the Roman Empire and there wouldn't have been that great distinction, but it certainly was a different part of the world. And it was the center of Greek civilization and Greek history and all those things. And so Paul has this vision of this man from Macedonia.

And so he and the men that were with them, they concluded based on the vision that God was calling them to cross over and to seek out ministry opportunities in that part of the world. And so in verse 11, it says, therefore, sailing from Troas, that's where they left from. They ran a straight course to Samothrace, which would have been an island about halfway between Troas and the mainland there that they were destined for.

And so the next day they came to Neapolis and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And they stayed in the city there for some days. And so they arrived in Philippi.

They're following what they believe to be the Lord's calling to go over and to minister in this part of the world. And as we were wrapping up the study the last time, perhaps you remember, I was talking about how possibly at this point Paul had even a greater revelation of the extent to which the gospel was to go through his ministry. And remember, it was Alexander the Great who had brought the world into subjection and had Grecianized the world.

He had Hellenized the world. He had brought the Greek culture to the known world at the time. And as Paul was sailing to this area, he's coming into the place where all of that originated to the birthplace of Alexander to Philippi, the city named after Alexander's father and to Thessalonica named after his sister.

And perhaps it was here that Paul was really beginning to understand that the Lord was calling him to really take the gospel into areas that had not yet received it. And that's how Paul did see himself as he grew and developed in his ministry. He saw himself really as a pioneer, as someone who was going into new places.

He actually said that that was his ambition to go where Christ had not been preached before. He wanted to go and just break new ground. What an adventure Paul was.

He was a man who wanted to go into new cultures and meet new people and get the gospel message to them. And so they arrived now in the city of Philippi. Now, it says here that Philippi was a colony.

Now, the Romans, of course, dominated the world at the time, but the Romans, as they would go into a particular region, they would allow certain elements of the culture and even the religions and things to pretty much remain the same. But there were certain places where they would set up colonies and a colony was basically a miniature Rome is what a colony was. And they would send into the area, they would send veterans, military men who were veterans and retired.

They would go in and they would know Roman law and Roman culture and all of those things. And they would go in and they would establish in a particular place, a strategic place. They would establish a little Roman center.

And that was all just to remind the people who was boss. It was really there to just, you know, keep everybody with that keen awareness that the Roman authority was watching over everything that was going on. And so Philippi was a colony.

Now, if you happen to be a Roman citizen and you lived in Philippi, you were a celebrity. You were a person who was a favored person. And so it was a great place to be if you happen to be a Roman.

So that's the place that they ended up in there in Philippi. And remember, there was a vision of a man that was calling out for help. Now, Paul had this habit of going to the Jewish people first.

Paul was himself a Jew, of course, and he was under the firm conviction that the gospel was to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. So he was in the habit of going into a place and beginning his ministry in a synagogue. But interestingly, evidently, there was no synagogue in Philippi.

And that's quite amazing because the Jews were, of course, scattered throughout all of the world at the time. And in order for a synagogue to be established, you needed to have 10 Jewish men in any community. So because there was no synagogue in Philippi, that seems to imply that there were not 10 Jewish men in the city.

And so that was a bit unusual that you didn't find much of a Jewish community there, because, as I said, the Jews were pretty much scattered throughout the entire Roman Empire. So Paul is going now into this Gentile dominated environment. And that's OK for Paul, because you remember, he grew up in Tarsus.

He himself has Roman citizenship, although he's a Jew ethnically and religiously. Yet he also has a keen understanding of the Roman mindset and the Greek culture and all of those kinds of things. So on the Sabbath day, because there was no synagogue, they went out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made.

So if there were not 10 Jews in a city and if there was no synagogue, then they would seek a place to meet for prayer and they would seek a pleasant place. And here they sought a place out by the riverside. Now, to the Jewish people, water was very important.

Running water was very important. So many of their rituals and things had to do with bathing and cleansing and so forth. So they probably would go down by the river to have access to that water to ceremonially cleanse themselves.

But they would go and they would spend time on the Sabbath day there in prayer. And so Luke is recording this now, he says, and we sat down and we spoke to the women who met there. So again, it doesn't really appear that there were many Jewish men around, but there were some women that were meeting there for prayer.

And so they spoke to these women. And now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God.

Now, Thyatira, of course, is back across where Paul had come from. And in that region of Asia Minor, Thyatira was there and the woman was a native of Thyatira, but she was a businesswoman. She sold purple and that was a lucrative business in those days.

And so she was probably fairly wealthy and she had set up her business here in Philippi. But she was a believer in the Lord. She was probably Jewish.

We don't know that she was for sure, but she probably was. But she had a faith in the Lord. And as Paul sat there ministering and sharing.

It says the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. The Lord opened her heart, you know, that is something that needs to happen with every person that we talk to. The Lord needs to open a person's heart, and that's why it's so important to pray for people.

That's why it's important to pray for our loved ones and it's important to pray for our friends and our acquaintances to pray that their hearts would be pliable, that they would be softened so that when the word does come to them, there's a receptivity. That's why it's important when we have opportunities to speak to people about the Lord, that even as we're speaking to them, we be praying, Lord, open their mind, Lord, soften their heart, Lord, give them the ability to receive. Because remember, Jesus told us that when the word is going out, the devil is trying to counter what God is wanting to do.

Remember the parable that Jesus communicated that in the parable of the sower, where the sower goes out and he sows the seed he was speaking of himself, the son of man, he's sowing the word of God. And as the word of God is being sown, he said some falls by the wayside and the birds of the air come and snatch it up. And then Jesus gave us the interpretation of that.

He said, when the word goes out and falls on a hardened heart, immediately the devil comes and snatches up the word before it has the opportunity to take root. And so that's why it's so important to pray, to pray for people, to just keep praying for them. And then when we have those opportunities to be praying for them as well, that God would really open their hearts.

So the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And so she persuaded us.

So Luke doesn't give us all the details. Evidently, there was a bit of time that passed and her household was able to hear the message. And each and every one of them embraced the Lord and they were baptized.

And then this delegation, this team that Paul had, they were invited to come and stay in the home of Lydia. So she was going to take care of them. Now, here's an interesting thing.

This is the beginning of the church in Philippi. In our New Testament, of course, we have the letter to the Philippians. That is to the church in Philippi.

Well, the church in Philippi got its start in the home of Lydia. That's. Been a common means of getting churches started, home fellowships, home groups, just opening up one's house to have someone come in and share the Bible.

And I'll tell you, many Calvary chapels have been started that way. Some of the very large Calvary chapels have actually been started originally as a home fellowship. And that's the model that we have right here for us in the scripture.

And it started with this one person. And here's something that I think is important to take into consideration. You know, sometimes when we're thinking about serving God or doing a work for God, we're thinking about something like planning a church.

You know, a lot of times we look at ourselves and we think, you know, what can I do? I'm just one person. How could I really make any sort of a difference? Well, Lydia was just one person. But Lydia said to the

apostles, come and stay in my home.

And no doubt when they came, they began to share and to minister the word in her house. And more and more people began to come. And that was how the church got started.

And so you see, as one person, you can make a tremendous difference. You could do something like open your house. You could do something like just invite someone in to teach the word or you can make some sort of a contribution and say, you know, we need to have a study here.

I want to make a contribution so we can rent this community center or something like that. Little things like that are the very foundational things of how ministry begins and develops and progresses. And we need to understand that there's no contribution, contribution that's insignificant.

And so this woman, I doubt that at this time she actually thought, OK, we're going to plan a church through my home here. But just her hospitality, her thankfulness for the salvation and the ambassadors that had brought the message to her. She was so thankful she just invited them in.

But then as a result, the church was birthed there in Philippi. And so it happened, verse 16, as we went to prayer. So again, some time has passed.

They're residing there in Philippi. But once again, they're going to prayer. And a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us who brought her master's much profit by fortune telling.

Now, this term spirit of divination, a literal translation is. That this slave girl was possessed with a python spirit. Now, in.

Greek mythology, you had the story of Apollo. And. The story of how.

This python was the guardian. To the. Temple of Apollo and to the Delphic Oracle.

Today, if you go to Greece, Greece is a fascinating place and we've had the opportunity to go and visit Greece and to see the ancient ruins there in Athens. I mean, it's really, you know, impressive to say the least when you look at these these incredible structures that are thousands and thousands of years old. But while we were there visiting one time, we were taken to the Oracle of Delphi.

And this is where the people would come and they would come to find out their future and all these sorts of things. But it was this python spirit that was there, you know, the inspiration behind the Oracle. Now, of course, this was all mythological, but beyond mythological, it was all very demonic.

And this particular young woman was actually possessed by this spirit. And that was a common thing at the time. There were many young women who were devotees to this python spirit.

They were known as the Pythonese. And they were they were able, as it says here, to fortune tell they were they had a clairvoyant sort of a thing going. And so that's what's happening with this girl and her masters.

They made much profit off of her. She was very young. The implication in the language, too, is that she was a very young girl.

So who knows? She could have been 10, 12, 13 years old. The girl followed Paul and us and cried out, saying, these men are the servants of the most high God who proclaim to us the way of salvation. So she's following them around and she's crying out, these are the servants of the most high God.

Listen to them. They're telling us the way of salvation. Now, you would think, well, hey, that's all right.

She was advertising. She was helping out in the campaign. But notice, Paul didn't feel that way.

And this she did for many days. But Paul greatly annoyed. Paul was greatly irritated by this, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And he came out that very hour. Now, why is it that Paul would have reacted this way to this situation? Why was it that Paul did not want this kind of publicity? Well, first of all, this term that she used, the most high God, was also used of Zeus. And so there would not have necessarily been any clear distinction in the thinking of the people when she said these men are servants of the most high God.

Many of the people might have thought they're the servants of Zeus, but also even Yahweh, the God of Israel. Was known among some Greeks as being synonymous with Zeus, much like today, we have many people who are under the false impression that Allah is the same as the God of the Bible. But yet we who are Christians know that that is not true at all.

The Allah of the Koran is not remotely related to the Yahweh of the Bible. And so there would not have been the kind of clarity she wasn't necessarily talking about the most high God that we know, the God Yahweh and about his son, Jesus Christ. And of course, Paul would not want at all for anyone to think that what he was proclaiming had any association with who this woman was and the kinds of things that she would have been known for.

Paul wanted there to be a clear distinction between this occultic thing that was going on and what they were proclaiming. He wanted no confusion whatsoever, so he did not allow it to continue. But he went for many days with this going on.

But finally, obviously, he was prompted by the spirit to then deal with it. And immediately the young woman was delivered from demonic possession. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities when they saw that their hope of profit was gone.

They didn't have any concern for the young woman. The fact that she had been under the control of this demonic spirit and demon possession is not a pleasant thing. And those who have dabbled in the occult and those who have gone into that sort of thing, they can tell you firsthand of the dark, dark side of all of that.

Obviously, dark being demonic. So here's here's a woman who, yes, she could tell fortunes and make them money, but she obviously lived in torment herself personally because of the demon possession. And now she's liberated from that.

But these guys, they don't care about that. They don't care about her. All they know is that, hey, our cash cow is it's gone.

You know, we're not going to be making money anymore. And, you know, as the scripture says, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And it's amazing today as well.

Nothing's changed at all to see how many things people do evil, wicked things in the end. They do it for the money. It's all about money.

You think of the whole pornography industry and all of that and all of these young women and young men and their lives and the destructive nature of that whole thing. And then you think of these people behind the scenes who are manipulating the whole thing and they're doing it all for the money. I remember when the when the war first broke out and, you know, people were seeking to send Bibles and things of that nature over to the troops to to encourage them.

And I remember reading about a certain pornography company that was sending videos over to the troops as well. And, you know, some people spoke up and said, look, you know, this is a Muslim country and the Muslims are already hostile toward the West because they think of us in those terms of perversity and all of that sort of thing. And, you know, this this person wrote to the president of this particular pornography company and basically said, you know, please don't do this.

And the guy wrote back and, you know, said. I'm going to do it because I've got the freedom to do it and that's what America is all about. It's all about free speech and freedom to do what we want to do.

And I'm just going to demonstrate my support for America by exercising my right to free speech. And I'm going to send these over. And of course, he was going to make some money on it as well.

And that's so often. The very thing behind the scenes, the whole drug trade and that whole world of. Destruction and misery and death and all of those things, and, you know, these big drug lords and the cartels in South America and, you know, even in our own communities, people living high and, you know, life in the fast lane and all.

And it's because of their drug dealing and all the lives they're destroying. But it's all about money carrying nothing for the people that they're actually in the process of destroying. And so that was the situation here.

But they brought them to the magistrates and they said, now, notice. They come with this. They come as though they're concerned about other issues.

But the real issue was they they were going to lose their income. So they bring these men and they say these men being Jews exceedingly trouble our city. And they teach customs which are not lawful for us being Romans to receive or observe.

So they come and they know, of course, that if they were to say, you know, we had this girl, she was fortune telling for us and they cast the spirit out of her. And now we're out of business. Who was going to listen to that? But they come with this.

Concocted story, you know, that they're concerned about Roman law, they're concerned about these Jews violating the laws of the land and so forth. You know, it's like, you know, these people you hear today, oh, you know, we can't have people speaking in public schools about Jesus Christ. Of course, that would be a violation of of the First Amendment.

And we you know, the church and state clause, we don't want we want to keep those laws. We respect the Constitution. And that's what no, we're not against God at all.

We're not against Jesus. We just are defending the Constitution. Nonsense.

It's absolutely ridiculous. They're not defending the Constitution. They distorted it in the first place.

They hate God, they don't want anybody to hear about God. The last thing they want is for young people to hear about God because they want to bring them into their worldview and their mentality and and into their way of thinking, to control and manipulate and everything else. So my point is this, the world hasn't changed any, has it? The Bible is very relevant today because the things we're reading about here are the very things that are going on right in our own world.

So the multitude rose up together against them and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Now, let's pause for a moment and think about this whole thing. Paul is in Troas. He's trying to go into Bithynia.

He's trying to go into Galatia, is trying to go to these different places. And the Holy Spirit keeps forbidding him. But yet he has a vision and there's a man in Macedonia saying, come over to help us.

And so by faith, they take this venture and they head out and they go and they find not a man, but they find a woman, Lydia. And she opens up her house and that's good. And some people are responding and all.

But now things sort of take a turn for the worse. And they do a good deed in delivering this woman, but suddenly they're caught up in this whole mob thing and they're brought before the magistrates. And without any kind of a fair trial, they're taken, they're beaten.

The next thing you know, they find themselves in jail. And not just in jail, but having been beaten and in jail and not just in a cell, but now fastened into the stocks, which was a very uncomfortable situation. Now, at this point, you might think that they might have thought, was that vision really from God? You know, maybe we missed it.

Maybe it wasn't the Lord calling us to Macedonia. I mean, after all, this isn't the kind of ministry that we were anticipating. And, you know, those kinds of things happen sometimes.

It doesn't mean that it's not the call of God. It just means that. There are more aspects to the plan than God let you in on at the time and for very wise reasons, probably.

They might not have been so anxious to go had the Lord said, hey, this is what I want you to do. I want you to go over to Philippi and there's a demon possessed girl. I want you to deliver her and then they're going to take you and beat you and throw you into jail.

Sound good. They might have said, Lord, is there somewhere else we could go? But no, they were led by the Lord. But there just were elements in the plan that God hadn't shown them.

But the great thing is these guys, they trusted the Lord and they were able to roll with the punches, so to speak. They were able to just acclimate to the situation. And Paul's no stranger to this sort of thing.

Silas might have been we don't know what Silas's previous history was, but this is his first missionary journey with Paul. And he might be at this point thinking, no wonder Mark bailed out on this guy. Maybe maybe I should have gone with Barnabas.

So Paul's no stranger to this and now, you know, the same kinds of things are happening. But as they're cast into this prison, notice what happens at midnight. Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them.

This is so beautiful. And the beautiful thing about it is that they didn't know what was going to happen next. You see, we know we're reading it after the fact.

In other words, they weren't praying and singing because they knew in just a few moments God was going to bring this miraculous deliverance along. They weren't praying and singing because they thought, OK, if we pray and sing, God's going to bring an earthquake and get us out of this situation. They were praying and singing simply because that's what they did.

Because they were God's men and they were trusting the Lord. And even in a circumstance like this, they were able to keep their focus on the Lord. And the Lord was with them there in the prison.

And there was undoubtedly a sense among them of the presence of God right there with them. You know, when we hear about people who are persecuted for the faith, I think quite often I know I do when I read about those things, you know, there's something that troubles me about that. And I think, oh, how could that have happened? And and, you know, you sort of put yourself in their position and you and you empathize with that.

But, you know, there's something that happens in those kinds of situations that we who are observers or we who are hearing about the story after the fact or whatever, we're not privy to some of what's going on there. And the thing that we don't always understand is that the Lord is meeting those people right where they're at and he's giving them the ability. To endure what they're enduring, he's giving them the grace, you see, you might look at this and say, well, you know, I want to serve the Lord, but I couldn't go to jail or be beaten or be persecuted.

I couldn't handle that. Well, as you sit here right now and think about it, you probably know in your thinking process, you probably can't handle it. As a matter of fact, I was talking to a young lady last night from Cambodia.

And she was telling me that she's been feeling that the Lord has been prompting her and preparing her to go back and to minister in that land that she came from. And at the same time that she's been sensing that, there's also been this nagging sort of a fear that if she is to do this, then it's going to mean certain death for her. And actually, I was teaching last night on the subject of spiritual warfare and I was talking about how that's the kind of thing Satan will do.

Satan will often come to us in our thinking process and he will threaten us with evil consequences for our obedience to God. And so she actually came up to me to tell me that having shared that last night, it really lifted that burden off her. It liberated her because she realized what was going on.

She realized it was Satan. And yet I said to her, I said, you know, there's no question about it. What you're considering doing is a very dangerous thing.

It is a very hostile environment to the gospel in that part of the world. But if God's calling you to know this, he'll be with you. And whatever happens, he will give you the grace.

Now, I couldn't in all good conscience say to her, oh, don't worry, go just nothing's going to happen to you. You're going to be fine. I don't know that.

And if I were to try to give her that sort of assurance, I might be misleading her greatly. And, you know, that's true in every situation. The world is hostile to God.

And the hostility toward the gospel of Jesus Christ. Is still very prevalent in many places in our world, and as people are going out into the mission field and so forth, it really is a dangerous thing. But that's OK, because the Lord is with us and whatever we go through, here's what we can be sure of.

He'll be with us and he'll give us the grace when we need it. You see, we we don't have the grace right now to even think about it. Oh, I can't think about that, but I don't need the grace right now.

I'll need the grace if it comes and when I need it, that's when it will be there. And these guys could sit in this prison cell and sing, worship and pray because the grace of God was there for them. And, you know, that's true, not only for those that are going to the mission field, that's true for each and every one of us.

You know, a lot of Christians live in fear of death. They say, oh, I'm just so afraid to die. I just and you know, you can talk about it and assure them, I know all of that's true, but I'm just so afraid.

Well, obviously, you're not going to die real soon if you're so afraid, because you see, when it comes time, the grace to die will be there. You don't have it because you're not dying. When you're dying, you'll get it, the grace will come.

People just live in fear, I think I'm dying, oh, I'm so afraid. Oh, you're OK. You don't have the grace yet.

And when you get the grace, it's OK, you're not afraid anymore. But it's not only as I'm saying, it's not only the mission field or this kind of context of that sort of persecution or whatever, it's it's whatever the case might be, because there are lots of prison houses, aren't there? We can have those kinds of experiences just in our own lives right here through family crisis, through financial distress, through health issues and through, you know, just different things that happen in our lives. But here's the great thing that we can always know is that the Lord is with us.

And when we go through those things, we find that there is a grace. That meets us right in that situation that sustains us through that, and that's what they had here. They were singing praises to God because God was there and they sensed his presence.

And as they were doing this, the prisoners. Now, they were listening to them, see, this is all part. Here's the thing.

This whole thing is all part of God's plan. Remember the vision Paul has the men of Macedonia. It could very well be that we're going to be introduced to him right now.

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 everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. You see, under Roman law, if prisoners escaped.

Then it was your head. And so as far as this guy knows, all the cell doors are open and he couldn't imagine any prisoners sticking around. They've all fled.

And so rather than go through the the horrors of being executed, he decides he's just going to end it all right there. And so Paul evidently saw this going on and he called out with a loud voice saying, do yourself no harm, for we are all here. And then he called for a light, ran in, fell down, trembling before Paul and Silas, and he brought them out and he said, sirs, what must I do to be saved? So here it is.

This was all part of the plan of God, this man right here, sirs, what must I do to be saved? We don't know the background, so we have no idea how he could have come to that conclusion. Maybe he heard them singing and praying. Maybe there was some conversation, he's the one that put them in prison and put them in the stocks.

We don't know what he knew, but obviously he knew enough to know that he needed to be saved. And so he comes and he falls down before them, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said to him, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You and your household.

What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The only thing that we must do to be saved is to realize we need to be saved and then to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This guy realized he needed to be saved.

You see, his the weight of his sin had come home to him and now he's frightened and he realizes he needs to be saved. The minute a person realizes that the weight of their sin is upon them and that they're responsible for their sin, the minute they realize that and they cry out, what must I do to be saved? The the response comes immediately from the Lord. Believe in me.

That's it. But, you know. So many people don't realize that.

They don't know that. And instead, they think that in order to be saved, I've got to, you know, perform these works or I've got to join this church or I've got to go through this ritual or something like that. But it's much simpler than that.

When a person comes under the conviction of the spirit and a person realizes that they're they're dead in their sin and they're under the judgment of God, all they need to do is say, Lord, Jesus saved me. And I think sometimes even as Christians, we can complicate it for people. And we've got this procedure that we've got to lead them through.

And yet what they really need to do simply is just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, just put their trust in him. But that is preceded by the conviction of sin. You know, I think sometimes we fail today to to address the sin issue with people.

And it's important that we that we remember that, you know, this is a real simple thing, really. And I've been thinking about this recently, I mentioned to you that I had read this book a while back on this missionary couple, and I don't want to go into detail again because somebody said you mentioned that

every time you preach now. Well, as you can see, it's greatly influenced me.

But the thing that really struck me, one of the things the thing the thing is a number of things, but one of the things that really struck me was how they went to these. These people living in the jungles of Ecuador and they brought to them, this was a simple message they brought to them, the message of God, the creator. And who sent his son into the world to save them from their sin.

And everyone that they would talk to, they would bring up to them the sin issue. And that the sin was the obstacle to this relationship with God that they were presenting. And, you know, as I as I was reading through the story, I was thinking myself how so often we sort of miss that a lot of times.

But it's really simple, you know, you walk up to somebody and you have a conversation with them and in the course of talking to them, you're telling them God loves you and God has a plan for your life and all of that. But you know what? We need to add to that. But, you know, there's one thing that's standing between you and that.

There's one thing that keeps you from this wonderful life, it's your sin. But Jesus has done something about it. But people have to come to the consciousness of the fact that they have sinned, that they are sinners and that that sin is the thing, that's the obstacle to the life of God.

But Jesus has done everything that needs to be done to remove it. This man, he had come to that conclusion. That's why he said, what must I do to be saved? We need to bring up the sin issue, not necessarily in, you know, a dramatic way where we pronounce them sinners.

But yet just the the stark reality of sin, you are a sinner. And that's the the thing that stands between you and God, that's the thing that stands between you and heaven, that's the thing that stands between you and eternal life. But it need not be there because Jesus did everything that needed to be done to remove it.

And this is how that happens. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And here Paul says to this man, you and your household.

Now, some people have misunderstood the apostle and thought here that what he was teaching was that when a person becomes a believer, automatically everybody in their household is saved. That's not the case. What it seems to be saying here in this particular situation was that Paul was speaking prophetically.

Perhaps there was some concern on the man's part about his family, and Paul was just giving that him that assuring word that your household will be saved with you. And so, of course, then on the other hand, it might be that Paul's just simply saying, you know, you will be saved as you believe in your household will be saved as well if they believe. But then 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 he washed their stripes and immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now, when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. And so this perhaps was the man in the vision.

It doesn't say it was, but here's a man who needed to be saved. And isn't it interesting? The lengths that God will go to to get his message to people. What does he do? He sends his servants into the jail.

You know, Paul would say later, as he would write to Timothy, he would say this. He he said, I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. I endure all things.

In other words, for Paul, it was OK to go to jail if it meant that the salvation of this jailor and his family. It was OK to be stoned in Lystra if it meant the salvation of the people in Lystra. Paul was completely at the disposal of the Lord, basically just said, Lord, whatever you got to do with me and through me to get your gospel to people and to get them saved.

Here I am. Do whatever you got to do. That's the way to live right there.

And that's where things get exciting. That's where things happen. But, you know, I'm absolutely convinced that Paul was not remotely disappointed about any of this stuff.

He was trusting the Lord, and then when they saw the conversion of this man and his family and you can imagine that he said, oh, Lord, thank you. Thank you for getting us to this jail to meet this guy. You know, when a person is committed to serving the Lord in that sense, they're really unstoppable all throughout history.

You know, these kinds of things have happened. They take a person who's preaching publicly and they say, you shut up or we're going to throw you in jail. And he persists and they say, oh, we're going to, you know, we're going to stick you in prison.

And they persist and finally they take them and arrest them and throw them in jail, and then they preached everybody in jail. You know, they'll stop. They just got a new audience and a more receptive one, probably criminals a lot of times are more accepted, more receptive than others.

And that's happened so many times. But that's the way to look at it. And that's the way Paul saw it and understood it.

And so when it was day, the magistrate sent the officer saying, let those men go now. You know, it's a bit curious as to why they even put him in jail anyway. They had beaten them already, which would have been, you know, that really would have been sufficient punishment.

But they put him in jail and it would seem that it was because it was just a chaotic thing. And they weren't quite sure why they were doing what they were doing. So we're going to throw them in jail and we'll make a decision later about what we're going to do with them.

Well, after they probably went back and the magistrates reevaluated the thing, they probably thought, you know, it wasn't really we probably overdid it by putting them in jail in the first place. So they call to the officers and they say, let let the men go. So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul saying the magistrates have sent to let you go now, therefore, depart and go in peace.

But Paul said to them, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No, indeed. Let them come themselves and get us out.

Paul's a tough. He's a tough guy. Says, oh, no.

Now, you see, here's the thing. To to beat or imprison a Roman citizen. Could result in your execution.

So all of a sudden, these magistrates, these guys are paranoid. They didn't know that they were Romans, they should have asked him a few questions, but it was, you know, again, sort of a mob situation. But now Paul says, oh, no, we're not going to go that way.

We're Romans, we're uncondemned. We didn't have a fair trial. You come.

Now, people would say, well, why why would Paul do that? I mean, isn't that pushing it a little bit too far? But you see, I think Paul, he's doing something wise. He's going to take advantage of the law. To the extent that he's able to.

And that's what we ought to do as well. We have certain laws, there are certain rights that we possess as citizens of this country, and there are a lot of people today that want to deprive us of our rights. And a lot of times Christians will just say, oh, well, you know, we just we you know, we're just not going to bother with it.

We don't want to fight it or whatever. We need to stand up for those things while we have them. There might come a day when we don't have them and we don't have any recourse and we can't, you know, really do anything about it.

And if that's what happens, then that's what happens. But while we have these rights and privileges, we ought to seek to take advantage of them and defend them and hold on to them. You know, I read a book just the other day and the guy was talking about how, you know, the gospel, of course, wasn't written in the context of the Constitution of the United States and the First Amendment and all of that.

But nevertheless, that's the situation in our country. And even though the gospel can still go forth without religious liberty like we have it, it goes forth a lot better in some ways when you do have religious liberty. And it's true.

I mean, let's face it, there are countries today where they don't have the religious liberty. You can't go into Saudi Arabia and preach the gospel. And therefore.

The spreading of the gospel in that country is a more difficult task. So we have certain rights and privileges here that have been passed on to us from those who founded our nation, and we need to take advantage of those things and we need to seek to defend those things as well as lawfully and as long as we can do that. If there comes a time when that's no longer the case, we no longer have the religious liberty.

Then, of course, we'll deal with that when it comes. But while we have it, and I think Paul shows us that right here and on other occasions, Paul will take advantage of his Roman citizenship. He will utilize his position as a Roman to further the gospel.

And the point of the book that I was reading, incidentally, was that young men and women ought to really consider today a future in public service and politics and things like that. Christian young men and women, because we need people like that in those kinds of places, influencing policy in those types of things. And, you know, I agree we do.

And one of the things that's happened in our country is that at a period in time, the church, many evangelical people just sort of withdrew from the culture. Sort of threw their hands up and said, you know, everything's so wicked, let's just get out of all of this secular scene here and just sort of retreat into the church. Well, that's more pleasant in one sense, but yet, on the other hand, as time passes, you see the

ramifications of it are far from pleasant because now we're in a situation where we have people in power politically and making policies and things like that who are dead set against everything that we believe in and doing their best to fight against our freedoms to continue to spread the gospel.

So I must say that as I read this little book, I had to agree in a lot of ways with the person who wrote it, that it would be a wonderful thing for young men and women to pursue those kinds of things for the glory of God and for the maintaining of the liberty that we have. And for with the future idea of the gospel continually going forth without those governmental interferences and restraints and so forth. And so, Paul, he sets us an example here and they told the officers these words or the officers told the words of the magistrates and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out and asked them to depart from the city. And so they went out of the prison and they entered the house of Lydia. And when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

So back to the house of Lydia and notice they encouraged the brethren, so the church is growing. In Philippi. And we'll find that as time passes and when Paul finally writes back to them, the Philippians became very near and dear to the heart of the apostle Paul, they became co-workers with him in the evangelization of their region and they got behind him.

They supported his work and they had this lifelong bond that developed as as he had come to them and led them to Christ. They then in turn would become some of his main supporters. And interestingly, when he writes to the church in Philippi, remember, began in the house of Lydia with one person when he writes to the church, he addresses it to the elders plural and the deacons plural.

Which indicates that if you have a number of elders and a number of deacons, you have a large number of believers. So from this one woman. And her hospitality and her willingness to open up and allow God to use her life, this great church was planted and this great work of God was accomplished in this region.

And not only there, but support came for the apostles ongoing ministry. The Philippians said, we want Paul to go to new places and do for those people what he's done for us. And that's the way it works today, too.

And so like Lydia, we just. Open up our hearts and our homes and our lives and just say, Lord, we want to be used by you. In whatever way you can use us.

And know that there are many like the jailer. That are yet to be saved. They're just waiting for that person to come along.

And if we can be instrumental in that in some way, either being the person ourselves or helping that person get where they need to go, whatever the case, that's what we want to do. And that's why I love studying this book of Acts, because it's just one exciting thing after another. And I really believe that the Lord wants us to look at this and what was happening then and say.

This is what you want to do today, Lord, we believe that. And so here we are. We are the people today.

And God is looking to use. People to touch other people. Let's just make ourselves available to him, Lord, we thank you for these great stories, true stories of how you were working in the early days of the church.

But Lord, not just history for us to read with interest, but also prophecy about the future, about today, about the things that you want to do. Even in these days. Lord, you want to send us places.

You want to use us right where we're at. You want us to open our hearts and our homes and our lives and. Lord, you want to touch people all over the world.

And we want to be part of that, we want to be part of what you're doing. And so, Lord, work in our hearts, fill us. And use us for your glory and Lord, thank you that.

Whatever prison we might find ourselves in. Be it literal or figurative. We thank you, Lord, that you've promised to be with us and give us grace.

And Lord, perhaps even tonight, there are those that feel that they are in prison. And I pray, Lord, that they would know that you're with them. And Lord, that.

Rather than fretting, rather than despairing. That they would be able to pray and to sing hymns to you and Lord, knowing that. You're a very present help in time of trouble and that you're going to work and that even though it might look bleak like it did for Paul and Silas when they were cast into that dungeon.

You had a plan. A great plan to touch many lives, and even in this present difficulty. That some are experiencing tonight.

Just assure them, Lord. That as they trust you, you've got a plan and you're working out your purpose through it. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen.

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