

Earthquaking the Way Into the Evangelisation of a Continent

by Ian Paisley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and the role of the Holy Spirit in conversion, using the story of the jailer's conversion as an example of how anyone can be saved through believing in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 36:29

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 16:13-15, Acts 16:30, Acts 16:34, 1 Corinthians 4:12-13

Topics: "Salvation Story", "Faith Conversion"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of the Jailer from the Bible. The Jailer was a hard and wicked man who took pleasure in the suffering of prisoners. However, one night, there was a sudden shaking in the prison, and all the doors were opened. The Jailer, fearing for his life, decided to take his own life. But before he could do so, he heard the voice of Paul, who assured him that all the prisoners were still there. This encounter led to the Jailer's conversion and the salvation of his entire household. The preacher emphasizes the power of belief in Jesus Christ as the answer to salvation and encourages both unbelievers and believers to continue believing in order to experience joy and eternal life.

Transcript

We'll find an authorized version in the English language of the Holy Scriptures before you in the pew. Pick it up and turn with me to the New Testament, to the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts. Acts chapter sixteen.

We'll want to read some verses from this chapter of God's holy and precious word. We'll find it on page one hundred and fifty-five in the New Testament part of the Bible, the second part. The book of the Acts of the Holy Ghost through the apostles at the chapter sixteen.

Verse thirteen, And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made. And we sat down and spake unto the woman which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken by God.

And when she was baptized, and her heart cold, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And it came to pass, as

we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with the spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying.

The seer followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them, and the magistrates went off their clothes.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stop at midnight. Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.

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 loosed. And the first keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house shall be saved. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his street-wings. And when he had brought them into his house, he sat meekly before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

The magistrates said, Let those men go, and the keeper of the prison said, The magistrates have sent to let you go, therefore depart and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly, uncondemned being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and bring us up. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates, and they feared when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed. God shall stand with his own divine seal of approval and blessing upon this reading of his very own infallible book. Open your Bible at the sixteenth chapter of the book of the Acts.

My subject tonight is Earthquaking the Way into the Evangelization of Europe. No greater evangelization of any part of the world started in the quietest of ways as this great invasion by the gospel preachers into Europe. It started with a very quiet woman's prayer meeting.

It's well they weren't plume of brethren, or they would have no meeting at all. But at that meeting there was a business woman called Lydia, who very quietly opened her heart to the Lord. And she was so soundly

converted, she opened her home to the Lord.

And it was from there that they started their evangelistic drive. The second incident provoked a storm. A devil-possessed young woman, filled with an evil spirit of divination, bantered Paul and Silas and their friends as they made their way to the morning woman's prayer meeting each day.

Paul was greatly grieved with the language of this devil-possessed girl. And eventually he cast the devil out of her. This brought the furies down upon the heads of Paul and Silas and his fellow workers.

The girl's masters, who had made a lot of money through her spirit of divination, brought apostles before the magistrates of the city. And they hurled fierce and lying accusations against them. They made political charges against them, linking them with rebellion against Caesar's rule.

And branded them as part of the disturbers coming from the Jewish nation. The result was the stripping of the preachers of their clothes. And when they were naked, they were severely beaten with many strikes.

And then they were taken to the prison and cast with great force into the prison. And the dealer was instructed to deal hardly with them. And he thrust them into the inner prison.

And he made their feet fast in the stone. Nothing dunched them. The apostles prayed and sang praises to God.

And then the lid was blown off the whole situation. There was a great earthquake. It wasn't a small rumble of the earth.

It was a great. Every part of the prison rocked under the grasp of that earthquake. The very foundations of the prison were shaken.

And all the binding chains and stops that were on the prisoners were all smashed. This great earthquake made the extraordinary way for the evangelization and conversion of the whole of Europe to the Christian faith. The quietness of the prayer meetings.

The queerness of that devil-possessed woman. The quaking of the earth. All welded together brought about a series of happenings which led to the fire of revival being kindled in Philippi.

What a kindling! And what a fire! We are here tonight in part of Europe. And we are having the gospel preached because of this incident. I want to take seven looks tonight at the jailer.

I want you to look with me at this jailer before the prisoners were committed to his charge. For his conversion is a remarkable instance of divine grace. Prison jailers under Caesar's rule were hard men.

They were bitter men. They were drunken men. And they were wicked men.

They were mostly the scum of mankind who took great delight in the torture and suffering of the prisoners that they were in charge of. The world of the Caesars was a wicked world. It was a tough world.

It was a hard world. It was a vengeful world. It was a sinful world.

It was an unloving world. And it was an unkind world. No doubt, the character of his day and the character of the office he held had taken a country produced in the jailer.

But secondly, let us look at the jailer when the prisoners were committed to his charge. The character of this jailer is seen in the brief description of his activity when these special prisoners were committed to his custody. Silas and Paul were in a dreadful condition when they were handed over.

Their clothes had been torn off them by the magistrates. They had been very severely and cruelly beaten. Their backs were covered with stripes that ran red with their blood.

And then they were cast into prison. The meaning of the word was they were thrown into prison with no respect for their penance. That word portrays the brute force that was used to cast them into the prison.

The jailer was sternly ordered to keep them safely. How did he respond? With more cruel handling. He thrust them.

And that word thrust suggests he manhandled them into the inner self. He pushed them down on the ground. And he took the chains from the stocks and fastened them in the stock.

Let us look thirdly at the jailer when the prisoners were thus sick. He didn't think of their bleeding bodies. He didn't think of their tattered garments.

He did not worry about the bitterness of their plight. He didn't care that they were hungry. And he didn't take time to listen to their prayers and their singing.

There is no mention that he even heard at any time their prayers or singing. The other prisoners heard them but he closed his ears to all such things. Instead, he had a supper.

He went to his bed. He had not even one thought for the badly abused prisoners in the inner self. He was in no way disturbed.

How do I know? Because when he put his head on the pillow, he went to sleep. He heard nothing. He was asleep.

But let's take a fourth look at the jailer. The jailer was awakened. Suddenly, his peaceful sleep was disturbed.

And when he opened his eyes, the whole prison was rocking from side to side. Every door was off its hinges. Every prisoner was loose.

Because the law was under Caesar that if a jailer lost, then he immediately forfeited. Do you know that those famous characters in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius, both committed suicide in this very city, the city of Philippi. And here is this man, and he is standing within an inch of hell.

He has the sword, he has the sword at his breast, ready to plunge it in. Paul recognized what was going to happen. And with all the thunder that his voice could muster, he cried out to the jailer, Do thyself no harm, we are all here.

So the jailer was kept eternity. And he was about by his own hand. Let's take a fifth look at the jailer.

Notice the jailer's three times he is on the record, and only three times that he spoke. First of all, he called for a light. Secondly, he called for spiritual light to become a Christian and to be saved.

And last of all, he told Paul of the light of his own deliverance. He said, the magistrates have sent to let you go, now therefore depart and go in peace. Let's take a sixth look at the jailer.

He cries for salvation. What must I do to be saved? The jailer was not an ignorant man. The scenes at Philippi every day were known to him.

It was his business to know what was happening in the city. And if there was unrest, what his duties would be if that unrest broke out. He had no doubt heard of the testimony of the devil possessed girl, who said about Paul and Silas, these are the servants of the most high.

He must have been very impressed by the majesty and the grace of Paul and Silas. Other prisoners cursed their persecutors and damned the magistrate, but these two men showed patience and love and respect. Their testimony was the testimony of 1 Corinthians 4 verses 12 and 13.

Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we suffer. Being defamed, we entreat.

We are made as a filth of all things unto thee. Almighty God was at work in the jailer's mind, in the jailer's conscience and in the jailers. It was Charles Wesley who wrote the lines.

What but the power which wakes the dead could reach a stubborn jailer's heart, in cruelty and rapine bred, who took the ancient murderer's part, could make a hardened, roughened field and shake him over the mouth of hell. He was standing with a sword to commit suicide, but the Holy Spirit conquered him. The jailer was within an inch of hell, but amazing grace intervened.

He had retired. He had gone to sleep. It seemed that all would be the same on the morrow, the old routine.

But no, he was awakened. What an awakening he had. Every timber of the prison shook.

All the doors by tremendous force were torn open. The chains of the prisoners were all smashed. The whole earth moved.

It was a great earthquake. No wonder he cried in terror, What must I do to be saved? But let us take another look at the jailer as his prayer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

This was the contempt. There followed hereafter a full and blessed exposition of that gospel. And Paul spoke the word to all in his house.

Prisoners included, but to all in his house. Note what happened. This man was suddenly, miraculously, gloriously comforted.

He became a believing Christian. Verse 34, it says, he believed in God. Faith is the first fundamental.

Notice, he was immediately a humble. A man that is proud, a woman that is proud cannot be a Christian. Christianity brings with it humiliation.

What did he do? He did the work of a servant. He did not call one of his underlings to watch this. He watched them.

He was a ready Christian. He heard, he believed, he was baptized, he served, and he rejoiced. He heard, he believed, he was baptized, he served, and he was a practical Christian.

These men were hungry, and he set meat before them. But most of all, he was a rejoicing Christian. He rejoiced with all his house, family, and all his prisoners.

Think of it. The whole prison population, and the jailer's family, and himself, all gloriously rejoicing. What a feast! What praises! What prayers! He believed to the saving of his own soul.

And the others believed to the saving of theirs. What must I do? The answer was simple. Believe! It's so simple that fools think it's out of date.

But it's not. That was the answer then, and it's the answer this night. How can I be saved? Believe! That is still the answer.

That will always be the answer. That answer will always be fresh, new, and sweet, and it will always work. Anyone who believes will be saved.

No wit or art of man will ever find a crack or a flaw in that definition. That definition is God's definition of how you can be saved. It doesn't say, join the church.

It doesn't even say, be baptized. It says, believe. What is believing? Believing is receiving.

But as many as received him, to them give he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe. It's faith that makes. It's life that proves you are a Christian.

He that hath the trials conquered confirmed that you are a Christian. And death crowns you with eternal peace as you pass. Notice seven things.

There was a sudden shaking. There was an alarmed awakening. There was unwanted quagging.

There was earnest seeking. There was faithful speaking. There was decision making.

And there was believing and a joyous partaking. As they sat down to meet, they rejoiced. What must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Unsaved man. Unsaved woman. Unsaved boy.

Unsaved girl. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Dear Christian man.

Dear Christian woman. Dear Christian boy. Dear Christian girl.

Keep on believing. And if you keep on believing, you will have joy. Wonderful joy.

For Jesus has come into your heart to stay forever. May God bless His holy word. Father, we pray that thou wouldst write thy word upon every one here.

And may no soul step out into the darkness of the shadow of death. But may every one of them step into the light of believing in Jesus Christ. Take our thanks for thy holy word.

The simplicity of the gospel. The actuality of being saved. And to know we are saved and partakers of everlasting life.

May men and women partake this night for Jesus' sake. And everybody say, Amen.

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