

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

10.12.2025

PART 36 - JUST BELIEVE

I. INTRODUCTION

Main Point: Put all your belief in the Lord Jesus alone because he is a mighty God, a mighty Savior, and the only sure foundation we have both now and for eternity.

Acts 16:25-40

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

26 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.

27 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.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

30 Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

33 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.

34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go."

36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

37 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.”

38 The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.

39 So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city.

40 So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

II. A MIGHTY GOD

- This is an remarkable account of the miraculous deliverance of Paul and Silas from prison in Philippi.
- If you were here last week, you'll recall that Paul and Silas had come to this leading city of Macedonia.
- They encounter a wealthy religious woman named Lydia who heard them preach the gospel and her heart was opened by the Lord and she came to faith in Christ.
- And then Paul casts out a demonic spirit from a fortune-telling slave girl.
- Problem was, it wasn't celebrated by her masters who had just lost their means of making money from her fortune-telling. And they stir up the crowds, making it seem like the message that Paul and Silas was preaching was coming from traveling Jews who were stirring up anti-Roman practices.
- Paul and Silas were just preaching the gospel of the risen Christ as they were called to do. Christ already drew them to himself, opened their hearts to the gospel, and they believed in Him and followed him completely.
- Paul had met Jesus on the road to Damascus and trusted in him, turned to him in faith, and his life was completely changed.
- We don't have details on Silas' conversion, but we know he was a follower of Christ from Jerusalem, and fully dedicated to his Savior.
- Because of their firm belief in the resurrected Christ and their obedience to make him known, they are in prison, suffering for their proclamation of the gospel.
- In the inner stocks of this prison in Philippi, that belief was expressed and made evident through their praying and singing hymns to God at midnight in the midst of an incredibly difficult situation.
- The joy their inner belief brought resulted in an outward expression of prayers to the Lord, expressing their faith, their trust in him, praising his name, magnifying and exalting their great and mighty King!
- Their joy was evidenced in singing hymns to the Lord! And we know they weren't quietly singing to themselves, they were singing loud enough that the other prisoners could hear them.
- Knowing Christ, walking with him, being led and taught by the Holy Spirit brings joy to the believer! And joy leads to singing and grateful prayer!
- We've seen multiple times in Acts that the early church was characterized by joy. In Acts 2:46 "they received their food with glad and generous hearts," In Acts 13:52 "the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."
- Think you're not a singer? Psalm 5:11 includes you! *"But let **all** who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you."*
- 'All' includes you if you're taking refuge in the Lord, if you say you love his name, then sing for joy! Exalt his name! Rejoice in the Lord your God in song!

- Where are you focusing? In that moment when the burden is unbearable, are you looking at the burden, or the hardship, and focusing on it, or are you looking past it?
- Are you placing your focus and your hope on the great and mighty King of the universe who strengthens you when you are weary, lifts you up when you fall, gives you endurance for the hardship, and who is using that hardship for your ultimate good and for his glory as he sanctifies you, leads you, protects you, and sustains you in every single situation that this life affords?
- The psalmist reminds all of us to preach to our souls every day and in every perilous or hard moment: "Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"
- We believe completely in a great and mighty God and that confidence brings us joy, which causes us to break forth as God's people in song.
- Paul and Silas' joy stemmed from their belief in a powerful and mighty God that could shake the earth and break chains and open prison doors.
- The foundations of the prison were shaken apart! The stocks that held their feet broke in pieces! The bonds which held them fell apart! The doors of their cells were blasted open by the strength of this earthquake!
- That is amazing! Likely, you've read this passage before, but take a moment and reflect on just how incredible this work of the Lord was.
- The God we believe in and call upon is a great and mighty God. Yahweh is strong, he's good, he cares for his people, he sets the captives free.
- If you're walking through hardship, feeling like you're chained or feeling like your situation is dire, be encouraged that however severe, difficult, or extensive your hardship is, our God is greater, wiser, more powerful than you can imagine!
- Just like he cared for Paul and Silas in the dire situation they were in, he also cares for you.
- If he cares for the little sparrow, the most insignificant little bird, then how much more does he care for you, made in the image of God, called by His name, drawn to himself, loved with an everlasting love, then you can trust whatever burden you're carrying to him.
- Don't just say you know God cares for you, believe he cares for you and trust your burden or your circumstances to him.
- He is a God who can and does shake the earth for his people!
- The interesting question is: why, when God shook these servants of the Lord free, why didn't they escape? It would seem that God showed up mightily and powerfully for these servants of the Lord to set them free, and then they just sat there. They didn't escape the prison.
- The jailer, realizing the doors were opened and the bonds unfastened, draws his sword to kill himself, which was not an act of cowardice, but to reclaim his honor as losing all his prisoners would be shameful.
- But the prisoners were all there. I don't know how Paul and Silas knew that the earthquake was for a greater salvation than their own freedom from their chains, but God had a plan for these events which he divinely orchestrated for Paul and Silas' release. That plan was for the redemption of a lost jailer in need of salvation and for the vindication of this early Philippian church within this community.

III. A MIGHTY SALVATION

- Paul and Silas' belief in Christ spoke loudly and clearly to those who did not share that same belief.
- Paul reassures him that they are all still there. The jailer, who was ready to end his life one moment, is now rushing, trembling, and he comes falling down in front of Paul and Silas. He shows instant

recognition that the object of their faith is so strong, so great, he must know him too!

- He brings them out and asks the most important question he could ask in that moment: What must I do to be saved?
- This Gentile jailer recognizes in this moment by the great grace of God that he needs salvation!
- Many people have asked that same question and unfortunately, depending on who is asked, they might receive a variety of answers.
- But there is nothing else to add, just believe! Put all your trust, your faith, your confidence, your hope, in Christ!
- Don't stand on the strength of your faith, it's not the amount of the belief you have, it's the object of your faith that is important!
- Turn to him in faith and repentance! Look to Christ alone for salvation!
- Rom 10:9-11 *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one **believes** and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, "Everyone who **believes** in him will not be put to shame."*
- Believe and you will be saved! Believe in who? The Lord Jesus Christ! He is the object of our faith, the basis of our salvation. He is the one who lived a sinless life, who died on a cross to pay for our sins having no sins of his own, and who rose victorious over the grave, securing salvation for eternity for everyone who believes in him. If you believe in Jesus, you will not be put to shame!
- There is a promise to stand on from God here: repent and believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved from the judgement to come for your sins.
- Not only is there a promise here, there is also a command: Believe!
- Have you believed in the Lord Jesus and are you saved? If not, don't delay! Today is the day of salvation!
- Belief isn't just an acknowledgement we make that Christ lived, that he was good, or that he loves you. The bible says even the demons believe, and tremble. They acknowledge who he is.
- But they don't believe unto salvation. And unfortunately there are many people who only know of Christ as the central figure of the bible, as a good and loving man, maybe even they know that he died for sins, but they don't know him as their Lord.
- Matthew chapter 7 tells us that not everyone who says to Jesus "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. Those are the ones who trusted in their own righteousness, their own good works, which can never be good enough when God's standard of holiness is perfection, a standard which only Jesus met!
- That's why salvation is a gift to be received, not earned.
- Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*
- Salvation is a gift, freely offered to lost sinners! And this Philippian jailer recognizes this!
- If someone asked you how to be saved, could you give an answer?
- Paul and Silas were ready to give an account of the hope within them.
- And by the grace and mercy of God on this jailer's life, he repents and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and he is saved!
- The gospel is proclaimed and received by this man and also his whole family.
- And this belief is immediately evidenced by obedience and action. That same hour, he washed their wounds, and he and his household were baptized, they began showing hospitality, serving food to them, and now the whole household is rejoicing in knowing Christ as their Savior!
- This is the impact of the gospel. Those who receive the washing of all their sins away are now washing the wounds of their fellow saints and publicly declaring their faith in the waters of baptism!

- Those who were far from the household of God now open their doors in hospitality to the family of God!
- Those who were dead in sin and trespass now rejoice for the mercy and salvation they have received, which has brought them from death to eternal life!
- There is immediate change here. The jailer and his family are now characterized by actions showing evidence of the mighty salvation they have received.
- And whether you've been a Christian for a short time or a long time, your faith should be evident by the accompaniment of action.
- This is the difference between believing in Jesus intellectually and trusting him personally. We live in a day and an age where many agree that Jesus lived, that he was a good man, maybe even that he did signs and wonders. But believing in him with your head is different than trusting him from your heart.
- And this new Christian took action by caring for Paul and Silas, opening his home, and publicly declaring his faith in baptism.
- Paul and Silas had been Christians longer, and their faith was evidenced by actions of praying to the Lord, singing his praises, boldly sharing the gospel, ministering to the church.
- Whether you're a baby christian or a well seasoned one: exam your life. What actions are showing evidence of your faith? What actions do your family see from you? What actions does your church see from you? What actions do your unsaved friends and coworkers see from you?
- Faith without works is dead. We are called to a life of faith, of belief in action.

IV. A MIGHTY MISTREATMENT

- The following morning, the magistrates send the police with a message to release the prisoners.
- If you've read Paul's letters in the New Testament, you'll recall him saying things like "So far as it depends on you, live peaceably with everyone." Or, "As members in Christ, you are called to live in peace." "Live in harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus."
- But here in Acts 16:37, Paul takes a completely different tone in his response!
- Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, and Roman law prohibited this treatment of its citizens entirely.
- According to Lex Julia, the ancient Roman law of that time, the law stated that Roman citizens were exempt from punishments and beatings such as what Paul and Silas had received. And there were strong consequences for those who violated this law.
- Acts 16:20-21: *And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. 21 They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."*
- Paul and Silas were treated as criminals, though no wrong-doing had been done. As Roman citizens they would be exempt from the mistreatment they were experiencing.
- You might recall that was how our Lord Jesus suffered in our place. He did no wrong, lived a life of holiness, righteousness, love, care and compassion. He cast out demons, healed the sick, raised the dead to life, preached the kingdom of God to the people!
- And he too was arrested, dragged before the authorities, mistreated, beaten, and ultimately nailed to a Roman cross, punished for no wrong doing of his own. He was punished for our wrongdoings. For our sake!
- Paul and Silas suffered innocently as well, following the example of their Savior. And in their handling of this immensely difficult and terrible

situation we see it wasn't for their own benefit but for the sake of the gospel.

- Having called out the magistrates with their response, they waited.
- The police reported their response to the magistrates and they are justifiably, afraid. They had broken Roman law in the unjust affliction they had committed on these two men.
- They send their full apologies. And they bring them out publicly and ask, politely, for them to leave the city.
- Paul and Silas were vindicated of any wrongdoing, but even greater than that, they took a stand that flies in the face of political correctness. They weren't apologetic for their proclamation of the gospel! They stood firm in a society that wanted to silence the gospel and discredit those who would preach it--"it is right and good that we speak the truth boldly!"
- Brothers and sisters, is this not the society we live in today? A society that rejects the gospel and seeks to discredit, dishonor, harm, and silence those who would be bold to speak the truth.
- Be bold to speak in love the message of good news to our lost city, our county, and our nation.
- Should we not likewise avail ourselves of the legal privileges we enjoy in freedom of speech to boldly use that to speak words of life to others, and to wield that when society would try and silence our voice in the midst of so many hateful, leering, and worldly voices all clamoring to prevent the message of the gospel from being heard!
- The gospel will advance, and the message will go forth, and we must boldly proclaim it even if it brings suffering, even if it brings derision or accusations because this world of darkness hates the light and those who shine it forth.
- We are not called to be politically correct. We are not called to only speak the gospel in church or at home where we know the message is acceptable.
- We are to also preach it to a society that is lost and hates the message of the gospel, unless the Lord opens their hearts and gives them ears to hear and eyes to see!
- Some of you are bold in your proclamation of the gospel. Praise God for saints who sow seeds of the truth heavily among their friends and neighbors.
- Some of you need to move from political correctness to preaching confidently and not apologizing for the message of the gospel, as 1 Corinthians 1:23 says: "...preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles," Remember that Jesus is a rock of offense, a stumbling block for those who reject him.
- Expect that message to offend some, but also expect that some will receive it unto salvation!
- Remember what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16: *"16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*
- To those who believe the gospel is the power of God. Not a politically correct message that toes the line.
- And some of you aren't worried about being politically correct because you've been silenced already. You've abdicated the responsibility to other Christians the mandate we all have been given to go into all the world and preach the gospel!
- And for you, now is the time to repent, and pray to the Lord for boldness and conviction of heart to share the good news with those God has granted you opportunities to interact with during your time here on earth.
- So then, Paul and Silas' sit-in at the prison ultimately wasn't for their own vindication, but for the vindication of the gospel, and to clear the air for the message to continue to go forth in Philippi.
- Scholars have noted four benefits of the approach they took:

- First, the message of the gospel was left connected with a clean and honorable reputation, not one of criminality. The message wasn't tainted or left with a dishonorable association!
- Second, the messengers of the gospel, and subsequently the new church, were left with a spotless reputation instead of an evil one. They were vindicated, publicly, and exonerated of wrongdoing, so that there was no association of the messengers with lawless actions.
- Third, just as Christ was humbled but eventually exalted, these men too were humbled in the treatment they received but ultimately at the end were also exalted; lifted from a lowly estate to a higher one.
- Fourth, their handling of the situation moves it beyond just a cultural issue. The accusation that they were Jews disturbing the peace and promoting cultural customs not viable for gentiles was proved to be false. The gospel was for all nations.
- The gospel was for a wealthy woman Lydia in Philippi. It was for a slave girl freed from demonic oppression. And it was for a gentile roman jailer, who was not of high society like Lydia nor low in society like the girl, but rather in the middle.
- And now we see at least three members of various backgrounds united in a single church in Philippi by the message of the gospel, which is for everyone, from every nation, tribe, tongue, and socioeconomic status.
- Upon their release, Paul and Silas go visit Lydia and the church. Their first priority is to encourage the brothers and sisters in this new church in the prominent city of Philippi.
- And only then, having done that, they depart, leaving this church to grow, and flourish.
- They continue to bear gospel fruit as a church. The letter of Philippians tells us they supported Paul in his missionary journeys, sending him funds when no other churches did.
- And if you read the book of Philippians, you can't miss the loving, kind, and caring tone that Paul continues to have for this church.
- Paul and Silas lived out their belief in Jesus to the fullest. They believed in a God that was mighty to save their souls, bring them joy in their suffering, powerful enough to shake the earth that the message they were tasked with bringing might continue to go forth and flourish.
- They had the incredible opportunity of seeing the mighty Savior show up and save a lost gentile jailer. To witness first hand his admission of his deep need of salvation, his need of being saved from judgement and the wrath of God for the sins he had committed.
- And they saw his belief, his repentance, the change in his life, and in his family's lives, not because their belief was so strong but because the one they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is mighty to save!
- It's why the writer of Hebrews, in chapter 7 verse 25 says of Jesus, "he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him"
- Jesus can save to the uttermost church! He can save a gentile jailer, a wealthy woman, and a slave girl. He can save me, he can save you. And once he does, we are his, we are saved to the uttermost.
- Because it's not on account of our own works. Not on account of our worthiness or goodness. It's only by faith, believing in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who came humbly to this earth to seek and to save the lost.
- This is all grace brothers and sisters! For us who have trusted in Christ, we have received his grace in great measure! We can be encouraged to sing in difficult circumstances because of the grace shown to us and because of the enduring might of our King!
- We can be encouraged to take a stand in our society for the gospel, to not proclaim it apologetically but with boldness and conviction, not backing down from the charge we have to proclaim the gospel to all the world!
- And if you have not yet trusted Christ, the example of the Philippian jailer is for you. Come trembling on your knees before a holy and righteous God who commands you today to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved!

- Don't delay! Repent of your sins and acknowledge Christ as the only means of salvation! The only one powerful enough to save lost and broken sinners such as us!
- 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 *We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 6:1 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*
- Put all your belief in the Lord Jesus alone because he is a mighty God, a mighty Savior, and the only sure foundation we have both now and for eternity. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?