

## Sunday November 13, 2022

### Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

#### Welcome & Prayer

As we begin our service of worship this morning lets remind ourselves of the great God we are coming before. So I am going to start off with a reading from Psalm 46. *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* (NIV)

**Prayer** God our Refuge, when human resources fail, you alone remain our sure hope and defence. In the knowledge of your love, grant us courage. We place ourselves in your hands, confident that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for Jesus, the Living One, the First and the Last, who was dead, but now is forever alive. Help us, who have not seen, to believe; send us, as you have sent Jesus, to greet the world with the Easter word of peace and to share with all the Spirit’s new life of forgiveness. We ask through the Lord Jesus, our Passover and our Peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

#### Song – To God be the glory [To God be the glory - YouTube](#)

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|--|---|
| <p>1. To God be the glory<br/>Great things He has done<br/>So loved He the world that He gave us His Son<br/>Who yielded His life an atonement for sin<br/>And opened the life-gate that all may go in</p>   | <p>2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood<br/>To every believer the promise of God<br/>The vilest offender who truly believes<br/>That moment from Jesus a pardon receives</p>                                |
| <p>Chorus<br/>Praise the Lord, praise the Lord<br/>Let the earth hear His voice<br/>Praise the Lord, praise the Lord<br/>Let the people rejoice<br/>Come to the Father<br/>Through Jesus the Son<br/>Give Him the glory<br/>Great things He has done</p> | <p>3. Great things He has taught us,<br/>Great things He has done<br/>And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son<br/>But purer, and higher, and greater will be<br/>Our wonder, our worship, when Jesus we see</p> |

#### Bible Reading – Acts 16:6-15 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup> When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup> So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup> During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” <sup>10</sup> After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. <sup>11</sup> From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup> From there we

travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. <sup>13</sup> On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup> One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup> When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

## Announcements

**Focus for October – One2One.** How do you get deeper in your Christian faith? It is hard to have that level of trust when you are dealing with a whole congregation or even a small group. But you can find it with someone who is committed to you and your spiritual growth. That often happens when you meet one2one with someone over a period of time. You develop a level of trust and sharing that helps you to grow in your faith and understanding of God. Would you like to know more? Then speak to one of the elders about meeting one2one with someone next year.

### Upcoming Events

- Sat 19/11 Men's Breakfast (7-9am). At Webb Park, Redhead. Arrive 7am for a leisurely walk together followed by a BBQ Breakfast from 8am and then a testimony. \$5 pp. If coming please tell Colin Wright on 0414841 740 by Tues 15/11
- Sat 19/11 NSW State Moderator Visits Swansea Church Hall for morning tea 10-12am. All welcome across both ends of the parish.
- Sat 26/11 Gingerbread House Nigh. See Brochure for more details
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration. Keep the date. More details a bit closer to the time.

**Resource.** This year just a one-day conference (Wed 16<sup>th</sup> November) on the book of Ezekiel. More details go to [hgm.org.au](http://hgm.org.au) Please pray for Stephen who has had to step in at the last moment to deliver the talks.

**Church Redevelopment.** The Building Working Group continues to look for an option that will suit both our future and our budget. The cost estimations are still way above our budget but we are working hard to develop options for the congregation to consider. Please pray for the building Working Group as they continue to do the work that the church has given them to do.

**Supporting the Parsons.** Would you like to support the Parsons, our link missionaries in Japan, either prayerfully or financially? Take one of the Mission cards from the back table and contact them directly.

**Leave.** Jon and Ang are on leave at the moment. They should be back on deck on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November. In the meantime, if you need any pastoral help, please see Stephen or Jo.

**Monthly Matters Packing Day.** 10am 19<sup>th</sup> of November, at 39 Carnley Ave New Lambton

Packing sustainable feminine hygiene kits for girls in Vanuatu to be sent with our mission team in January. No experience needed, contact Julie Hearn for more information, 0434 589 538

**Giving.** Would you like to give regularly to the work of the church so that our ministries can be sustained or even grow? If so, the easiest way is by setting up a direct debit from your bank account. You just decide you much you would like to give on a weekly basis and then organise that amount to go to our Church each week. If you would like help to set it up then please speak to Letitia. Otherwise the Church Bank details are Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian BSB 062 611, account # 1007 5420.

## Prayer Points for 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Pray for the persecuted church.** That they would remain faithful even under extreme pressure. That they can shine like stars in the midst of a corrupt and depraved world. That their church would grow as the truth of the gospel goes out from their witness and words.

**Pray for the country of Sudan.** (Population 44.6 mill, Christians 2 mill). Since the 2019 coup that ousted Omar al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan for 30 years, the situation for Sudanese Christians has somewhat improved. The government has changed its policy of considering Christians enemies and agents of the West. However, social attitudes about Christians have not shifted and society is still majority-Muslim and **suspicious** of any other faith. The government also has not put real protections into place for Christians and other religious minorities. Even with the change in official status, **confiscated** churches and lands have yet to be returned to their Christian owners. Trying to build new churches is extremely difficult.

**Pray for the homeless** people in our suburbs. That as their world falls apart that they might find hope in a god who cares and a Church that expresses to them the love of God.

**Pray for Destiny Haven**, the group that we raised funds for at last week's concert. That women who are needing help and support can find it in a supportive, Christian environment. That they can find hope that is bigger than the troubles that are currently consuming them.

## Bible Reading – Acts 16:16-40

<sup>16</sup> Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." <sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her. <sup>19</sup> When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. <sup>20</sup> They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." <sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open & everyone's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup> They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him & to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup> At that hour of the night the jailer took them & washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. <sup>34</sup> The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household. <sup>35</sup> When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." <sup>36</sup> The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." <sup>37</sup> But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves & escort us out." <sup>38</sup> The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. <sup>39</sup> They came to appease them and escorted them from

the prison, requesting them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

## Song – Never Alone [Never Alone \(Acoustic Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

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|---|---|
| <p>1. We're not alone, for Christ is here<br/>Immanuel our God come near<br/>We're not alone, for to our world<br/>Jesus has come, eternal Word.<br/>And as he speaks, our souls laid bare<br/>Naked, ashamed, sin is made clear<br/>And yet he clothes us in his love<br/>Never alone, Christ is with us, is with us.</p>                          | <p>3. The dawn will come, the sun will rise<br/>Out of the grave we'll see hope's light.<br/>Tomb opened wide, stone rolled away<br/>Morning has come, a brand new day.<br/>"He isn't here," the angel said.<br/>"He is alive no longer dead."<br/>Our hearts are lifted, souls raised high<br/>Christ is with us, Christ is our life, he's our life.</p> |
| <p>2. The longest walk, earth's darkest day<br/>The pressing crowd, his mounting pain.<br/>A heavy load of grief and shame<br/>Breathless that we should breathe again.<br/>"Father forgive them," comes his cry<br/>Silence from God blackens the sky.<br/>A creeping dread in every heart<br/>Lost in the world now God departs, God departs.</p> | <p>4. Never alone, is now our cry<br/>In joy, in grief, in lonely sin.<br/>Never alone, for Christ is ours<br/>He lives in us, we live in him.<br/>And 'til we reach that final day<br/>When fears are gone, cast far away<br/>We'll live secure, trust in his love,<br/>Never alone, Christ is with us, he's with us.</p>                                |

## Sermon – Come and help us (Stephen T)

Over the years there have been some fantastic newspaper headings. Here are some of my favourites... From *The Herald-News, Westpost, Massachusetts* "Official: Only Rain Will Cure Drought". From *Cornell Daily Sun, December 7, 1995* "Study finds sex – pregnancy link". Then there were these beauties "Diana was still alive hours before she died." And "World Bank says poor need more money."

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But my absolute favourite was when first division Inverness Caledonian Thistle beat Premier League heavyweights Celtic 3-1 in the Scottish Cup (2000), the Sun came up with this whopper! "*Super Caley go ballistic Celtic are atrocious*"

But if we were creating a headline for the passage from Acts 16 that we read this morning, one such caption would be "*Jesus arrives in Europe!*" Now of course Jesus never physically made it to Europe, his whole life was spent in the region of Palestine. But here for the first time the message of Jesus was buried in the soil of Europe. And boy how it was to grow. For the next 19 centuries Europe would be the epicentre of the Church's witness. The one that has kept the gospel flame alight even in the midst of the dark ages & it all starts in Acts 16.

Slide 3

But the journey taking the gospel to Europe wasn't an easy one. <sup>6</sup>"Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. <sup>7</sup>When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. <sup>8</sup>So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas."

Slide 4

You see Europe was not Paul's first objective. He wanted to go into the province of Asia but the Holy Spirit wouldn't let them go there. Now how does that work? Was there a border crossing they weren't allowed into? A flood perhaps? A vision? We are not told. But somehow the door remained closed, so instead of

going east they went north. And then the exact same thing happens. The spirit of Jesus doesn't let them go in that direction either.

Slide 5

The only option is now westward. They get to Troas and before them is the Mediterranean Sea. So, as they think through their options, <sup>9</sup>*"During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"* One door closes but another door opens. Europe. Why hadn't we thought about Europe! And notice they make the decision as a team. <sup>10</sup>*"After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, **concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.**"*

It was better to go to Troas with God, than anywhere else without him. But are there any lessons learned about guidance that we might be able to put into practise today from this incident? Yes. God leads by a number of factors, closing doors, opening other doors, a vision and a good discussion between colleagues – they were all factors in discerning God's will. And sometimes God has to stop us before he can turn us. And do you know Paul and Silas do eventually get to the province of Asia later on in this missionary trip so sometimes doors close and open for a season. And good ideas might still be good ideas but at a different time. But in everything, God is the one who is in control & we need to be sensitive to His leading.

Slide 6

So, <sup>11</sup>*"From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. <sup>12</sup>From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days."*

In 1736, Jonathan Edwards wrote a book called *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*. And in many ways, that's what Luke is giving us here in the sixteenth chapter: a narrative, a portrait gallery, if you like, of surprising conversions. Because while in Philippi there were many conversions to Christ but only three are given here. And I think they are each given for a reason. And that was to show that this Church was a mixed bag of all sorts of people. But they were all unified together by the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Beginning with

Slide 7

### 1. A wealthy woman. (Acts 16:13-15)

Because in Acts 16 we see a woman becomes the first European convert. Not a king, not a powerful business man, not a general, but a woman. <sup>13</sup>*"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."*

Don't you find that interesting? A man from Macedonia calls them over to Europe and when they get to Philippi there are no men at all looking to worship God! Just a small number of women. And our author Luke directs our attention to one of those women, Lydia. A woman of means. A dealer in purple cloth. Who believed in the Lord but hadn't gone the whole hog to become a Jew. But now she would go the whole hog to become a Christian!

Because the Lord opened her heart. The message was Paul's but the saving initiative was the Lord's. Paul's preaching on its own was not effective, it only hit its target when the Lord did his work. The Lord could have converted Lydia without Paul's help, but he chose, like he normally chooses, to do his work through the preaching of the gospel.

You see ultimately, we don't change the world, but God does. We have no power over the future but God does. And he wants us to work in partnership with him. He desires us to step out in faith and he will ensure that our faith is multiplied. For ultimately there are many people around us like Lydia, who are seeking the

truth. Who want to know about their Creator but they don't know where to look. And as we share with them the gospel of the Lord Jesus, God may or may not choose to bring them to Himself. So can I ask you, who are we currently praying for? That the Lord would open their heart and draw them to Jesus?

Slide 8

And once Lydia's heart is opened, she then opens up her home to Paul and his missionary team. <sup>15</sup> *"When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us."* You see a changed heart leads to a changed life. An open-heart lead to an open hand. And so now Paul has a base to continue his work in Philippi.

Philippi has become a beachhead for God in Europe. The flag of Christianity has been unfurled in the midst of the might of the Roman Empire that day. And Rome had no idea what was to come but one day, this Christian gospel would conquer the whole Roman empire. History is being written. Caesar might think he is Lord but the Lord Jesus has come to Europe & Jesus will one day be declared Lord of Europe, in fact Lord of the whole world!

Slide 9

## 2. A wealth woman and then a **Satan possessed slave**. (Acts 16:16-24)

<sup>16</sup> *"Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup> She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants (slide 10) of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.' <sup>18</sup> She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her."*

Yet there was more to happen in Philippi than just Lydia & her household being converted. God was working but at the very same time so was Satan! Paul, looking for opportunities to tell others about Jesus, soon found himself shadowed by a young slave girl who was demon possessed. And this particular demon gave her the ability to predict the future.

Now you don't have to be too smart to know if you can pick tomorrow's winning Lotto numbers today, you've got it made. And so, there are some guys, they've got this girl, and they're making a fortune from their little fortune telling business. And they are able to do that because not only is Satan keeping this woman in bondage but so are they. But as long as she keeps raked in the dough for them, they don't really care much about her at all.

Slide 11

Until Paul has had enough. He doesn't need the demons telling people about the Most High God. Why let an unreliable source be the one to tell others about the trustworthiness of God's gospel? As the Puritan preacher William Bates put it, *"the devil will tell you a hundred things that are true in order that he might tell you the hundred-and-first thing that isn't true, and weave his way of cunning and evil into the machinations of your heart and soul."*

So, after a few days Paul has had enough and he turns around and tells the demon to come out of her and immediately the spirit leaves her. She is now in her right mind. With Christ within her, the demon has nowhere to go but to leave her. And I think we are to see here that she has been genuinely converted. Because it is placed in between the conversions of Lydia and the Philippian jailor. And because the only way that the power of demons can be overthrown is when it is confronted with an even more powerful force, the Spirit of Jesus.

Slide 12

I was once asked to go around to someone's place and exorcise a demon that was living in their home. Now that wasn't part of my training as a minister, how to exorcize demons. But I was reflecting on that

passage in Mt 12 where Jesus says, <sup>43</sup> *"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. <sup>44</sup> Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. <sup>45</sup> Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, & they go in and live there & the final condition of that person is worse than the first."* The point being if you drive out an evil spirit you really need to replace it with the Holy Spirit.

So, I went to this house and told them I would pray for the removal of this evil spirit under one condition. That they would consider giving their life to Jesus so that if the evil spirit was to return in the future, they would have within them the power of God that would protect them into the future & the lady was not willing to do that. But in Acts 16, the slave girl was!

Now when Paul exorcises the demon that possesses her, he exorcises her owner's source of income as well. And they are not very happy. For when the gospel comes near to us it also effects the economy around us. And so, they organise a rent-a-mob to suddenly appear & they call for the city officials to come together, and Paul and Silas are now in real danger.

But in the meantime, another local has been changed, maybe even saved. This girl with no rights, no power, no status has now been offered the same saving grace as the wealthy businesswoman. This first Church in Europe is going to be a liquorice all sorts, isn't it? But then the gospel is for all people, men and women, rich and poor, slave and freeman. Jesus coming to Europe is having an amazing impact, isn't He?

Slide 13

### 3. A wealthy woman, a Satan possessed slave and **thirdly a jaded jailer**

*"They seized Paul & Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities... <sup>20</sup> and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar <sup>21</sup> by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." <sup>22</sup> ... the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. Slide 14 <sup>23</sup> After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks."*

So how they going to react? Called by God to Europe. Flogged for freeing a woman. Placed in the bowels of a miserable, flea infested pit? <sup>25</sup> *"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying & singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."* How amazing is that? Instead of profanities the whole jail house hears praises to God!

Slide 15

It was Charles Spurgeon who said *"Any fool can sing in the day. It is easy to sing when we can read the notes by daylight; but the skilful singer is the one who can sing when there is not a ray of light to read by... songs in the night come only from God; they are not in the power of men."*

Now before we see what actually happened, do you think that if you met someone like Paul you would be interested in having what they had? If you saw someone who didn't whinge when they were wronged. Who didn't complain when things didn't go their way. Who was able to praise God and do it genuinely even when they felt the pressure from all sides. Don't you think that there is something very attractive about that person? I do! And I would want to know how I could get it as well. Well Paul and Silas are imprisoned after a shocker of a day and they sing and they pray and they praise God and the Bible says all the other prisoners were listening to them.

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Now on one level they had no choice, did they, they too were stuck in prison. They were going nowhere. They were a captive audience. But in another sense even these hardened criminals were impressed with Paul and Silas' attitude, so much so that when the jailhouse rocks and rolls due to the coming of an earthquake and all the chains fall off all the prisoners, they don't go anywhere. Paul and Silas and all the

prisoners just stay in their cells!

Now to me that is almost as big a miracle as the earthquake and the fact that Paul and Silas are freed. But I think what kept the prisoners in their cells is the feeling of the presence of God with these two Christians. Once again Paul and Silas make an impact, a huge impact on their world by showing how a Christian trust in God no matter what their outward circumstances. They make an impact by singing praises to God even when their circumstances are not so great.

So what sort of an impact would people have if they saw us singing God's praises and praying this morning? Would they feel the presence of God? And what sort of an impact would we have if we were able to praise God in the middle of the dark night as well as at the dawn of a new day, in the highs and the lows, in the pleasure and the pain? Each one of us have a captive audience of people who watch our every move. What sort of faith in God are they going to see in us when we are in the midst of a shocker of a day?

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*<sup>27</sup> The jailer woke up & when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword & was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul & Silas. <sup>30</sup> He then brought them out & asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

I remember being on a Beach mission while still a young Christian and some of the locals in the caravan park were vandalising our tents and our equipment while we slept. So, it was decided that we would take it in turns to sleep in various tents - the big Marque, the Kitchen tent, there was always plenty of guys willing to protect the fridges if I remember correctly, the teenage tent and the others.

Well, this one night it was my turn to look after the junior teens or JT's tent. I was a bit on edge but I soon got off to sleep. About midnight I heard some muffled sounds just outside and I froze. Then I saw the flap of the tent open up and a couple of guys crawl on through. I didn't really know whether I should just pretend I didn't see them or try and stop them. But as I was thinking about it, a voice said "Steve are you there?" "Yeah" I replied as I recognised the voice of Matt, one of the guys who had been coming to the mission programme each day. Matt said "Steve, what must I do to be saved?!?!"

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What would you say to that question? Paul replied "*Believe in the Lord Jesus - you and your household and you will be saved.*" Each word is important. "Believe" have faith, put your trust, rest entirely. "On" or "onto" the Lord Jesus. The one who died for your sins, has risen to life for your resurrection. He is the one who is now Lord of all the earth. Trust fully in him.

And this jaded Jailer does that. And this belief changes his actions. Just a few hours ago he was treating Paul and Silas roughly, now he takes the time to wash their wounds. And invite them into his place for breakfast. And his whole family also believes. The wife, the kids, the servants. And just as he washed Paul now Paul baptises them washing away their sins. Just hours before he was the representative of an unjust and cruel regime, now they are brothers, equals in Christ, fellow believers. Paul's message and his lifestyle has changed this jailer and his family. And will ultimately help change how he runs his household and his prison, as well as how he will from now on live out the life of faith.

Slide 19

So, friends from this short passage we see Paul responding to God's call. And as he does that he meets three people. To a wealthy woman during a quiet discussion, he answers her enquiring mind and brings her to eternal life. To a slave girl, he frees her from the evil that possesses her. And in the midst of a dramatic miracle of an earthquake, Paul deals with a man who comes to him with an incredible need and he points him to Jesus.



Now when you think about it, it would be hard to imagine a more different group of people that formed the first European Church than a business woman, a slave girl, maybe one or two prisoners and a gaoler. Racially, socially, psychologically they were worlds apart. Yet all of them are changed by Jesus and form the one Church.

Let think about their nationalities first. Lydia is an immigrant from Asia and so not a local. The slave girl and the prisoners were probably Greeks and are residents of the city. And the gaoler, like most gaolers of the time would be a Roman army veteran. So here in this Church is a melting pot of Greek, Roman and Asian but one in Christ. Or what about their social backgrounds. Lydia is most likely from a wealthy background for she has a home that can accommodate at least another four people to stay in it. The slave girl comes from the opposite end of the spectrum, she owns nothing, in fact she is owned herself. And the jailor would be a respectable middle-class man. Yet they come together in the Church at Philippi as equals. All children of the one father in heaven.

Then what about their personal needs. Lydia could be said to have an intellectual need. She is one whose mind has been opened by the Holy Spirit. The slave girl and the prisoners would have psychological needs as they would all have had very difficult backgrounds. And the gaoler has a moral need as his conscience has been aroused and he cries out to be saved. Yet all their different needs are met in Christ.

Slide 20

Friends doesn't that give us confidence this morning? Because our community is filled with a liquorice all-sorts of people. Young/old, black/white, rich/poor, godly/ungodly but in the Church, we can be all one in Christ. We don't want Churches for different nationalities or ages or professions, we want one Church, filled with those who have the one faith in the one Lord and will live as the one family of believers.

That's what is unique about the Church. But it is not something that comes naturally. We need to rub shoulders with those who are different to us. We need to connect with others whom we would not normally spend time with. Yes, it can be a bit uncomfortable at times. But our own families are uncomfortable at times to. But this is how God grows his kingdom. Not just in Europe but all over the world. Because the most important thing in your life, is the most important thing in their lives. Jesus. And we want others to hear about Jesus and see Jesus in our midst. And who knows God might just open the hearts of other different people to join us here in the future? How wonderful would that be?

## Song – Jesus thank you [Jesus, Thank You \(feat. Brook Hills Music\) - Official Lyric Video - YouTube](#)

- i. The mystery of the cross I cannot comprehend  
The agonies of Calvary  
You the perfect Holy One, crushed Your Son  
Who drank the bitter cup reserved for me

*Chorus*      *Your blood has washed away my sin. Jesus, thank You*  
*The Father's wrath completely satisfied. Jesus, thank You*  
*Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table. Jesus, thank You*

- ii. By Your perfect sacrifice I've been brought near  
Your enemy You've made Your friend  
Pouring out the riches of Your glorious grace  
Your mercy and Your kindness know no end

*Chorus*  
*Bridge* Lover of my soul, I want to live for You (x4)  
*Chorus*

**Benediction.** <sup>32</sup>*“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him & to all the others in his house. <sup>33</sup>At that hour of the night the jailer took them & washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. <sup>34</sup>The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.” (Acts 16:32-34)*