

Evidences of Eternal Life Acts 16:32-34

We have seen quite the amazing scene here in this Philippian jail. We saw Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns at midnight, then an earthquake. Then we saw all the chains and bindings on the prisoners came off. The jailor rushes in and thinking the prisoners had all fled was about to kill his self. Then in such loving and dramatic way there is a voice from the inner prison pleading with him to stop because we are all here. Paul's voice would have been such a sweet and glorious fragrance. You can imagine the jailor goes from the deepest despair to the height of humble gratitude and relief. It goes from hopelessness — you can't get anymore hopeless than when ready to end your life — to life and hope.

Knowing something of the message of these two men, he asks that famous question — Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And the answer that comes back is to believe on Jesus Christ. The real person released from prison that night is the jailor. And God's mission and God's plan in the earthquake was not the release of the missionaries, they go before the magistrates later, but the release and salvation of the jailor and his family. And it is amazing because his story is our story. God is the One who finds us. We often talk about finding God, but it is God who is on the hunt for those who are his. He is the One who arranges the circumstances of our lives, and works effectively in our hearts to cause us to do something that we would not do and cannot do — and that is believe on Jesus for wonderful, free, and eternal salvation.

Think of it, the missionaries are called to Philippi, and then they have to meet that slave girl who is possessed, then her owners have to be hardened to take legal action, then they have to be cast into prison, the jailor has to be in his position, and then there has to be an earthquake for all of this to happen. This is none other than the God of all eternity that works out all of these details.

But his greater work, more glorious and may I say even shocking work is the work that is done in the heart. He truly takes that which is dead and makes it alive. And that life will always have life. It will always give evidence that it is alive. And you can see that in the passage because the Philippian jailor's whole life and disposition suddenly changes. He really is a new person in Jesus Christ. And seeing this change in the jailor is important for a couple of reasons. One is as we see this change, we see the great the change that has gone in our own heart. Because, although we are all different and unique, the new life that causes belief in Christ will always have the same markers or characteristics because of our new love for Christ, because of the object of our faith. Therefore, as we see the new life of the jailor, we see those characteristics in ourselves, and we remember that this is none other than the work of God in us. And it causes us to praise God. Is he has brought this much change in my life he can do so much more. Seeing his work in our lives and in the lives of others, causes us to be zealous for Christ, confident that his work of sanctification will continue in our lives. Are you revelling in this God who has not only sent Jesus Christ to be your perfect sacrifice for sin, but also is active — transforming you into the image of Christ?

Secondly, passages where we see salvation are great passages to really look at our lives to really see if we have evidences of eternal life — to see if we have truly trusted Jesus Christ. It is amazing that many have reduced salvation to nothing more

than a transaction. Jesus robes for mine. He paid the penalty, and now that is done and taken care of, now I can go and live my life anyway I please. But for the true believer this is unimaginable. And the reason why is because of that very work. Listen to what Paul says in Romans 6:1-4, **“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”** Paul says it is unthinkable! Perish the thought! Why? Because we who have believed have died to sin, or died to that old life, but have been given this new resurrected life in Christ, and there is no going back to the old.

So as we look at this section, and see the marvellous, and many ways shocking change in the Philippian jailor, do you see evidence of new life in Christ in you? It is not that we ever live perfect lives in the here and now, but through Christ there are two new relationships that we have — a new relationship with sin and also a new relationship with Christ. There is a new hatred for sin we never had before, and a new love and devotion and zeal for Christ. Do you see those different relationships in your life? Let's look at this passage and the change over the jailor and examine our own lives to see that change in our own life. May God truly challenge us to see the glory of his work in our lives. I want us to see two aspects that flow out of our new relationship with Christ.

1. We see through Christ, a new relationship with the Word. V. 32

Have you ever thought about how extraordinary the Scriptures are? Have you ever thought about how wonderful it is to have the Scriptures even taught to us? I mean God would be perfectly holy and glorious if he remained silent. Look at the world he made and all the glory it reveals as far as his character. But God in his goodness has condescended to make himself known personally. If you want to see the extent of God's love for us it is right here. He has chosen to communicate to us. His self-disclosure of himself is evidence that God not only loves you but desires a relationship with you. Every time the scriptures are opened it is further evidence of his love and care for you. I mean how many times have we sat in a Sunday school class or heard a sermon and said afterward that is just what I needed? Who arranged all that? God. Oh, it should make us so zealous to know his Word and love the God of this Word, and cherish his Word. Think of these words — God has spoken! John Wesley's famous statement, **“Oh give me that book! At any price, give me that book!”** Do we treasure this book in that way? Do we long to read it and have it preached over our souls? Are we like a tree planted by streams of water? Are the Scriptures sweeter than honesty and more precious than much fine gold? Our relationship to the Word is a great way to measure where you are spiritually. John Owen wrote, **“If you have no appetite for God's word then your spiritual life is in a bad state.”** Why? Because this is our sustenance. It has fed billions of believers over the last several thousands years, but is it feeding you? Or are we content with a little saying or meme on social media, are we more addicted to our phones than God's communication to us? God gives to his true children a hunger for himself and therefore drives us to his Word.

Now with that in mind, look at the text, **“And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”** Now there are a number of things that we need to point out here. One is that the Word of the Lord is spoken. This is the means of which God has ordained to communicate his Word is through the audible and spoken word. Any time we get to hear the Word of God it is an unmerited and undeserved gift of God. We do not deserve to have his Word in our hands or hear his word. But think of how many sermons you have heard in your life. Think of also all the opportunities God has given you even to learn and read the Word of God in your life. So many say they want to grow in knowing Christ. Maybe they want to be a more godly spouse or parent or have a real and living and intimate relationship with Christ. But if that is true, if you have that desire, then change needs to take place. You have to go beyond desire, and you have to look at your time and life and just make more time to hear the Scriptures and the truths of God, whether that is through reading his word, listening to his Word, but you have to ask — where in my life can I make time for an intake of his Word?

And the importance of this is seeing what his word is. I love the way the gospel and the preached word is describes. It is described as **“the word of the Lord.”** The little word there — “of” is possessive, and what that means is that this is someone else’s word. Someone else has ownership or it belongs to them. And these “words” are none other than the words of the Lord. These are his words. This is what makes this book infallible, without any error, altogether necessary, and also authoritative in our lives. There is nothing like it. If this was just the musing of ancient people about who God was and is, then it would have very little bearing in our lives. And there is much evidence that this is none other than the Scripture — through predictive prophecy. Some count over 300 prophecies fulfilled in the life of Christ alone. We see that even though it was written over a period of fifteen hundred years, it never contradicts itself. Think of the history of our own world over that period. The same God in Genesis is the same God in Revelation. We see that in the beginning God creates man and gives them a kingdom mandate — the whole world should be filled with God-worshippers who love and trust him. At the end of the book there is a kingdom and there is a king ruling and reigning. The world is full of God-worshippers. There is no other book that reads like this. The evidence of God’s authorship is all over it.

And yet the greatest evidence for us as believers is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn’t give us new revelation but illumines the revelation already given. We know as we read it that this is none other than God’s Word. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, **“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”** God the Spirit illumines are hearts so much so that we see and revel that these are none other than the Scriptures.

And you see that right in our text. Look at our verse again, **“And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”** Who did Paul and Silas speak the Word to? The Philippian jailor and his family. Now let me say this is significant, because so many take the phrase in the last verse as teaching household salvation. Look at the promise of the last verse, **“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”** He says if you believe you

can be saved. Then he adds you and your household. Now is the promise that if the Philippian jailor believes that he will be saved along with his household through his faith alone? Or is it Paul is giving a promise that also extends to his household? If the ones you love dearly believe they too can be saved. The Roman Catholic Church teaches based on this verse what is called household salvation. And therefore a person can be saved through their parents and through infant baptism. They surmise there had to be infants in this household. It would have included his family along with servants, so there had to be some under the age where they couldn't understand salvation. And that teaching goes against the clear teaching of Scripture. Paul explains how a person is saved in Romans 10:10, **“For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”** One has to believe the truths about Christ. This is even followed by a confession of those truths.

And may I say that this is exactly what you have in this passage. Because right here we see that it is not only the Philippian jailor who is believing but his whole household. God opened their hearts. But the amazing thing here is Paul and Silas were singing hymns at midnight and the jailor and his family wanted nothing to do with this message. They were sleeping. There is no desire to hear. But now God has given them new life, and they not only believe but they zealously and enthusiastically want to hear. And here again is the question: if God in great love has spoken to us and made himself known — which he has — would you want to know what he has said? Wouldn't you want to read and understand none other than this self-revelation of this great God? Here is the incredible thing as believers. He has given us a love for his Word but we do need to cultivate that love. We have a new relationship with our God and it can be seen in our new relationship with his Word.

2. We see through Christ, we have a new relationship to good works. V.33a.

This is again, absolutely incredible that for every person that has ever come to Christ there are going to be those external good works that are seen and are evident because of the work of God in their lives. And these good works are part and parcel of our salvation and how are great God is truly glorified. Listen to Ephesians 2:10, **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** Now how are these good works different than others who do good works, and how do they glorify God? People many times do good things. The image of God although marred has not been obliterated. And those good things or good works they do is because of his image in us. But what we have in salvation is so different. Because the reason why we do good works is not because we are trying to say look at me or trying to earn some kind of status before God, that status has already been won and guaranteed to us through Christ. No, these good works are inspired by love for God. We crave and cherish opportunities to magnify him. Not — look at me, but look at him! And we have this new relationship with believers, this new kinship with them that wants to bless others.

So if God saves us and has prepared that all of his would truly walk in good works, where are these good works seen in your life? Again, this not the reason we are saved but the outcome or result of our salvation. Where are you serving others, sacrificially and lovingly? Where do you see the results of your salvation?

Because the results of the Philippian jailor are totally transformative. He truly is a new person from the night and day before. The evidence of the grace of Christ is all over his life. Look at the text again, **“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds.”** Paul would later write to this church, “For to me to love is Christ and to die is gain,” and that is exactly what this man is living out right now. He feared what the Roman authorities would do to him, so much so that he was on the verge of killing himself. Now he really doesn’t seem to care, because what he does in this text is extremely dangerous. And I love the immediacy of his love and devotion to the two missionaries, and his love and devotion to his new Lord — Jesus Christ. He takes them out of the inner prison, he doesn’t take the stocks and reattach them but brings them out. Remember the official command given to him by the authorities. Put them in the inner prison and bind them in stocks. But he now disregards these commands. He brings them out, probably to the courtyard of the prison. He could be severely punished because this looks like a blatant disregard to the orders given. But not only that we see he washes their wounds. There was probably a fountain in the courtyard, and the wounds from the flogging would have been dirty and maybe even infected. He gently would have washed away the grime and the dry blood. But again, this punishment was handed down by the authorities. He has no right to go against their decision. And this might have even looked union as high handed treason. His actions were at a great risk to his life.

Think of it, because earlier in the night he got his orders, he put them in prison, he fastened the chains, he locked the door and went to bed. No thought of these men or the God they served. Yet the dungeon flamed with light, and his chains fell off — and this jailor came out of that dungeon a new man. He had a new heart and a new yearning to honour his new God, no matter what the cost. And this new zeal was all due to Christ’s sacrifice for him. God the Son in all his glory came from heaven, lived that perfect life, and died for a cruel man like me — how can I not serve and love and follow and suffer and sacrifice for him? What was the new message emblazoned on his soul that created these new and glorious works — **“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”** All of life is about him and his glory and not our own. What a grasp on the truth of the gospel. He knew God’s will and had a heart for Christ, and whatever may come, my life is safe and hidden in Christ. There is nothing in jeopardy!

Now I want us to see the relationship of these two markers of eternal life because they really do feed into one another — his work and works. God creates life and light in us. We believe on Christ. It is that very life and love that causes us to love Christ and want to learn more about him. And through that learning, we want to serve and rejoice and make much of him. We actually grow in our love, commitment and service to him. And so it is not just one of these elements are working in our lives but both of them. We desire his word, his word causes us to desire good works or to magnify him through serving one another no matter how great the sacrifice in our lives.

So think of it, if you are a believer in Christ, and you are feeling parched or even some distance between you and God, sometimes we want to be given something to do for God, but the reason we do is more about recapturing a feeling rather than love for God. When we see who God is and come to see more fully and gloriously who he is then sacrifice and service seem to naturally, even though it is supernaturally, flow

through a heart that is increasingly loving our God. His Word is so active and living in our lives because God is active and living in our lives.

We've made allusions to Psalm 19 throughout this sermon but have not quoted the psalm. But let me name four benefits that come our way as believers. And David in these verses describes what the Word of God is, and then the fruit or work it does on our lives. Listen to the first part of verse 7, "**The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.**" You want a revival of your soul and life? You want to change and love God above phones, YouTube, sports or anything else in your life? God's perfect Word is able to show us someone so far superior that it creates a greater love for him. Listen as that verse goes on, "**the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.**" Oh we can be so foolish and self-centred in our talk and actions. You want to walk in wisdom? The fear of the Lord is the beginning not only of knowledge but wisdom, and there is only one reliable source — God's sure word. He reveals himself, the God of all wisdom.

Listen to verse 8, "**the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.**" We often wonder why we are so angry or bitter or depressed, rather than the fruit of the Spirit coming out of us. And the reason why is we are believing lies about ourselves and about God. But think about it — God's word is truth. It is right. The great salvation we have in Christ is right. It is truth. Jesus really did pay it all. The word shows who I am but also how merciful and loving my God. How can your whole life not be one of rejoicing? Then he ends verse 8, "**the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.**" Oh, the word of God gives so much direction. After I see the patience, undeserved love, forgiveness, kindness of the Lord, I understand more fully why I should give this to others. My heart has been enlightened. I cannot but follow Him.

So here is the fruit or evidence of salvation. There is a new relationship with his Word, and there is a new relationship to making much of him no matter what the cost. Both of these interact with one another. Let us truly seek to learn of him. I will guarantee your life will change, but if you ignore him and his word, your life will also change. God is so good — let us taste and see his goodness to sinners like us.