

A Jailor's Enquiry

Acts 16: 6-40.

Seekers for Light.

Fourteen Addresses to Edinburgh Students.

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Chapter 11

A Jailor's Enquiry; or, Europe's first convert.

There is a peculiar interest attached to the scene before us, on this ground, that the Spirit of God records here the entrance of the gospel into Europe. No European should make light of such a weighty fact as that. It is a wonderful thing the gospel, because it is the revelation of God to men; moreover it brings men to God. And understand clearly, you do not know the gospel unless you know God, and unless you have been brought distinctly, and personally to God, so that your heart can rejoice in God, just as the poor jailor did. I think I had better call him "rich jailor" now, for indeed he was a wealthy man from that night onward.

This scene is one of the most beautiful in this way, that it shows that there is no limit to the grace of God. Europe was perhaps not more godless than other regions, but it was in heathen darkness, and wallowing in the squalor of sin, governed by Satan. If I may so speak, God says, I will begin at the bottom: I will begin with the very worst man I can find. Now, the man we looked at lately, Cornelius, was what you would call a good man; a prayerful, pious, almsgiving man; a benevolent man; but here you have what would be called a downright, hardened servant of the devil. If there be a man here tonight who feels, I have served Satan thoroughly, my friend, you may get great hope from this chapter. The fact is there are none too bad for Jesus; but there are a great many people too good for Jesus. I have met scores of them; and there are some of that hoodwinked class in this hall tonight. They are too good for Jesus; they do not need salvation; they are not lost, hence they do not need Him. But here was a man who knew he was lost; but he was not too bad for Jesus.

Now see the way in which God brings grace to this needy man. We read in the verse which I commenced with, that Paul and his fellow-travellers "had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia." They were evidently pushing on to preach in the surrounding district when they "were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." That is very remarkable; because, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been working in Asia, and they would not have crossed the water at all into Europe. But the Holy Ghost stops them. I believe,

friends, in the leading of the Holy Ghost: I hope you do. I believe in the wonderful fact, that the Spirit of God, the third Person of the Trinity, is upon the earth. I never pray to God to send Him; I hope you do not either. I never ask the Lord to send the Spirit Why? Because He *is here*.

That is the great truth in the Acts of the Apostles, that from the day of Pentecost onwards, the Holy Ghost had taken up His abode on earth in the Church. Our Lord announced this wondrous fact in John 14, saying, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever*" (ver. 16). He came to do two things — to reveal the glory of Christ, and to minister blessing to those who believe; and in spite of the sin of the Church of God, the Spirit of God is here now. Sometimes people say to me, Why do you not pray, that the Spirit may come? Because I know that He is here. I pray that I may not grieve Him (Eph. 4: 30); I pray that He may not be quenched in the assembly (1 Thess. 5: 19, 20); but I never ask — and I hope if you have done it hitherto, you will never do it again — for the Holy Ghost to come. He is here, and I will further add, that I believe the crying sin of Christendom is infidelity as to the presence of the Holy Ghost. That, however, is by the way.

The Spirit more than once forbade these dear servants of God to go in the direction they themselves thought to labour in, for "after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas" (vers. 7, 8). This was a large mercantile city, a very important one too, from man's point of view, being populous, and opulent. While there, "a vision appeared to Paul in the night There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (ver. 9). What a touching petition for an evangelist to hear, "Come over and help us!" Ah! it is a fine thing when a man knows that he needs help. "And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them" (ver. 10). A happy conclusion! A most blessed inference! A conclusion charged with the deepest import for those who come before us in the after-part of the chapter.

Paul recognises that the Spirit had called him into an entirely new sphere, and over he goes into Macedonia. Thank God! he does go, and preach the gospel there. And now it has come to Edinburgh: I wonder if it has got into your heart; that is the point. The gospel is round about you in these days, but has it reached you? Are you a saved man yet? Ah! the Lord save you tonight, my friend; and if you have never known what His salvation is, may you know it tonight. I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why? It is the power of God unto salvation; and mark you, you cannot be saved by anything but the gospel; and you will be damned eternally if you do not receive the gospel.

Ah! you reply, I do not believe in damnation. I know you do not: you are one of a very large company, who will join hands with you in your infidelity, but that proves nothing. It is usually a multitude who run to do evil. But you may depend upon it, if man did not need salvation, God would never have sent His Son: He never would have sent the gospel. Therefore if I do not receive the gospel it is perfectly clear that there is nothing before me, but the righteous judgment of God in respect of sin. The point is this, man has sinned, and God will not make light of sin: we have all sinned, but before the day when He judges man's sin, God, in the most blessed grace, has sent His own Son into this scene to bear that sin, and sustain the judgment it demanded, that He might deliver the man who receives the gospel.

Here He sends Paul into Europe. I think his heart was immensely cheered that day, and that he said when he got his message, Thank God! I have got a new field. Nothing warms my heart like the opening up of a new field for the gospel, and seeing God work in it. I know that many of you are, what is called "gospel-hardened"; but, still, it is the simple story of the gospel that you need. You have heard it all your days; but there is nothing for you but the old simple gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing will take you to glory but it. You may have science and learning, but these cannot take you to heaven. You may polish your acts up as you like, but they will never get you an entrance into the glory of God. I will tell you what will give you an entrance — the precious blood of the Son of God, shed on the tree for sinners: that is the gospel. I think you had better accept this gospel. God give to you, to receive it tonight!

I am quite aware that this blessed old gospel is nowadays quite out of date, and therefore I am not up to date at all; perhaps you have discovered that already. Be it so; I have no wish to be up to date, which simply means gilded infidelity as regards God's Word. I prefer to believe the Scriptures, and I want to go back, and to carry you back to the faith of the people, who first heard the good news, and received it; who enjoyed it; who lived on it; who lived for it, and who would have died for it, if God had called them to do so. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1: 16); so wrote the man whom we are reading about just now. Are you ashamed of it? I tell you, there is a day before you, when you will be ashamed that you were ashamed of it. Ashamed of Jesus! God forbid! You may be ashamed of yourself: I will go with you there. You may be ashamed of your life, of your heart, of your ways and of your unbelief: I will go with you there, But ashamed of Jesus: God forbid! Nothing can reach your heart and fill it, except the gospel. It comes with the glad tidings of the love of God on the one hand, and the holiness of God, maintained in the cross of Christ, on the other hand. God's love is manifested in giving His Son, and the Saviour's love manifested in His death. By that death He met the righteousness of God; nay more, He bore our sins, that He might in righteousness deliver us. He has gone into death, and, by so doing, has annulled death, defeated the power of Satan, and delivered the believer.

Now, the Holy Ghost has come down to proclaim this. It is very good news to me; and you and I are in exactly the same position. You may think not, but it is the case. You are a poor sinner like me. You may have a little more money; you may have a little more learning; you may have a better status than I have; but when you are stripped of all these, and when you are revealed to yourself, as God sees you, you are a poor sinner in your sins. And that is what I was, and then Jesus saved me. And He wants to save thee. You had better let Him. You do not love the gospel! But the God of the gospel loves you; the Jesus of the gospel loves you; and the Holy Ghost, that proclaims the gospel, loves you, for "God is love." Hallelujah!

It was love, therefore, that sent up these men from Troas to Philippi; let us follow them. "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis " (ver. 11). I think that is very interesting. As soon as the Spirit of God came with the message to go to Macedonia, Paul and his companions went down to the harbour, and quickly found a vessel going to Europe. It was not a very long voyage, for they took only a day and a half. When on this gospel errand, they, so to speak, got a fair wind, and got over the distance in a day and a half; but, when they were coming back, it took five days: they then had contrary winds, I suppose (*see* Acts 20: 6). Ah! God loves to send peace to the anxious, troubled soul.

God delights in that, and often gives His evangelists a fair wind, to carry the message of peace the quicker to the troubled soul. His keen eye and loving heart note every soul craving for light pardon, and peace. Such is God.

Well, they got to Neapolis, the seaport for Philippi, which was about nine miles distant And they went "from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days" (ver. 12). I suppose when they got to the city they looked for the man who had said, "Come over into Macedonia and help us!" I have no doubt Paul looked this way and that way, saying in his heart, "Where is the man who wants the gospel?" Are you the man, my friend, who wants the gospel? I am looking for my man tonight Paul looked for his man, but he did not find him immediately. But we read, "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (ver. 13). He could not find his man anywhere, but he found a lot of prayerful women. Thank God for the women that pray!

Women are often more earnest than men, and have much less of the coward about them. Young man, you are afraid of being thought a Christian, while that young woman of your acquaintance is bold for Jesus. You know perfectly well, that if she were to try and speak to you about Him, you would try to get away: I know you would. Young men think they are fine fellows when they play the fool, drink, curse, swear, and blaspheme; and yet lots of them are the greatest cowards possible, and would blush ruby if they were requested to stand up for Christ, and own Him before their fellows. Do not I know it? Does not your conscience tell you that you are a moral coward, young man? Oh, you say, but what would the fellows in the class think of me? They would laugh at me. Well, I say, let them! I was a Christian before I became a medical student: I used to be studying for the law, I was going to be a lawyer; but when I became converted I did not think that the law and grace mingled very well, and so I went to medicine. That is the real truth. Where I was, studying in London in 1861, at first there was no young fellow-Christian: none of the students were on the Lord's side. And, you say, what did you do? Well, I tried to make them Christians; though, of course, I could not; but I spoke to them of Christ, and looked to God to bless them, and I am thankful, some of them turned to the Lord. Of course they made fine fun of me: they twitted me, and jeered at me; but I just turned to them, and said: "All right, my boys; you are welcome to your fun; but I am better off than you are, because I have got a Saviour, and you have not I have salvation, and you have not." They soon gave me a wide berth.

If there is any one here tonight afraid of hoisting his colours, I would like to tell him what an old Christian lady said to me. She has been a Christian for over fifty-two years, and as she sat this evening at my tea-table, she said, "Doctor, I think there is one thing we ought to do!" "And what is that, madam?" I asked. "We ought to be loyal to our colours." "That is exactly it," I said. First of all, my friends, get Christ; get to know Him, and then confess Him. Be loyal to your colours. Ah! but you say, I would not care to be seen at a prayer meeting. No, you say, it is only fit for women. Thank God! for the women that pray, I say again. Thank God! for the praying mothers, praying sisters, and praying wives. I say this from the bottom of my heart, for when the Lord converted me, though I did not know it then, I found out afterwards that I was fairly netted in prayer. There were people praying for me all over the country, although I did not pray for myself. Others prayed for me, and there were a good many women amongst them. My dear old

mother, who has gone to heaven since, prayed for me, and how glad she was when she heard that I was converted. And do you not think your mother would be glad if you were converted tonight, my friend? When mine read the letter that I sent, telling her that the Lord had saved me, I understand she wept for joy for three days even on: the tears rolling down her cheeks as she read again, and again, the letter, telling her that her youngest boy was turned to the Lord. When is your mother going to have that joy? When is she going to know that you are turned to the Lord?

At Philippi these women were praying, and let me tell you, I never knew much work going on without prayer; while, on the other hand, much work has often been the fruit of the prayers of women. One of the most interesting revivals I knew, took place a few miles from here, and more than two hundred souls turned to the Lord. I found out afterwards, when I came to inquire, that three simple elderly women had met for nine long months, and had been praying to the Lord to send somebody into their district, to preach the gospel; and without my having any knowledge about it, the Lord said to me, You go and preach in that place. I never saw such a work before or since, and it was all due to these three women, who had been praying to God during those nine months. God always answers prayer. Fellow Christians, pray on! You will get God's answer of blessing in due time.

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the river-side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." They had not much light, but they were anxious clearly, to get the gospel, and God's messengers very wisely sat down, and spake unto the women. I sometimes say, I think the gospel got into Europe in the character of an after-meeting. I mean, in what should be the character of an after-meeting. There was no preaching. I do not find that either Paul, or Luke, or Silas preached. They "sat down and spake unto the women." Do you know, if you Christian young men were to go in a little more for that conversational evangelising, you would be amazed at what would be the outcome I was talking to a young man coming to the meeting tonight He has only been converted six weeks, and he said to me, "Doctor, I think we who are turned to the Lord, ought to be showing our light" "Yes, certainly," I replied. "And do you not think we should try to turn others about?" "Most surely," I answered. "Well," he said, "it strikes me that Christians do not do that very much." I replied: "You are quite right We should bear testimony to other people, but I am afraid we are too much inclined to relegate our testimony to other people, — people called preachers, — and think that it is their duty alone to do so." But that is not so; if you know Christ and love Him, you will tell anybody you know about Him. That is the way to spread the gospel, and it is wonderful how it will spread.

"They sat down, and spake to the women." Here there was a simple colloquial unfolding of the truth. No doubt, that is what took place, and what was the result? "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 of Paul" (ver. 14). This earnest woman had her heart opened. It is a great thing when the heart is opened: what do you think takes place when the heart is opened? The Lord gets His right place there. "And when she was baptized" — she publicly owned the Lord — "and her household, 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" (ver. 15). Well done, Lydia! There is a nice woman for you. She is not afraid to identify herself with the Lord. She is the first in Europe to do so. I believe, in Lydia you have the

first convert to Christ, in Europe. She identifies herself with the Lord's servants. First of all, her heart is opened, and then the next thing is her house is opened. Is your house used for the Lord? If so, it is a very happy thing. If you do not use your house for the Lord, even though it be but one room or two, I do not think He has got a very big place in your heart. What can I do? You can take in some servant of the Lord — not necessarily to stop with you — nor does it imply that you require to be able to extend hospitality. The thought is this: I mean to identify myself thoroughly with the work of the Lord. Lydia was a genuine woman: would that every man who hears me were as earnest and real.

And now I read, "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer "the prayer-meeting was kept up — "a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; the same 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" (vers. 16- 18). Why did the apostle, Paul do that? may I ask. Why does he refuse the testimony of this deluded girl? She was simply a servant of the devil: she was possessed by the spirit of Python. Satan was governing her absolutely, although she went after them day by day, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation!" Why would Paul not accept this testimony? The fact was simply this; he was spiritual enough to recognise that this was the devil trying to get his hand into the work of God; the devil, in plain language, was going to patronise the work of Christ, and that would not do at all.

I daresay, some of us, had we been followed about by that girl, crying, "These are servants of the most high God," might have thought that we were doing pretty well; and we would have been tempted to accept her help. But the devil can never help the work of God. Satan wanted to get his hand in, so that he might frustrate the work of the Spirit of God. Paul, however, says to the spirit, "Come out of her." It was Satan in his deadly opposition to the gospel, endeavouring to spoil the work. There are two principles you find all through Scripture — they are corruption and violence. In the garden of Eden the devil corrupts Eve; and what is the next thing? Cain slays Abel, *i.e.*, violence. It is the same in the scene before us. Satan tries to corrupt God's work, before Paul develops it. When Paul refuses the devil's help, note the change in his tactics. Satan tries to crush the servants of God, and violence comes out.

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers" (ver. 19). The fact is, if you want to touch a man of the world most effectually, the spot to touch is his pocket. There is scarce a man here tonight, but can be touched through his pocket These men were touched there, for when Paul commanded the spirit, he came out of the girl. She was, in fact, delivered from the power of the devil, and that is what you want, my friend. I do not say you want to be delivered in exactly the same way. You may say you have no spirit of divination, which I quite admit, but nevertheless it is a solemn truth that the man who is not under the power of the gospel, is under the power of Satan. When Paul was converted, the Lord commanded him to go to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26: 18). Therefore you see that, until you and I are brought to Jesus,

we are in Satan's power. I frankly admit that men do not like to own it. I know I did not care to own it, nor would I have owned it when I was unconverted, but I own now where I was till Christ delivered me.

But here was a woman completely under the power of the devil, and when she is delivered from it by the power of the Holy Ghost, there arises a storm. Her masters "caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city" (ver. 2, 01 All sorts of false accusation are made; they do not get a fair hearing; their clothes are rent off them, and after that they are beaten. "And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks" (vers. 23, 24).

I have no doubt the devil thought, I have put a stop to the gospel now. I have put a conclusion to the work of the Lord, now that I have got His servants shut up. Do you know when grace wins its finest victories? In the moment when everything seems against God, and against His servants. There was a victory to be won on this occasion; but the way to it was painful. The man whom Paul had seen in vision was in the precincts of that Roman prison. God had His eye upon him, and he must be got at somehow. He was not likely to come out to hear the gospel, so Satan, in attempting to stop its course, is made to carry it in to him.

The apostles are thrust into the inner prison, and their feet are put in the stocks. The jailor seems to take a brutal pleasure in his treatment of them. He does not say, "Come along; I am sorry I must lock you up;" but apparently serving his then master gleefully, he "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks." Then, clearly, he went to get a sleep. "And at midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (ver. 25). What a wonderful thing is faith! Look at the faith and energy of these servants of God. Think of their condition with bleeding backs, and cramped limbs, in that damp, miserable, wretched dungeon of a prison. The prisons which the Romans prepared for their prisoners were awful places. And yet, if you had been passing by that old prison, I think you would have stopped, with the question, What is that I hear? Why, they are having a really good time of it in there! Singing, do I hear? They seem to be very happy! What has happened? They seem uncommonly well off in that prison. True, they were profoundly happy, hence they "prayed and sang praises." Ah! you cannot crush or shut up the heart of a man that has Christ in it You cannot spoil his joy. Do not you see that the Holy Ghost always brings joy to the heart of the persecuted? Persecution does not damp joy: the very contrary, the more men persecute you, the brighter will you get. A little persecution would brighten us up wonderfully, my friends. I could not find a better illustration of that than is found here.

Now what do you think was the burden of those midnight prayers? I do not think their prayer was, "Lord, let us out." I believe their prayer to God was, "Lord, turn this to Thy glory; turn this to the salvation of souls; turn this to the blessing of precious souls in this prison; and, O Lord! keep those who have believed, and especially Lydia, keep them firm." Besides they sang. Songs ascended to God in the night seasons. Had it been you and me, my friend, I am not sure we should have been like Paul and Silas. We should probably have turned to each other, and said:" This is a very blue look-out indeed. Instead of going on with the preaching, here we are in

prison." Indeed, we are very wishy-washy Christians nowadays, I fear; but look at the sturdiness of these men; look at their boldness and confidence in God. It is lovely.

But not only did God hear their prayers and songs, for we read, "and the prisoners heard them." I think I can hear the others saying amongst themselves, "Uncommon kind of prisoners these; poor chaps, they came in just a short time ago, and they had an awful beating outside; now their feet are in the stocks. Still, here they are, praying and singing, as if they were in a palace, instead of a prison." They were doubtless a great enigma to their fellow-prisoners, but they were simply acting as holy priests, just as they acted as royal priests a little later in the night. A Christian is a most remarkable person. He is indeed a wonderful man. He is a holy priest, and a royal priest. What do you mean by a holy priest? you ask. He has the privilege of offering the sacrifice of praise to God; and as a royal priest, he has something for other people. He holds up one hand to God in praise; he is a worshipper. In the other, he holds out to the poor and needy that which he has to give them; he is a benefactor. (See Heb. 13: 15, 16, and 1 Peter 2: 5-9.) The Christian is the most independent creature under the sun, as regards man, but hangs on God. He has salvation through the blood of the Son of God; he knows God; and he is here to witness for God. I wish I were a little more of the backbone Christian myself, for in this scripture I read how unlike myself were these men.

Here then they were sending up their music to God; and what a sight for heaven that must have been! The servants of heaven's Lord were shut up in prison by the devil, but he could not shut their lips, so they prayed, and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them.

That God heard them is blessedly manifest, for we read, "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loose." God steps in, and the prison is shaken to its very foundations at His command. This was God's answer to the prayer of His servants. It was God's tribute to the cheerful song of His beloved witnesses: it was God's testimony to the name of His blessed Son. I do not think it was the earthquake that converted the jailor. There were two great quakes that night. The earthquake woke up the jailor, as you will see presently, from his slumbers; the second, which I had better call a soul-quake, woke him as to his state before God. It was not the physical danger that did that. God steps in: the old prison is shaken to its foundations; the doors are opened, and the bands are loosed. That is a sort of figure of what the gospel does; I will tell you, it produces a moral earthquake in a man. When you get under the power of the gospel, you collapse. You are laid hold of by God, and reduced to nothingness. A man told me not long ago: "I was in a meeting last night, where you were preaching about the precious blood of Christ, and it just seemed as though God laid hold of me, and brought me down, down, down; till I got down to the very dust in the sense of my sin, and guilt, and danger before God." It is the same principle here. It is a wonderful thing when God deals with a man; when you have the sense in your soul that the eye of God is upon you.

"And every one's bands were loosed." That is what the gospel does. It comes out, and sets the captives free. Emancipation is emblazoned on the flag of the gospel. Emancipation for the captive, the slave of Satan. That is what I get in this chapter: and the first thing is everybody is loosed from their bands. Have you received the gospel? Will you be the Lord's tonight?

"And the 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 that the prisoners had been fled" (ver. 27). The jailor is awakened. He became conscious that the doors were open. In a minute he says to himself, They are all gone; my life is forfeited. He draws his sword, and is about to commit suicide. He knows that his life will be taken in the morning, for that was the Roman law. If a jailor allowed a prisoner to escape, he had to forfeit his life for that of the man he had allowed to escape. Historians tell us that Philippi was the most wonderful place for suicides. It was quite the fashion, and this poor man was about to launch himself into eternity. Is there a wretched sinner, a would-be suicide here tonight? Ah, friend! are you fit to go into the presence of God? Can you go into God's presence, above all, with the sin of self-destruction upon you? Is there a man here — I have sometimes met them — who has determined to hurl himself into eternity, as this poor wretch was going to do? Stop! man, are you fit to go into the presence of God? No, you are not fit, unless you are saved.

Just as this man's sword touches his breast-bone there comes out from the darkness a loud voice. The voice of a royal priest utters these wonderful words, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (ver. 28). That woke the jailor up. It was not the earthquake that produced the state of exercise in his soul, that you read of. It was the word from the lips of the royal priest, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." He would ask himself, no doubt, How in the world could he know I was going to commit suicide? Here it is thick darkness, yet he has seen me. The Spirit of God was the Author of that word. "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." You, who are going on your way to eternal ruin, do you know what God says to you? You, sinner, who are going on in your own way, sporting with the things of this life, and turning your back upon Christ, do you know what He says by my lips tonight? "Do thyself no harm." That is just what man is doing. The jailor heard the voice, and we read, "Then he called for a light." Is that not very striking? When a man is touched by the Spirit of God, he always wants a light. I like to see the man who wants God's light. You know what light does? It makes things manifest. True, this man called for a physical light; but do you not want spiritual light? If you do, you will get it. The jailor had the physical, and desired spiritual light, and he got it.

He was just at the doorway, and he "sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas; and brought them out." And at that moment there burst from the lips of the awakened man, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Who had said a word to him about salvation? Who had said a word to him about his sins? Who told the man that he was lost? Who pressed upon him the necessity for salvation? God can do a wonderful work in a very short time; and even this night, since you came into this meeting, I trust He has wrought in your souls, to make you feel that you need salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" is a wonderful query. He had received light from God, and the first discovery in his soul was this, I am a lost man; and so he cried, "What must I do to be saved?"

Have you ever taken your place before God with a query like that? Have you — let me affectionately ask you — ever put such a query as that? Have you ever, in the presence of God, asked, "What must I do to be saved?" If you have not, I believe the truth is that you have not discovered what the jailor discovered, that you are a lost soul. Oh! may God show you that you are a lost sinner, and give you grace to turn to Him with a similar query; that is to get light, and knowledge, and salvation. "What must I do to be saved?" is the sinner's inquiry. How beautiful is

God's answer! "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." How charming is that answer! Was he to do some great thing? No! He was to believe the good news of the love of God, made manifest in His precious Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." There was not one word about works; works come in, in their proper place: there is no doubt about that, — in the history of the Christian. But you do not work in order to be saved. As the hymn puts it —

"I would not work my soul to save,

For that my Lord has done;

But, I would work like any slave,

For love of God's dear Son."

What works could you do, sinner? As a careless sinner, you bring forth "wicked works"; and as a religious unconverted man you can only bring forth "dead works." Both wicked and dead works must be judged of God. Not to him that worketh, but "To him that *worketh not*, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4: 5), is God's way of salvation, and that the jailor heard that night.

But what did this jailor know about the Lord Jesus Christ? Till then nothing, so "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The Lord Jesus Christ he was bade to believe on. His full name was given. Why was it not believe on Jesus; or believe on Christ? It was the Lord Jesus Christ he was to know: He was the Lord; the Lord of all. Is He not your Lord? If not, oh! let Him have dominion over you in future. He was also Jesus! What does that mean? Jehovah, the Saviour! "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And further, He was the Christ, the anointed One, the exalted One.

But this was not all the jailor heard, for by the statement, "they spake unto him the word of the Lord," I have no doubt, Paul brought out the tale of the birth of Jesus, and of His holy, gracious life; the story of His death on the cross when men put Him there; and how at that moment, was accomplished the work of redemption, which He only could accomplish; and how God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all; how He who knew no sin, was made sin for us; and how, after His suffering was ended in His atoning death, and the shedding of His blood, He was laid in the grave for three days. How that after the third day He was raised from the dead, and was received up into glory at the right hand of the Father. I think Paul told him more than that. He told him that, after Jesus had gone to the right hand of God, the Holy Spirit came down to testify of Him, to proclaim forgiveness of sins in His name, and to seal the faith of the believer.

This, then, is the answer to your question: if you want to be saved, you must believe on God's Son. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Mark you! it is Christ, you must know. It is the Person of Christ who is the object of belief, the object of faith. Christ, personally, is the object of the soul's faith, and the one who believes in Him gets the benefit of all the work He has done. I do not agree at all with an old woman, in Arran, who said to a friend of mine, who was pressing the gospel on her, "You make far o'er muckle o' that

word, believe, believe." That let out a great deal. You cannot make too much of believing. If Christ has not hitherto been the object of your faith, may God give you now to believe on His blessed Son, and you will get what the jailor got. "Thou shalt be saved," is God's assurance to the believing soul.

The moment you turn to Christ, the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment you get salvation. The moment the sinner accepts Him, acknowledges Him, and confesses Him, that moment is salvation the present, and eternal portion of the believing one. You get what the jailor got. He got salvation; for, I find: "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, *believing in God with all his house*" (vers. 33, 34). He was told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I read he believed in God. Why was that? What he had heard led him to see that the blessed Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he had been told, was really God; that the blessed One, who became Man, that He might die for his sins, and save him, was the eternal, blessed Son of God. Accepting that truth, and believing that truth, in the simplicity of a little child, he believed in God it with all his house." Mark that! Not only he himself, but all his house were marked for blessing. Paul had found his man, but he got a good many besides.

Truly this is a charming scene. The first man converted in Europe is just a sample of what God's grace is still doing. Look at the contrast — at one moment the slave of Satan, and in the very pay of the enemy. One moment doing the devil's work, as he thrusts the Lord's servants into the prison, and makes their feet fast in the stocks; and the next he is suddenly awakened — awakened by God — and is about to hurl himself into eternity, when he hears a word that arrests him, and he cries, as a lost man, "What must I do to be saved?" He hears the gospel, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, confesses the name of the Lord, and then identifies himself with the work of the Lord. He is a saved man, a trophy of grace, indeed. A wonderful trophy was that man — do you resemble him at all?

The next morning the magistrates sent to him, saying, "Let those men go," and he came and said to Paul, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace" (ver. 36). What a change between the way he received the Lord's servants, and the way he dismissed them. Indeed, a wonderful change comes over a man when the gospel is received, and the jailor knew it full well as he said "Go in peace," the very words his Lord and Saviour had often used to others.

My friends sometimes talk about transformation scenes. I think this is one of the finest transformation scenes. The man has been a servant of Satan till that hour. In a moment he is transformed. He comes out, and is identified with the Lord's interests, and he takes up this position, while discharging his daily duties as a jailor.

You say that you are converted, and yet there has been no change in your life. I doubt very much if you have been converted, if there is no change in your life. Converted! What are you converted to, if your ways, your habits, and your manners are unchanged. Converted! No, no. Whenever God is working, Satan has a number of false converts about, in order to spoil the work. Ah! says some one, that is what upsets me. I do not think I shall ever make any profession,

because those who do so do not walk differently. I do not think there is any reality in conversion. Why? Because you think some people inconsistent. Do not let that upset you. If the Spirit of God were not making real, genuine converts, the devil would not make false converts in order to spoil the work. Do not you be a false convert. Do not you profess what you do not possess. But if you know Christ, own Him boldly, hoist your colours, and confess Him.

The Lord give you to be on His side from this night forward, and not ashamed to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.