Acts 16:30

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 May 1988

Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0:00] Let us turn now to the book of Acts and to the 16th chapter and verse 30.! Acts chapter 16 and verse 30.

Sars, what must I do to be saved?
And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Now I suppose that all of us know the story of Paul's visit to Philippi.
How he went there by direct divine guidance and revelation. And how for a while the mission seemed to prosper until Paul gave offence to some of the citizens and found himself with Silas suddenly in prison.
And I think that one of the great lessons of the whole narrative is that the gospel of Jesus Christ is relevant to all sorts and all conditions of men.
[1:42] We find the stories of three remarkable people, all of them influenced by the gospel, and yet all of them very, very different.

We find Lydia, our respectable, prosperous, wealthy, middle-class lady, our religious personality, and she is brought to the Lord the Lord.
The Lord opens her heart and she accepts the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we meet a slave girl, an antriloquist, a fairground entertainer, a girl apparently of little intelligence, maybe demon-possessed, or most certainly living loosely.
But she too experiences, in some degree at least, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We couldn't find two women more different more different than Lydia and the slave girl.
And yet, the gospel, the power of Jesus, is relevant equally to each other. And then we find this man, this jail, a man probably who had spent his life in the Roman army, would have all the virtues that went along with that lifestyle, the virtues of strength and courage and discipline, a man lacking in the making of human kindness, a man brutalized by the work given him to do, a man, I suppose, who never gave a moment's thought to his own soul and to his own salvation.
[4:10] And yet, when God sent Paul to Philippi, he had this man very, very much in mind. God had loved him from all eternity.

and God meant that at this moment, God's love and this man's need would be brought so effectively face to face with one another.
And so we have those three very, very different personalities. One refined woman, one demon-possessed, loose living woman, one brutalized man, and yet, to all of them, the word of God speaks.
Isn't it a shame that so very often we imagine that God's world is relevant only to certain conditions, only to certain limited forms of human personality, and how clear it is that God's word isn't simply for one social background or for one level of intelligence or for one level of morality.
I suppose such many a Lydia-like person has listened with despair to the story of her conversions of great drunkards and great profligates and she has found no point of contact between herself and that kind of salvation.
[6:00] and sometimes people have almost wished that they had lived like the slave girl or like the jailer and had some great dramatic cataclysmic conversion.

They have so envied the drama and the clarity of that kind of transformation. And yet sometimes the jailer too as they met in the fellowship of the church at Philippi must have envied Lydia her gifts perhaps and her refinement and her culture!
and the quiet glorious way that the Lord had brought her to her knowledge of himself. the important thing surely is this that we ourselves who are witness into Christ should not despair of any single individual.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We might look sometimes at the Lydia's and they're so complicit and they're so secure and we imagine to ourselves God's gospel can never penetrate that security that great inner certainty and self-assurance and yet God did precisely that.
Or we may look at this careless and this loose living girl this girl with the demonic elements so clearly apparent in her life and we might say well what can God's grace do?
[7:39] I don't suppose she could have even discussed many of the points of doctrine that are so important to us and yet God's rule for her was that she would know deliverance from the force and the power that held her in such dreadful bondage and how many would have said when Paul came to Philippa and when Paul was thrown by this man into the innermost dungeons and handled so roughly and treated so brutally that in a few short hours this man would become a great trophy of grace he was all that we deemed barbaric he was a rough diamond he was a religious and godly and foul mouthed man and shoe and yet the gospel of Christ came home to him was to blend the spell and he was transformed into a living member of the body of the Lord

Jesus so let's not despair of any condition let's not despair of those who are so secure in their own spiritual fastnesses let's not despair of those whose lives are so apparently and obviously demonic and let's not despair of those brutalized by the lives they've lived in fierceness and in roughness and in stupor and in debauchery of all kinds because God's grace is still able to reach them even in the distance at which they stand from the norms of God and of his word now let me turn the whole thing around maybe tonight we mention that the gospel is not for us maybe we mention that because we're not Lydia's the gospel is not for us or we mention it because we're not young as this girl was the gospel is not for us or we mention it because we haven't sunk to this level of brutality we haven't this roughness and this obvious abandonedness that are so multifunctional of so many of the great testimonies and the great conversion stories that the gospel is not for us you know as these people shared experiences in the church at Philippi
I'm sure they must have found one another so difficult to understand Lydia would have said there was no earthquake in my life I was awakened so quietly and going to God's kingdom so gently and so comfortably I was just led so kindly by God into the state of grace and she couldn't understand the jail and he couldn't understand how unthraumatic her experience was but what does it matter if the grace of God has touched our lives wherever we are whether we are lideous or whether we are filling ground entertainers or whether we are brutalized by lives of abandonment the gospel is still for us but my main concern lies some worries my main concern is with this question that this man asked and
Paul's great answer to it what must I do to be saved and Paul's response and Sarah's response to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ this man had suddenly come face to face with the implications of his own behavior he had locked up and he treated the messengers of God and he didn't know very much about this God but the God of the name the God had come and he was shaking a palace and he was shaking the whole world in which this man lived and he came out trembling and terrified because of the guilt connected with recollection of what he had done to the messengers of this God and he's asking what must I do what must I do what must may instantaneous clarity of the response that the apostles made.
[13:24] Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. You see these men they don't know if this man is elect and they don't know if he's a seeker they don't know if he's committed of sin they don't know if there's real spiritual hunger they don't know if this man is prepared for the gospel.

All they know is this man is a sinner and with no delay and no hesitation and no qualifications they'll say to this man simply as a man and simply as a sinner they'll say to him where you are now believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
I think that so often we imagine that we must be more careful we must not be so free we mustn't be so liberal and so unqualified with the gospel of the Savior we must wait to know where people are we must wait to know whether they're really seeking really convicted really ready but these men knew nothing of this they didn't ask him was he penitent they were he remorseful they didn't ask him was he convicted but they simply said to him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ well let me put it to you this way they were asking him to believe a message they were asking him to quote you the modern man of the 18th century they were asking telling him this they were telling him be validly persuaded there is something they said that we want you to believe we don't know where you stand spiritually but there's something we want you to believe and that's where we begin and that's where

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

I begin with you tonight there's something
I want you to believe I want you to be very persuaded I want you to really believe that God in Christ is able to save you it doesn't matter whether religious or slave killers or jailers or something quite different we may be great intellectuals we may be ignoramuses we may be very religious people we may have been seeking for the truth for years and even for decades or we may not have given these things a moment's thought until just this instant and yet I want you to believe that God in Christ is able to save you that God is able to forgive all your sins that God is able to cover your past able to blot out your guilt able to eradicate all you've demeuryt and all the ability to the punishment you do sin it doesn't matter how long
I'll carry you in sin it doesn't matter how indifferent we've been to adopt to this moment it doesn't matter how aggravated by circumstance sin against light sin persisted the blood of Jesus Christ God's son is able to cleanse you from all your sin I want you to believe that God can deal with the guilt of your sin I want you to believe that the spirit and power of God can deal with all the defilement and all the bondage of sin it may be you say to me tonight my problem what bothers me is not the guilt of my sin it's its power it's this kingdom this bondage
[18:16] I'm the prisoner I'm the victim driven by this thing I'm the slave of this thing and God is saying believe that I can deliver you I want you very persuaded that God can deliver you and God can save you from your sin he makes the vilest clean there is no degree of sin that can defy the blood of Christ the blood cleanses from all sin there is no degree of defilement or of bondage from which God's spirit is not able to liberate and able to deliver us can we please begin by believing that by not putting this gospel past ourselves by not saying it's for others by believing it's for me

God is saying to you where you sit tonight God is saying to you I can save you I can cover your sin I can liberate you from sin believe that believe that God is offering to save you that he stands here tonight in the world of his gospel and he's offering to you forgiveness and he's offering to you deliverance and he's offering you everything that belongs to salvation believe and you will be saved the blood of Christ to cover your sin the power of the spirit of
God to indwell you may be frightened that you might begin this life and then make such a mess of it and bring such disgrace upon yourself and you'd rather not begin because you don't trust yourself and I'm saying you will indeed don't you trust yourself for a single moment but this is a salvation of power the spirit of God to indwell you and so to indwell you that you can mount up with wings as eagles you can run and not be weary you can walk and not faint God is offering you that he will make you as righteous as Christ himself as powerful as the very spirit of God he is offering you that he will make you absolutely like
Christ he is offering to transform you from the inside to give you a new image to give you a new form to give you a new glory and he is offering you the whole inheritance of the son of God let me say to you again he is offering you the whole inheritance of the son of God you know we Christians we are heirs of God we joined heirs with Christ all the promises God made to his only son all these promises are ours promises of preservation and promises of protection and promises of power and promises of blessedness all these promises are ours in trust and I'm here I'm here in God's name I'm here with an offer that comes from
God himself and I'm saying to you believing as I do in the sovereignty of God in the man of the God who commissioned me I'm saying to you that I'm offering you in God's name salvation salvation it's a free offer and it's an offer which has your name upon it and all I want is your acceptance I want your signature I want you to accept God's offer of salvation God is saying to you believe I am able to save you God is saying to you believe I am offering you salvation and God is saying this to you too believe I am pleading with you to accept my salvation as though God did beseech you by us
[23:26] God is saying to us I plead with you I beseech you I beg you to be reconciled to God you know God is really exalted and I am saying that I hope and confidence again that that's what God has commissioned me to do I know he's the king of heaven I know that he possesses the most august and the most awesome majesty I know that his name must not be compromised and yet I know that God begs that God pleads and that God beseeches I know that your salvation matters tonight to God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ I know that if you are lost it will give

God no pleasure I know that if you turn to God this moment there will be joy in heaven all that a sinner repented I sometimes think that you should turn to God just for the sheer pleasure it's going to give himself imagine there's going to be joy in heaven if you go back to God that surely is of great encouragement well how do you react do you say to God that Lord I might be killed this man could

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

have said that this man could have said but I haven't given these things a moment thought and this moment I thought you must be preparing to come surely there must be some routine to go through and there must be various stages before a man can come to
Christ must I not go through conviction of sin and spiritual hungering and thirsting and reforming my life mustn't there be some preparation before I come to God well you know Rabbi Duncan said this to us Rabbi Duncan said that the gospel is a prepared feast for unprepared guests and there was never a man who was less prepared for the kingdom of God than this jailer and yet God said to him look you believe now and you will be saved now that's what God said to him I have first prepared for you but the man said I'm unprepared and God said oh this is for unprepared people you don't need to prepare you just come just as
I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee oh Lamb of God I come just as I am and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blood but that thy blood may cleanse each spot oh Lamb of God I come ah but you say I can't go to God with all these blots and all these stains and God is saying yes just as I am and waiting not till he do cleanse my soul of one dark blot please don't say to God Lord wait till I've rubbed away the blots and cleansed away the blots you know it's God's business it's
Christ's work to cleanse away the blots we are to come to God poor and blind we're to come to God just as we are and let me turn the holes and run again into this way we are to come to God as sinners we come to God not sinners we come to decorate the army of Jesus we come to God as sinners we come to God not proud of ourselves not in self indication or in self defense or in self confidence we come knowing arise your defense is that so we come and that's what God said to this man you come you believe
[28:52] I can save you you believe I offer you salvation you believe your salvation really matters to me would you believe these things tonight I mean will you believe you for your own personal self will you believe these things and will you come to God just as you are maybe maybe we aren't listening to this simply as unconverted people maybe we're God's own people maybe we're wrong with the Lord maybe we're adrift from the Lord and God is saying to you I have good news for you too you come just as you are a buck slider you come you can say to

God but I must deal with this buck sliding first and then come but we come just as we are come as sinners we come as back sliders we come as those who lack assurance we come as those who have lost the Lord as those who are far off from the Lord isn't it glorious just as I am poor hearty and blind all I need and you need to find you are saying to God Lord I come to you when I find this and God is saying come you'll find what you need in me do I really believe that tonight that I can find in God in Christ a covering for my sin deliverance from my sin peace with
God power from God hope for the future acceptance of myself do I believe that and do I come unprepared to this prepared feast for unprepared guests do I come to God simply as a sinner do I come to God simply as a backslider and just for a moment a word on the great sequel to this whole experience how this man's life was transformed and how marvelously even his outward and social life is revolutionized by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ you see how it is on from verse 32 verse 33 how the gospel and the transformation defects is registered in his outward conduct first of all there is a transformed relationship with the preachers he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes these men you recall they'd been flogged and they were covered with blood and when this man first saw them he had shown no compassion he'd done nothing to help but here he is now you see this jailer is doing something he had never done in his life before he's playing the part of a mother or the part of a nurse and there he is washing their stripes suppose a former colleague had come in and seen him there he was with these prisoners and he was showing his love and his concern for them in this way
I'm not going to elaborate the point but when we come to Christ our whole attitude to our fellow man and to the Lord's people that is so thoroughly and totally transformed and then again you see this he was baptized and all his immediately you know there was faith in his heart he really believed the message and he acted on the message and he came to God there and then in the quietness of his own soul and he laid the guilt of his sin on Jesus and spread the bondage of his sin before the Holy Spirit and he went to God the Father to find acceptance and to find peace he made that journey invisibly in his own heart and I want you to do that now in the quietness of your own souls no one's going to see it because it is so intensely personal and so profoundly inward we make the journey to Christ we believe into Christ and no one sees it it's a matter of prayer a matter of the heart yielding

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

surrendering coming asking God for forgiveness in the name of our
Savior and yet it is going to find outward expression too he was baptized what was in had to come out the faith had to become confession and profession and for this man it had to happen immediately are we prepared not only to believe inwardly but prepared to give outward expression in some way or other prepared to identify openly with the people of God because at last what this man was doing was this he was openly choosing God's people as his people he had chosen God and that was inward and secret that was very very personal very very private but it had to come out and you know in a few hours they would know in
[35:53] Philippi the place would be a dog and a buzz in Philippi you know the jailer he's one of them he's one of them yeah he's one of them they would know he would do something that would be a public profession of his faith and the world would know where this man stood well does the church of God know tonight where you stand and does the world know where you stand in relation to Jesus it's very well for us to have pious thoughts and inward resolutions that one day yes we'll do it it may be that we made our peace with God already but we're keeping it all bottled up and it's all private and all concealed well you know the Lord wants invisible disciples the Lord wants people the world can see the world the Lord wants people the world can persecute the Lord wants people who speak for him he'll give a reason for the hope that they've got can we move tonight not only to Christ in the depths of our own souls that can we move so that the world knows exactly where we stand in relation to the things of

God and again you see this this man has given a whole new social life that's hinted for me hinted at in verse 34 he said to meet before them doesn't mean much to you does it but you know it was a moment loaded with emotion because not only do we have here the jailer with the prisoners sitting at the one table we have Jew and Gentile we have this malice evolution this transcending of all the social barriers and they're all one in Christ Jesus they're all around this table and every difference and there were manifest and tremendous differences these differences have forgotten and they're overcome and they're inconsequential he said meet before them he brought them into his house it must have been a marvelous place this church at Philippi the Lord's table
Lydia and I think the slave girl and the jailer Jews and Gentiles sitting together and they were all one in Christ Jesus the world is saying to you if you become one of them you know it's very solitary and very lonely there's no joy there's no social life they'll say once you're a Christian well wasn't this the seed of a social life wasn't this the seed of new friendships of new relationships of new associations of new depths of togetherness and fellowship and sharing the gospel brought this man not only to the Lord Jesus it brought him into a whole new complex of relationships and of opportunities and I want you to take one last look at this man to know his justice is rejoicing and you ask him you're very happy why are you so happy he's only one thing to say you rejoiced believing in God that's all there was we're not told about the circumstances or what would happen when news came out of what transpired this man would have many a cross to bear price to pay sacrifices to make but he was rejoicing believing in God it was said of
John Duncan Rabbi Duncan that when his years of atheism were at last brought to an end by divine grace and he was led to real faith in God it said he said I danced with joy on the brigadier I danced with joy and if you asked him why are you dancing this man who never danced in his life I'm dancing because I know God exists I'm dancing because God is do you know anything of that joy which is simply a response to the fact that God is God lives Christ lives Christ at the right hand of the majesty and high and this man is rejoicing and he has no reason to rejoice except that he believes in God well how we ever asked the question what must
I do to be saved how we accepted God's answer and believed those things that God wanted us to believe can we tonight and just now make this journey this journey which culminates at this point where our hearts and souls rejoice simply believing in God I'm not going to plead further you know the truth you know how much it means to God that you would come to God you come inwardly in the depths of your own heart sinner backslider you come to God there's no way you'll be rejected no way at all and when you come you'll rejoice may God grant it so let us pray oh lord have mercy on our souls we pray thee and draw us close to thyself and draw us into thine own presence and lord as this word goes forth in human frailty may it have added to it that dimension of power which thy spirit alone can supply and may hearts be prepared by thee to receive the truth in the love of it and to act upon it speedily through
[43:35] Jesus Christ our lord amen may may may may

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host