

The Philippian Jailor

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: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Alan Murray

[0 : 0 0] Here we have a simple gospel, simple salvation, I suppose really there is hardly a parallel with it in the whole of the scripture.

But an awakening this man had. He awakened physically at this point, but he also awakened spiritually, perhaps not at exactly the same moment, but it was certainly not far from it.

So we have the strange coincidence or nearness of this man waking to this tremendous experience and coming to also be awakened from the dead spiritually.

Here is simple gospel, as simple as it can be. Here is simple and glorious salvation. Here is a man not only himself, but it seems also his whole home, his whole household transformed by the power and by the grace of God.

He is, I suppose, a bit of a mystery to us because we know so little about him. Sometimes I toy with the idea of who I would like to speak to in heaven.

[1 : 3 0] If I ever see heaven, who would I like to speak to? I suppose we all toy with that idea. And I often think that I would like to speak to this Philippine jailer.

And the reason I would like to speak to him is to find out what kind of thoughts this man had before this experience. If he had any thoughts at all of the gospel.

And this morning, what I want us to do is to concentrate on the man himself, to follow through his experience from the point of view of the man himself.

First of all, let's ask the question, what kind of man was he before his conversion? You might say, well, we can't answer that question. We can't really give a very, very full answer to it.

And yet there are some things here which we can very clearly say about this man before his conversion. And the first thing we have to say, and it's not the hard thing to say about this man, is that as far as we can read, that he was not interested in the gospel.

[2 : 5 6] And he received these two men, Paul and Silas, they would be bleeding, they would be bleeding over the arms. And perhaps he knew a little bit, I think he kind of seemed to what happened later on, but he knew something about what they were preaching.

And yet, we see him just taking them and just simply obeying the order, putting them into the prison and into the inner prison, what we call the dungeon, making that he passed in the dark.

And we can always picture this man, going up to the keys and throwing up in the air and touching them and hanging them up and then sitting there and that's my job. And that's not the kind of pity we get of this man, but he is not at all interested in how much more about these men and what we preach him and perhaps even asking about what brought him there.

What was the change they had brought about in this, in the dance that brought all this upon us. As far as we can see, attempting to be unfair to the reading here, it seems that he had no interest in the gospel.

He said he had no interest in Paul and Silas. His concern was to appear all this to the very last letter, and then settle down with no further interest in it.

[4 : 31] I think we might also say that this man's conscience was not troubled. How can I say that?

Well, it seems that the man slept silently as usual. Not only that, but while the prisoners were awakened or at least heard the singing of Paul and Silas, it seems as if he didn't.

It was the earthquake that woke him up. He slept silently as far as we can see. His conscience was not troubled at this time about spiritual things or about any wrongdoing which he was part of or anything like that.

The third thing is when we come to the way this man reacted, when he was just going to plunge the sword into himself, he was going to kill himself.

What does that say to us about this man? Well, I would dare to say that it shows that he did not want the disgrace that was going to come to him.

[5 : 52] Nor, of course, did he want perhaps a more unpleasant death, which would have been his if his person had escaped. But I think there was this resistance in him, this unwillingness to face up to the distress.

Just a certain element of pride. Pride in his work and pride in his own passion. But rather than face the disgrace that he was just going to finish it all.

So, we see these things, we might just add one other thing. And it's kind of difficult to fit in at this stage, although later on we are forced to.

Is that in him there was something of a certainty of judgment. Is there a knowledge in this man which he had known and subject?

We believe, the Bible teaches us, that there is in man a certain knowledge of God. Something, although it's wrong to call it innate knowledge or innate knowledge, because the Bible makes it clear that it is God himself that put it in them.

[7 : 21] Is that in Romans 1? It's not accidental, not incidental to just being human, but it is something which God has placed in mind. To the extent that he is without excuse.

Now we know clearly from the scripture that although that knowledge leaves man without excuse, we know for sure that that knowledge will not seek.

It leaves man without excuse, but it cannot seek. It cannot be saved without the special revelation of God. So there would be in that man whatever is in every man, that knowledge of God planted by God himself.

But of course men have a tendency because of their sin to subdue that knowledge, to suppress it and even to kill it if it troubles them.

That would be that man. That would be that man. That I think also there was sin where that guy there in his memory or in his teaching or in his everything, something about judgment.

[8 : 34] That there was something to be healed. As far as the future was concerned. That fear was certainly numbed to the point where his conscience didn't bother, where he did make no enquiries of false violence.

And yet that knowledge was there. It was very, very quickly awakened when the moment came. So that's just about all that we can say or glean about this Philippine jailer.

So let's move on to the moment of change. Let me get it again from the point of view of the jailer himself. What was his experience like?

Here was a sudden conversion if ever there was one. And you know it's a strange thing that even in this conversion, which is the most sudden of all the conversions that we know, even there, when we begin to look and ask, well, at what point was he actually saved?

At what point did the life of God come into? At what point was he regenerated? We have been difficult. But that's just, by the way, we have yet a sudden and a dramatic conversion.

[10 : 05] In one moment this man is securely asleep. Done his work. He says, the man in prison, the man who has been told to put in the unit prison, they are in there, they are in the stocks.

He is lost in love. He is lost in love. There is no way that we can, after he can get out of it on the surface, fast asleep. One moment, securely and silently asleep.

He is fully lost. And every last moment he is awakened with an earthquake. To the left. Now this obvious isn't one of the little comments that we have in this country.

The foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors broken, and the prisoners found listed to it as a frightening experience.

It didn't need any kind of instrument to detect that these earthquakes had actually taken place. because they were aware of it taking place.

[11 : 13] I was talking to somebody once who was actually in an earthquake. And we were actually in the house where the earthquake, where these people lived.

And they told us that when the earthquake took place, the floor of the house was actually up and down in waves. I wondered how the house didn't fall down, but it didn't.

But it actually came up in waves like that. This was an earthquake. Foundations were shaken, the prison doors shaken open, and the banks of the prisoners were risen.

What an awakening. What a fright this man got. One moment of sleep, and then the earthquake. We see him violently awakened.

And it's not just an earthquake that he has to call it. We see him waking up to what must have been to him, what we call a dim-stay scenario.

[12 : 20] He was the keeper of the prison. The doors are opened, wide open. Immediately thinks that all the prisoners have escaped.

One thing that I think it's been here is, okay, Paul and Silas didn't escape. What kept the other prisoners from escaping?

Why didn't they make a wrong part? Then all you do is you're open. As far as we can see, that this didn't happen. Paul says to, to do is that no harm.

We are all here. God kept, God did the aftermath for this man, this moment of his conversion, and sure that none of the prisoners escaped.

They were all there. Nobody made a wrong part. When you see this man responding, this moment when he was going to kill himself.

[13 : 35] Just ready to do it. I don't think we can say this man was in one way pretending. He was actually going to do it. Because of the, the scene that was before him, it was unbelievable.

This was the end of the world. There's nothing worse, I suppose, that this man could imagine happening to. And what was looking at him and staring in space with him.

So he was going to end it, he was going to finish it. And this man is literally snatched from the jaws of the grave.

He is just, he is just within a second of it. And Paul stops him. He says, hold on, do yourself no harm, for we are all here.

Now that, what an awakening is like that. When we read that the kids were in the prison waiting out of his sleep, this was an awakening among awakenings.

[14 : 48] He was looking at this awful scene. He had just been snatched from the very grave. And from killing himself with his own hand.

And then we see him in disbelief. He cannot believe what he says. And Paul says, do they set no harm, for we are here.

He calls a famine. And then he calls for a life. He's standing in the king's house. He couldn't believe it. How could it be that these prison doors were open.

And all the prisoners were still there. What's going on here? What is this? Then we see him.

Just like a physical witch. trembling before him.

[16 : 10] He was still there. He was still there. Then, the next thing is a very strange sort of thing. He's still really regaining his composure.

Called for a light. And swung in and came trembling and held down before Paul and Simon. And it is not at that point that he asked the question.

It is not at that point that he asked the question. Because it says, he brought them out. He got back on his feet. And he obviously regained his composure.

And this question, I think, was a far more sober question. Than we tend to make it out to be.

He fell down, trembling, yes. But then it says, he brought them out. He got up in his feet. Brought them out. And stood before them.

[17 : 15] Realized. Perhaps something coming back to him. Certainly the knowledge of God. The certainty of church.

That he needed to be saved. Amit. Sir. What must I do to be saved? What must I do? What must I do? There is an emphasis here on, you know, that's a tremendously important thing.

There are people you saved. They want to save the world. They want to do good to the whole world. They want to spare the whole world. That's all I ask about that. But you're going to be saved. You're going to have to start with yourself. Oh, but you see, that's what is selfish. Perhaps it is. But if it's selfishness, maybe you have to be selfish.

They want to spare the whole world. That's all I ask my friends, but you're going to be saved. You're going to have to start with your self.

Oh, but you see, that's what is selfish. Perhaps it is. But if it's selfishness, then you have to be selfish at that point.

[18 : 27] He doesn't ask, how will that person get saved? He doesn't say, tell me how it is all.

He doesn't say, how will we all get saved? He's not concerned. At that moment, there is only one person. He is concerned that one and one only, and that is himself.

What must I do to be saved? Yes, me, the jailer, the one who received you so easily and so easily put you into the inner prison, into the stocks, and so numb my conscience, and so pretended to be so strong and so impervious to any other thing.

Yes, I have been brought to myself. Something amazing is happening to you here. I know it. I have trembled before you.

I must know. I must know for myself, not for anyone else but for myself.

[19 : 45] What must I do to be saved? And I believe that on a reading of this year that we have to say that this world is a sober question.

That's important, I think. Because I think it is important that the transaction between man and God in matter of salvation that it needs to be done with a certain amount of sobriety.

and things done and commitments made on a wave of emotion are not what is required but what God wants.

Once you in self have done the work, you will see that God is really damaged. Once he has done it, then it is a sober commitment.

knowing what you have paid. Knowing what the cost will be. The cost of this man obviously would be paid.

[21 : 03] He sees what must I do to be saved. Saved from what? There has been nothing about salvation, nothing about sin.

All these things are missing. And yet he says, what must I do to be saved? He must at least have had a conviction of certainty above judgment.

A knowledge which had been subdued but it was real. But in a moment that knowledge is brought to the very forefront of his mind.

And he knows that he must do something about it. in a moment this man is changed. His conscience is awakened.

And he is here standing with whatever pride he may have, whatever hardness he may have, whatever hardness he may have created and brought about in himself.

[22 : 06] It is all destroyed. We see a man who has been broken. we see a man whom the mercy of God has reached in breaking him, in breaking his hardened heart, in breaking open his conscience, in breaking his pride and everything, even in breaking him physically.

that is just the mercy of God. And thirdly, there is the counselling that he received.

Now, these are not what we would call trained counsellors, Paul and Silas. all they had was the knowledge of the gospel. Yet, I suppose, they had no sort of technique or no sort of framework at all, and yet they gave him such good counsel.

But is what it is. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved and thy house. first of all, it goes straight to the court.

Now, they're not asking him questions about have you got enough conviction of sin. They're not asking him anything like that. They're not asking him have you had any sort of preparatory to work.

[23 : 45] Go to your back. They say just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved. They went right straight to the court of the matter.

The question was what must I do to be saved? And there was only one answer. First of all, there is only one answer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Not you might be saved, but you will be saved. There is a certainty, there is a confidence in the counselling of this man.

man. And then they bring in something which is very very strange. Right into the midst of this. Similar to which we tend to think is way, way, way along the road of Christian experience understanding.

Covenant loss. Covenant loss. Here it is, brought in here, right at the very moment of salvation. Right along with the first thing.

[24 : 53] Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. I think there shall less in that.

There shall less in that. one of the things that we have really lost touch with is household salvation.

We have been discouraged to the point where we don't believe any longer that heads of households are going to be saved. Our only hope is young people and perhaps those who have no house no hope nothing in this world who are the denizens of society.

I think we need to get back to seeking and praying for the salvation of the heads of households.

how is this village going to be transformed? Surely there would be nothing more effective to transform the village than that some heads of households should be converted and that we could go to them and say when they say what must I do to be saved believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your house right at this early point he Paul and Silas are talking to him and bringing before him somebody which we think is so far so far advanced along the world so difficult to understand oh we have such struggles don't we with covenant promise that promise which is to us and to our children to our seat after us then we see that the word of the

[27 : 09] Lord was expounded to the gathered household to the gathered household three things there is the core thrust notice there the emphasis is on the Lordship of Jesus Christ we talk about receiving Christ as Saviour and Lord some or other the book of Acts puts more emphasis on receiving him as Lord than on receiving him as Saviour I'm not one of these people who believes at all that it is possible to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour without receiving him as Lord but I do believe that if he is received as Lord then he is automatically and necessarily

Saviour you love to receive him as Lord believe on the Lord Jesus Christ make him Lord trust him as the Lord the king the master the ruler the overseer the governor the supervisor of all of you and your life there has to be a totality of submission to him right left and center believe on the Lord Jesus Christ then there is the covenant promise perhaps it's given here as a bit of motivation what a motive this is man to a head of a household what a tremendous thing to be told that you believe you receive the

Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved and your house what an encouragement how we should be confidently preaching that as they did and then there is the exposition of God's word to the gathered household we see his response fourth his response he washed the stripes he and all his were baptized and it says when he had brought them into his house strange saying isn't it he's supposed to keep them in prison what about the other prisoners he was watching over the prisoners I don't know

I don't know the answer to these questions I wonder if perhaps all these prisoners if they were all there I don't know I was reading this in Matthew Henry he said that he believed that in the same way as all that were on the ship were given to Paul that all that were in that prison were given to him I don't know I don't know that's what Matthew Henry says but took them and washed their stripes he and all his were baptized whatever the risk involved and there would be a risk his soul was open to them right there and then and we notice that his believing and his joy filled his whole house they were all affected and not even say infected this joy in believing he had was so tremendous the change in him was so amazing that they were all affected by it all around him all in his house they were rejoicing with him they couldn't help it what a response believing and rejoicing in

God with all his house and fifthly I want to ask a question just to finish was this man's experience was it a pattern for all was it a pattern for all you might be sitting there today and saying well if I had that kind of experience then I would certainly believe you might even be saying well if I got even any experience from God I would believe but I feel I need to have that experience is this man's experience a pattern for all my answer is no and yes and that's not an easy word it is no and yes in terms of the unusual drama the earthquake the awakening and the tremendous experience the upheaval the answer is no it is not a pattern for all

[33 : 02] I will go further than that and say this but I believe that an overwhelming experience like this can be dangerous to the life of a believer I know people I know one person in particular who had a tremendous experience at this conversion now years and years afterwards he has not got beyond that experience as far as I can see his whole hope is in the experience he had when I try and turn his mind to the Lord Jesus Christ he is always wanting to go back to this experience about somebody in this congregation in case you're wondering somebody elsewhere has had a tremendous experience you see there is always the danger that we might put our hope in the experience rather than in the

Lord himself our hope must not be on an experience it must not even be and listen to me it must not even be on a belief that we have been converted no our hope our faith must be centered on Jesus Christ it must never be I have that it must always be he did it for me you see don't crave an experience please but crave a heart which rejoices and praises and thanks in that way he did it for me he covered me he had me in his mind he loved me and gave himself for me he is the center of my hope he is the focus of my all that is salvation that is the basis for christian faith it is not experience because experience can be badly used is Jesus Christ the center of your hope is he Lord do you glory in his Lord does you sing and say I am glad that he is my Lord and Master I am glad I am under his yoke totally everything in my life everything in my body in my mind and in my spirit is under him his yoke is upon it all he is my Lord and he will do for me he died for me he rules me he will take me home I will never be separated from was this experience of this man a pattern for all answer first of all no in terms of the dramatic experience some have it some don't yes it is a pattern for all in terms of this brokenness brokenness to a brokenness to a situation of need which can only find relief in

Christ that is the kind of brokenness not just tears not just trembling but a brokenness of passion and of heart which can only find relief in Christ yes in that way it is a pattern for all it is a pattern for all in one other way that is the rejoicing rejoicing oh how little rejoicing there is in us how this man rejoiced this house it's almost as if the place is just exploding with joy it is centered on the man but everybody else is affected by it restore to me the joy of thy salvation how we need to rejoice

I don't mean that we go around with a big grin from year to year I don't mean that at all but it is rejoicing which has its root in the heart in the inner mind it is something which is exploding out of us not something which is plastered onto our fist but it is from inside it is a heart that's got a new song in it that has the joy of the Lord in it that is thanking thanking thanking that is amazed amazed amazed at what God has done at at the mercy at the blessedness that that heart that passion is experiencing let us pray Lord we thank thee for the glorious gospel of thy grace we thank thee

Lord that thou art God of all power we thank thee that through the glorious and blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that that power comes to men and women and boys and girls we thank thee that it is the means appointed by thee for the salvation of sinners that we know that it is thou and thou alone that can save pray that thou bless that gospel to us now oh that thy arm would be made bear oh that we would see salvation being displayed in our midst that thou bless us and keep us and forgive our sins in the name of our

[41 : 48] Lord Jesus Christ Amen