



Wisdom's Toolbox – Part 7

Interacting with Earthly Governments

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I'm just trying to have lunch. I'm just trying to have lunch. That's a line that I can imagine the disciples saying or at least thinking as they were trying to eat under a tree next to a well near a Samaritan town called Sychar. While they're trying to eat Jesus is saying, "Hey, guys, lift up your eyes. Put down your falafel. You've got to see that it is time for you to recognize that the fields are white for harvest. Lift up your eyes. See the fields. They're white for harvest. We got other things to do here." I just know that's just like Jesus to remind them over and over again and us that the surface things of life, kind of the everyday things of life, things that occupy so much of our thinking, they really don't matter that much. They just don't.

He's always trying to get us to have the wisdom to lift up our eyes and look higher at things that are far more important. He says, "Don't be like the Gentiles." Right? That word was used to just talk about those who don't know God, who are just chasing after all these things. He said, you need to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. All these other things, don't worry about it. You'll get to your sandwich. You'll get fed today. Just you need to focus on what's most important.

I went to a college in my undergrad that was founded 136 years ago by a man who had eyes to see. He had eyes to see, he cared about people and their lives. And he was an ardent evangelist. Every day his commitment was to share the gospel with someone. When I was there as a student, I had a president of the school who had eyes to see. I mean, he cared deeply about people's spiritual state. His favorite verse he quoted all the time, Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise." I mean, he just loved that verse. We heard it all the time. It was about his concern for the souls of people, not their income, not their status, not even their health. It was like, where are you at with God? That's what mattered.

And by God's grace, he started to get a hold of my life when I was there and got me to the place of saying, okay, I'll lay aside my career aspirations and I will seek to have eyes to see. And I will go and seek to try and help people have eyes to see anywhere you want me to go. And I had no idea where that might take me. And 35 years ago, I ended up back here in Southern California, in South Orange County. And I've been trying to do my best, get people to see what's most important with lines you've heard endlessly if you've been here. "It's not about the here and now. It's about the then and there." It's not about what matters today, this week, this month. It's about what matters 100 years from now. It's about getting that eternal perspective, setting our minds on things above. It's about seeing things that matter for eternity. Those are the things that are important.

And that certainly is a challenge in a world that has all the flashing bells and whistles trying to get us to look at what's right in front of us. But our real goal is to think about things that matter for eternity, particularly when life is pushing in on us and there are pains and aches and trials and troubles and all we can think about is getting relief from those things.



We've been studying here in Acts 16 two men who clearly had eyes to see. They saw what was most important. Matter of fact, they were willing to look past being beaten, having their clothes stripped off of them and put in stocks in the darkness of an inner cell of a Philippian jail. Paul and Silas. And as we studied through the passage last time we were together, we got to the place where there was a great earthquake and their shackles came off, their chains came off. The stocks they were in, whatever was connected to it all, it all broke apart.

And that's where we ended our discussion with God doing something to change their status in that jail. But what was amazing and we paralleled the concept of how amazing it is that Job could look in the midst of his pain and not shake his fist at God and seemed to be okay with the fact that God is a God who gives and a God who takes away because he wanted to bless the name of God. He wanted to live his life for things that were more important than just the temporal things of this life. And certainly here's Paul and Silas at midnight in pain with lacerations on their skin and they're praising God, they're singing hymns to God, and they're praying and all the other prisoners were listening.

I want to pick back up in this passage in verse 27, Acts Chapter 16, and I want us to see what happens next. And again, we're going to have to be stuck with a bit of a cliffhanger because there's so much more to go in this text. But something that is familiar to you if you've grown up in church or been to Sunday school, the story of the Philippian jailer. And that's interesting because God's got this guy in his crosshairs. He is going to become a Christian and he's going to have an influence on a lot of other people. But God has to put Paul and Silas here in this prison. I guess he could have done it a number of ways, but that's how he chooses to get this Philippian jailer saved. And we see that all play out here.

And it's something that I think as I study this text that reminds me to keep my focus set on things above. By that I mean particularly how can we care about things in people's lives that count for eternity? And there are few surprises in this passage. I want you to look at it with me. I'll read it for you beginning in verse 27. I'll read it from the English Standard Version all the way through verse 34. The text reads, "When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were opened, he drew his sword and he was about to kill himself." And you can understand in that day in this Roman colony, this Greco-Roman world, the responsibility that was given to this jailer to keep those prisoners in place and now they were in his mind, they're all gone. They've escaped. The doors are open. And he is thinking they're going to take my life for this.

An important position as we're about to learn. He's an important person, but he thinks I'm done. He's despairing of his life. Why? Because he's "supposed the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself,'" I know we might expect that but here's the next line that's quite surprising, "'for we are all here.'" I'm thinking I'm just here temporarily because I'm about to get out, right? The doors are open, my chains are off. And yet he's like, "No, no, don't kill yourself. All the prisoners, we're all here. I know we don't have chains on us anymore but we're all here." "And the jailor called for lights and he rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas." Verse 30, "And he brought them out and he said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"



And we learned earlier in this passage that Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke, the writer of this text, are all there, along with others, I'm quite sure. And people have been getting saved by the riverside. Lydia, this prominent, influential rich gal, who ends up hosting the church in her house. They'd been there for many days it says in verse 12. So we know there's a lot of ministry going on, a lot of preaching going on. I'm sure the jailer, of course, he's in charge of the place, knows why they're in jail. Now, he cares about kind of what's going on in there. He's got a responsibility for it. All the other prisoners are locked in fixation on these two who are singing and don't seem at all disturbed. They're not shaking their fist at God or each other or the jailers. They're there seemingly contented in a bad situation.

And he's got an interest in what they've been saying. He's thinking, "I don't know what's happening here, but I just feel like I need to know. I need to respond to this whole thing you were put in prison for and this message you've been sharing with the prominent people in our town." He asks, "What must I do to be saved? And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he," the jailer, "was baptized at once, he and all of his family."

Verse 34. "Then he brought them up into his house and he set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God." Conversion of the Philippian jailer by Paul and Silas in the middle of this night when they're having this supernatural deliverance from jail. And you're thinking that would be kind of what the story should be about. We saw it earlier when Peter was in jail. God gets him out of jail. The whole point is, hey, you get to be reunited. Go back and Rhoda meets them at the door. You remember all this. It's just like, wow, here we have a jailbreak. But that's not what this story's about even though it is a jailbreak. God gets him out of jail and the whole point is showing us his concern for the souls of the people in that jail, in particular, the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

And it's quite a remarkable thing that begins with him saying something that I do think is interesting, "We're all here." And I think about that for the well-being of the jailer who's about to kill himself. It's good to know that someone's going to say, you don't need to do that, we are all here. But also to think about the fact that he's about to lead him to a confident assurance that when he dies, he will be right with his maker, he will be saved. This is a good thing that Paul and Silas are there.

And it's good that they're there because like we see throughout the book of Acts, God often moves people into places to have an effect on their lives for eternity, like we saw in Chapter 8 with Philip, who ends up getting put in this place he would never go on his own. And he sees this chariot going by, this eunuch who is in charge of a bunch of things for Queen Candace. And he's going down this road reading the scroll of Isaiah. And just at the right time, as he's reading Isaiah 53, there's Philip to answer his questions about whether this prophet is speaking of himself or someone else. He hops up into the chariot, he leads him to Christ. And then we see this weird statement we scratched our heads at when we were looking at the



passage in Acts 8. He seems to be transported. I mean, it was a Star Trek moment. He's here and then he's like somewhere else on this road toward the Mediterranean. It's like, what happened there?

And God playing chess with these pieces on the chessboard to lead these people to Christ. And I just think it's a good thing for us to stop and pause and think about it. God is a God who does play chess with our lives. He's a God who puts us in places, and he does it for a specific reason. And if you think about Christianity in general, it is a call for us to follow him so that he will make us "fishers of men." So he will make us people who "shine light into this world," that we're "salt in this world," that we're "ambassadors of Christ," that we're entrusted with a message of reconciliation. We've got a job to do and he calls us to himself and then he commissions us with this job, and he puts us in places often when we don't even think we would have ended up there and we are there for a reason, for a purpose.

We've got to think about that purpose, particularly as it reflects this particular text, and that is that God situates people like you and me in places to save lives. If you're taking notes, jot that down, number one on your outline, we've got to start by seeing ourselves just like Paul and Silas being put into places to be a messenger of a message that saves lives. "Know You're Situated to Save Lives," number one. That really is the call of your life. And I know you think well, that is not how I feel. I'm not a career missionary. I'm not in ministry. I'm not putting out resumes to figure out where I'm going to go and share the gospel as some pastor or something, so I'm not sure I can identify with that.

Well, I want to help you identify with that. I want you to go to the book of Proverbs Chapter 16. I want to look at a couple of Proverbs here, maybe three or four of them in this book, just to get you to think about something that I think we struggle with and because we struggle with it, we don't think about it much. And that is the fact that God is sovereign over where you live and when you live, down to the details of when you live and where you live. Matter of fact, he's going to say to the Athenians in the next chapter, Acts Chapter 17, that "God sets up the boundaries," and the habitations of people in the world. Every last person, every family of the earth, every person on the planet. And the whole purpose that he describes there is so "that they will seek after God," they might grope for him, "and perhaps find him." So God is putting people in positions with people like us, putting them in contact with people like us so that they might have the message of salvation given to them. And we've got to think in those terms.

Proverbs 16, did you turn there? Let's take a look at this proverb just to get started. There's a handful of them here that I think will help us merge together this concept of God's sovereignty over our lives, even though we feel like very free agents and you have all kinds of choices before you. You can live anywhere, you can go stay in any place you can go, you know, move to another state, another country. You could do all that. But here's what the Bible says. Here's what God has said about his sovereign control.

Proverbs Chapter 16 verse 9. Proverbs 16:9. "The heart of man plans his way." Check. Got that. True. Plan my way. I got plans, I've got aspirations, I've got ideas. "But the Lord establishes his steps." There's something there about the confluence of you and your



freedom to make choices and God's sovereign oversight of all things. We've got to recognize this. You plan your way, but in the end, we've got to realize this, the steps that you're taking, they're established by God. And that is for us to struggle with intellectually, but never to reject intellectually, because we think that somehow if it doesn't compute in my mind it can't be true.

God is a God who's got a lot of things going on in his person and in his economy that you don't understand. That reminds us that God's a bit bigger than your brain and that's a good thing. God is a God who gets his will done. As a matter of fact, as Ephesians 1 says, "he works everything after the counsel of his will." And you want to talk about your life, you can look at Romans Chapter 8 verse 28. We quote it a lot, but "God is working everything together for good." What kind of good? "To those who are called according to his purpose." He's got a purpose and he's working that out by putting you in a particular place. And we need to just start with this. You make plans, I get it. You decide things. I understand that. But God is establishing your steps.

Go toward the end of the Proverbs, here at least move forward four chapters to Proverbs Chapter 20. Proverbs Chapter 20 verse 24. I made some plans for my life, they didn't work out the way that I thought. Even the turns and twists and left turns here and there. I didn't know how I was going to go. I was working at trying to figure this out. But when I look in the rearview mirror and said, "How did I get here?" In my case, standing on a platform in South Orange County on a Sunday morning teaching you the Bible and Acts 16. It really is mind-boggling and in some ways, I got to think this is an inscrutable plan that God has that I really couldn't figure out. Can't figure it out. All I can do is look back at it and go, "Well, I don't know. It's just God doing what he's doing." And the same needs to be true for you if you understand that God is sovereignly overseeing your life.

Put it this way, verse 24 of Proverbs Chapter 20. Proverbs Chapter 20 verse 24, "A man's steps are from the Lord." And we got that in Chapter 16 verse 9. "How then can a man understand his way?" That's a rhetorical question. The answer is you really can't. It is an inscrutable oversight of your life. You are where you're at. You live where you're at. You're in the circles that you're in. Your sphere of influence is what it is. Your job, your neighborhood, your neighbors. All of those things are part of God's plan. And if you tried to work it out on your chessboard, you just couldn't figure it out. This is an inscrutable... You can't even understand, ultimately, all the details of how God works all this out. Particularly when our plans start to intermesh with each other's plans, it's like God is doing amazing things in doing what he wants to do.

And speaking of what he wants to do, go back one chapter to Chapter 19, drop down to verse 21, Proverbs Chapter 19 verse 21. "Many are the plans in the mind of a man." Check. Lots of them, but a contrasting conjunction, "But it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." That's just the good word. "Purpose of the Lord that will stand." I'm not trying to hurt our brains by thinking about God's sovereignty and human responsibility and human freedom. I'm not trying to hurt us with that. I'm just trying to say you just need to know if you end up in an inner cell of a prison in Philippi at night, you just need to know God has got me here. You can lament it.



You can say I don't like it. I wish I were somewhere else. You can think all that. But this is God's work of governing your life. He's got a purpose.

Now for Paul and Silas we get to see it pretty clearly, we know what it is. More people in Philippi are coming to Christ. We're going to lead this prominent official within the municipal jail system to Christ. And that's a big deal. Speaking of that, that should be kind of the underlying assumption of our lives. Chapter 24 verse 11. I said four proverbs, here's the fourth. Proverbs Chapter 24, look at verse 11 and we'll look at verse 12 too if you have the stomach for it. Let's start at verse 11. "Rescue those who are being taken away to death." Proverbs 24:11. "Rescue those who are being taken away to death." Right? And you think, okay, I got it. If there's a jailer in front of me with a sharp tip of his sword about to pierce through his chest, I'll say, "Hey, stop. Don't kill yourself."

That's true. It would be good if you see someone who is about to die, it would be good for you to rescue them from death. But you do understand the death that the Bible is concerned with, the real death that he's going to have, is that "we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." That's the concern. The concern is that we rescue them from the death that matters for eternity. Look at this. "Hold those back," hold them back, "who are stumbling toward the slaughter."

If you want a New Testament verbiage for that statement, think about Jude saying we're there to "snatch them from the fire." They're about to head into a Christless eternity. They're about to suffer the penalty of their sins. And you have a message that can bring them into the family of God. You can "transfer them," to use Paul's words to the Colossians, "out of the dominion of darkness," into this domain, "this kingdom of his beloved Son." I mean, this is an amazing opportunity that we have, and it should be our concern.

And if you say, verse 12, "Well, I'm not a missionary. I didn't know that." If you're saying, "Well, I didn't catch that sermon, I never studied that part of the Bible." Proverbs 16:12 says, "Behold, if we say we didn't know it, does not he who weighs our hearts perceive it?" You sit here for just a minute in the silence of this room and just think, "Okay, I guess I do know it." God knows that your heart knows it. God knows it from the time you became a Christian. If you are a Christian, you know you've been saddled with the responsibility to take the message that you've heard and probably the first thing someone told you was, "Go tell people what you just did." You're called to be representatives of Christ. You're entrusted with the message of reconciliation. And if you sit here and say, "Well, I didn't know I was supposed to speak up about this." God knows you know. And you know you know. "Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it?" Of course he does.

And now here's the hard part, "and will he not repay man according to his work?" You're a messenger of the message. You're placed in a particular place in your life. You have the spheres of influence that you have. You have the circle of friends that you have. You have the neighbors that you have. Your kids are on the soccer team there and the parents who are part of that whole conglomeration of families, it's all part of God's big master plan. And you were there. You decided. I know you decided, but all of your steps are established by God, he's got



a purpose and the purpose ultimately is that you would be an effectual agent of pulling people out of death, out of the slaughter. That's really the goal.

As I read Acts 16 and I think, okay, there are a lot of things you could have asked, like how did this all happen? But the question he asks is, "What must I do to be saved?" And I think, why would he just rush to that? Why does he have a theological question all of a sudden? Well, of course, because they're in town and they're known as, you know, evangelists. And they're sharing this message about heaven and hell and Christ and salvation. So, yeah, he's interested in that. No, no, no. I think he's got to have his interest heightened, does he not, because of the unique thing that's happening in that prison at midnight that all the prisoners are fixated on and that is how in the world are you sitting here happy and singing songs at midnight? Everyone's interested in that. It's like, that's weird. It's like Job. It's like you're suffering, but you're okay.

Paul writes this group of Christians in Philippi, you don't need to turn there unless you want to, but Philippians Chapter 2. Maybe you remember this text and you quoted it without the larger context of knowing if there was ever a man to instruct the Christians at Philippi about this particular topic with integrity, it would be the Apostle Paul and Silas. And here's what he says. Verse 14. Philippians Chapter 2 verse 14. "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." A Greek word. It's an onomatopoeia at least the way it sounds in Greek, is the idea of like murmuring, complaining. "Do all things without grumbling or disputing," or complaining or murmuring. Just don't do it.

I mean, they think this is the guy who came to our town and led a bunch of us to Christ and he sat in a prison and everyone knows, the prisoners attested to it, the jailer attested to it, they were singing songs as though everything was fine while their back was filleted, while their face was beaten, while they had wounds and bruises and who knows how many broken bones in their ribs. They sat there singing. It's like they weren't complaining. They weren't grumbling. They weren't shaking their fist at anyone. Here's the purpose clause verse 15, "that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation."

How would everyone else respond to that situation? "Among whom," and here's the point referenced back to Jesus' commission, "among whom you shine as lights in the world." That's the point. Let your light shine before men. You are supposed to bring a message to them that they might turn to God and one day rejoice and attest to the fact that they have heard the good works of your life and that you've attributed them and tied them to the God who saves. And this is the point: shine. And he says, you're going to shine and you're probably going to get a hearing if you can be innocent people, blameless people, and they don't see you like everyone else. You stand out from a crooked and perverse generation.

And I just tell you, this is a side note here. It's not the main thrust of the sermon, but how are you doing with not complaining in the midst of your struggle? I mean, how are you doing in the fact that you didn't get that promotion, you got transferred to another job or you didn't get that house or you got foreclosed on and now you're living in an apartment when you want to



live... Whatever it is. And you're there and you're thinking, I don't like being here. Instead of saying, God directs my steps, God is sovereign over my path. God has a purpose for me where I'm at, I should just recognize I'm here. Is there anyone "stumbling to the slaughter" that I can have an effect on? That's exactly how Paul and Silas are thinking. I get it.

It's teed up with a question. "What must I do to be saved?" But I think the people who are interested in the answer to that question are usually tying the messenger to the message, and they're ready to hear the message often when you're the kind of person, they think, here's a man of integrity. Here's a woman who actually practices what she preaches. And there's something about you living in this world in particular. Do you want to stand in stark contrast to everyone else? Just don't complain. Just don't grumble about your situation. Stop it. I understand your health is bad. I get it. You're in pain. I understand you don't have as much money as the guy across the street. I get all of the problems. But here's the thing about the Christian life. They understand the sovereignty of God enough to say I'm not going to grumble and complain.

And I do think that certainly gives you a kind of force and power and moral integrity to be able to say to people, let me tell you about the God who saved me, because it isn't about this life, it's about the next one. It's not about what matters here for the next ten years. It's what matters really for the next 10,000 years.

Just to sum everything up let me quote for you Second Corinthians Chapter 2 verse 14. Second Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession." That's a group of people moving in a direction, going somewhere that "through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. Wherever you're at, he's going to lead you there to spread the fragrance of him everywhere." "For we," verse 15, "are the aroma of Christ," not only to God, but "to God," certainly "among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." I mean, that's just an amazing passage. And you ought to say, God has led me here to this prison. God has led me here to this oncology ward. God has led me here to this neighborhood. God's led me to this apartment complex. God's led me to this job, to this team, to whatever it is, this class. And I'm led here.

Now, I just got to think about God's purpose being established through me. How can I do what the Bible asks me to do that is demonstrated so clearly by the Apostle Paul and Silas here, even if it's painful to not grumble, not complain, but see what I can do to help the people who are perishing? "He who wins souls is wise." It would be good for us to care about people's souls, to get our sandwich down and to say what doesn't matter as much is what I'm eating today. What matters are the souls and the status of the souls of the people around me.

Well, he asks a great question. Look at our passage again. "What must I do to be saved?" Fantastic. Here's an opportunity clear as can be. And they knew how to answer it, verse 31. "And they said," Paul and Silas, "'believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.'" Here's a quick short description of the answer to the question. How do I get right with God? How do I get saved, right? That has a context, certainly in all that they had been



preaching in the streets and by the riverside throughout Philippi. They want to know what's the gist of this thing that you're saying and how do I rightly respond to it. And he's going to give an answer. And you need to know the answer. You need to know how people are saved.

If you're there in that situation, in this particular place, at this particular time, wherever you're headed to, when you're done with this service, wherever you're going to be on Wednesday afternoon, if your job is to see people saved, the question is how do they get saved? And he gives us a great summary sentence here. But let's write the heading down. "Know How People Are Saved." You ought to know that. I ought to be able to wake you up at two in the morning and I say, "How are people saved?" And you say, "I know how they're saved. Here's how they're saved." I know it and I know what these words mean because you can recite the words, "believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household." And you can say, "Well, there, I just said it." Well, the question is, do you know what you're saying and do you mean it?

And let's start with this. Are your eyes opened enough to know that you know the gospel and you are benefiting from it? You've appropriated this. That it's true of you. Are you saved? Do you know you're saved? And do you know that these words mean more than what a lot of people think they mean because Satan's number one strategy is to blind the eyes of people so they hear these words, but they don't understand what they mean? They're spiritually discerned, they're spiritually appraised. And you need God's Spirit to make very clear to you that these words mean something that Satan doesn't want you to understand.

You've got a message to bring to the world and it'll be frustrating because you're bringing that fragrance of the knowledge of Christ everywhere. Sometimes the people who are perishing and they will not get it, but some will. And the Philippian jailer in your week, in your month, in this quarter of the year might come to faith in Christ. But you better explain what these words mean.

So let's look at them. The first word. What is it? Believe. Believe. Now, here's the problem with the word believe. Believe like every other word in our language and in the Greek New Testament or the Hebrew Old Testament, it has a breadth of meaning. There's a breadth of meaning here that does not mean that you can go immediately to the easiest, simplest understanding of that word and say, "Well, that must be what it means." And I can prove it to you just by quoting one passage in James Chapter 2 when it says, "The demons believe." And the context of that is quoting the Shema of the Old Testament, which is the reciting of good doctrine that starts in Deuteronomy 6 who everyone learned in Sabbath school. And here's the thing that he's saying. "You know the demons know all that. They believe, but they're not saved." Right? They don't have whatever this is, they don't have it.

And when we talk about our understanding of the breadth of the word "believe," whether we're talking Greek or English, that idea of what that word means. It can't mean that. And what is that? Let's describe it this way. It can't mean "to agree." It just can't mean to agree. Because if I said to the demons, "Hey, do you agree that, you know, the doctrine of the Shema, that the Lord our God is one? Do you believe that?" Absolutely. And that's the point James makes.



They believe all that. I could go down the list of systematic theology and ask them about questions of theology proper. Do you agree? Of course they agree. They know, now it doesn't mean they're not going to go and lie about it in this world. But they agree. Why? Because they know it and they have to consent to it because it's true and they know theology better than you do. They know soteriology better than you do. "Know it," as in "agree with it." They intellectually say, "Well, yep, that's the truth."

And if that's all we're saying is, yes, that statement corresponds with reality, you don't have saving faith because the clear distinction between believing just to know and agree that it's true to nod at and say, "I believe there was a Jesus. I believe he died on the cross. I believe he loved us. I believe God sent his Son into the world to save people. I believe that I'm saved." You can say believe all day long and if what you mean is "I agree with it," that's not saving faith. So you can't think that way. Belief is more than just saying, I agree.

And think of that passage in Mark, for instance. When the guy comes up, he's got his kid convulsing, foaming at the mouth, and he brings this kid to Jesus and he says, "Yeah, if you can do anything, I mean, yeah, do something." And Jesus, you can see it. He takes it as though, "If I can do something? If I can?" He said, "Do you believe? You got to believe." And here's what the guy said, remember this line, "I believe; help my unbelief." Now, if belief means agreement, then you think, well, that's a nonsensical statement then. It's got to be going from the breadth of understanding of the word from "Yeah. Agree. I do agree. But help my unbelief," whatever that is.

Now, think about the distinction there. He's not being schizophrenic -- "I believe, but I don't believe. And I'm just bouncing back and forth." No, I think he believes. Right? But he certainly doesn't do what is needed. And Jesus is pushing for that. And he's always pushing for that. And that's why sometimes the word "Pisteuo" in the Greek New Testament, "I believe," is translated in a way that I think helps us kind of start to distinguish it. Sometimes the word pisteuo, sometimes the word in the Greek New Testament is translated "to trust." And that's helpful because we do understand the distinction between those things. We don't think about trust the same way we think about belief, even though it's the same etymological word. It's the same word.

But we know, like all of our words, it can be used with a breadth of application. And so is believe a good word? Of course it's a good word, and we believe in the Lord Jesus and we're saved. I get that, but what does that mean? Some of you sit here today and think I'm okay with God because I believe, I agree with all the stuff you're saying. I agree with it. I can't argue with it, my parents taught us that, I went to Sunday school, I believe that. I just believe. I believe it. I believe it. And by believe you just mean you assent to it. You agree with it. You nod your head at it. You think it's right. It's not saving faith. If the question is, how do I get saved, that's not it. It's more than that.

And I know you've got to lean toward this trust side because of the word that comes next in Paul's answer. And what's that word? A little word, two letters -- "in." "Believe in." Now, as soon as we add that preposition to the word "believe," we know we've moved ourselves from



the word "agree," the concept of agree, into the concept that means something much richer, much deeper, much more profound than that. "To believe in."

If you're talking to me about something maybe that you can do for me. And if I say, "I believe you." Right? That's one thing. But to say, "I believe in you." Or if I say, I "believe" what you said or I say, I "believe in" what you said or something you did. I "believe" what you did or I "believe in" what you did. I mean, there's something there that pushes me toward the end of this word, the spectrum of this word, that makes me say, well, that's something different. That's putting my trust in this person. That's saying, I now have transferred the sense that not only can you do this, but I know you have the ability. I trust you to do it. I put my confidence in you. And that's a huge difference to put my belief in, "believe in."

That's helpful to say I'm trusting in. I'm believing in. I'm saying that if I want to be saved from the penalty of my sins before my Creator, it starts with this thing called belief and it heads toward the idea of trusting by giving me that word "in" believing in. Think about what Jesus said in John 14:1 and 2, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe IN God; believe also IN me." I mean, just even that concept of transposing or putting that next to, juxtaposing that to the idea of a troubled heart. Do you have a troubled heart? Do you want that to go away? And the whole point of salvation is, if I go away, going to go my Father's house, many, many rooms. Right? "Believe in me. Believe in God." Here's the deal. If I go away. That's the whole beginning of this discussion in John Chapters 14 through 16, he's going away. If I go away, right? "I'm going to go away, prepare a place for you. I'm going to come back and receive you unto to myself. That where I am, you may be also."

But you've got to start with this. Stop with your worry. You have to trust IN me. Trust IN God. Trust also IN me. And he says, if you want this, you have to trust in me. Believe is more than agreeing. "In," man, that drives it to a whole different quality. "Believe in." What are the next two words? "The Lord." "Believe in the Lord," the Lord. We're about to give his proper name, but we're starting with his title, "The Lord." Now, unless you're thinking about the aristocracy of Europe and lords and ladies and, you know, monarchs and dukes and duchesses and kings and queens, you got to get that out of your head. "Lord," though there's some connection, obviously, and something germane to the word, the idea is the boss, the king, the one in charge. The chief.

If you're going to be saved from the penalty of your sin, you have to "trust in" and it starts with this, remember who we were talking about, "the Lord," the Lord. He's in charge. Here's one of the problems that people in this room, they think, "Oh, I'm good with God, I'm good with God because I believe and I believe in him, I'm trusting him, but I'm trusting him kind of like I trust my, you know, my auto insurance agent, my State Farm guy. I trust him. Well, you trust in him when there's an accident, but he's not the boss of your life, right? You're not thinking that way. If we're talking about saved, you've got to think about the fact that the one who saved you is the Lord. He's the boss. He's the chief. He's in charge.

In contradistinction to the word Lord would be this word. Are you ready? Here's the word in the Bible, we see a lot, "idolatry." Right? In contradistinction, contrast to the word Lord is the



word idolatry. Like the last phrase of First John 5. Right? "Little children, keep yourself from idols." Idol is like the antithetical reality of the word Lord. Christ is the Lord. Jesus is Lord. Here's the problem. There are a lot of rival things in life that will take your attention, your loyalty, and will become supreme, be the arbiter over things that the Lord says. And if he's not the Lord, then you're an idolater. And here's the thing about coming to salvation, you have to put your trust in Christ and Christ is the Lord, Jesus is the Lord, the Lord.

And if he's the Lord, that means he's the boss. And some of you love your jobs more than the Lord. Well, he's not going to play second fiddle to your job. Some of you love your families more than you love the Lord because if the Lord says do this and it's going to affect your family in some negative way, you don't want to do it. Some of you love yourself more than you love the Lord because if it is going to affect what I want then I don't want to do it. And so you don't show that you're really trusting in the Lord Jesus. You're trusting in him like an insurance agent. "If I ever get in an accident, I need you. And I'm sure I'll need you at the end. So, I'll look you up there on my deathbed." You can't look at salvation that way. Christ is the Lord.

If you call on him, to quote Romans Chapter 10, as Lord, calling him Lord to save you, then he'll save you. But you have to understand who he is. He's not going to sit on this shelf over the fireplace, on this pantheon of gods that you have and say, "Well, I trust in this for that. I trust in this for that. I trust in my bank account for security. I trust in my doctor for good health, and I trust in Jesus for when I'm dying and thinking about I might go to hell. So I got all these things I trust in." You have to say at the top of all of that is I trust in the Lord. I don't trust in the physicians. I don't trust in my financial advisor. I don't trust in my health. I don't trust in any of these things. Ultimately, my trust is in God. I don't trust in if you're David and you're a commander of an army, I don't trust in chariots, I don't trust in horses, I don't trust in the strength of men's legs. I trust in God. And that's what it is to be rightly related in this case to the one who makes us right before God. "Believe in the Lord."

Now we get his proper name, Jesus. Now, here's the problem with that. The word Jesus, unfortunately, is a transliteration of the Greek word in the New Testament that in your mind is really divorced in many ways from what etymologically we should connect it to in the Old Testament. Because when anyone in the first-century heard that the name of the Messiah was Jesus, they immediately thought of the book of Joshua and they thought of the character of Joshua because the word Yeshua in Hebrew, translated in our English Bibles, Joshua, is the same word that Jesus has as his proper name.

He is Joshua. You could call him Joshua if you want. His name is Yeshua. It just happens to go through this Hellenized language and from Greek into English. And because of German we stopped saying "J's" as "Y's" and in English we harden them and they become "J" sounds and we were used to the word Jesus. And then for some reason we say different than we say Joshua, because Joshua was coming from Hebrew into English instead of Greek into English and yet we don't make the connection. You should make the connection.

Because the point of you saying, I going to get right with God and enter into his kingdom, you have to trust in Joshua. There's nothing blasphemous about it, but you have to trust in



Joshua. I mean, Jesus of Nazareth, Joshua of Nazareth, the Christ, the Lord. And just like in the Old Testament, the picture of Moses doing his job and then giving the baton to Joshua because Moses was barred from the Promised Land and Joshua is going to take you into the Promised Land. And he didn't say, "Great, now more calisthenics, more pushups. You sharpen your sword. We're going to go in there and we're going to demolish these people. I'm just going to give you the game plan. I'm just the quarterback telling you to run, but make sure you pump your weights 'cause we're going have to push through the defensive line." That's not how it worked.

He goes to the biggest city in the middle of the Canaanite land and he goes to the city of Jericho and he says, "Listen, forget all that stuff. Matter of fact, I hate to tell you this, it's kind of weird, we're going to take torches and they're going to be trumpets, a little bit of yelling. But don't worry, God is going to do this." Which, by the way, is what the word Joshua means. Joshua in Hebrew means "salvation." It means, the end of the word, "Yah," it means Yahweh will save.

Yahweh is the Savior and God will save. But if you follow me, you have to trust me. And when I say, "Don't sharpen your swords instead get your trumpet ready. Get these torches ready. Get ready to go and do what we're going to do here. And we're going to march around the city seven times and you're going to yell and then all of it's going to fall down. We're going to act more like we're in a parade than we are in a war. And you just have to believe that God is going to accomplish this. But you can accomplish this through me. I'm going to be your captain leading you to the Promised Land."

Jesus' name is that reminder. He's leading us into the Promised Land and you trust in him. And whatever he says, you do it because he's the captain of this whole thing. He is going to lead us into the Promised Land, into the kingdom, into a right place where there's no mitigation of God's blessing, where the forgiveness of sins is absolutely true for every citizen, and all that's bad is taken away, all that, the kingdom of God. You have to trust in Yeshua, in Joshua, in Jesus.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus," and you will be, "and you WILL be saved." Will be. That's such a powerful statement. And it's important for us because a lot of people sitting here today and they think, "Well, I believe in Jesus and I think he's nifty and cool and king and I'll try to do my best to remember him in all that I do. And so I'll be fine." And then I say, "Great, you've got a health scare here. They only give you a year to live." Whatever. You got some bad thing and you're approaching your death. And I say, "Are you going to go to heaven when you die? Are you going to be right with God when you die? Are you going to inherit this new earth with God in the New Jerusalem?" And you say, "I hope so. I hope so."

That shows something about the first word that's so pivotal. Your faith is not really fully transferred to Christ. Do you really think it's really not about Joshua who's going to tell us what's right and accomplish salvation for us? It's really about what I can do. So I'm doing more push-ups here hoping I can get into this place. I'm hoping I can do it. I trust. I'm trying. I'm trying. You know most people who claim the name of Christ, if you were to ask them, are



you sure you're going to be right with God the moment you die? They say, "I hope so," because they do not "believe in Christ."

When the man being crucified next to Christ said, "Hey, when you enter into your kingdom, remember me." That was a great expression of the transfer of his trust to Christ. And Jesus said, "Today, you WILL be with me in paradise." Everybody looking on went, "That ain't right. That is not right. It's not right. How can a guy like that be... He just got promised by the Messiah that he's going to make it. I just don't think that's right." As a matter of fact, explain to your neighbors that the worst child molester on the planet can be sitting there on death row after killing and cannibalizing people and if he puts his trust in Christ, truly says, "I believe in Jesus Christ. I mean it, he is the savior of my life." The prisoner will go directly into God's presence, no purgatory, directly he will be in the promised land with Christ. And when they say, I don't like that, then you know they don't understand this whole arrangement. That's it.

Because you don't earn it. You don't contribute to it. You have no part of this. You bring nothing to this but your sin. And the Savior says, I will take care of that on my cross. "You believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." There's no trying. There's no hoping. There's no crossing your fingers. When I say hoping, I mean the modern definition of hope. In the Bible the word hope means I have a confident assurance of it based on someone else's performance. Hope for us just means I'm basing this on my performance and you know what, it's a little iffy. If it's a Thursday or Friday, I'm not sure. I'm hoping I'm going to make it. That's not what it means to trust in Christ for salvation.

"Believe-in-the-Lord-Jesus-and-you-will-be," here's our word, "saved." Saved, what does that mean? That's the whole point of Paul's preaching. We're sinners. "The wages of sin is death." We deserve to be cast out of God's presence. You should have no blessings from God because you were a sinner. He is holy. You are not. And instead you become a participant, an heir in the kingdom. You get all the unmitigated blessings of God. That's what we mean by salvation and no condemnation, to quote Romans Chapter 8 verse 1. "There is no condemnation for those in Christ." There's no fear of judgment to quote First John. I'm completely exonerated of my sins. When? At the moment of my salvation. If I were a thief on the cross. He never got off, never got baptized, never gave money, never took communion, never did a good deed, never helped an old lady across the street. I just have a record of crimes. If Christ says to me when I transfer my trust to him, "today, you will be with me in paradise." It's a done deal.

That's called the grace of the gospel. Paul was preaching it. "Believe-in-the-Lord-Jesus-and-you-will-be-saved. You and your household." Oh, I love that. Love that. I hope my dad's trusting in Christ because if he trusts in Christ, his whole house will get saved. Right? You want to read that this way, as some people foolishly do. Right? You know nothing of the rest of the Bible and you know nothing of the next verse. What's the next verse say? "And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house." Well, why in the world would you go double up on them because you already told me they're going to be saved, if dad's saved? Right? I mean, why go and share the gospel with people who don't have need of it? Because they don't have a need of it because they're saved on their dad's faith. Right?



This isn't just about his kids. Obviously, he's got servants, we're assuming just the way it's described and the whole concept of the use of the word household in the book of Acts. This guy's probably got people in his home, probably extended families, like a lot of first century families did. They had uncles and aunts and grandmas and grandpas and kids. Who knows how many generations in this house, but they have a lot of people here and now he's said, you're going to be saved, you and your household. How is that the case? Well, grammatically, I don't think that means if you put your trust in Christ, listen, automatically everyone else gets saved. Because if that's the case, it just defies everything else in Scripture. Because the Bible is always saying every individual has to respond to this. You have to put your trust in Christ.

I mean, every promise in the Bible about salvation comes down to an individual concept of you dealing with your Creator. And as someone has said, God has no grandchildren, right? You're either his child or you're not his child because every person has to decide. Everyone has to have this moment of me putting my trust in Christ. I'm not giving myself credit for that. I'm just saying, individually, everyone comes to Christ.

He goes to share the gospel with his family because here's what I think is in view. What's in view on every missionary journey of Paul and every passage in the Scripture that deals with the commission of people being saved, they're then told, "You got to go out there and become fishers of men." And guess where you start, in your own Jerusalem and then your Judea, your Samaria, the ends of the earth. You've got people and those people because you're saved, now you've got a mission field. And here are these people and now let's go to them. Right? And that's what he does. We're going to go. Silas and Paul go and they start sharing the gospel with the family, with the household, with everyone under his roof. Why? Because they need to respond to the gospel.

Some people don't see that. Some people, as a matter of fact, feel like it is an insurance policy they stick in their back pocket. They don't think as soon as I become a Christian, I feel the burden of responsibility for everyone around me starting with the people closest to me. And I got to start sharing the gospel with them. How are people saved? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, you will be saved." You and now you've got a mission in your household. No one is forgiven by another one's confession of sins. Never, ever in Scripture.

Well, verse 33 Acts 16. "He took them that same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once." He was the first one in line to be baptized. Here was this water baptism because once you make a disciple, you're supposed to baptize them in the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That picture of being baptized is the ritual, if you will, the ritual celebration of a conversion. You make a disciple or a disciple is made, their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Now let's go and in this ritualized ordinance, this ordained method of being ordered by Christ, "go and baptize them." That's the first thing that the Ethiopian eunuch knew he needed to do and Phillip's like, "Yes, let's go baptize you." That expression in celebration of the completed and finished work of Christ. And had we been able to unpin the feet from the cross of the person next to Christ, we would have baptized



him, because that was a picture of the celebration of the finished work of Christ in that life. They're a child of God.

They're getting their wounds washed, bandaged. Baptism. His family had responded here. We know that because they wouldn't be baptized if they weren't. Verse 34, "Then he brought them up into his house." And now it's time to eat. We're going to convalesce and nurse you back to health. "And he," the Philippian jailor, "rejoiced along with the entire household." And I'm sure, we don't have to even say it in this verse, I know Paul and Silas were certainly happy about this. They rejoiced that they believed in God, that he had believed in God and of course, everyone in his household, everyone was celebrating.

You know, a lot of your priorities are measured by what you get excited about. And even this context of celebrating the conversion of this man and his family, food involved, I just want you to write this down. You ought to celebrate, "Sincerely Celebrate Salvation," in yourself, in other people. This ought to be the thing that you care about. It's going to judge and say a lot about you, about what you really get excited about. If you're more excited about a raise at work than you are about some coworker who came to faith in Christ, then I'm thinking something is really wrong with your priority grid. Put down your sandwich and "lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest." The harvest matters.

Things that matter for eternity matter way more than whether or not you are going to have a big house or a small house. That doesn't really matter. What matters is God's kingdom and his righteousness and you being about advancing that in this world. And when you do, that ought to get you excited. We read it in Isaiah recently, it is a great passage about the fact that we are clothed in God's garments of salvation and we celebrate and we're excited as though a person is at a wedding, it says. It talks about the husband being dressed like the priest with a headpiece and a robe and the best clothing in the country. And then it's like a bride who is adorned with her jewels. It's like this is worth... And the ground's going to bring its produce, and we're all going to celebrate the salvation of God.

I mean, that's a poetic picture in the book of Isaiah of the fact that it's... let's bring out, to use the words of Luke 15, the fatted calf. Let's put a ring on my son's finger and a robe on him, and let's celebrate the thing that matters the most. "My son was lost and now he's found. My son was dead and now he's alive." I mean, you ought to be groping for those things to celebrate. It'll say a lot about your priority grid. We're about to have a baptism. You heard it announced this morning. Nathan talked about our next baptism coming up. That should be one of the most gratifying weekends that we have throughout the year. We have several of them. But when you see a baptism, you think this is it, this is what we're celebrating, this is what it's all about.

That's way more important than anything else, right? You're cancer free. That's great. But you know what? It doesn't matter as much as someone sitting in this tank testifying that they were lost and now they're found. You turned around some bad financial situation and now you can pay the rent. That's great. It's fantastic. But here's what's really important. Someone was dead



to God and now they're alive. And the closer that gets to your sphere of influence, the more excited you should be about that.

One more passage, turn to Psalm 103. It's such a great text. Not to take away from anything I said last week, because when I said we should think about God who saves and God is a God who saves, I put that in quotes for you. Do you remember that? Last time we were together, we said God is God who is responsible for every good thing that happens. I get that. Should you credit him with those things? Should you give thanks for the things that...? Of course you should. If you get a raise, should you thank God? Sure. Do you want to pull out, you know, an extra slice of toast? Great.

But here's the deal. When someone's saved, nothing could be more important than that. And if you think because we're in this sentient world with all these things in front of us and we're so temporally minded, I'm just excited that I got a good sandwich here. I'm not really interested in the people of Sychar coming to Christ. You've got to tell yourself to re-prioritize and reevaluate.

Psalm 103, you see it's written by David there in the superscription. He says, "Bless the Lord," and I love this every time I read it, I point this out, "O my soul." David's talking to his inner self. Right? You, hey, soul. It's time to bless the Lord. "Hey, all that is within me." That's why I use the word sincerely. We should sincerely celebrate. I'm thinking they pulled out food, and I'm sure they brought out the best food that night to celebrate the fact that people in that household were getting saved. And all I'm saying is that's a good thing. "With all that is within us," we ought to "bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of his benefits." And there I'm willing to say you ought to rejoice when something good happens in your health or your economics or your relationships or in your community or in whatever. Be thankful for the good things that God does.

But you want to know what's at the top of the list? Verse 3, "Who forgives all your iniquities." Because what does it profit a man to gain the whole world if his iniquities aren't forgiven? Who cares if you live in the best house in Orange County if your sins are not forgiven? Who cares if you're the healthiest person on the planet if your sins are not forgiven? Who cares if you have everything going for you that you really would get excited about throwing a party and having your friends over to celebrate if your sins are not forgiven? That's at the top of the list. "Who forgives all your iniquities."

Hey, you got through cancer? Great. "He heals all your diseases" as well. That's awesome. You're here just to read that with your own eyeballs. That's awesome. God is giving you life for another year. But here's what really matters. "He redeems your life from the pit." I mean, you're not going to be cast into the Lake of Fire or hear from him, "Depart from me. I never knew you." If you're a Christian, that's worth celebrating. And if someone in your sphere of influence gets to that place, man, that's worth celebrating. He set on you his hesed, his love, "his steadfast love," his covenant love, "his mercy, he satisfies you with good" things. That's true. If something good happens, celebrate it. Some days you're feeling good. "Your youth is renewed." Fantastic.



But you go back to that picture of him bringing people out of slavery in Egypt, and you recognize that is a picture of the redemption the whole biblical story is moving toward. Christ has come. He is our Joshua. He brings us into the Promised Land. "The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed." The ultimate oppression is the enslavement to sin. Jesus kept saying that. "He made known his ways to Moses, and his acts to the people of Israel. The Lord is gracious, he's merciful, he's slow to anger, he's abounding in steadfast love. He won't always chide, he won't keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins." And praise God that's true. "Nor repay us according to our iniquities."

"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him: as far as the east is from the west." He's got this amazing, massive love and he takes our sins "as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us." If there's anything worth celebrating, it ought to be that. "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. He knows our frame; and he remembers what we are." And in his grace, he reaches out and plucks people from the fire.

And I say that as though there's not someone involved in the process. And that's the whole point. You are enlisted and positioned where you're at, when you're at, to see people saved. You got to know what all those words mean. You ought to know what it means to put your trust in Christ. You ought to make sure that it's true of you. You ought to celebrate that it's true of you. You ought to forget none of his benefits. And at the top of the list that your sins are forgiven. And you ought to care deeply about the people of Sychar or Dana Point or Mission Viejo or Irvine, who need to hear the message of Christ. And Jesus says in that passage in John 4 that I started with, if you just get involved in this, man. Someone's already started the farming process. You just get involved and start reaping, reaping with joy. You'll receive benefits. It's so much better than your sandwich.

You've got to go and see what's most important. I hope your eyes are attuned to things that matter. "He who wins souls is wise." The whole point of the wisdom of this particular passage, as it's demonstrated in Paul and Silas, is just a singular focus, not so much on the injustice of their imprisonment. We see not even a hint of that in this passage, but we certainly see a concern about the salvation of the people in the jailer's household. I hope we can echo the same in our lives.

Let's pray. God, it's hard, I know, for us to have a focus on things that matter for eternity because the present and the temporal is just right in our face every day. The pains in our bodies, the struggles with our checkbooks, the problems with our relationships, the issues of our world. But God help us to not be troubled, to take heart, to know that you've overcome the world. And what matters most is that you've gone to prepare a place for us and you promised to come again. We trust in God, we trust in you, and we want to see more people trust in God and more people trust in you. As was said in this text that this jailor he believed in God and he trusted in God and it was worth celebrating at that point. And I pray that we would celebrate



whenever we see that happening, whatever advancements we see in that regard and when we don't see it it ought to grieve us, as Paul said, anguish every day for the lost people who responded negatively to the gospel. That it hurts.

But that's really the battle. That's where the real concern should be. And when the victories surface, God, let us be so grateful that you are a God who still saves right here in our part of the world where you've placed us. Let us be effective in bringing that message to our generation. I pray it's true of everyone in this room. That's a huge statement to make but may it be and may it be advancing in the hearts of people in this room that more people can say with certainty that my iniquities have been forgiven, that my sins have been separated, and transgressions are as far from me as the east is from the west. Increase your domain, your Lordship, over our lives in this room and everyone who hears my voice, please, God, do good things in saving them.

In Jesus name. Amen.