

## WHY ARE THERE DISASTERS?

**T**onight we're in Acts 16:26 and following. This is a famous passage of Scripture. Most people know about the Philippian jailer who is discussed in this passage. In verses 26-34 we have two miracles. This section answers the question, "what to do when there's a catastrophe." You all probably have had that happen to you or the possible expectation of disaster or catastrophe. In context we have an earthquake. A lot of people are concerned about what is God's view about the earthquake. Here we have what to do when there is a catastrophe.

Secondly, we're going to answer the question in this section, "why is it that God delivers believers out of catastrophes, like earthquakes, hurricanes, volcano eruptions, tornadoes, etc. Why does God deliver a believer out of a circumstance like that?"

Thirdly, this section's going to answer, "what's the perfect answer to a catastrophe or a disaster in life." When you read of some natural disaster, like an earthquake or hurricane or storm or whatever, what's the answer? What is the purpose? Why earthquakes?

Acts 16:26-34.

Verse 26 says, "And suddenly there was a great earthquake." Here is something rather unusual because this is happening in Macedonia. In Macedonia it is very peculiar to have earthquakes. In California it is very natural. By the way, there's something interesting in the Mid-East, where this seismograph says there is a fault just at the place where the Lord will touch down at the Second Advent. In other words, if He just blows on it, it will part, just like the Scriptures say, and divide. It will become a sea port.

There is a fault in that particular area. Nevertheless, verse 26 is talking about a great earthquake and it's rather unusual because it is in Macedonia. There was an earthquake that night.

This is God intervening. This is probably a very local earthquake. It wasn't universal. It

just happened in one area. It just tore up the prison. It says, "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that," the words "so that" mean with the result that, "the foundations of the prison were shaken."

Remember the prison? We described it last time, where Paul and Silas were thrown. It was a Roman prison in the ancient world. The prison goes very deep down into the ground, like a pit. This means that everything is loosened.

Then the verse says, "And immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." "Were opened," the Greek language says "sprang open." "Bands" were actually shackles. Actually we have a miracle here. It is an earthquake but it appears that the only serious damage that was done in the prison is the opening of the doors of the prison and the breaking of the shackles off of the prisoners' wrists. It's an obvious earthquake. It shakes the foundation, it says here, but it doesn't loose the foundation.

So, this apparently is a most unusual earthquake. There is no damage done in the town. No one was hurt. It just simply had one purpose. This is what we would call a "selective earthquake." It was to loose the doors and the bands for these prisoners.

Verses 27-29 we go back to the jailer. This is the key subject here. It says, "And the keeper of the prison," the keeper of the prison is the jailer. If you knew of any keepers of prisons, especially in the ancient world, he is a very rough type of a man and his job required it. This crisis of the earthquake finds the jailer asleep. Possibly he might have had a pattern of sleeping through all these miseries in prison.

Notice it says, "having become awakened," awaking out is having become awakened, "and seeing all the prison doors open, he drew out his sword." We'll see this a little later on because at this point you may not realize what is going on, but he knew. In other

words, the Romans, in the time this was written, would kill him for this. In other words, he assumes that the prisoners have all escaped, because he's lost his prisoners. Therefore, there's nothing for him to do but take his own life. He's now going to follow the principle of killing himself.

Notice, the verse says, "and would have killed himself," literally it says, "he was about to kill himself." So we have to come up with the principle of why would he think that he should take his life at this point? Well, for two reasons. The Romans had given him the responsibility of guarding these prisoners, especially Paul and Silas, which we saw before, because they are very important people. The Romans would kill him slowly under torture. He would rather die quickly under his own hand than let the Romans torture him.

Secondly, there's a factor behind this. The city that this is taking place in is Philippi. Philippi is one of the most famous cities in the ancient world for suicide. In other words, if someone gave you an exam, and asked you a question from history, what would you say was the "suicide capitol of the world" in the ancient world? you would say Philippi. I'll explain to you why that was.

People in Philippi would think about suicide when no one else would, just like in Japan. The Japanese have this famous habit of suicide. Whenever the Japanese get into trouble, they just think about climbing up Mount Fuji and jumping off. It's automatic with them. During World War II they had kamikaze pilots, which were suicide pilots. What they would do is get into their plane and dive their plane right into the chimney stacks or the decks of our destroyers and troop ships. They are prone to do this, to the glory of whomever they're worshipping at the time. It's a practice with the Japanese culture. This is also automatic in the city of Philippi.

You have to remember that Philippi was named after Philip. Philippi had one of the most unusual reputations for suicide in the ancient world. Cassius, history tells us, was one of the men who was in the plot to kill Julius Caesar. Cassius was defeated by Mark An-

thony. That was right outside of Philippi. So, Cassius ran into town, then he ran a sword through himself and killed himself in Philippi.

At the same time, Brutus was involved in this. Remember Julius Caesar said, as he was dying, he looked up and saw Brutus and he said, "et tu Brute." Everybody has seemed to taken up that idiom, and it actually meant "and you too Brutus." Of course, he had a reason for saying that, which most people won't tell you why he said that about Brutus. Because historically Brutus was his illegitimate son. Consequently he was surprised that his own son would have a part in killing his father. That's why he said that. It was his son. Maybe no one knew it, but he knew it. Brutus apparently thought about it afterwards so he went into Philippi and he killed himself in Philippi. Actually, most of the men who assassinated Julius Caesar took their own lives and so Brutus went into Philippi and killed himself.

The Roman Republic army, which was defeated by Mark Anthony at the battle of Philippi, was made up of a lot of aristocrats. So, right after this defeat of Brutus, Brutus said to the people, we must flee, not with our feet but with our hands. That was one of his expressions. In other words, Brutus gave an order for all the officers in that army who were defeated, to commit suicide and literally, hundreds of them committed suicide in Philippi. For one reason, or several reasons. For one reason, they didn't want to fall into the hands of Octavius and Mark Anthony. So, thousands of people went into Philippi and killed themselves.

Why am I saying this? Because here is this Roman, ex-officer or soldier, who is a jailer, and he has the apostle Paul and Silas in prison. He's guarding these prisoners and all of a sudden there's an earthquake and all the doors are open and he thinks that all of the prisoners are gone and now it is his life. So, he's about to kill himself. That's just a habit in Philippi. Philippi had quite the reputation for being a suicide town, so naturally, this Roman jailer, thinking himself to be of good company, to die like Brutus and Cassius, and so many other great military men after the great

battle of Philippi. So the Philippian jailer is about to do the same thing, take his own life.

The reason for him doing so is now given. The verse says, "supposing that the prisoners had been fled." It's very interesting to me how people obscure the Bible because the Bible always explains the Bible. Why did he try to take his life? It says, "because he thought that they had fled." The word "supposing" means to assume. He assumed that since the doors were opened that all the prisoners had escaped, and it was a jail break. And there was no hope of their recovery. Therefore, the only thing for him to do was to beat the Romans to the job and take his own life because it would be a lot quicker and a lot easier. This is a big, rugged, strong, tough jailer, but he know the system of torture used by the Romans and so he is about to fall on his own sword.

Every time you see a play or you watch a show on TV or a movie, and you see some guy trying to take his life, they always have this person coming in and trying to give them some nonsense about why they shouldn't. You know, their dog will miss them, whatever that is. I want you to notice how God the Holy Spirit answers this suicide. Contrary to what most people would say. In other words, what would you do if you were faced with a person who wanted to take their life? Here it is. You have Paul getting into the picture now.

"But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying." In other words, when Paul saw the jailer about to fall on his sword he probably yelled, "stop it," or anything probably to get him to stop what he was doing. He says, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." And he understood and this stopped the jailer immediately. See, he that the doors were open and these prisoners were gone and it was his life. Now, Paul comes in and says, "Hey, we're all here. We haven't escaped. Your life is not in jeopardy."

Verse 29, "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas." In other words, as soon as he was able to get a light he went in, Paul stayed where he was, all the prisoners

were still there, probably too frightened after the release because of the earthquake and apparently only Paul and Silas did any moving. They went from the bottom floor in the pit, to where the jailer was at the top. They came to the room of the jailer and saw the jailer about to kill himself so they stopped him. Then the jailer, in verse 29, calls for light. Once he gets the lamp then he's ready to come in, trembling. This probably indicates the general reaction of the jailer. He's almost taken his life. He's at the point where he wants to kill himself.

First of all, he knew he was doomed because he assumed the prisoners were gone. But now he knows that the prisoners are not gone but he's still in a great state of agitation. He's gone from one extreme to another with his emotions. He's still frightened. He's still uncertain. So, he springs in, literally, it says to charge in, trembling, indicating his condition, and in this trembling condition he falls down before Paul and Silas. The word "fall" means he prostrates himself, he's completely beside himself. They've given him the only words of comfort, the only words of hope.

So, in verse 30 we have the desperate question. "And he brought them out," he brought them apparently into his room, "and said to them, Sirs." Now this is one of those King James English words of 300 years ago. That's what an Englishman would say. But that's not what the jailer said. He didn't say, "Sirs." That's too British. This is the Greek word for "lord."

The thing that really impressed him was the calmness of Silas and Paul under pressure and under the tremendous activities that were going on. See, they're in prison, they've been scourged, the skin has been beaten off of their backs, they've been thrown down into a hole, all kinds of rats and all different types of things were in that pit, then there's an earthquake, a tremor, and they are calm under pressure. They have a tremendous ability to think under disastrous conditions, at least as far as the jailer is concerned, and this puts them in a very high place now.

The jailer, like all jailers of the Roman colony, was an ex-soldier, he was a retired soldier. This is the job that the Roman Empire gave many of them. Many of them would develop farms surrounding Philippi, but this one is a retired soldier and he has his special Roman job, that the Roman Empire gave.

He, as a soldier, has been under pressure situations, he's been under fire many times. So, consequently he can admire and respect courage. When a person under conditions of disaster can think clearly, when he can think under pressure without falling apart, then he calls them what the King James English word says, "Sirs," which is a way of recognizing someone prominent. It would be similar to him as a military man recognizing a high ranking officer. This is actually a soldier speaking to them as he would to some superior officer. He's giving them the highest respect. It's not just the word "Sirs."

An officer of those days earned the respect of his troops in combat conditions. He earned their respect by being able to think under pressure conditions, as the tactics in warfare would change. So, when he says, "Sirs," he's marking them out as high ranking officers, as it were, men who could be admired and respected. Men who had something that gave them authority.

And he said, "What must I do to be saved?" That's the famous passage. The Greek language is a little different, it's a slight change. It says, "what must I do with the result that I MIGHT be saved?" It's an aorist tense. This is the word for "saved." SOZO. If you wanted the Greek word for salvation or saved, that's it. This is an aorist tense, a passive voice, and it's a subjunctive mood. That's the way that this verb is broken down. There's a little particle here, which indicates a result clause. So, when he says, "what must I do," you have to, because of the particle, inject "that I," subjunctive mood, potential, "that I might be saved." It's a little different. The aorist tense is in a point of time. This is a point of time, right now, when he's got this problem, the jailer. The passive voice means that the subject receives the action, so it should be, "when can I receive salvation?"

The subjunctive mood says that it is potential, maybe yes and maybe no. The deliverance is potential.

Now the jailer is thinking of two things. I know most people come along and say that this is a plea for salvation. But you have to remember the background. He's a jailer taking care of prisoners. There's an earthquake. He's about to kill himself because of loosing the prisoners. Paul and Silas come in and tell him that they're not gone, they're here. He's trembling. He's diswrought. He recognizes them as being calm. He calls them "Sirs." And he says "what must I do to be" this word is used for salvation BUT it is also used for deliverance. The context will tell you which is which.

The jailer was thinking of two things. The word for saved here **does not** mean spiritual salvation. I know that Paul does say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, but we'll get to that. Give me just a little more time. In the jailer's mind, he's not asking for salvation. When we see "what must I do to be saved?" automatically we think of spiritual salvation. The jailer has on his mind physical deliverance from his difficulty. So, we would probably translate this "how can I get out in one piece?" This is a problem that demands a solution.

But, from the subconscious mind of the jailer, the crisis brings into his mind the problem of eternal salvation. Whether he can think actually in terms of eternal salvation, or not, and all that means is that he has apparently suppressed it in his subconscious. In other words, at some point in his life he became aware of God, we call that God-consciousness. He probably has suppressed that for a long time. And now because of this catastrophe and problem he is now, in his subconscious mind, waiting for an answer, and demanding a hearing.

So, there are two factors in this phrase. First of all, he's thinking in terms of physical deliverance. The word SOZO, here, is used both ways. Here it means physical deliverance. Secondly, it means spiritual deliverance, or salvation, as we think of it today. But,

when he comes in front of Paul and Silas, the first thing on his mind was deliverance from his problem. He came to them with a problem. "How can I get out of this problem? What is the answer?"

Just as many times a pastor, and other people, are faced with problems, and many times people come in and they simply want the problem, or whatever it is to stop hurting. They want you to make it stop hurting. In other words, get me out of this jam. That's the first concept here.

The second concept goes back to the fact, and we can actually trace this out, because this man does become a believer in the next few verses. Undoubtedly this man had a desire, he had positive attitude at the point of God-consciousness because we'll see later on that he does respond to the Gospel.

We look at this verb, SOZO, the aorist tense of the verb, which means a point of time, the point of time is right now. He wants deliverance from his problem. He wants someone to help him. Secondly, this is a passive voice, which means that he has to receive his deliverance, he can't do it himself. If it was an active voice, he would have to do it. The jailer recognizes that he cannot provide his own deliverance. That's the passive voice. He has a problem, he's saying, that he can't solve.

So, **God brings him to the place with an unsolvable problem in order that the issue of the Gospel may be brought to him.** See, now we're getting into some practical applications. Often, when a person, at the point of God-consciousness, becomes aware that there is a God, and is positive towards that, God must provide Gospel information.

Here we have a jailer, who probably years ago, as a boy, went on positive signals, when he reached God-consciousness. Now all of that has been suppressed and placed in his subconscious. What brings it out to the conscious mind again, it's brought out of his subconscious mind by a disastrous situation. He's about to take his own life. Of course, here is one man who cannot take his own life, until **God, in His faithfulness, let's him hear the Gospel.**

See, he's about to take his life on this sword. But he can't die until he hears the Gospel. So, apparently he hasn't heard it. So, there has to be someone there to stop him. Obviously the person is Paul along with his companion Silas.

So, we have a disastrous condition here. This condition forces something out of his subconscious and brings it into focus. So, when he says, "what must I do that I might be saved," undoubtedly he is thinking about deliverance from his problem. But he is also thinking about something else, too. He's thinking about, which the subconscious brings out God-consciousness, he needs something for eternity as well as for time.

How much this man has done in thinking about eternity is questionable. He's a rugged soldier. He's a jailer. To be a jailer under the Roman Empire you have to be tough. You're not a philosopher. You don't spend a lot of time thinking. This man apparently spent a lot of time drinking and probably spent a lot of time running around in his off hours. He didn't spend his time contemplating infinity. He probably didn't think about anything.

But now, it is all going to be brought out. It's forced out by a disaster. You know, many times we are going to find people who have gone on positive signals at God-consciousness, but since the whole thing has moved out into their subconscious, they will not give the Gospel a thought, they won't give one thought to God or to salvation, or to anything else, then there's only one way that God can bring them to the place where He can fulfill His responsibility. It takes disasters to often bring people to focus their attention on the Gospel.

So, we have evangelism here under disastrous conditions. **every time we have a national disaster, every time we have a local disaster, you look for the people who are ready to hear the Gospel. Because in every disastrous condition that has ever existed, God is going to reach certain people, who have gone on positive signals at the point of God-consciousness, and this is illustrated by the**

Philippian jailer. Remember, **In any disaster**, you're going to see many disasters in your day, **and you will survive these disasters because God will use you as He did with Paul.** Paul survived this disaster. He survived this disaster to find the persons who, from their subconscious, things were forced into their self-conscious, and they were willing and ready to face the issue of faith in Christ for salvation.

**One of the great purposes of disaster is that God protects the believer in the disasters of life so that He might reach those who are now facing the issue of salvation for the first time, in an honest way, because pressure brings it about.**

Here's an illustration. In the Tribulation, after the Church has been removed, there's a great deal of pressure. The anti-Christ is on the scene. All hell breaks loose. The Church is removed. The Holy Spirit is removed. It starts with unbelievers only. All kinds of imaginations. What happens? There's lots of disasters. But, there's also a lot of evangelism, too. Revelation 7 and 14 say that in that disaster during the Tribulation, there will be the greatest time of evangelism. 144,000 Jews preaching the Gospel. Moses and Elijah are coming back. Angels will be preaching the Gospel. All kinds of people will be presenting the Gospel. It's like God just pulls out all the stops.

I think we've missed the boat on disasters. In other words, we should look at a disaster, and we're still alive, that there is someone somewhere that needs the Gospel. That's one of the reasons why God uses disasters, to get their attention. So, why are we remaining after disasters? Well, here's one of the purposes.

This man is obviously under pressure, or he wouldn't have tried to take his life. See, that's a disastrous situation. His solution to his disaster was to take his life. Paul turns around and gives him eternal life. Isn't that interesting? What do you do with a guy who is about to commit suicide? **Give him the Gospel and then let him go.** Don't call in the psychiatrist, the philosopher from the police de-

partment. Give him the Gospel. That's a disastrous situation.

So, this jailer's solution to his disaster was to take his life. But he was hindered from that. Say that God didn't allow him to do that. Well, if he's going to live, why is he living? He's still alive for one reason. If you're alive after a disastrous situation, **GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE.** If you haven't accepted Christ as your Saviour, accept Him. If you have, start taking in the Word and start producing the character of Christ and telling other people about Him. You still have a purpose.

This man, when he grew up, went on positive volition at the point of God-consciousness, which we all do. Therefore, when any person does that, God has a responsibility to make sure that man gets Gospel information. How is He going to give him the Gospel? Here He's going to do it through the apostle Paul.

Isn't it amazing, the apostle Paul is on his second missionary journey and he was hindered from going into certain areas. But God opened the door for him to go to Philippi and there's this jailer right there. It's interesting the way that God brings people together.

This man expresses all that very briefly. He didn't do much talking. He's a soldier. Soldiers talk in very quick sentences and here he says, "What must I do in order that I might be saved?" The aorist tense means that he wants deliverance now. The passive voice means that he's beyond helping himself. And the subjunctive mood means that as far as he's concerned it's a potential thing.

Now we have the perfect answer. The perfect answer is right here. Under disastrous conditions answers must be brief and to the point.

You see, that's why we have Bible classes. I don't know if you ever thought of it that way. But that's why we teach for about an hour each time. The principle is very simple. You're not under disastrous conditions in a Bible class. We couldn't have Bible classes under disastrous conditions, or while we're under fire, or something like that. That's not the

time for Bible classes. In other words, you learn the Word of God under normal conditions so that you can use it under disastrous conditions.

This perfect answer is given under disastrous conditions. The answer has to be short. You can't give a long message under disastrous conditions. You have to have a short message and get straight to the point. And they said, notice, it's an aorist indicative, and apparently they said it simultaneously, Paul and Silas said the same thing at the same time. Both of them spoke. What both of them said was "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They apparently said this in unison. The structure of the Greek says they both said it at the same time and they both said it forcefully.

So, under disastrous conditions here is what to do. This is what the Bible says. You say to the person who is diswrought and things are going bad all around, like the rumbling of the earthquake, the falling of the bricks, the earth is erupting around them, and then you say, "Well, there are two views of the unlimited atonement, of the sacrifice. There's one view, for a moment, that So'-n-so said thus and so. And then there's another view that Dr. So'-n-so said. Well, I personally never made up my mind between these two professors. I sort of lean towards Dr. So'-n-so." Then the other guy says, "Yes, he does have a point."

All the time that this is going on, the Earth is rumbling, the ship is sinking, and the plane is going down, and there's fire all around, as it were. Well, you just don't do that sort of thing in an emergency. You see, one thing that we fail to recognize is that **God is perfect. What God says is perfect.** His Word must be presented dogmatically. This is it. There is no room for anything else. Jesus Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me." That's it. There is no room for anything else. So, they say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is an imperative mood. It's an aorist tense, which means in a point of time. The ac-

tive voice says that you do it and the imperative mood says that this is an order. "And thou shalt be saved." This is a future tense to indicate the result of the person who believes in Christ.

The believing is in the aorist tense. It is very important because the aorist tense is a point of time. This is what it looks like. All that the word "aorist" means is a point of time. At the point of time when you accept Christ as Saviour, this is what happens to you. It's a point of time, divorced from time, and perpetuated forever. **Once you accept Christ as your personal Saviour, that decision, that mental ascent, is out of time and into eternity. You have eternal life at that moment.** So, it's a point of time, divorced from time and perpetuated forever.

Actually, they don't have time to describe many things that the Philippian jailer will receive. They can't give him a whole list of things that happened to him at salvation. They are just telling him that the perfect answer is "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," that if he believes in Jesus Christ, then he will receive the many things of salvation and probably will spend the rest of his life on this Earth learning about what God does for every believer at the point of salvation. He won't learn them all at once.

In other words, Paul and Silas didn't give a dissertation on the many things that you receive at salvation. They just told him the mechanics, the know how. That is "to believe." The moment that this jailer believed, he received many things from the Lord. He had all of those things the next day and all the way down the line throughout his life. He may have gone out the next night and gotten drunk. He still had all of those things of salvation that God provided for him at the moment he believed. He may have done many things that are considered to be not spiritual, but he still has all those things that God gave him at the point of salvation. There is never a time that he would not have all of those things, no matter what he did. Maybe he would renounce the Lord at some future period. We know from Scripture where it says "If we deny the Lord, He won't deny us." His re-

nouncement doesn't mean anything. He's already accepted Him.

**One second of time when you believe in Christ you receive all that God has provided for your life.** He has provided everything that you will need for all eternity in just that one second of time. His Plan is perfect. He provides everything that you will need. You are never more saved than that moment when you accepted Christ as Saviour. You never lose anything that God gives you at the moment of salvation. You're prepared for eternity at the moment that you believe. How mature and how much reward did the thief have on the cross? 0.00. What did he do? He accepted the Lord. "Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Most people think that he had to be a spiritual giant, whatever that means, in order to have access to Heaven. They are mixing up salvation with growth and maturity. So, you are prepared for eternity the moment that you believe. That preparation is absolutely perfect. God gives you many things that actually tie up the salvation package forever. So, no matter what you do, no matter what you think, no matter how you retrogress, no matter how you progress in the Christian life, no matter how you fail, no matter how victorious you are, no matter who and what you are, all through your life on this Earth, it may be 50 or 100 years, you still have all that you need for eternity provided by God at the moment of salvation.

Let's say that this jailer had 50 more years after he believed in Christ. Of all those 50 years, every day, every second, he still had those things of salvation and he NEVER lost them. If he renounced Christ, if he had committed some sin, no matter what he did he had those things and he could live one day after or he could live 50 years after, and the moment he does he goes right to be with the Lord, absent from the body and face to face with the Lord.

That's exactly what happens to every believer because of what the Lord provides in a second of time when a person accepts Christ as Saviour. **God does the saving work and it**

**involves many categories of activities. It's permanent and it's perfect and you can't remove it by anything that you do.** No one else can take it from you. That's why the answer is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

It's a perfect answer. It encompasses everything that he will need for this moment. He'll learn a lot of the Word later on. He'll learn a lot of the Word that night because we'll find out later on that he gets baptized. He knew enough of the Word to be baptized, otherwise Paul wouldn't do it. In other words, he knew his position in Christ and that he had union with Christ and that Christianity was a relationship with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, for this second of time, here is a perfect answer. It's concise. It's to the point. It's short. It covers everything he needs. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." If he accepts Christ as his Saviour, eternity is settled. Now he can have his problem answered in time. **Problem solving in time is answered by making a decision for Christ for eternity. But you can't solve a problem in time until you settle eternity.** OR, you can't settle a problem in time until you're in the Plan of God by faith in Christ Jesus. So, this answers BOTH.

If someone was in a disastrous situation and you could let them out physically, would you do that instead of the other, or would you give them the Plan which would take care of both. That's the point here.

There are two ways to present the plan of salvation to an individual or to a group. First of all, you can do what Paul did in this case. This is an emergency. This is also an emergency procedure. He started with the mechanics. From the mechanics he goes to the actual Plan of salvation, or the content of salvation. The other way is to simply start with the Plan, describe the Plan, and then give them the mechanics. Actually those are about the only two ways that you can do it as far as the principle is concerned. What you say may vary depending upon the individual's status, their understanding and other factors of this sort.



In this case here, there's a particular emergency, suicide. The mechanics had to be used first in order to catch the attention of the jailer, so the mechanics are given by both Paul and Silas. The aorist tense would indicate that they almost spoke simultaneously. They said "believe." The word "believe" is an interesting word because it brings up a point. PISTEUO is the word for "believe." This is the Greek word for a system of perception. This is something that goes on in your mind.

There are only three systems of perception. This Greek word here describes one of them, PISTEUO. That's the verb "believe." The noun for that would be "faith." The other two systems are rationalism and empiricism. But, rationalism and empiricism are both meritorious. In other words, if we had to understand everything, if we had to perceive everything through a system, through a critical system, then we would never be able to come to conclusions. So, this is meritorious. Rationalism and empiricism are both incompatible with the GRACE of God.

Only faith is compatible. But the basic system of learning anything is PISTEUO, faith. Therefore, the Holy Spirit uses the word "believe."

You will notice that there is a subject here. In this case the jailer is the subject. So we will put the word "you" there because it is "you believe," which indicates the active voice. Believing is non-meritorious and the object of faith has all the merit. The object of faith in this sentence is Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ is the One who has all the merit. He is the Saviour. So the emphasis, when you have either the word "believe" or "faith" is always on the object, because the object does the work. The object gets the credit. That's compatible with the principle of GRACE. GRACE equals God, Jesus Christ, doing the work, and that's Divine Good.

This is the work of Christ on the cross for the salvation of the human race. Man simply receives what God has provided. Then God gets the credit. That's the way it has been,

that's the way it will **always** be, as far as Christianity is concerned.

The greatest enemy of mankind is religion. **Religion is the worst thing that ever happened to this world.** In religion you have exactly the opposite. You have man doing the work and God is supposed to bless man's work. In this case, God would save him and that would be a blessing. Now, God is supposed to save, when it comes to religion, on the basis of what man does. **That way man would get the credit.** That's what we find today in Houston and throughout the world. Man is trying to be saved by his own works. It may be something like baptism. Maybe something like joining a church, giving money to a church. It may involve and imply such principles as living under the "golden rule," morality, or some systems of "do-good," or some systems of works. It's usually been outlined by some organization or some church.

So, religion is really our greatest enemy. **Christ is the only answer.** This phrase, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" is compatible with the principle of GRACE, because man, here, is doing the believing. Believing is non-meritorious. **There's no way that man can get the credit.** This is an aorist tense, which means in a point of time when you believe. God provides for you some 34 things at the point of salvation. At that point when you believe it's a point of time, divorced from time and perpetuated forever. At that moment you now become a Christian and you're now in stage two of God's Plan, which is a believer in time. No matter what happens to you as a Christian here in Houston, you still retain all of these 34 things.

You may commit some "terrible" sin at some point, but you still have those same 34 things. Next week you may have some great victory, but it doesn't make any difference what you are, your experiential status, you may be carnal or spiritual, you may be a spiritual moron or a spiritual giant. It makes no difference. This salvation package applies to every individual at the point of salvation.

That is the point, that little spark of faith by which we believe. That point of time is taken out of time. That faith doesn't have to be strong at all. It's just a little more than no faith at all. The aorist tense says, look, the point of time is taken out of time, perpetuated forever, and there never will be a time when you will not have these things that God gave you at the point when you first believed. So, it's "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." It's an active voice which means that no one can do it for him. It's an imperative mood which means it is a command from God, this is an order from God. This is the only way in which to be saved. **The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.**

In the next verses we're going to see some more explanation. We start out with this verse, which is the mechanics. The content for the Gospel will actually be presented after the mechanics in the next verse. They add something. They are apparently aware of the fact that the jailer has a family. And he's living apparently in the jail.

Jailers in the ancient world were quartered in the jail. Above the ground you have some domicile type areas and apparently there is the jailer's quarters and the jailer's office and below you have the various cells.

Paul and Silas were down below in the lowest dungeon, fastened in the stocks after being flogged. And they say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." "Thou shalt be saved" is a future tense called a logical future. It happens every time. The passive voice means that you receive salvation, which is a contrast to "believe" where you do the believing. With the passive voice in the Greek you receive it, the subject receives the action of the verb. They receive salvation. The indicative mood is the reality that we receive salvation when we believe in Christ.

Then they add something, "and thy house." This is an idiom. It doesn't mean that he believes and his household is saved. It simply means that what applies to you, jailer, ap-

plies to them. This is a common Greek idiom. Instead of saying, "You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And your house, if they believe, they will be saved." See, that would be too long of an expression for the Koine Greek language. It's too inefficient. It's typical of the English language. You can get more "double-talk," and more "hot air," and more motilquence out of the English language more than other language. We are short of idioms which simply save words.

But, the Greek language is the most efficient language of all time for saving words, and they do this by some very neat idioms. So, "and thy house," is very simple in the Greek, but in the English we would say, "if anyone in your house believes, they will be saved, too." The members of the jailer's household will be saved exactly the same way that he is, and that is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last principle for this class is: **The true value of faith always lies in it's object, never in the subject.** People will tell you, "just turn your faith loose. You have to have more faith. You need more faith, and more faith." **It's not IN YOU, but where you place it.** See, one ounce of faith in Christ gives you eternal life. So, the value of faith always lies in the object. The object of faith for salvation is Jesus Christ.

John 3:36 says "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the only Begotten Son of God." Christ did the work on the cross. He was the One who was judged. Therefore, Christ has to be the object in salvation. When it says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," it is very simple in the English because we have a transliteration of the words.

Buddy Dano, Pastor  
Anderson Bible Church  
Anderson, Indiana 46012