18.10.26 pm

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Date: 16 October 2026

Preacher: Stuart King

[0:00] Good evening. It's good to be together this Lord's Day as we seek to be blessed by the word which we hope to hear and as we sing praises to his name.

I won't go through any of the specific intimations, just one to add and it's that the Connect Club on Friday are going to be doing shoeboxes so if there's anything anyone wants to donate for shoeboxes feel free to leave it in the foyer.
It would be great if you're able to do it across the week, Friday afternoon will be the time that Connect meets so if you're able to do anything that would be grand and hopefully we'll be able to fill a few shoeboxes.
We'll start just now our worship of God by singing to God's praise from Psalm 40. Psalm 40 from the Scottish Psalter and we'll sing the first five verses of the Psalm.
So down to the end of the double marked five, the verse double marked five. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear at length to me. He did incline my voice and cry to hear.
[1:05] He took me from a fearful pit and from the miry clay and on a rock he set my feet establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify. Many shall see it and shall fear and on the Lord rely.

Oh, blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such as turn aside to lies. Lord my God, full many are the wonders thou hast done. Thy gracious thoughts to us were far above all thoughts are gone.
In order none can reckon them to thee if them declare and speak of them I would they more than can be numbered are. We'll sing these verses, verses one to five of Psalm 40 and we'll stand to sing to God's praise.
I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear.
I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear.
[2:38] I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear. And on a rock he set my feet, he established in my way.

He put a new song in my mouth, a rock to magnify.
Many shall see it and shall fear. And on the Lord rely.
O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such as turn aside. Lest it is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies, respecting not the proud nor such as turn aside.
O Lord my God, full many are the wonders thou hast done. O Lord my God, full many are the wonders thou hast done.
[4:23] Like ancient thoughts to us, Lord my God, full many are the wonders of the Lord. Like ancient thoughts to us, Lord my God, above all thoughts are gone.

In order none can wreck of them. To thee if they declare.
And speak of them I would they more than can be numbered up.
Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them.
Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them.
[5:36] Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. Go in that make of them. not a God that's distant, not one that's far off, but one that we can turn to and that we can turn to in our times of joy and one we can turn to in our times of grief and in our times of sorrow.

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We give thanks that as we look to you we see a merciful and a gracious God. We see an awesome God that is sovereign over each and every one of us and we thank you that it is indeed you who is the one that's sovereign. We thank you for that precious gift of the sending of your own son, him who knew no sin, who became sin for us. We are so undeserving of that glorious gift that yet you saw fit but from before time began to send that sacrifice for our salvation and we pray that as we look to the cross we are not forgetful of what happened there, we don't seek to sanitize what happened there but we are reminded of the brutality and the suffering that took place there. We are reminded of the blood that was shed for our sins, for our transgressions and each and every one of us here both in this building and online we all have our fingerprints on the nails on the cross. So we pray that as we look to the cross each and every day, as we look at it in our devotional times and our times we were coming to your word through family worship or even in our quiet time on our own that we are reminded of the cross, that our eyes would always be forever pointed to the cross. We pray and give thanks Lord for all the blessings that you've bestowed upon us as a congregation. We give thanks for the privilege of being able to be based here in this corner of your vineyard to share your word, to witness and to reach out to the community here Lord with that glorious gospel message. So we pray that you would continue to equip the congregation here, that we would not be puffed up, that we would not be looking to ourselves but that we would be remembering that all things we do are to your glory.

As the kids clubs begin again, as we look to our Sunday school, our creche, Road to Recovery, our Bible studies, we give thanks Lord for those opportunities that we have to be able to come together, to grow in our knowledge of you, to come together in the study of your word but also to be able to go out, to go outward beyond the walls of this house to be able to share that word with those who come in. And we pray that we would have many more visitors coming in to hear your word each and every week but that we would also have young people in the community. We see so many in the school that don't come along to our kids clubs but we pray Lord that this would be maybe the term that they do, that they would come along and they would hear a little bit about who you are and what you've done Lord. So we pray that we would have those opportunities to be able to reach out, to share that word and that you would continue to equip us Lord. We give thanks for the many volunteers, the many hands that help within the congregation here but we ask Lord that you would continue to lay upon the hearts of others to help out, to volunteer, to give of their gifts, to give of the talents that you've given to them. They would be ultimately used again for your glory and that we would be able to see this place be a beacon of light in the community here that is that is not just a light but is one that also radiates our warmth Lord. But we also remember those who are unable to be with us this day. We think of those who are maybe unwell at this time that are housebound and unable to come out Lord but would desire to be here, would long to be with us as we worship together. We bring them before you Lord and ask that you would indeed comfort them, you would equip them and that you would strengthen them. We especially pray for those who have no thought of you this day, who have maybe spent a number of hours awake already with no desire to hear of you, no desire to come to hear your word, have no thought of you from the moment they wake to the moment they sleep.

We pray Lord that you would make yourself known to them, that you would reveal yourself to them, that they would be mindful of the sin that they have in their own lives and they would recognize that that sin needs to be dealt with and if not dealt with by a saviour then they must be the ones that would be punished for that sin Lord. So we pray that you would grant opportunities for us as a congregation, for us as individuals to be able to reach out to those who have no thought of you. Grant us a courage and a boldness to share your word, to share even our own testimonies for those of us that know you, that we would share that hope that is within us. For we all gather here, yes and especially in a day and a week like this we gather with heavy hearts but we also gather with those who have a hope and we give thanks for that Lord. But we especially bring before you KTAC this morning, this evening Lord and we ask that you would be with her, be with Taffy and Rachel Lord, we ask that you would comfort them during this difficult time Lord and although we are once again greeted with the cloud of loss at this time Lord. We again, as has been said, we gather with those who have a hope Lord. We give thanks for Neil's life as we look to all that he did Lord. We see one who was a faithful brother in Christ who had a deep longing for you Lord and has, although this very evening he is indeed with you, he has transferred and swapped the sun and the moon of this world for the light of his saviour's face Lord. And we pray that although through the difficulty and all

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through the grief we may question, there may be people that question why or why must certain things happen in our life, why must there be suffering in the world. Our loved ones across on the west side of Lewis, especially this week, will be struggling with these questions Lord. We pray that we would be ultimately turning to you for all things and that we would be asking for your comfort, that we would be asking for your leading and guiding hand to be upon all those who are sad at this moment, draw near to them in these days of grief Lord and when there may be silences that feel unfamiliar in homes, Lord we pray that they, those who are struggling, they would be able to turn to you, that they would be reminded that your promises from your word never fail and that we would ask Lord that you would grant us opportunities to come back to your word and to be reminded of those promises. We ask Lord that you would grant strength in times of weakness and you would grant hope in times of moments of sorrow where things are overwhelming Lord. We ask that you would be the one that does a work in the lives of those who are struggling at this time Lord. So be with us just now as we open up your word, as we continue to sing praises to you, as we seek to worship you, we ask that you would be around us and you would keep us and you would pardon our many sins in Christ's precious and most glorious name we pray. Amen. We'll sing again this time from Mission Praise 708,
To God be the glory. 708, To God be the glory, great things he hath done, so loved he the world that he gave us his son, because his son, and then the chorus, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice.
So we'll sing the whole of 708, To God be the glory, and we'll stand to sing to God's praise.
[13:40] To God be the glory, great things he hath done, so loved he the world that he gave us his son, who yielded his life, and looked open for sin, and opened the life, faith that all people will.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer, the promise of God, The highest repentance, and that all people will.
The highest repentance, and that all people will. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.
[15:12] O come to the Father through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done, and greater rejoicing through Jesus the Son.
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
And wonder our rapture when Jesus we see.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice.
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son, and give him the glory, great things he hath done.
[16:13] If you could turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts and chapter 16. Acts chapter 16, and we'll read from verse 16.

Acts chapter 16 and from verse 16. We're just going to look at this account of really the conversion of the Philippine jailer.
But we'll begin our reading from verse 16 where we read of Paul and Silas in prison. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination, and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.
She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation. And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her.
And it came out that very hour. When our owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.
[17:39] And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.

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The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.
Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.
About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.
And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.
When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.
[18:46] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, 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 the house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds.
And he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced, along with his entire household, that he had believed in God.
But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police saying, Let those men go. And the jailer reported these words to Paul saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go.
Therefore come out now and go in peace. But Paul said to them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison.
[19:49] And do they now throw us out secretly? No. Let them come themselves and take us out.
The police reported these words to the magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.

So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.
Amen. And may the Lord bless that reading of his holy word. Before we come back to consider that passage, we'll sing Psalm 121.
Again, this time obviously all from the Psalter. Psalm 121. I to the hills will lift mine eyes from whence doth come my need. My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made. Thy foot he'll not let slide nor will, he slumber that thee keeps. Behold, he that keeps Israel, he slumbers not nor sleeps. The Lord he keeps, the Lord thy shade on thy right hand doth stay.
[20:51] The moon by night thee shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day. The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill. Henceforth I going out and in, God keep forever will.

So we'll sing the whole of Psalm 121 to God's praise and we'll stand to sing. Psalm 121. I to the hills will lift my night from whence doth come my need.
My city cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made.
Thy foot he'll not let slide nor will, he slumber that thee keeps.
Behold, he that keeps Israel, he slumbers not nor sleeps.
[22:16] The Lord he keeps, the Lord thy shame, all thy right hand doth stay.

The moon by night thee shall not smite, nor yet the sun by day.
The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill.
Heath forth I go, wake and in, God keep forever will.
Just before we come back to that passage that we read, we'll just ask a blessing upon it. Lord, gracious God, we give thanks again that we find ourselves here, considering your word, considering your most holy scripture, Lord.
[23:43] We pray that as we look at this passage, maybe a very well known one to many of us, that we would seek to glean something new from it today, Lord. That we would again be reminded of your glorious hand of salvation upon us, as we see the life of the Philippian jailer.

So we pray that as we open up this word that you would speak to us, that we would have ears to hear, that we would not just hear what you have to say and then close our ears for another week, but that we would maybe go away and that we would read the passage again, that we would read surrounding passages, that we would meditate upon the word, that we would chew upon that which

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we hear.
For we have an enormous blessing to be able to be here in your house, to hear your word. We know that there are many across the world that do not have such a privilege as we have.
Those who are on persecuted ground, those who are maybe unable to even utter your name, without the fear of their own lives being under threat.
So we pray for the persecuted church. We think of those across the world who meet maybe in secret, who meet maybe this very moment as we do underground.
[24:59] But we are each, both them and us, encouraged by the promise that where two or three are gathered, we are blessed with your presence. So we pray for them, Lord.

We ask that you would continue to grant them opportunities to sing praises as we read of in our passage where we see Paul and Silas singing praises at midnight, Lord. We pray that those who are doing so, even at this very moment in times of persecution, that they would be blessed and encouraged during those dark times.
We pray as well for each congregation across our islands where your word is being preached. We give you thanks that we are able to come before your word and glean much from it.
So we pray that wherever Christ crucified is preached across your islands this evening, that you would indeed bless those respective gatherings. We pray for our denomination. We pray for our presbytery.
We especially pray for our vacancies across our own presbytery here, Lord, and ask that you would do your work in the hearts of men to go into these places, to shepherd the flock, to faithfully preach your word to those that would be there to hear, Lord.
[26:09] So we pray for our denomination. We pray for those churches around us. We pray especially for Ena, Mahela and the family, Lord, as they've departed from our midst here but have moved to Stornoway, Lord.

We give you thanks for them and for their time with us. We ask, Lord, that you would bless them and you would encourage them and equip them to continue to be faithful servants for you, Lord, in a different place but ultimately to the glory of the same God.
So we pray, Lord, that you would be with them, that you would equip them. Then we pray for David as well in our own congregation here, Lord. We ask and give thanks for all that he does for his faithful, diligent preaching of your word each and every week.
We ask that you would continue to bless him, Mary and the family, that you would continue to use him mightily as you have done over these years here in Harris, Lord.
So we give thanks for all that you've done for us as a congregation, Lord, and ask that you would be with us as we open up your word this evening. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, if you could turn in your Bibles to the passage that we read in Acts chapter 16.
[27:16] Acts chapter 16. And we'll really just be considering from verses 25 through 40.

I want us just to consider this conversion of this Philippian jailer. It's likely a passage that you'll have come to a number of times, something that you're very much very familiar with.
But I want us just to maybe have a wee think about what this has to tell us. And pray that the Lord would bless our coming together at this word.
So just thinking about the Christian life in general, I was in my preparation, I was thinking about what do people, what do other people think of the Christian life? Oftentimes people will expect something very different from the Christian life.
Some will assume that if we follow God's will, then life will become easier. Then things will be easy, things will be smooth, there'll be a nice flat road ahead of us. Some will maybe assume that obedience will bring comfort, we'll be comforted if we're obedient to God's will.
[28:22] Faithfulness should bring blessing and sacrifice should bring immediate results. Yet the experience of many believers, I'm sure many here would agree, is the complete opposite of that.

There are times when obedience to Christ leads not to comfort, but to conflict. It maybe leads not to applause, but to opposition. It won't lead to ease, but it will lead to suffering.
And it really raises a question with us, which I think this passage kind of illustrates very perfectly for us. There's a question that every Christian believer asks, and it's, what do we do when faithful obedience appears to bring hardship rather than blessing?
It's kind of the umbrella question I want us to consider today. What do we do when faithful obedience appears to bring hardship rather than blessing? And we don't need to go through it line

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by line again, but the words that we read in Acts 16 here kind of jump off the page.
This is exactly where Paul and Silas were in the passage that we read. They've preached the gospel. We've seen that they were preaching the gospel around. They've served Christ faithfully.
[29:34] They've done exactly what God had called them to do. Yet where do they find themselves? They find themselves beaten. They find themselves bruised. And they find themselves sitting in a prison cell.

Humanly speaking, everything seems to be going wrong for them. It seems as though from the outside looking in, that the mission appears to be failing. The gospel appears to be getting hindered.
And the enemies of Christ appear to be winning. The wonderful reality of this passage is that God is still at work. And he's at work when nobody can see it.
So the great lesson that we read of here in this passage in Acts 16 is that God uses suffering. He saves sinners and he advances his gospel through his own sovereign power.
So as we kind of work through the passage, these verses that we have here, I want us really just to see that in really three ways. And the first way that we see it, the first way that we see that God uses suffering and he saves sinners to the advance of his gospel using his sovereign power, is that we see faith that worships in suffering.
[30:44] So that's really our first point. Faith that worships in suffering. Look at verse 25 of the passage there. About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

So I want us to consider that scene in our minds eye. Just think about that moment. We read it. We read that verse. And we maybe gloss over it. But let's pause for a moment and just think what this means.
These men have just been beaten. We saw in the passage that we read slightly earlier on that they've been beaten after being captured. Their backs will have open wounds in them. Their feet have been placed in the stocks.
And they're sitting in the innermost part of a Roman prison. And it's midnight. The darkest part of the day. It's not even as if they're in the brightest part of the day. They're in the darkest depths of the day.
But what do we find them doing? They're praying and they're singing. And they are worshipping God. It's worth pausing for a moment and asking how two wounded men could be singing at midnight.
[31:50] Surely they would be looking for a moment's sleep. Just a few hours of rest, given everything that they've gone through. I mean, we look at them worshipping and we consider ourselves as a moment. Worshipping and we consider ourselves worshipping here.

We've got the heat on. Sometimes it's a wee bit too warm. But it's lovely tonight. We've got lovely comfy seats. We're protected from the elements. We've got light. We sit here in comfort and we worship.
And we enjoy in that. But these two people were stuck in the middle of a prison. It would have been cold. It would have been dark. They've got wounds. And they find themselves singing and praying to God.
There's nothing naturally joyful about being in a Roman prison. These men's backs were bleeding. Their future at the moment was uncertain. Humanly speaking, they have every reason to despair. Yet their circumstances did not dictate their worship. Why is that? Well, the reason is that their view of God is greater than their experience of suffering.
[32:54] Throughout scripture, we find that same pattern. Just highlight a few of them. We remember Job. He worshipped when everything had been taken from him. David sang in the wilderness while fleeing from Saul.

Habakkuk, Dr Craig preached on that a number of months ago. Habakkuk declared that even if the fields yielded no food and the flocks were cut off, yet he would still rejoice in the God of his salvation.
The people of God have often discovered that some of their sweetest communion with the Lord comes in their darkest hour. And that may be the same for you. It may be something a number of years ago, a really difficult time, but looking back, you can see that there was much blessing to be taken from it.

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Notice what they're not doing. Something I think we need to consider as well. What are Paul and Silas not doing in this passage? The first thing is they're not complaining. They're not complaining about their situation. They're not complaining about how unjust it was that they were captured. They're not complaining to the jailer who's just locked them up. They're not accusing God. They're not questioning God's wisdom. Instead, we find them here at midnight in a prison praising the Lord. [34:07] Look just at the end of verse 25 there. Who are they praising God? Who's around them when they are praising God? We see there that the prisoners were listening to them.

They're singing hymns. They're praying. And the prisoners are listening to them. Yes, they worship God together. But more than that, they were evangelizing.
They were speaking to the people that were around them. Just as we meet here, we hope that people will be able to see something of the building here. We always think, why are the lights on? What do we hear in the prayer meeting when the windows are open and we're walking by?
Maybe it's sparking something in the minds of others. What is it about those people that maybe stands out? And during this time, they're praising, they're singing hymns. Prisoners are listening to them.
Suddenly, a great earthquake comes upon them. In God's appointed time, an earthquake shakes the prison and every chain is loosed.
[35:05] What does this teach us about God? It teaches us that God remains absolutely sovereign, even in suffering. God remains absolutely sovereign, even in our suffering.

Nothing in this chapter is outside of his control. The beatings that they had was not out of his control. The imprisonment in the innermost part of this jail was not outside of his control.
The prison itself was not outside of his control. God has not lost control of events going on here in the life of Paul and Silas.
And it's the same for us. Wherever we are, whatever valley we maybe feel we're in, God is not out of control in those events. From our perspective and from the outsider's perspective, you see, Paul is in prison.
But from God's perspective, Paul is exactly where he needed him to be. The Lord has purposes that Paul cannot yet see. And for us, it's often true in our own lives.
[36:08] We might ask why? What are we doing here? But we know that the Lord has purposes for us that we cannot yet see. We view our circumstances often through the lens of the present moment.

As you know, I'm ministering training at the moment, just coming to the end of Term 1. And as I sit at home studying Greek, and I know Duncan can sympathise with me here, trying my best to put stuff into my head, learning things about church history at the end of Term 1.
It can often sometimes be hard to think there's an end to this training. That in four years' time, God willing, there will be an end to this training. Oftentimes, our circumstances can overwhelm, and we don't see the bigger picture.
But that's not the case with God. Paul and Silas knew that God was in control. We view our circumstances through the lens of the present moment, but God views our circumstances through the lens of eternity.
He always has eternity in view. And that really brings us to an important question. How can Christians endure suffering without despairing?
[37:17] How can we endure suffering without despairing? The answer is not found in a self-help book. I'm sure you could go to... I should have maybe checked this, but I can imagine if you went to Amazon's top 10, 20 books at the moment, there'll be a bunch of ones that are self-help books about how to improve your life, and how to get more money, and how to advance your career.

That's not where we find the answer. It's not found in positive thinking. It's not found in just working hard to develop a better resilience. It's found solely in the character of God.
Paul and Silas knew something about God that enables them to endure what they were experiencing. They knew that the Lord reigned. They knew that he was in control, even though to the others it did not look that way.
The God who was with Joseph as his brothers sold him into slavery. The God who sustained Daniel in Babylon, and who led his own son to the cross, is still governing every detail of their lives and of our lives today.

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Joseph could look back and say, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. What Joseph learned in Egypt, Paul is now learning in Philippi.
[38:35] And what Paul learned in Philippi, every believer will soon learn. John Flavel wrote quite perfectly that the providence of God is like Hebrew words.

It can only be read backwards. What we see with God's providence is that we often only understand it backwards. In fact, we so really only ever understand it backwards, never forwards.
We can never look at God's providence and say, I can see exactly what the Lord is doing with my life. I can look forward and I know ahead what's there. We always have to look back. And it doesn't take you long.
You just listen to someone's testimony and you'll often hear somebody recounting something that happened in previous years, and that they could see the Lord's hand in their life. When we look back, we're able to see God's providence.
Scripture teaches that God governs all things for his glory and for the good of his people. Christians are not promised an easy life.
[39:35] They're promised the presence of God. Christian joy is never rooted in our circumstances, or it should never be rooted in our circumstances. It should be rooted solely in Christ and in him alone.

If our joy depends on our circumstances, then our joy will constantly fluctuate. Because our circumstances forever fluctuate. But if our joy depends on Christ and on Christ alone, then it rests upon one who never changes.
And Paul and Silas, as we read these verses, they knew that truth. They understood that truth. That's why they could sing in prison. They weren't singing in prison hoping that something might happen.
They knew that God was the one that was in control. They knew that the God who rules the prison also ruled the universe. Some of us perhaps maybe need to hear that this evening. Maybe we're trying to interpret God through our own circumstances, when we ought to interpret our circumstances through God and through his word.
If we begin with our trials, if our trials are the foundation of how we think, then we will very quickly become discouraged. But if we begin, as Paul and Silas do, with the character of God, we discover reasons for hope, even in the darkest nights.
[40:48] Perhaps tonight you've got much going on. I know most, if not all of you, but I don't know your hearts. I don't know what's going on in your own life. But perhaps maybe you feel like you're sitting in your own prison this evening.

Maybe there's something that is a significant burden above you. There's something you can't see the end of. You can't see a way out. Just like Paul and Silas could have. They may have looked at this and thought, that's us.
We're imprisoned. We're never going to get out of this. That's us. We might as well give up. That might be where you are. You may be carrying grief. You may be carrying disappointment. You may be carrying a diagnosis or an illness or an anxiety.
Possibly even there's unanswered prayers that may be coming to the forefront of your mind. And perhaps you're asking, Lord, why has this happened? Why is this happening at this moment with me?
Well, I want you to not be discouraged by that. Even if you are asking questions, don't be discouraged by the fact that you're asking questions. You're not alone. Just look at the Psalms.
[41:50] They're full of questions being asked. Psalm 10 verse 1 says, Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Psalm 13, How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? The psalmist can ask questions, then you yourself can ask questions. We need to be reminded that it's in God's sovereign will that we should be looking at our circumstances.
And this passage reminds us that hardship is not evidence that God has abandoned us. Paul was not abandoned. Silas was not abandoned and neither are you.
God is still working even if you cannot see it. Anyone can sing when the prison doors are wide open. But faith sings while the doors remain locked at midnight.

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And while they sung, who was it that was listening? It was the other prisoners. They were the ones that were listening. And as we gather in worship this evening, the world is also listening to us. [42:52] Yes, it's not a couple of thousand years ago, but the world is still watching on. Those prisoners were watching on to see, I wonder what these two guys are going to be like in prison. I wonder if they'll give up on that God that they were preaching about not that long ago.

It's the same with us here. There's a microscope over Christians today. The world is listening today. People around are watching to see how Christians respond in suffering.
People are watching to see how Christians respond in times of blessing, in times of great joy. There's always a lens being put upon Christians today. So, we need to remember that when believers continue to trust Christ in their hardship, they be a powerful witness to the worth of the gospel.
I've mentioned before, it was a quote I read that where, I think it was along the lines of a paraphrase now, but where someone is able to see that the gospel has changed you, they're far more likely to see that it can change them.
And you just imagine people looking at Paul and Silas. What on earth, in the middle of prison, singing and praising God. That would have been an attractive thing to those that were watching on. [43:59] It's the same for us. The lives that we lead ought to point people to the cross. So, we've seen there the first point really is that we see faith that worships in suffering.

And the second point I want us to consider is God's power brings salvation. After this earthquake, we then start to move into, look really turning out attention towards the jailer himself.
We don't know this man's name. All we know is that he was the jailer. He was the one that had locked them up. And he was the one that was in control of Paul and Silas' fate at that moment. So, we see this earthquake coming.
See there in verse 26, an earthquake comes. The prison doors fly open. The chains fall away. And the jailer awakens. Verse 27, there if you read, When the jailer woke and saw that prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.
He knew the law of that day. He knew that he would be found guilty for letting these men escape. So, he thought of taking his own life. Yet, verse 28 shows us that Paul shouts to him, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.
[45:13] For we are all here. Not some of us. You can imagine some of those other prisoners that were there rightly. Some of those other prisoners were justly locked up. None of them even left.

All of them were there. What a remarkable moment that would have been for the jailer. The man who'd guarded the prisoners has now been protected by the prisoners. The man who'd shown no mercy is now receiving mercy.
And what does he do? He rushes in trembling. Rushes in trembling to them and says in verse 30, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
Surely this is one of the most remarkable scenes in the book of Acts. A few hours earlier, just a matter of hours before this moment, this man was just simply doing his job. He had no apparent interest in Christ.
He had no concern for his own eternity. And he had no sense of his spiritual need. Yet now, a matter of hours later, he stands trembling before Paul and Silas. And he asks probably the greatest question he will ever ask.
[46:19] So, what's happened? Can it have just been this earthquake? What is it that's happened? Well, the answer is God happened. The Lord had disturbed his false security and awakened him to his need of salvation.

Now, this jailer's understanding, you see the question there that he says in verse 30, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? His understanding of what it meant to be saved was likely influenced by what he'd maybe heard about Paul and Silas, that they'd been preaching and they'd been who they were and that they were followers of Christ.
But it was probably likely formed by what he'd heard them singing that night. What he'd heard them singing and praying about at midnight would have had an impact on him. And he recognized that he had a need for a savior.
And Paul in verse 31 gives one of the clearest answers in all of Scripture. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.

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I'm going to speak to some of the younger ones here. I've got something in my pocket. I'm just going to show you this. I was speaking in Barvis on the same passage today. And I showed them this. Can anyone tell me what this is? Do you know what this is?
[47:32] Anyone guess? Go for it, Ben. A highlighter. You're absolutely spot on. And I was sharing this about this highlighter with some of the people in Barvis.

And the reason I was sharing about it is I've been using it a lot with my Greek. But the main thing is a highlighter helps us to remember things.
We highlight passages in our Bible. We highlight things maybe in textbooks or at school. We highlight these things as little things for us to remember. And I was thinking about this jailer.
And I thought out of that whole night, I wonder what he would highlight. It was probably going to be what he heard in verse 31. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. You and your household.
A handful of words. He wouldn't have had one of these highlighters. But he would have been able to take a note in his mind. And know that this was the most amazing thing that he had been told.
[48:28] What we see in this passage here, the greatest miracle. It's not this earthquake that happened. And it's not that the doors opened. And it's not that the chains fell off the feet of the prisoners. The greatest miracle is that this jailer was converted.

That's the greatest miracle that we see in these passages. Earthquakes can shake prison doors. But only God can shake the human heart. Chains can fall off from a prisoner's feet.
But only God can break the chains of sin. What we've read in this passage, even earlier on from verse 16 onwards. It's all been moving forward to this moment. We've seen that suffering that they underwent.
We've seen the imprisonment that had happened to them. We see the worship at midnight. We see this earthquake. We see the open prison. And what we see here is that God is orchestrating events to bring just one sinner to salvation.
And there may be some among us that think this is, I don't know, maybe a bit of a confusing conclusion. Maybe you're somebody that thinks that you have to contribute something to your own salvation.
[49:34] I mean, this man had likely been part of the beatings that he had received. He'd shown no mercy to them. He locked them up. Why is this man being saved? You maybe think that you have to bring something to the table.

The scripture constantly points us in the other direction. The jailer, as well as all of us, contribute nothing to his rescue except of his need of it. He knew, whether it was from the singing, whether it was from his understanding of who Paul and Silas were, he knew something needed to be done. But everything else was provided by Christ. Again, just as we looked earlier on about what Paul and Silas were not doing at midnight, I want us just to think for a wee second about what Paul does not say to him in his response here in verse 31.
He does not say, try harder. Paul doesn't say, you better improve your life. Maybe give up this job. Go and do something else. He doesn't say to him, go and earn God's favour.
He doesn't say to him, you have to go to church. You have to start going. And only once you've been for the first 20 weeks, then maybe we'll consider salvation. No, he says, believe. Believe.
[50:41] Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. You need to remember that salvation is not achieved. Salvation is received. And that's what happened here to this jailer.

Christ has done everything that is necessary. He lived the life that we could not live. And he died the death that we deserve to die. He rose again in victory.
And sinners are called to trust him. That is the heart of the gospel. This quick exchange, this very quick conversation, one question, one answer, is really the gospel in a nutshell.
Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. It could be the shortest sermon ever. That's the heart of what we need to be sharing with others around us.
But if you're not yet a Christian among us, the jailer's question that he asked there must become your question. What must I do to be saved? The amazing thing is that God's answer today is the exact same one as it was back then.
[51:43] Believe in the Lord Jesus. Turn from your sin. Turn in Christ. We need to rest in his finished work. Just think of the parable of the lost sheep.

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We see that sheep that was headed off into the wilderness, was away from the flock, away from the other 99. It wasn't a requirement that that sheep had to somehow navigate its way back, had to work out how to find its way back to the flock.
No, it had to be rescued. The shepherd had to be the one to come and rescue it. And spiritually speaking, that's the condition of every single sinner. We don't need assistance.
We need salvation. We don't need advice. We need Christ. Many believers have loved ones who remain outside of Christ. In my own family, there are loved ones that we have.
Maybe children, grandchildren, friends, neighbours, spouses. There's plenty of people in our own lives that we know are outside of Christ. And perhaps you're tempted to think, well, they're never going to come to faith.
[52:42] I've asked them for years to come to church and they've still never come. I've not even asked them to come to a service. I've asked them to come to a curry night and they still won't come. Remember this Philippian jailer.

Nobody would have expected his conversion, yet God saved him. No one is beyond grace. Paul and Silas and their servant heart were simply remaining faithful to God.
They did not know what God would do. They weren't trying to orchestrate anything in and of themselves. They just simply trusted him, knowing that he would do something. And the same principle applies to us.
Our own responsibility is faithfulness. God's responsibility is in the results. Perhaps there's someone here this evening who's maybe sat under the gospel for years, for decades.
You know the scriptures inside out. You know them back to front. But you've never yet personally trusted in Christ. The Lord's invitation is not hidden to you. It's wonderfully clear before us.
[53:42] Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. It doesn't say you might be saved. It doesn't say believe in the Lord Jesus and we'll give you a couple of tests and we'll see how you got on.

It says believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. Not tomorrow. Not when you become better. Not when you've learned more of the Bible. Not when you've prayed more. Not when you've become worthy.
Believe now. Today. So we see there that our first point, we see faith that worships in suffering. We then see God's power that brings salvation. And then finally, just as we close, we see that God vindicates his servants.
Let's read verses 35 to the end of 39. So we've seen this jailer. He's been told what he must do. Then he looks after Paul and Silas. His house gets baptized.
And then he gives them food. And they go back to the prison. And then we read from verse 35. But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police saying, let those men go.
[54:49] And the jailer reported these words to Paul saying, the magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore, come out now and go in peace. But Paul said to them, they've beaten us publicly, uncondemned men who are Roman citizens and have thrown us into prison.

Do they now throw us out secretly? No. Let them come themselves and take us out. The police reported these words to the magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens.
So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. They send word to release Paul and Silas. They know that they've made a mistake and they need to quickly brush this under the carpet.
Let this hopefully go. Nobody will say a word and we can just move on. But Paul refuses this secret departure. It might feel strange to us. We might ask the question why.
He's just spent his evening and the night before being beaten, spent time in prison. Surely all he would be looking for is just to get away, put this episode behind and just move on.
[55:53] But he doesn't because this is no longer merely a personal matter. A public injustice has been committed. The authorities publicly humiliated himself and Silas.

The authorities publicly beat them. Therefore, the authorities must publicly acknowledge their wrongdoing. And so the magistrates come personally and they escort Paul and Silas out of the city. But at first sight, when we look at these actions, it may seem unusual to us that Paul chooses this path. Why not just quietly leave? Why insist on public acknowledgement?

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The answer is that because Paul understands that the reputation of Christ's church is at stake. This is not pride. This is not something where he wants people to be apologising to him.
This is a pastoral concern. The young Philippian congregation would remain in the city long after Paul has departed. Their witness must not begin under a cloud of criminal accusation.
[56:52] This tells us that God not only saves his people, but he vindicates his people. The Lord allowed Paul to suffer. The Lord allowed Paul to be imprisoned. The Lord also ensured that the truth would ultimately be seen.

At midnight, Paul appeared defeated. By morning, the authorities are apologising and a jailer has been saved in the same time. The situation has been completely reversed.
That's often God's pattern. We see the cross, the suffering at the cross, followed by a resurrection. We often see suffering being followed by glory.
And this story also reminds us that God's vindication does not always come immediately. Sometimes it comes in this life. Sometimes it comes in the last day. Yet we know that it will always come.
God governs every authority under heaven. The magistrates themselves believed themselves to be the powerful ones. But in reality, they were under God's sovereign rule.
[57:53] And this points us ultimately towards the last day. There are many injustices in the world. Maybe injustices in your own life. There are faithful believers that are falsely accused each and every day.

You don't often see it in the news. We should see it more in the news. But if you look up persecuted Christians, be that in Nigeria or other places, there's so much happening each and every day. But God's final judgment will set everything straight.
No wrong will remain unanswered. No truth will remain hidden. No faithful service will be forgotten. Many believers carry wounds that no one else can see.
False accusations, maybe misunderstandings that were never corrected. And perhaps you find yourself longing for vindication. The passage lifts our eyes beyond human courts to God's throne. The judge of all the earth will do right. No one act of faithfulness will be forgotten. No one tear will be wasted. And no one injustice will remain unresolved forever.
[58:58] Paul, in this passage, he's not driven by vengeance. He's not driven by a desire to see these men, these magistrates, humiliated in their public apology.

He's driven by concern for Christ's church. Christians are not called to retaliate. We're called to trust in God. The Lord who preserved the Philippian church is the same Lord who preserves the church today.
The church does not survive because of human strength. The church survives because God sustains it. So as we leave this scene here in Philippi, what do we see?
We see two believers singing in the darkness. We see a hardened sinner brought to repentance. We see mighty rulers humbled before the purposes of God.
He's governing the suffering of his servants. He's saving those appointed to eternal life. He's building his church. This is the foundation of the church. He's overruling the powers of this world.
[60:03] The prison could not stop him. The magistrates could not frustrate him. Satan himself could not and will not, will ever defeat him. And therefore Christian believers should take courage.

Your circumstances that you're in just now, no matter how difficult they may be, are not the things that are in control. God is. Your future is not uncertain, for God reigns over it.
Your suffering is not meaningless. God is using it. We may not understand how and why, but he is using it. Therefore we should worship him in suffering.
We should trust him in uncertainty. And we should witness for him faithfully and rest in the confidence that the God who opened those prison doors in Philippi still rules over every detail of his people's lives today.
So as we leave this evening, as we step back from Acts 16, three great truths stand before us. When believers suffer, God is still sovereign.
[61:06] When sinners seem beyond hope, God is still able to save. And when God's people are mistreated, God is able to vindicate. Therefore we should worship him in suffering.

We should trust him for salvation and we should rest in his vindication. Because the God who ruled the prison in Philippi still rules every circumstance of your life today.

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And for those who are not yet Christian among us, like this jailer at the beginning of the night, or you like him at the beginning of the night, no desire to know Christ, no interest in who Christ is, then I want you to go away with the exact same question that he asked.
What must I do to be saved? Like that highlighter, get that highlighter out and focus on the words in the answer in verse 31. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.
There's a quote I wanted to just close us with. One of the writers wrote, he says, The chains that bind God's servants can never bind the God that they serve.
[62:10] The chains that bind God's servants can never bind the God they serve. So we ought to trust in him. Don't overthink it. Don't put up barriers.

We often put up barriers ourselves as to why we cannot come to the Lord. Maybe I don't know enough of the Bible or I don't pray enough. That's certainly my own testimony. The jailer didn't put any barriers up.
He didn't say, I've never read a Bible. I don't, I've never even prayed. He just says, what must I do to be saved? And that's the question that we go away with this evening.
Amen. And may the Lord just bless these very short reflections on his word. We'll close with a word of prayer just before we sing. Gacious God, again, we give thanks for your word.
We give thanks for the testimony of Paul and Silas here as we see them in the depths of the night, having been beaten, being imprisoned, yet they still find the desire to sing praises to your name and to pray.
[63:11] Not just silently, not just quietly amongst themselves to support one another, but openly for others to hear, for all to hear. And we give thanks, Lord, that you've placed us in a place where we can do the same.

Whilst it's not the same circumstances, we may be in different circumstances, far better circumstances likely, but we can still do the same thing. We can still faithfully praise your name, point people to Christ, and that we can maybe have opportunities to have gospel conversations, Lord.
But we ultimately know that you're the one that does the work. You're the one that does the work in our suffering. You're the one that does the work in our hardship as we grieve, as we find times difficult. We may not know why we are going through these difficulties, but we ought to be trusting in you, knowing that you're the one that is sovereign.
So we give you thanks for this story, for this testimony of this jailer who now is in glory, Lord. And we give thanks that he did not put up barriers in the way, and just simply asked the very basic question, what must I do to be saved?
And the glorious response from your servant, Paul and Silas, was, believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. So we pray, Lord, that that would be a question that is answered this very evening, by many here who don't know you yet, have maybe been coming for years, and have yet to place their trust in you, Lord.
[64:34] We pray that this would be the night that that question comes from their own heart, and is answered in the same way today in 2026, Lord. So be with us just now as we close in praise, and be with everyone throughout the rest of this week.

We pray, Lord, that you would go before everyone in all that they do, whether that's in the workplace, whether that's the young people as they go back to school. We give you thanks for holidays, and we pray for the young ones as they go back to school in Scolari, Lord, and ask that you would let them be little disciples for you, Lord, that they would share what they hear in Sunday school, what they hear at Jam Connect, Rooted, and the other clubs as well, Lord, that they would be able to share that with their friends, and that we would be able to see people going out, sharing the gospel message, and we would be able to see lives transformed much like this jailer as well, Lord.
So be with us just now. Forgive us for all of our sins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, we'll just conclude by singing the hymn on the screen, Great is Thy Faithfulness.
Again, just a reminder to us that it's the Lord's faithfulness to us, and Paul and Silas, whilst unlikely that they were obviously singing this song, it echoes very similar to us that it's God's faithfulness in our own lives.
Morning by morning, new mercies I see, all I have needed, thy hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. So we'll sing the whole of the hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness, and we'll stand to sing to God's praise.

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[65:59] Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father, there is no shadow of church, with me. Thou changest God, thy compassion take care of God, as thou hast been, thou forever will be.

Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness, Morning by morning, new mercies I see, all I have needed, thy hand hath provided, Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.
Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their courses above, Join with all the hymn, O God my Father, there is no shadow of the hymn, To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Morning by morning, new mercies I see, all I have needed, thy hand hath provided, Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.
Lord, unto me. Pardon for sin and the peace that injures, Thy own dear presence to cheer and to guide, Keep me on my heart, To them and where you are loveless, Lord, unto me.
[68:38] Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me.

Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me.
Lord, unto me. Lord, unto me. I see All I have needed Thy hand has provided Great is thy faithfulness Lord unto me We'll conclude with the words at the end of the book of Jude Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy To the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever Amen

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