

Conversion and Character

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"Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard 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 chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house. And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." [Acts 16:24-34](#).

THE work of God at Philippi went on very quietly and successfully in the hands of Paul and Silas. It was the commencement of the Gospel in Europe and very auspicious were its circumstances. The good work was intimately connected with Prayer Meetings, which for this reason should always wear a charm for Europeans.

Godly women met together for devotion. Paul spoke to them and households were converted and baptized. The work went on delightfully, but the devil, as usual, must put in his foot! To any who judged according to the sight of the eyes, it must have seemed a most unfortunate circumstance that a poor woman having a spirit of divination came in Paul's way. It was a sad ruffling of the gentle stream of prosperity when, on account of his casting the demon out of her, the Apostle and his companion were dragged by the mob before the magistrates, shamefully beaten and thrown into prison. Now the preacher's mouth would be stopped, as far as the people of Philippi outside the jail gates were concerned. No more of those delightful Prayer Meetings and Bible readings and opening up of the Scriptures. Surely there was cause for the deepest regret. It might have appeared so, but like a great many other incidents connected with Christian work, the matter could not be judged by the outward appearance, for the Lord had a secret and blessed design which was being answered by the apparent disaster! Servants of Jesus Christ, never be discouraged when you are opposed, but when things run counter to your wishes, expect that the Lord has provided

some better thing for you! He is driving you away from shallow waters and bringing you into deeper seas where your nets shall bring you larger draughts. Paul and Silas must go to prison because a chosen person was to be converted in the prison who could not otherwise be reached!

No, it was not only one person who was to be saved, but Eternal Love had fixed its eyes upon a whole house! The members of this elect family could by no other means be brought to Christ but through Paul and Silas being cast into prison! And, therefore, into prison they must go—to do more by night in their chains than they could have done by day if they had been free—and to bring to Christ some that would be more illustrious trophies of the Grace of God than any they could have gathered had they been preaching in the streets of Philippi! God knows where it is best for His servants to be and how it is best for them to be! If He foresees that they will do more good with their backs scarred than they would have done if they had escaped the flagellation, then their bodies must bear the marks of the Lord Jesus and they must rejoice to have it so! Brothers and Sisters, we do not like the sick bed—we would not choose aching limbs—especially those of us who are of an active disposition and would be perpetually telling out the love of Christ! And yet in our temporary imprisonment we have seen the Lord's wisdom and have had to look back with thankfulness upon it. Oh,

children of God, your Father knows best! Leave everything in His hands and be at peace, for all is well. May the Holy Spirit work quietness of heart in you.

Our subject is the jailer of Philippi and, first, we shall say a little as to what kind of man he was before conversion. Secondly, we shall consider what was the occasion of his conversion. And then, thirdly, we will notice what sort of convert he made when the Grace of God brought him to Jesus' feet.

First, then—

I. WHAT SORT OF MAN WAS THIS JAILER BEFORE HIS CONVERSION? He is a remarkable instance of the power of Divine Grace, but he ought not to be spoken of as a notably great transgressor, for of this there is no trace, whatever! He was, like ourselves, full of sin and iniquity, but we find no record of anything especially bad about him. I see no reason why Mr. Wesley should so severely stigmatize him as he does in his lines—

"What but the power which wakes the dead Could reach a stubborn jailer's heart, In cruelty and rapine bred, Who took the ancient murderer's part? Could make a hardened ruffian feel, And shake him over the mouth of Hell?" On the contrary, we shall be able to show that the jailer's salvation is an instance of the Grace of God saving one of an admirable moral character, one in whom there were most commendable points—a man of such regularity and decision that he was not so much saved from vice as from self-righteousness! I take it, from the little we know of him, that he was a fine specimen of stern Roman discipline—a man full of respect for those in authority and prompt in obedience to orders. He was a jailer and he had to act, not on his own responsibility, but on the command of others,

and this he scrupulously did. When we read, "having received such a charge," we infer that he carefully followed the tenor of his orders and attentively observed the weight which the magistrates threw into them. He, therefore, thrust the Apostle and his friend into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. You can see that he was thorough-going in obedience to authority, for afterwards, although he might have liked to retain the Apostle and Silas in his house, yet, when the magistrates sent him word, he spoke to his beloved guests as an official was bound to do, waiving, in some respects, the friend, and tersely saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." It strikes me that he was an old soldier—a legionary who had fought and done rough work in his younger days and then settled down, appointed on account of his good behavior to the important post of governor of the jail of Philippi. With his family about him, he occupied himself in attending to his duties as a jailer and carried them out with the strictest regularity. For this he is to be commended—for it is expected of men that they be found faithful.

I say, then, that I regard him as an instance of a man whose mind was molded according to the Roman type, a person subservient to discipline and strict in obedience to rule. I grant that there was a little harshness about his fulfilling the orders concerning Paul and Silas, for he seems to have "thrust" them into the dungeon with some violence. But we cannot object to their being placed in the inner prison, or to their feet being made fast in the stocks, because his orders were that he should keep them safely—and he was only doing his best to secure this. He was not responsible for the order of the magistrates and when the prisoners were brought to him fresh from the lictor's rods with a strict charge, what was he to do but to obey it to the letter? He did so and does not deserve to be called a ruffian for it. His ruling idea was that he was a servant of the government and bound to carry out his instructions—and was he not right? Such men are very necessary in government employ—I cannot tell how public business could be done without them.

Notice that before he went to bed he saw that the prison doors were all fastened and the lights put out. Even Roman jailers were open to bribes and though lights had to be extinguished at a certain hour of the night, it was still possible to burn your lamp if you placed a little oil upon the jailer's palm. But there was no lamp in the jail of Philippi, for when the keeper, himself, needed a light, he had to call for it. All lamps were out at the proper time and all chains were on every person—for the narrative says that, by the earthquake, "Every man's chains were loosed," which they could not be if they were already unbound. The inmates were all secured in their cells and the whole building was in due order. This shows that the keeper of the prison attended to his business thoroughly, nothing turning him aside from the most correct observance of his instructions.

Well, all being shut up, he has gone to bed and is fast asleep, as he should be, in the middle of the night, so as to be fit for his morning's work. But what happens?—

"Paul and Silas, in their prison,

Sang of Christ, the Lord arisen!

And an earthquake's arm of might

Broke their dungeon gates at night" See how every timber in the house quivers and he awakes out of his sleep! What is his first thought? To my mind, it is fine to observe that he has no terror for himself or family, but at once rushes from his room to look to the prison below. Seeing the prison doors open, he was alarmed. He does not seem to have been in any alarm about his wife and his family, though the earthquake must have shaken the rooms in which they were, but his one concern was his prison and its contents. Under the seal and authority of the Roman Emperor, he was bound to keep the prisoners safe—and when he wakes, his first thought concerns his duty. I wish that all Christians were as faithful in their offices as this man! When as yet he was unenlightened, he was faithful to those who employed him. It is a grand thing when a man, placed in an office of responsibility, has his work so much upon his mind that if he starts up in the middle of the night and finds the floor under him reeling with an earthquake, the main thing he thinks about is the duty which he has engaged to fulfill. It ought to be so with Christian servants, with Christian trustees, managers and confidential clerks—and indeed with all Christian men and women placed in offices of trust! Your chief concern should be to be found faithful—it was so with the jailer.

Now notice, as he finds the prison doors open, this stern Roman fears that he shall be disgraced, for he feels sure that the prisoners must have fled. Naturally they would escape when the doors were open and as he could not confront the charge of unfaithfulness in his office, he drew his sword in haste and would have killed himself. For this proposed suicide he is to be most severely censured, but still note the stern Brutus-like fidelity of the man. He cannot endure the charge of having allowed his prisoners to escape, but would rather kill himself. Is it not singular that this Philippi was the place where Cassius committed suicide? Where Brutus also slew himself? Here this man would have added another name to these who laid violent hands upon themselves—and all because he feared that he would lose his character? He preferred death to dishonor. All these things show that he was a man sternly upright and determined to perform his duty. I am always doubly glad when such men are saved, because it does not often happen—such persons too often wrap themselves up in the sense of having walked uprightly towards their fellow men. And because after the lapse of many years, they stand high in public esteem and everybody says the country never had better servants, they are apt to forget their Master in Heaven and their obligations to their Lord—apt to have a blind eye towards their own shortcomings and to be little inclined to sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, unless some wondrous deed of Divine Grace is worked upon them! Hence we admire the Grace of God which brought such a man trembling to the Apostle's feet!

The jailer was a person of few words. He was not a great talker, but a prompt actor. We only know three things that he said. First, he called for a light. And next he cried, "Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?" a terse, laconic question— respectful, earnest, to the point, having not a word too much or too little in it. His other speech to Paul was of the same order when he said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now, therefore, depart and go in peace." You would not expect a jailer to use very flowery language—he was accustomed to measure his syllables when he spoke to his prisoners, never uttering a word beyond the statute in that case made and provided. Thus he had acquired a hard, businesslike style of speech. Men of such a type are often cold as so many statues. We find it hard to warm their hearts and, therefore, we bless the Grace of God which made this man's heart to burn within him and snapped the bonds of cold routine, so that, after his conversion, he feasted the ministers of Christ and rejoiced with all his house!

It may be well to make one more remark. It is evident that he was a man of action, of precision and decision. Once let him know what is to be done, and he does it! He acts as a man under authority having wardens under him. He says to this man, "Go," and he goes. And he acts mechanically as his superiors command him. He was a man who, I suppose, opened the prison doors always to a minute at the right time in the morning for those who went out to exercise, measured out the meals of the prisoners to the ounce and shut up the cells and put out the lights exactly at the fixed hour at night. I see it in him. Precise obedience is his main point. When he was bid to believe, he believed. He was also immediately baptized. What he lacked in speech, he made up in deeds. He obeyed the Lord Jesus immediately, then and there. I love to see a man

brought to Christ who has orderliness and decision about him. Some of us are rough beings, needing a deal of combing to bring us into shape. But certain others are shapely after their way from the first and all that they need is spiritual life. When the Divine Life comes, their habits are in beautiful consistency with the inward law of obedience and holy order. Still, it is not often that persons of this class are saved, for these very orderly people frequently think that they have no sin and so the warnings addressed to sinners do not come home to them. For instance, a man says, "Never since I took my position as manager of my master's business have I wasted an hour of his time, or a shilling of his substance." This is well, but the devil is ready with the suggestion, "You are a good and faithful servant. What need have you to humble yourself before Christ and seek His mercy and Grace?" It is a most blessed thing when this tendency is overcome. I see the Divine splendor of Grace as much in the conversion of the faultless moralist as in the repentance of Manasseh, or of that woman who was a sinner, of whom we spoke a little while ago. It is as hard to deliver a man from self-righteousness as from unrighteousness, as difficult to deliver one man from the frostbite of his own orderliness as to save another from the heat of his unbridled passions. Converts like the jailer are very precious and very sweetly display the love and power of God! Now, secondly—

II. WHAT OCCASIONED THE JAILER'S CONVERSION?

The narrative is short and we cannot, therefore, get much out of it. I think, however, that we are warranted in believing that this man had received some measure of instruction before the earnest midnight cry of, "What must I do to be saved?" Perhaps the often repeated testimony of the Pythoness had been reported to him, for it must have been a matter of general notoriety throughout the town of Philippi that this woman, who was supposed to be inspired, had testified that Paul and Silas were "servants of the Most High God." It is also very possible that when he was fitting on the irons to these holy men and roughly thrusting them into the inner prison, their quiet manner, like sheep at the slaughter, and perhaps their godly words, also, may have carried information to his mind. What he saw and heard did not savingly impress him, for he showed the Apostles no sort of courtesy, but, as I have already said, was somewhat harsh with them. "He thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks," so that at that time he had no belief in their mission and but small respect for their character. He felt, it is clear, no compunction, for he went up to his chamber and fell asleep—nothing of any importance was on his mind, notwithstanding what the Apostles may have said to him. A young Divine in a flowery sermon described the jailer as converted through hearing Paul and Silas sing at midnight. A very beautiful picture he made of it, but it had the drawback of being untrue, for the jailer did not hear them sing. "The prisoners heard them," for they were all down in the vaults under the jailer's house, but it is clear that the keeper of the prison did not hear them, for he was asleep until the earthquake startled him.

I have also heard it said that he was converted through fear of death—a most ridiculous remark, for how could he be afraid to die who was going to kill himself? No, he was too brave a man to be moved by terror. He was afraid of nothing but of being suspected of neglect of duty. He was a soldier without fear and without reproach, dreading dishonor infinitely more than death! He was a stern disciplinarian and thought little of his own life or the lives of others. He would have ridden in the charge of Balaclava, with all the rest of them, bravely enough—

"His not to reason why— His but to dare and die."

You can see that it was not fear that brought him to the feet of the Apostle. I do not doubt that some are brought to Christ by fear of death, but one is a little suspicious of such conversions—for he who is frightened to the Savior by fear of death may possibly run away from Him when he perceives that his fear has no immediate cause.

Others, too, have thought that he was made to tremble because he was afraid of being brought before Caesar for permitting his prisoners to escape. That fear may have hurried him into the desperate intent of suicide, but it was not the cause of his conversion, for all distress upon that point was gone before he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In fact, he came to Paul and Silas because that fear had been banished by hearing the calm and brave voice of the Apostle as he said, "Do yourself no harm: we are all here." It was not even

a fear of censure from the magistrates which compelled him to tremble, for that, also, had been removed by finding the prisoners still in their cells. And though the whole of these things together make up the circumstances of his conversion, they cannot be put down as the cause of it, since this last, especially, had ceased to operate upon him when he fell trembling at the Apostle's feet.

What was it, then, which led to the jailer's faith and Baptism? I answer, partly the miracle that the doors were opened and the prisoners' chains loosed by an earthquake. And coupled with that, the fact that none of them had escaped. What gladness filled his bosom! He would not be arraigned, after all, for being unfaithful to his trust. How strange that the prisoners were all there. What a conflict was there in his spirit! What anxiety and what sudden quelling of his alarm! There was no need to commit suicide lest he should be blamed, for there was nothing for which to blame him. What a deliverance for him! An awful power was abroad and yet it had taken care of him. A mingled feeling of mystery and gladness created astonishment and gratitude in his bosom. He could not make it out, it was so singular—he had been brought to the verge of a precipice—and yet was safe. "Do yourself no harm: we are all here," rang out like music in his ears! He felt a solemn awe of those two prisoners whose voices had reassured him. Their voices had been to him as the very voice of God sounding forth along those corridors out of the innermost cells. Their bold, truthful, confident, calm tones had astonished him! He had seen before something very singular about those two men, but now the very tone in which they conveyed to him the glad intelligence which banished his worst fear filled him with deep reverence towards them—and he feels that no doubt these men are the servants of the Most High God and, therefore, he calls for a light, breaks in upon their darkness and brings them out.

While this was transpiring, he was brought very near to the world to come by the fact of the sword having been so near his breast, by the earthquake that had started all the stones of the dungeon, by the singular power of God miraculously holding every freeman as fast as if he had been bound and by the presence of men whom he perceived to be linked with Deity. This nearness to things unseen caused him to look over his past life. He was calm, despite the confusion of the night, for he was not a man to be frightened. But conscience, which in him was quick and prompt, from the very habit of obedience, reviewed his past life, judged it and condemned it—and he felt that he was a lost man because of his multiplied shortcomings before the Living God, whose servants were there present. For this reason he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" It was none other than the blessed and eternal Spirit, unfolding before him his life which he had thought to be so correct, making him to see the evil of it and striking him down with a sense of guilt and a dread of consequent punishment! So far we trace his convictions to an awakened conscience visited by the Spirit of God.

His full conversion grew out of the further instructions of the Apostles. That answer was very like his short question in fullness of meaning—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." This was condensed Gospel for him. And then followed a blessed commentary upon it, when the Apostle spoke the Word of the Lord both to him and to all his house. All this lit up his mind, which was already willing to receive the Truth of God, a mind which, from the very habit of obedience, was quick and prompt to accept the sway of the Lord Jesus. He received the Word of God in the love of it most sweetly, God the Holy Spirit blessing it to him while he listened. There was plain teaching and a simple heart to receive it—and the two together made quick work of it and made resplendent that strange midnight which was, henceforth in that house, regarded as the beginning of days!

Now, dear Friend, I want you to thank God for the circumstances which surround any man's conversion, for all things are well ordered. If the Lord has been pleased to call you by His Divine Grace, do not begin judging your conversion because the circumstances were not very remarkable! And do not suspect your friend's sincerity because there was no earthquake in connection with his new birth, for the Lord may not be in the earthquake, nor in the wind, nor in the fire, but in that "still small voice" which calls the heart to Jesus! The matter is not how you came to Christ, but are you there? It is not what brought you, so much as Who brought you. Did the Spirit of God lead you to repentance? Are you resting at the Cross? If so, then, whether, like Lydia your heart was gently opened, or, like this jailer, you were startled and awakened, and thus made to perceive grand Truths to which you had been a stranger before—it does not matter as long as Christ is believed in and your heart yields itself to His blessed sway! Our third point—and may the Spirit of God help us in it—is to notice—

III. WHAT SORT OF CONVERT THIS MAN MADE.

First, you are quite sure he made a very believing convert. The Gospel command came to him—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house"—and he did believe, believed firmly, without raising questions or discussions, without delays, or hesitations! How many there are among those whose conversion we seek after who meet us always with a, "but." We put the Truth of God plainly and they reply, "Yes—but—." Then we go over it again and put it in another shape, and they still say, "But." We tell them that salvation is by believing in Jesus Christ and they answer "but." This man, however, had no, "buts." He was told to believe and he did believe—and who would not—who knows how true the Gospel is? Who will not believe what is true? Who will not rely upon that which is Divinely certified? Why should we reject what thousands have proved to be true by a glad-some experience? Ah, Unbelief, what an enemy you are to multitudes who hear the Gospel! But you were utterly cast out of the jailer—he heard the command to believe and, though

he had received slender instruction, he nevertheless believed unto eternal life. He was a convert full of faith!

Next, what a humble Christian he was. He fell down at the feet of the servants of God, not feeling himself worthy to stand in their presence. And then, though their jailer, he took them up into his house and waited upon them with gladness. The man who is really born-again does not demand the best seat in the synagogue, nor disdain to perform the meanest service. It is poor evidence of a renewed heart when a man must always be the fore horse in the team, or else he will do nothing at all! He who knows the Lord loves to sit at Christ's feet—the lower the place, the better for him. He is even glad to wash the saints' feet, yes, he thinks it an honor! If you Christian people must dispute about precedence, always fight for the lowest place! If you aspire to be last and least, you will not have many competitors—there will be no need to demand a poll, for the lowest seat is undisputed. Humility is the way to a peaceful life—and the jailer began to practice it in his behavior to his prisoners, who were now his pastors!

What a ready convert he was! In that one midnight he passed through several stages—hearing, believing, baptizing, service, rejoicing and fellowship—and all within an hour! No long waiting for him! I wish more converts were like he. What slow coaches we have to deal with. You travel by broad-wheeled wagon to Heaven, even you who rush along by express train in the world's business! Yes, you must attend to the world, and my Lord and Master may wait your convenience, as Felix puts it! But this should not be. As soon as you know what your Lord would have you to do, every moment of unnecessary delay is a sin! The jailer had been prompt in other duties and he was just as decided with regard to Divine things! He was such a convert as we like to have in our Churches to set an example of quick obedience to the Great Captain of our salvation. Soldierly habits sanctified by Grace are greatly needed in the Church of God—would God we saw more of them!

Then see what a practical convert he was! "He took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and set meat before them." All that he could do, he did at once, and his wife and children were all busy to help him. It is not easy to fit up a feast in the middle of the night, but the good wife did her best—cold meats were brought forth from the stores and such good cheer as they had was set out so that the two good men, who, no doubt, needed refreshment, were sufficiently supplied. I think I see that midnight festival even now! How the young children caught up every word which was spoken by the holy men and how glad they were to see them at their table! They all believed and were all baptized, and therefore they were all eager to do something for the men of God. How pleased they were to fetch the good men up into the best parlor—how eager to put them into the easiest chairs and let them sit in comfort, or recline at their ease. They did not wait till morning, but showed kindness without delay! This is the sort of convert the Church needs—one who

delights to serve the Lord and is no sooner converted than he sets to work in his own hearty way! May the Lord send us scores of such conversions!

Friend, have you ever done anything for the Lord or His cause? "No, Sir. Nobody has set me anything to do." What? Live in these busy times and needsomebody to find you Christian employment? Why, you are not worth setting to work! He who lives in a great city and cannot find something to do for God had better not get off his knees till he has asked his Lord to have mercy upon his lazy soul! Here are people dying all round us, and being lost forever through ignorance, drunkenness and sins of every kind—and yet a young man of 21 stands up and says that he cannot find anything to do! You are idle. You are very idle! Does not Solomon say, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might?" You need not open your eyes to find good work to do, only put out your hand and there it is! For the love of Jesus, begin to serve Him as this jailer and his wife and family did!

Notice, again, that they were very joyful converts. He "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The Apostle was happy that night. His poor back was smarting, but his heart was leaping within him! And Silas, too, who had shared the scourging, he also shared the joy! How lovingly the jailer looked upon his two instructors, how tenderly he washed their stripes. As he had thrown them into the inner prison, so he brought them into his own house. What overflowing joy was in his heart! I think while he was waiting at the table, he would, every now and then, stop and wonder at what Di-

vine Grace had done! Would he not ask the Apostle to teach him that Psalm which had been sung below stairs? I am sure he would have sung heartily had he known that hymn which you so much delight in, wherein each one declares—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me!" Joy ruled at that midnight feast, and well it might, for the prison had become a palace and the jailer an heir of Heaven!

This man was an influential convert, for, through this conversion, all his house was led to believe. And he was also a sensible convert, which is worth notice, for it is not every Christian that is wise and prudent. Some zealous people are in a hurry to give up their secular callings. Such would say, "I cannot be a jailer any longer. I must give it up." A Roman jailer would have much to do which would grate upon Christian feelings, but there was nothing positively wrong in the office. Somebody must be jailer and who so fit for the post as a man who knows the Lord and will, therefore, manifest a gentle, humane spirit? Who so fit to have poor creatures entrusted to him as one who will not swear at them, or treat them roughly, but who will seek their good? Why, I think if a man wanted to be a missionary to those who needed him most, he might desire to be a jailer, for he would be sure to get at the very people who most require the Gospel! The Phi-lippian convert was in his right place, and instead of saying, "Ah, I must give up my situation and live with Christian people," he was wise enough to stay at the jail and abide in his calling.

Observe that when the magistrates tell him that Paul is to go, he does not violate their order out of zeal for the faith. He had no right to keep Paul as a guest in his house against the magistrates' will, or he would gladly have retained him. But being bound by his office and by the fact that his apartments were part of the jail, when Paul was told to go, he said to him, "Now, therefore, go in peace." The words look somewhat curt, but no doubt he uttered them in such a kind and courteous manner that the Apostle quite understood him. Then Paul went down to Lydia's house and I dare say the jailer came down to see him there, so that if they could not meet at the jail without breach of regulations, they could meet at Lydia's hospitable abode. He was quite right in maintaining the discipline of the jail and his sincere affection for the Apostle at the same time.

My own belief is that he and Lydia were ever afterwards two of the kindest friends that the Apostle ever had—and were chief among those who contributed of their substance to his necessities. Paul took no money from any but the Philippians. Though other Churches offered to contribute, Paul declined. But when the Philippians sent to him once and again, he accepted their gifts as a sacrifice of sweet smell. He said within himself, "All the family send this gift. All Lydia's household and all the jailer's household are Believers, so that no member of the family will grudge what is sent to me." One likes to see brought into the Christian Church those who will continue in their business and make money for Jesus Christ and lay themselves out to serve the Lord in a practical fashion. Many a man gets into a pulpit and spoils a congregation who, if he had stuck to his business and made money that he might help the poor, or aid the cause of missions, or support the Church of God, would have been more truly serving the great cause. He was a sensible convert, this jailer, and I rejoice in him!

And now, if I have been addressing anybody not a jailer, but a person in a position of trust, and if you have a feeling that you have done faithfully, I am glad of it. I am not going to dispute your claim to integrity towards man, nor to undervalue honesty and faithfulness, but oh, remember, you need to be saved! Notwithstanding your moral excellence, you will be lost unless you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do see to this. May the Holy Spirit lead you at once to accept the Gospel of Grace, for you need it even as others. May you become a firm Believer in Jesus, and may the Church find in you a willing and earnest helper.