

HOUSEHOLD SALVATION NO. 1019

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 5, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“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, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”
Acts 16:32-34.

IT sometimes happens that a good man has to go alone to heaven; God's election has separated him from the midst of an ungodly family, and notwithstanding his example, and his prayers, and his admonitions, they still remain unconverted, and he himself, a solitary one, a speckled bird among them, has to pursue his lonely flight to the skies. Far more often, however, it happens that the God who is the God of Abraham becomes the God of Sarah, and then of Isaac, and then of Jacob, and though grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet does it very frequently; I was about to say almost always, happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to Himself. He calls an individual, and then uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the gospel net! John Bunyan, in the first part of his *“Pilgrim's Progress,”* describes Christian as a lonely traveler pursuing his road to the celestial city alone. Occasionally he is attended by faithful, or he meets with a hopeful, but these are casual acquaintances, and are not of his kith or kin; brother or child after the flesh he has none with him. The second part of Bunyan's book exhibits *family* piety, for we see Christiana, and the children, and many friends all traveling in company to the better land; and though it is often said that the second part of Bunyan's wondrous allegory is somewhat weaker than the former, and probably it is so, yet many a gentle spirit has found it sweeter than the former, and it has given to many a loving heart great delight to feel that there is a *possibility*, beneath the leadership of one of the Lord's great-hearts, to form a convoy to the skies, so that a sacred caravan shall traverse the desert of earth, and women and children shall find their way, in happy association, to the city of habitations! We rejoice to think of whole families enclosed within the lines of electing grace, and entire households redeemed by blood, devoting themselves to the service of the God of love!

I am sure any of you, who yourselves have tasted that the Lord is gracious, are most anxious to bring others into reconciliation with God; it is an instinct with the Christian to desire that his fellow men should, as he has done, both taste and see that the Lord is good! Judaism wraps itself up within itself, and claims a monopoly of blessing for the chosen nation; the heir after the flesh gnashes with his teeth when we declare that the true heirs of Abraham are born after the Spirit, and are found in every land; they would reserve all heavenly privileges to the circumcised, and keep up the ancient middle wall of partition. It is the very genius of Christianity to embrace all mankind in its love; if there is anything true, let all believe it; if there is anything good, let all receive it! We desire no gates of brass to shut out the multitude, and if there are barriers, we would throw them down, and pray eternal Mercy to induce the teeming millions to draw near to the fountain of life! It will not be wrong, but, on the contrary, most natural and proper, that your desire for the salvation of others should, first of all, rest upon your own families; if charity begins at home, so, assuredly, piety will; they have special claims upon us who gather around our table and our hearth. God has not reversed the laws of nature, but He has sanctified them by the rules of divine grace; it foretells nothing of selfishness that a man should first seek to have his own kindred saved; I will give nothing for your love for the wide world if you have not a special love for your own household. The rule of Paul may, with a little variation, be applied here. We are to “do good unto all men, but especially unto such as are of the household of faith.” So are we to seek the good of all mankind, but especially of those who are of our own near kindred. Let Abraham's prayer be for Ishmael, let Hannah pray for Samuel, let David plead for Solomon, let Andrew find first his brother Si-

mon, and Eunice train her Timothy—they will be none the less large or prevalent in their pleadings for others because they were mindful of those allied to them by ties of blood!

To allure and encourage you to long for family religion, I have selected this text this morning. God grant it may answer the purpose designed; may many here have a spiritual hunger and thirst that they may receive the blessing which so largely rested upon the Philippian jailer.

Note in our text five things. We have *a whole household hearing the Word of God*, *a whole household believing it*, *a whole household baptized*, *a whole household working for God*, and then, *a whole household rejoicing*.

I. Observe, first, in the passage before us, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD HEARING THE WORD. I do not know whether they had ever heard the gospel before—perhaps they had. We have no certain proof that the jailer heard the name of Jesus Christ for the first time amidst the tumult of the earthquake; he may have listened to Paul in the streets, and so have known something of the gospel, and of the name of Jesus Christ. But this is hardly probable, as he would then have scarcely treated the apostle so harshly. Most likely the Word of God sounded at midnight in the ears of the jailer and his household for the first time, and on that remarkable occasion, they all heard it together. The father first, in his alarm, asked the question, “What must I do to be saved?” and received personally the answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house.” And then it appears that all the family gathered around their parent, and the two holy men, while Paul and Silas spoke unto him the Word of the Lord, and also to all that were in his house. We do not know whether there were children there, but if so, and we will assume it for this occasion, all were hearers that night. There was not a solitary exception; no one was away from that sermon in a jail. His wife, his children, his servants; all that were in his house listened to the heavenly message; it is true, he who preached was a prisoner, but that made the word none the less powerful, for he was to them an ambassador in bonds; prisoner as he was, he preached to them a free gospel, and a gospel of divine authority. He erred not from the truth in what he taught; he preached to them the “Word of God.” Would to God that all preachers would keep to the Word of God, and above all things, would exalt the incarnate Word of God! This were infinitely better than to delude men’s minds with those “gems of thought,” those strikingly new ideas, those metaphysical subtleties, and speculations, and theories, and discoveries of science, falsely so called, which are nowadays so fashionable. If all ministers could preach the word, the revealed mind and will of God, then hearers would in larger numbers become converts—for God will bless His own Word, but He will not bless anything else.

The jailer’s household all heard God’s Word faithfully declared, and there was the main cause of blessing, for alas, with many hearers, the Sunday is utterly wasted! Though they are attentive listeners, they are left without a blessing because that which they hear is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have, myself, heard sermons which, I am persuaded, God Almighty Himself could not bless to the conversion of anybody! He could not, because it would have been a denial of Himself! The discourses were not true, nor according to His Word; they were not such as were calculated to honor Himself, and how can He bless that which is not to His own honor? And how can He set His seal to a lie? The Word of God must be preached, and then the place, the hour, or the garb of the preacher will matter nothing! The minister may have been led up from a prison, and the smell of the dungeon may be upon him, but when he opens his mouth with the glad tidings, the name of Jesus will be as ointment poured forth!

I began my remarks on this point by noting that they all heard Paul. And observe the need of this, as a starting-point, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” It is not all who *hear* who will be saved, but the ordinary way with God is for men first to hear, then to *believe*, and so to be saved. “Being in the way, God met with me,” said Obadiah, and the road which a soul should follow to be met with by God is the way of *hearing*. Though it may seem a very trite thing to say, it is nevertheless exceedingly important if we are to have household conversion, that there should be a household hearing of the word; this is the chosen instrumentality, and we must bring all under the instrumentality if we wish them to obtain the blessing. Now, in this city, many *fathers* never hear the Word of God because they regard the Sunday as a day of laziness. They work so hard all the week, they say, that they are not fit to rise from their beds on Sunday morning. And then, after a heavy dinner, the evening must be spent in loitering about and chatting away time. Brethren, if you want to see your fellow workmen saved, you should earnestly endeavor to bring them under the sound of the gospel. Here is a very useful occupation for many of you; you cannot preach, but you can gather a congregation for those who do! A

little persuasion would succeed in many cases, and once bring them here, we would hope to hold them; if I could not be the instrument of converting a soul by preaching the gospel myself, I would habitually addict myself to the bringing of strangers to listen to those whom God has acknowledged to the conversion of souls. Why, our congregations need never be thin—I speak not now for myself, for I have no need, but in no place where the gospel is preached need there be a thin audience, if those who already appreciate the gospel would feel it to be a Christian duty to *bring others to hear it!* Do this, I pray you. I believe it to be one of the most important efforts which a Christian can make, to endeavor to bring the working men of London, and, indeed, all classes of men everywhere, to listen to the gospel of Christ! The men, the fathers, the heads of households, we must have.

If we are to have the household saved, however, the *mothers* must hear the word as well as the fathers. Many of them do, but I know cases, and perhaps there may be such present, and I wish to speak what is practical—where a man comes to hear the word himself, but his wife is detained at home with the children. Perhaps she is not converted, and has not much care to go to the service; perhaps she is a Christian, and though she would wish to go, she must look after the children; in either case it is the duty of every such father, if he does not keep a servant to attend to the children, to take his turn with the wife, and let her have her fair share of opportunity for hearing the gospel. He meanly shirks the duty of a husband, who, being a working man, does not take his turn at home, and give his wife as good an opportunity of learning the way of salvation as himself. This may be a new suggestion to some; I only hope they will carry it out. It is plain that if we are to have whole households saved, we must have whole households *hearing the word*, and if the mother cannot hear the word, we cannot rationally expect the blessing to come to her.

Then the *children*, also, must be thought of. We desire to see them converted as children; there is no need that they should wait until they are grown up, and have run into sin as their fathers did, that they may be afterwards brought back! It would be infinitely better if they were preserved from such wanderings, and brought early into the fold of Jesus; the blessing which God gave to the jailor's children by hearing, He gives in the same way to other children. Let the little ones be brought to hear the gospel; they can hear it in the Sunday school, and there are special services adapted to them; but for my part I like also to preach, so that boys and girls shall be interested, and I shall feel that I am very faulty in my style if children cannot understand much that I teach in the congregation. Bring all who have reached years of understanding with you; leave none at home, except for good reasons. Bring each young Samuel to the house of the Lord; let it be said of you, as it is written in the Book of Chronicles, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." If nothing else shall come from children's attending our worship, the holy habit of going up to God's house will be a perpetual heritage to them, and who knows but while they are yet young their hearing the word shall be the means of their salvation!

Then there are the *servants*, and by no means are they to be overlooked. To have all that are in the house saved, all that are in the house must hear the gospel! Do you all make such opportunities for your servants on the Sunday as you should? I do not know, of course, how you conduct your family arrangements, but I know of some who do not think enough of their servants' hearing the gospel. Servants frequently are sent out in the afternoon, when there is no preaching worth the hearing; it may be unavoidable in many cases, but I would ask, "What is the use of their going out at an hour when no preaching is to be found?" If we give them only opportunities of going out when there is nothing to hear, we certainly have not given them a fair portion of the Lord's-Day! By some contrivance or other, perhaps with a little pinch and self-sacrifice, our servants might hear our own minister. You cannot pray God to save your household, and be honest, unless you give the whole household an opportunity of being saved! And God's way of saving souls—we repeat it, is by the preaching and the hearing of the Word of God! Oh, let every one of us be able to say, as masters and as parents, "I cannot save my children, and I cannot save my servants; but this I have done, I have directed them to a man of God who preaches the gospel faithfully. I do not send them to a place merely because there is talent or fashion there, but I have selected for them a ministry which God blesses, and I do my best to put them all in the way of the blessing, praying and beseeching the Lord to call them all by His grace." I anticipate the many difficulties you will urge, but would again say, *if we love souls*, we should try to meet these difficulties, and if we cannot

do all we would, we should at least do all we *can*—that we may have all our households every Sunday hearing the glorious gospel of the Blessed God!

II. We now turn to the next, which is a most comfortable and cheering sight. Here is A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BELIEVING! We know that the whole household believed, for we are told so in the 34th verse: “Believing in God with his entire house.” All, all! All were powerfully affected, savingly affected by the gospel which Paul preached to them. I have already remarked that they were very probably new hearers; if they had heard the word before, it could not have been many times, and yet they all believed! Is it not a most sad fact that many of my old hearers have not believed? The battering-ram has beaten often on their walls, but it has not shaken them yet; wooing invitations of the gospel have been presented to them again and again, accompanied by the soul-piercing music of a Savior’s dying cries, and yet, for all that, they remain unconverted still! Oh, the responsibilities that are heaped up upon gospel-hardened sinners! Take home to yourselves that warning word, I pray you. This household heard the gospel probably but once, certainly only once or twice, yet they believed, and here are some of us who have heard it from our youth up, and remain rebellious still!

Of this family it may be said that as they were new hearers, so they were most unlikely hearers. The Romans did not select for jailers the most tender-hearted of men; frequently they were old soldiers who had seen service in bloody wars, and been in cruel fights, and when these men settled down, as in a measure, pensioners of the Empire, they were allotted such offices as that which the jailer held. In the society and associations of a jail, there was very little that could be likely to improve the mother, to benefit the children, or elevate the servants; they were, then, most unpromising hearers. Yet how often are the most unlikely persons convicted of sin and led to the Savior? How true is it still of many who are most moral and excellent, and even outwardly religious, that, “The publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before they do.” This is an encouragement to you who work in lodging houses and in the slums of this vast city, to bring all kinds of people to hear the word—for if a jailer and his household were numbered among the first fruits unto God at Philippi, may we not hope that others of an unlikely class may be converted, too? Who are you that you should say, “It is of no use to invite such a man to hear, for he would not be converted”? The more improbable it seems to be in *your* judgment, perhaps the more likely it is that God will look upon him with an eye of love; how happy a thing it was for the jailer that in the providence of God, his hardened but probably honest spirit was brought under the influence of the earnest apostle! Bring others, like he, into the place of worship, for who can tell?

Note that though they were thus unlikely hearers, yet they were *immediately* converted, then and there! It took but a short time. I do not know how long Paul’s sermon was; he was a wise man, and I should not think he would preach a long sermon in the dead of the night, just after an earthquake! I have no doubt it was a simple exposition of the doctrine of the cross, and then Silas, too, talked, perhaps when Paul had done. Silas gave a little exhortation, a brief address to finish up with, and fill up anything which Paul had left out. The teaching was soon over, and at its close the jailer, his wife, his children (if he had any), his servants, and, indeed, all who were in the house, avowed themselves to be believers. It does not take a month to convert a soul! Glory be to God, if He wills to do it, He can convert all here this morning in a moment! Hearing the gospel once may be sufficient to make a man a Christian; when the eternal Word of God comes forth with omnipotent power, it turns lions into lambs, and that in a single instant of time! As the lightning flash can split the oak from its loftiest bough to the earth in a single second, so the ever-blessed lightning of God’s Spirit can cleave the heart of man in a moment, for our text shows us a whole family saved at once!

It is said particularly of them all that, “They believed.” Was that the only thing? Could it not be said that they all *prayed*? I dare say it could, and many other good things; but then faith was at the root of them all. It was the sneer of an old Greek philosopher against the Christians of his day—“Faith,” he said, “is your only wisdom.” Yes, and we rejoice in the same wisdom *now*—faith, for the moment we receive faith we are saved! It is the one essential grace—“*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” The moment God gives a man faith; and that He can do at any time; the instant the heart casts itself into the arms of Jesus crucified, and rests there; whoever it is, he is saved in an instant! Effectually and infallibly saved! He is, in all respects, a new creature in Christ Jesus. Faith is an instantaneous act at its beginning, and then it remains as an abiding grace. Its first act, by the power of God, puts a man into the present possession of *immediate* salvation. I wonder if we preachers fully believe this as a

matter of fact. If I were to go into a jail tomorrow evening, and were to preach to the jailer and his household, should I expect to see all saved then and there? And if they were, would I believe it? Most likely I will not see it, and the reason would lie because I would not have faith enough to *expect* it. We preach the gospel, no doubt, but it is with the slender hope that *some* may be converted, and they are converted, here and there; but if God would clothe us with the faith of the apostles, we would see far greater things. When He works in us a larger faith, He will also restore to us the hundredfold harvest which, alas, is so rare in these days.

Notice very particularly that these persons, though converted thus suddenly, all of them were, nevertheless, very hearty converts. They did that night, as I shall show you soon, abundantly prove how thoroughly converted they were! They were quick to do all that in them lay for the apostle, and for the good cause; they were not half converted, as many people are. I like to see a man renewed all over from head to foot. It is delightful to meet your hearty Christian, who, when he gave his heart to Jesus, meant it, and devoted his whole body, soul, and spirit to the good Lord who had bought him with His blood. Some of you have only got a little-finger conversion—just enough to wear the ring of profession, and look respectable; but oh, to have hand and foot, lungs, heart, voice, and soul, all saturated with the Spirit's influence and consecrated to the cause of God! We have a few such men, full of the Holy Spirit, but, alas, we have too many other converts who are rather tinctured with grace, than saturated with it, and to whom *sprinkling* is a very significant ordinance, for it would appear that they never have received anything but a *sprinkling of grace!* Oh, for saints in whom there will be a thorough death and burial to the world, and a New life in the resurrection image of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the true baptism of the Holy Spirit!

However, I must return on this head to the point that they all believed. What a sweet picture for you to look upon. The father is a believer in Jesus, but he has not to kneel down and pray, "Lord, save my dear wife," for look, and rejoice as you see it, she is a believer, too! And then there is the elder son and the daughters. We know not, and we must not guess, how many there might be, but there they are, all rejoicing in their father's God! And then there are the servants! The old nurse who brought up the little ones, and the little maid, and the warders who have to look after the prisoners; they are all of them ready to sing the psalm of praise, and all delighted to look upon those who were once their prisoners as now their instructors and their fathers in the faith! O brothers and sisters, if some of us should ever see all our children and our servants saved, we would cry like Simeon of old, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace according to Your word." Many *have* seen it; the jailor's case is by no means an exceptional one, and I hope all of us are earnestly crying to God that we may gain the same unspeakable privilege.

III. We have, in the third place in our text, A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED. "He was baptized, he and all his straightway." In almost every case in Scripture where you read of a household baptism, you are distinctly informed that they were also a believing household. In the case of Lydia it may not be so; but then there are remarkable circumstances about her case which render that information needless. In this instance they were all believers, and therefore, they were all of them baptized. First, "HE" was baptized—the jailor. He was ready first to submit himself to the ordinance in which he declared himself to be dead to the world, and risen anew in Christ Jesus. Then "*all his*" followed. What a glorious baptism amidst the glare of the torches that night! Perhaps in the prison bath, or in the pool which was usually in the center of most oriental houses, or perhaps the stream that watered Philippi ran by the prison wall, and was used for the occasion. It matters not, but into the water they descended, one after another—mother, children, servants. And Paul and Silas stood there delighted to aid them in declaring themselves to be on the Lord's side, "Buried with Him in baptism."

And this was done, mark you, *straightway!* There was not one who wished to have it put off till he had tried himself a little, and seen whether he was really regenerated. In those days no one had any scruple or objection to obey—none advocated the following of some ancient and doubtful tradition; all were obedient to the divine will. No one shrank from baptism for fear that water might damage his health, or in some way cause him inconvenience; but he and all his, wishing to follow the plain example of our Lord Jesus Christ, were baptized, and that straightway—at once, and on the spot! No minister has any right to refuse to baptize any person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, unless there is some glaring fact to cast doubt upon the candidate's sincerity! I, for one, would never ask from any person weeks and months of delay in which the man should prove to me that he was a believer; but I would follow the ex-

ample of the apostle. The gospel of Christ was preached, the people were converted, and they were baptized, and all perhaps in the space of an hour; the whole transaction may not have taken up so much time as I shall occupy in preaching about it this morning. How, then, is it with you who wait so long? Where is the precept or example to warrant your hesitation? Permit me to remind you that duties delayed are *sins!* Will you take that home with you, you who have been believers for years, and yet are not baptized? Permit me to remind you, also, that privileges postponed are *losses!* Put the two together, and where duty and privilege meet, do not incur the sin and the loss, but, like David, “Make haste and delay not” to keep the divine command.

“Why say so much about baptism?” asks somebody. *Much about baptism?* Never was a remark more ungenerous, if it is made against *me!* I might, far more justly, be censured for saying so *little* about it. *Much about baptism?* I call you all to witness that unless it comes across my path in the Scriptures, I never go away from the text to drag it in. I am no enthusiast; I never made baptism my main teaching, and God forbid I should! But I will not be hindered from preaching the whole truth, and I dare say no less than I am now saying! The Holy Spirit has recorded the baptism here; will you think little of what He chooses to record? Paul and Silas; an apostle and his companion, dared not neglect the ordinance—how dare you despise it? It was the dead of the night, it was in a prison; if it might have been put off, it surely might have been then! Prison was not a reputable place to dispense baptism, some would have said. It was hardly a seasonable hour, but they thought it so important that then and there, and at once, they baptized the whole household! If this is God’s command, and I solemnly believe it to be so; do not despise it, I beseech you! As you love Christ, do not talk about its being non-essential; if the Lord commands, shall His servant talk about its being non-essential? It is essential in all things to do my Master’s will, and to preach it, for has He not said, “He that shall break one of the least of these, My commandments, and shall teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven”? I hope it may be our privilege here to see whole families baptized; come along with you, beloved father, if you are a believer in Jesus; come with him, mother; come with him, daughters; come with your mother, you godly sons, and come you servants, too! If you have come to the cross, and all your hope is placed there, then come and declare that you are Christ’s! Touch not the ordinance till you believe in Jesus Christ—it may work you mighty mischief if you do! The sacramentarianism which is so rampant in this age, is of all lies I think the most deadly, and you encourage sacramentarianism if you give a Christian ordinance to an unconverted person! Touch it not, then, until you are saved! Until you are believers, ordinances are not for you, and it is a sacrilege for you to intrude yourselves into them! How I long to see whole households believe, for then I may safely rejoice at seeing them baptized!

IV. Next, we have A WHOLE HOUSEHOLD AT WORK FOR GOD. Read the passage, and you will see that they all did something. The father called for a light; the servants brought the torches and the lamps such as were used in the prisons. He took his prisoners the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes. Here is work for himself, and work for gentle hands to do, to relieve the pains of those poor bleeding backs; to wash out the grit that had come there through their lying on their backs on the dungeon floor, and to soothe and bind up their wounds. There was suitable occupation for the mother and for the servants, for they set meat before the holy men; the kitchen was sanctified to supply the needs of the ministers of Christ. Everything was done for their comfort; they were hungry, and they gave them meat; they were bleeding and they bathed their wounds. The whole household was astir that night! They had all believed and been baptized, and their very first inquiry is, “What can we do for Jesus?” It was clear to them that they could help the two men who had brought them to Christ, and they did so affectionately; no Martha had to complain that her sister left her to serve alone! I am persuaded there was not one of the family who shirked the pleasant duty of hospitality, though it was at dead of night. They soon had a meal ready; and how pleased they felt when they saw the two holy men reclining at their ease at the table, instead of lying with their feet fast in the stocks in the prison! They did not take the food down to the prison to them, or wash them and send them back to the dungeon; they brought them up from the cell into their own house, and accommodated them with the best they had.

Now, beloved it is a great mercy when you have a family saved and baptized, if the whole household sets to work to serve God, for there is something for all to do! Is there a lazy church member here? Friend, you miss a great blessing! Is there a mother here whose husband is very diligent in serving God, but she neglects to lead her children in the way of the truth of God? Ah, dear woman, you are losing

what would be a great comfort to your own soul; I know you are, for one of the best means for a soul to be built up in Christ is for it to do something for Christ! We cease to grow when we cease either to labor or to suffer for the Lord; bringing forth fruit unto God is, unto ourselves, a most pleasant and profitable operation. Even our children, when they are saved, can do something for the Master; the little hand that drops its halfpence into the offering box out of love to Jesus is accepted of the Lord; the young child trying to tell its brother or sister of the dear Savior who has loved it is a true missionary of the cross; we should train our children as the Spartans trained their sons early for feats of war; we must have them first saved, but after that we must never think that they may be idle till they come to a certain period of life. I have known a little boy take his young companion aside and kneel down in a field, and pray with him, and I have heard of that young lad's being now, in the judgment of his parents, a believer in Christ! I have seen it, and my heart has been touched when I have seen it—two or three boys gathered round another to seek that boy's salvation, and praying to God as heartily and earnestly as their parents could have done! There is room for all to work to help in the growing kingdom, and blessed shall that father be who shall see all his children enlisted in the grand army of God's elect, and all striving together for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom!

V. That brings me to the fifth point, which is A FAMILY REJOICING, for he rejoices in God with his entire home. According to the run of the text, the object of their joy was that they had believed. Believing obtains the pardon of all sin, and brings Christ's righteousness into our possession; it declares us to be the sons of God; gives us heirship with Christ, and secures us His blessing here, and glory hereafter—who would not rejoice at this? If the family had been left a fortune, they would have rejoiced, but they had found more than the entire world's wealth at once in finding a Savior, and therefore were they glad! But though their joy sprang mainly from their believing, it also arose from their being baptized, for do we not read of the Ethiopian of old after he was baptized that he “went on his way rejoicing”? God often gives a clearing of the skies to those who are obedient to His commands; I have known persons habitually the subjects of doubts and fears, who have suddenly leaped into joy and strength when they have done as their Lord commanded them! Not *for* keeping, but “*In* keeping His commandments there is great reward.”

They also rejoiced, no doubt, because they had enjoyed an opportunity of serving the church in waiting upon the apostle. They felt glad to think that Paul was at their table—very sorry that he had been imprisoned; but glad that they were his jailers; they were sorry that he had been beaten, but thankful that they could wash his stripes. And Christian people are never as happy as when they are busy for Jesus; when you do most for Christ you shall feel most of His love in your hearts. Why it makes my heart tingle with joy when I feel that I can honor my God! Rejoice, my brothers and sisters that you have doors of usefulness set open before you, and now we can glorify the Savior's name; now we can visit the sick; now we can teach the ignorant; now we can bring sinners to the Savior! Why, there is no joy except the joy of heaven itself, which excels the bliss of serving the Savior who has done so much for us!

I have no doubt that their joy was permanent and continued; there would not be any quarrelling in that house now; no disobedient children; no short-tempered father; no fretful mother; no cruel brother; no exacting sister; no pilfering servants, or eye-servers; no warders who would exceed their duty, or be capable of receiving bribes from the prisoners. The whole house would become a holy house and a happy house from then on! It is remarkable they should be so happy, because they might have thought sorrowfully of what they had been; they had fastened the apostle's feet in the stocks. Ah, but that was all gone, and they were happy to know that it was all forgiven! The father had been a rough soldier, and perhaps his sons had been little better; but it was all blotted out—Christ's blood had covered all their sin; they were happy though they were penitent! It is true; they had a poor prospect before them, as the world would say, for they would be likely to be persecuted, and to suffer much. Here were two of the great ones of the church who had been scourged and put in prison; the humble members could not expect to fare better. Ah, never mind, they rejoiced in God! If they had known they would have to die for it, they would have rejoiced, for to have a Savior is such a source of thankfulness to believing souls that if we had to burn tomorrow, we would rejoice today! If we had to die a thousand deaths in the course of the next month, yet, to find a Savior such as Jesus Christ is, is joy enough to make us laugh at death itself! They were a rejoicing family because they were a saved family!

In closing, regard these two words. That household is now in glory; they are ALL there; the jailer and his spouse, and his children, and his servants—they are all there, for is it not written, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved”? They were obedient to that word, and they are saved! Now, with some of you, the father is in heaven, and the mother is on the road, but the children, ah, the children! With others of you, your little ones have gone before you, snatched away from the mother’s breast; and your grandfather is also in glory; but, ah, husband and wife, your faces are turned towards the ways and wages of sin, and you will never meet your children and your parents! There will be broken households around the throne, and if it could mar their joy—if *anything* could; it would be the thought that there is a son in hell, or perhaps a husband in the flames, while the wife and mother sing the endless song. O God, grant it never may be so! May no child of our loins die an heir of the wrath of God! May none that have slept in our bosoms be banished from Jehovah’s presence! By the bliss of a united family, I beseech you seek after it that you may have that united family in heaven, for this is the last question, “Will my family be there?” Will yours be there? Turn it over in your minds, my brothers and sisters, and if you can give the happy answer, and say, “Yes, by the mercy of God, I believe we shall all be there,” then I will ask you to serve God very much, for you owe Him very much; you are deep debtors to the Mercy of God, you parents who have godly children; you ought to do twice as much! No, seven times as much for Jesus as any other Christians! But on the other hand, if you have to give a painful answer, then let this day be a day of prayer, and I would say to you, could not you fathers who love the Lord, call your children together this afternoon, and tell them what I have been talking about? Say to the boy, “My dear boy, our minister this morning has been speaking about a household in heaven, and a household being baptized because they believed. I pray that you may be a believer.” Pray with the boys, pray with the girls, pray with the mother, and I do not know but what this very afternoon your whole household may be brought to the Savior! Who can tell?

You, dear boys just below me, who are a few out of my large family at the orphanage, some of you have fathers in heaven. I hope you will follow them in the right way; the Church of God tries to take care of you because you are orphans, and God has promised to be the Father of the fatherless. O my dear boys, give Him your hearts! Some of you have godly mothers; I know them, and I know that they pray for you. May their prayers be heard for you! I hope you will trust the Savior, and grow up to serve Him. May it not be long before you profess your faith in baptism, and may we all of us meet in glory above, every one without exception! The Lord grant it, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Acts 16:6-40.

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