

Divine Sovereignty - Acts III

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 October 2012

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] We continue to pursue the subject of election, predestination, foreordination, etc. and related issues as they are part and parcel of the Calvinist system.

And I told you several messages ago when we began this series that this is a position that I formerly embraced but no longer do. And I'm not going to go through the mechanics of the tulip again and talk about that, but we do want to spend some time this morning regarding the issues of belief and why it is that it is so important.

We talk about all you need to do is believe. Well, that is true, but there are levels to belief. And we've talked about that before and we will do so again.

But first of all, we want to read the scripture portion for this morning. And it has to do with two very familiar passages. The first from Acts 16, beginning with verse 19.

So whatever translation you may be using, if you will open it, please. And I'm just going to jump into the middle of a story here, which I really don't care to do.

[1 : 17] But for the time's sake, we must do this. This event is set against the backdrop of the Apostle Paul and Silas just having reached the continent of Europe.

And they are in the city of Philippi. And it is here that they were encountered as they attempted to deliver their message and preach the gospel.

They were confronted by a girl who was demonically indwelt. And I do not understand the mechanics of this and how it worked.

But they were able to use her demonic activities in some kind of a fortune-telling or predicting kind of scheme. And they were able to make money from her.

I do not profess to know the ins and outs of this. But I do know that demonism seems to have accelerated during the ministry of our Lord and the time of the apostles that immediately followed that.

[2 : 26] I'm not saying that there isn't any demonism today. I'm sure there is. But it just isn't as pronounced or as obvious as it was back in this day. Okay. So, when this girl who was demonically indwelt confronted Paul and Silas over their preaching and teaching, he cast this demon out.

And this poor girl was delivered from this horrible spiritual affliction. And by the way, demonic possession is a very real thing. It isn't simply a psychological condition or some kind of an imaginary thing.

It's for real. And you may be sure that when Jesus Christ confronted demonic spirits and talked with them, carried on a conversation with them, and their voice was heard.

These are referred to as angastromuthoc demons. They utilized the vocal cords of the individual that they indwell. And they were able to carry on a conversation with Christ.

And when these demons were cast out, they have no place to go. They have no body to indwell. And apparently, they really desire to indwell a body.

[3 : 42] In one case, some even thought that a herd of swine would be preferable to no body at all. And you'll recall that story. The Gadarene demoniac in the Gospels. Well, when Paul cast the demons out of this girl, she lost her occultic powers.

She lost the ability to do what she was going to do. And, you know, people who go in for this kind of thing today, seances and fortune telling and tarot cards and all of the rest of it, this is nothing to mess with.

Some of this stuff is as phony as a three dollar bill. And it's just a scam. But some of it actually does succeed in making contact with the demonic.

And it is nothing to be trifled or toyed with. And I would encourage anyone dabbling with the occult to stay far away from it. The scriptures soundly condemn occultic practices.

And it is always based on gaining power over people or increasing one's wealth. That's always the motivation behind the demonic.

[4 : 50] And there's always a promise of something that, of course, is never delivered. And this, by the way, ties in very dramatically with the Old Testament reality of idolatry.

You find so many idols, statuary throughout the Old Testament. Gods fashioned by men's hands. They bow down and worship to it. They sacrifice their own children in the lap of Molech, the god of the Moabites.

And the Baal worship and the fertility cult and all the rest of it. And it all has to do with personal gain of influence or power over other people or the gaining of wealth.

In every instance, that is what this has to do. And sometimes it is related very, very strongly to sexual things. And even that is represented in power over people.

It means being able to use people for your own end, whether it's sexually, economically, or whatever. So, all of this.

[6 : 00] And the whole premise, of course, is that in the occult and in the idols and in the idolatry, you can get something from Satan that you can't get from God.

That's the basis of the whole thing. And it's steeped way back in the book of Genesis. So, when Paul succeeded in casting the demon out of this girl, she lost her occultic powers.

And that also meant that these evil men who were using her and abusing her to this end lost their income. They no longer had the ability to manipulate, to control, to use her for their clients, etc.

So, we read, beginning in Acts chapter 16 and verse 19, But when her masters, these are the men, the masters of this poor girl who had been indwelt.

When her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.

[7 : 13] And when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, Now, I want you to notice, this is all just so much of a scam and so much of a lie.

They didn't say, These guys have put us out of business. And they didn't say that. They said, These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews.

Now, the first thing they had against Jews was the fact that if you were a Jew, that meant you believed there was just one God.

And that, of course, was contrary to everything they believed, because they believed in multiple gods. So, if you were a Jew, you were already suspect. And they are proclaiming customs, which is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.

Well, there isn't a bit of truth to that. What they were proclaiming was the gospel. And it had nothing to do with disrupting customs of the Romans. And the crowd rose up together against them.

[8 : 16] This is mob mentality. This is kind of like a lynch mob that's being stirred up into a frenzy. The crowd rose up together against them. And the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely. Now, you need to know something about this jailer, too, because he was the jailer of the jail at Philippi.

And if you read earlier in the chapter, you will discover that Philippi was a Roman colony. Rome extended its governmental and political and military and economic tentacles all throughout the Mediterranean world.

This is where the expression came from. All roads lead to Rome. Rome, everything of importance, came from Rome. Rome was the center of the world government at the time. And the city of Philippi, which was named after King Philip, who was Alexander the Great's father, the city of Philippi was a Roman colony.

That meant that the city enjoyed special perks, special privileges, special protection, special cooperation from big daddy government.

[9 : 49] In Rome. It meant that if you were assigned to Rome, that was pretty good duty. If you were a Roman soldier and you were assigned to Rome, that was pretty good. Philippi is pretty good duty because a Roman province or a Roman colony was almost like Little Rome.

Because everything Big Rome did, Little Rome, in this case, Philippi followed. And we read in chapter 18, I think it is, if I'm not mistaken, that Claudius had demanded that all Jews leave Rome.

Well, even in the first century, Rome was a really large city. And they had a huge Roman population. And Claudius issues this edict and says, all Jews, get out. Your persona non gratis. Chase them all out. So, what is Philippi going to do as a Roman colony? Well, they're going to follow suit. If Rome kicks all the Jews out of Rome, then we, being good Roman colony, we're going to kick all the Jews out of Philippi.

And that's why, when Paul and Silas went to Philippi, the synagogue wasn't even operating. Because all the male Jews had already been chased out of town.

[11:17] Nobody was left but women. And the Romans wouldn't make the women leave, even though they were Jews, because women were not considered a threat to Rome in any way. So, they have to go out by the riverside.

Nobody at the synagogue. They go out by the riverside. And that's where they find a band of women. No men. Just women. Because men have already been chased out.

So, that's where they encountered this situation with Lydia, the seller of purple. And that's where they also encountered this girl who was demonically inspired. And as a result, they end up being arrested.

And we are told that this Roman guard, who is placed in charge of guarding them securely, verse 23 says, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.

And the way Rome set up their guard duty was this. If a prisoner is entrusted to your guard, and you let the prisoner escape, the prisoner escapes for any reason, under your guardianship, then you serve whatever sentence he would have served if he were found guilty of the crime that he'll be charged with.

[12:36] So, what that did was, it effectively eliminated guards taking bribes. No guard is going to take a bribe. So, they would securely make sure that none of their prisoners escaped.

And we are told, in verse 24, that having received such a command, you might also call it a threat, he threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

So, I want you to get the picture here. Paul and Silas are not only put into prison, but they are put in a prison, inside a prison, and not only a prison within a prison, but then they are put in the stocks in a prison, in a prison.

So, these guys are really, you would call this maximum security. They're not going anywhere. But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying, and singing hymns of praise to God, and all the prisoners were listening to them.

What do you suppose those prisoners were thinking? Are these guys nuts, or what? And there's only two possible conclusions that I pointed out before. Either these guys are just out of their mind, or they really know something.

[13:50] And we know the answer to that, don't we? They really knew something. Praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

And suddenly there came a great earthquake. It wasn't just an earthquake. This wasn't a 4.2 on the Richter scale. This was up there. This got everybody's attention.

This is going to rumble the walls, and break down buildings, and roofs cave in, and all the rest of it. And it must have been absolute chaos. Because nothing, of course, was built with any idea of withstanding an earthquake.

Like we do today, with new engineering capabilities, materials, and all the rest. None of that stuff existed then. They just threw together whatever building materials they had, and hoped that it would withstand it.

And, of course, many of the buildings didn't. The foundations of the prison house were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened. I suppose that, physically speaking, that's very predictable of an earthquake, where everything is ratcheted, ratcheted, and turned sideways, and cockeyed, and split, and turned, and twisted, and all the rest of it.

[15:00] I imagine there were doors, and things falling off of houses, and buildings all over the place. And it wasn't unusual that it happened here. And everyone's chains were unfastened.

And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep, and had seen the prison doors open, first thing he thought was, uh-oh, they're gone. They're gone.

Because there's no way they wouldn't be gone. And all he can think of is the consequences that he is going to suffer for the prisoners escaping. So, rather than go through the shame, and ignominy of

the trial, and all the rest of it, as a Roman soldier, and be subjected to the capital punishment that they are going to administer, which would probably be chop his head off, he decides he's going to end it all right there, and just fall on his sword, and be done with it.

So, he drew his sword, and was about to kill himself. Supposing, assuming, that the prisoners had escaped. He was thinking, well, what would I do if I were a prisoner?

The only logical thing to do, is head for the hills, get out of there, run. And that's exactly what he assumed, that everybody had done. But they didn't. Now, I know why Paul and Silas didn't.

[16:18] What puzzles me, is why the others didn't. Because they could have too, but apparently, they did not. So, Paul cried out, with a loud voice, saying, do yourself no harm, we're all here, everybody's present, and accounted for.

Nobody's split. Everyone's here, everyone's here. I imagine the guy, had a big sigh of relief. I can't believe it, nobody escaped, they're all here. And he's obviously grateful.

And he called for lights, torches, and rushed in. And trembling with fear, he fell down, before Paul and Silas.

This guy is scared witless, and he has good reason to be. Falls down, before Paul and Silas. And after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do, to be saved?

Now, there are two ways, of looking at that question. What did they mean by that? What is this fellow, really asking? Some read it, and say, well, the guy is obviously, only concerned, about saving his own skin.

[17:33] How can I get out of this alive? That's what he's asking. I don't think the context, will allow for that, because he's already alive. And he already knows, that his life is not in jeopardy, because the prisoners, haven't escaped.

In reality, this man has nothing, to be afraid of, as regards punishment, or bad consequences. Nobody's going to blame him, for the earthquake. And the prisoners, are all still there.

So, his life is not threatened anymore. And the only conclusion, that I can come to, and I think that the context, demands is, Paul and Silas, were able to communicate, enough gospel information, about salvation, about the death, burial, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ, and why it was so important, and why it meant so much.

They were obviously, able to communicate that, so that this man, heard enough, to know, that something about that, was involved. And he's doing, a reversal of his attitude, before.

The attitude, that he had previously, which must have been, these guys are just, a bunch of crackpots, I don't believe anything, they're saying, it's all a bunch of hooey, throw them in jail, put them in the stocks, all the rest, and forget about it, go on and go to bed.

[18:46] He apparently, had no interest at all, in what they were saying. But as we pointed out, in the last couple of sessions, sometimes, a crisis, can be an open door, to the gospel, where there was no interest before, there can be, there can be very intense interest now.

It has been said, that man's extremities, are God's opportunities. And this man, was in an extremity, and there is an opportunity.

And when he asks, what must I do to be saved? I think, he is posing, a spiritual question, and he is looking, for a spiritual answer. Because the whole reason, for Paul and Silas, being there, the whole reason, for them taking, a missionary journey, the whole reason, for them crossing over, into Europe, the whole reason, for the Macedonian vision, come over into Macedonia, and help us. What this is all about, is the proclamation, of the gospel, because without, this information, people perish. They are lost. They need, deliverance.

They need salvation. They need, to be rescued. And this is the only message, that can rescue. I suspect, that they had ways, of making that quite clear. And I also suspect, that many of the people, to whom they preached, dismissed it.

[20:10] Disinterested. Could care less. Didn't believe it. Just didn't buy it. Indifferent to it. Just saw, what Paul and Silas, had to say, as just the concoction, of one more strange religion, that I don't really understand.

About this Galilean peasant, who died on a cross, and supposedly, came back to life, after three days. Who ever heard, of such a bunch, of hooey anyway? No doubt, that was the attitude, of many of them.

And when he said, what must I do, to be saved? And Paul says, believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and your house. And I don't believe, as some say, that this is, teaching

household salvation, that when the head, of the house, or the father, commits to Christ, that this provides, a spiritual umbrella, whereby everybody, in the household, is saved, because they are, under the father's authority.

That's nonsense. Because, the volition, that God gives, to each of us, is a personal granting, of the ability, and the responsibility, to make decisions, for oneself.

And while a father, may be able, to make decisions, for his children, in some areas, he cannot make decisions, for his children, in spiritual matters.

[21 : 33] He cannot, make a spiritual decision, for the child, and have it enforced, in some kind of, the father cannot believe, for his son, or his daughter.

No matter how much, you want to, you cannot, invade their volition, and make them believe, what you want them to. The old Saul, is a man convinced, against his will, is of the same opinion, still. So, volition, is a very personal thing, and Paul is not, teaching household salvation, here. What he is saying is, if you believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved, and this goes, for your whole household too.

If they believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be saved. That's all the text, is saying. And then it goes on, and tells us, that, they spoke the word, of the Lord to him, together, with all who were in the house.

What was that about? What does that mean? They spoke, the word, of the Lord. Has to be, precisely, what it says.

[22 : 37] Death, burial, resurrection, information, about Jesus Christ, who he is, what he did, why it matters, how it applies to you, how it affects you, all of this.

And they're listening now, with different ears. Not the kind of ears, that say, these guys are just a bunch of kooks. But, hey, you know what?

This is really starting, to make sense. Sin. Yeah. Wrongdoing. Yeah. Boy, I got plenty of those. Yeah. I have wondered, and worried about that.

I have thought, and wondered about, a time of, final accounting, and how I would fare in that. And he took them, that very hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and immediately, he was baptized.

This is the Philippian jailer. He, and all his household. Why was he baptized? Why was he water baptized? And, obviously, this is Christian baptism. No, it isn't.

[23 : 37] No, it isn't. This is the same baptism, that they had been using, from the early chapters, of the Gospels. This is John's baptism. This is the baptism, that they knew. This is the only baptism, that they knew.

And it was water. No question about that. And, this kingdom, that is being preached, continues to be, offered as viable, to the nation of Israel. And, this is part of the, program, that existed, at the time.

So, he and all his household. And, he brought them, into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God, with his whole household.

Now, this is a little bit, I must say, a little bit misleading. Having believed in God. Didn't he already believe in God, in some kind of a God? Probably. Maybe multiple gods.

But, when the text says here, that he believed in God, with his whole household, this is a different kind of thing. And, granted, it doesn't come right out, and say, he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, as his personal Savior.

[24 : 38] He doesn't use that language. But, his believing here, is obviously different, from what he had believed before. Now, I want to talk to you, a little bit about belief.

You understand, there is nothing, salvific. That is, nothing that can save anybody, in a formula, that you can repeat. I believe, on the Lord Jesus Christ, as my personal Savior.

You can mouth those words. You can make that statement. And, it doesn't mean a thing. Believing on Christ, is not some, abracadabra thing.

It's not some, magical formula, where, you just say, the right words, and this wonderful thing, of salvation happens. No, no. All you can do, with those words, is let them come out, of your mouth. But, if what is inside, where that really comes from, isn't intact, and isn't in a posture, of belief, no amount, of words, that you say, or combination, of words, is going to work.

[25 : 53] Believing on Christ, is not some kind, of magic. It's not some kind of, as I say, abracadabra. It comes, from an inner, conviction.

And this is why, the scriptures, often talk about, believing, in the heart. It means, believing, in the core, of your being. Believing, in such a way, that it makes a difference.

The reason, the reason that belief, is so important, and is emphasized, so much in scripture, is because, follow me now, beliefs, govern, behavior.

As a man, thinketh, in his heart. We could also say, as a man, believes, in his heart. So is he. We tend, to become, what we are, in accordance, with what we believe. Belief, is so important, because, we tend, to act, out, of our, beliefs.

[27 : 02] Whether, they are, right, or wrong, is immaterial. We still, tend to act, out of our beliefs. We're all, painfully, familiar, with the belief system, of, the Islamic, extremists, that, Christ, those, jet airplanes, into, the world, trade centers.

And, you must understand, that those, who were doing that, were, very sincerely, fully, completely, acting, out, of their belief system.

They, really, believed, what they said, they believed, and that's, what led them, to do, what they did. People, who strap, bombs, on themselves, and go, into marketplaces, and blow everybody, to smithereens, do that, because, of what they believe.

It makes, a huge difference, what you believe. Because, the tendency, is to act, on what you believe. And, the belief system, that operates, is generally, on three different levels.

And, we're familiar, with the levels, that we've talked about, in the past. And, we might just look at, again, briefly, they, they are, the notitia, and essentia, and fiducia.

[28 : 24] But, these different kinds, of belief, the first is, indifference. And, that's probably, the way, this Philippian jailer, looked at the gospel, the first time he heard it.

Before the earthquake. Before, he slapped, Paul and Silas, in the stocks. He was probably, just indifferent, to the whole thing. Just dismissed it. And then, there are those, who are willing, to, investigate.

I don't buy this stuff. But, it's worth looking into. I'm going to check it out. I'm going to be sure, that I can safely, discount it.

Or, possibly, I could be wrong. And, I'll have to adjust, my thinking accordingly. And then, there are those, who, oppose it.

They are hostile, to the message. And that's exactly, what happened here, in this instance, because, they laid hands on them, threw them into prison, and all the rest. So, these different things, all come into play, in connection with, what is taking place here.

[29 : 32] When the text says, that having believed in God, with his whole household. And then, it goes on down, and it makes it clear, that in verse 40, they went out of the prison, entered the house of Lydia, and they saw the brethren, they encouraged them, and departed.

We're going to see that, Philippian jailer, and his family, in heaven. And eventually, when we get there, they're going to be there. Because, they believed. And the way, we've talked about belief, excuse me a moment, I have to plug this thing in.

I have a switch on this. I have a switch right here, that operates my, overhead, but it just quit on me, this morning.

I guess the switch is broken, so I have to plug it in, and unplug it. But the three different levels, of belief, are very, very important, and only one of them, is a belief of salvation.

The others, are premature. And we've talked about these, in the past. They are just Latin words, because they are originally, developed in the Latin. But this word, notitia, translates with the English word, notice.

[30 : 41] Notice, N-O-T-I-C-E. And the Latin is, notitia. And all it means is, one has been informed, or put on notice, about something.

In this case, they have been notified, or they have come to notice, the gospel. That means, they have, heard, the information, Jesus Christ, died on the cross, for the sins of the world.

They've got that information. They have, been, notified. That's all it means. They haven't done anything, about it, other than to just, log it, as information.

They have been notified. That's the initial level, of belief. And this is where, everybody, has to start. It doesn't make any difference, who you are, or where you live, or what language you speak, or what your background is.

If you are going to be exposed, to the gospel of Jesus Christ, this is the first thing, this is the top of the information, you hear about, the person of Jesus, who he is, what he does.

[31 : 51] You're not doing anything, about it. You're just hearing it. It's just information. That's all. This is very preliminary. And then, the next level, of belief is, essentia.

And that's the Latin word, for the English word, assent. Assent. When you assent, to something, you agree to it.

when, a motion is made, on the floor, and people vote, on the motion, and, it is unanimous, we would say, the whole congregation, gave its, assent, to the motion.

Everybody agreed. That's the second level, of belief. This is where, a lot of people are, regarding, personal salvation, salvation, but unfortunately, this is as far, as some, ever go.

And yet, they confuse it, with belief, that results in salvation, and it does not. You can hear, about Jesus Christ, dying on the cross, and you can believe it.

[33 : 09] You can accept it, as a fact. You can say, I agree with that. No regeneration, has taken place. Nothing has changed.

No one is saved. All you've done, is heard historical information, and you say, I agree with it. That's the second level, of belief, and that is as far, as a lot of people go.

Unfortunately, many of those people, think, that they are Christians, and they are not. It is not adequate, to hear about Jesus Christ, and agree with what the Bible says, about him, but not do anything about it.

Believe, is a verb. It is an action word. It requires action. It requires movement. It requires decision. It is something, that demands, you do something about it. Not just absorb it. Not just agree with it.

[34 : 18] But you have to act on it. You have to take, a deliberate, actual, mental, spiritual, volitional, step, about that information.

And that's where, the last one comes in. This is the final level, of belief. And it is called, fiducia. Fiducia. It's the word, from which we get, the English word, fidelity.

We also get, the English word, faith, from this. We even name our dogs, after fiducia. We call him, Fido.

Comes from the same, Greek word. We have, a dictator, 90 miles, off the coast of Florida, by the name of, Fidel. You know what, Fidel means?

It means, faithful. So, names sometimes, don't mean anything, do they? Fidel means, faithful.

[35 : 22] It's a word, that we relate, to our saving institutions, because, when you put your money, in an institution, that, classes itself, as a state, fidelity, bank.

You, are counting on them, being faithful, with the money, that you entrust to them. And this is the whole, concept of, fidelity, and of, and by the way, this, this relates, to the word, if you put, if you put the alpha, prefix before it, with the Greek, new, with the letter, new, you get, infidel.

And an infidel, especially in, Muslim terminology, an infidel, is anyone, who is not a Muslim. Infidel, simply means, an unbeliever. Fidel, means to believe, and infidel, means not to believe.

And when you, connect this with a, with a marriage relationship, if a person, is guilty of, infidelity, in their marriage, that means, they have betrayed, the trust, of the one, that they are married to.

They have been, unfaithful, to their partner. This is a powerful, action word. And it requires, movement. It requires, the activation, of the will.

[36 : 49] It requires, that the one, who believes, do something, about it. And what do you do? You exercise, and that too, is an action word.

You exercise, your will, your volition. You make, a deliberate, commitment. It is an act, of the will. I can't emphasize, that enough.

In the same way, in the same way, that you exercise, your volition, when you, stood, at a wedding, altar, and, you were asked, will you, take this person, love, cherish, and obey, and honor, and etc. You activate, the will, when you say, I will. That's a very, deliberate, definite, decision.

And it's life changing. It's life changing, for the one, who expresses that, at a marriage altar, and they are saying, from this point on, everything is going, to be different.

[37 : 57] In the way, I live my life, and my daily routine, everything is going, to be different, because, I am volitionally, taking this person, to be my, lawful, wedded, partner, my wife, or my husband.

And it's in the, very same way, that you take a savior. No different. There's nothing, mystical about it. There's nothing, mysterious about it.

There's nothing, ephemeral about it. It is a direct, deliberate, volitional, decision, act of the will. Decision time. And that's what we find, in the book of Acts.

And you know, I cannot imagine, I cannot imagine, the apostle Paul, saying of the Philippian jailer, well, I'll be doggone. Who would have ever guessed, this guy was one of the elect.

I don't think Paul, ever thought in terms of election, like that. And we have election, to deal with yet, in Ephesus. When Paul wrote, to the Ephesians, he talks about them, being elect of God.

[39 : 07] So we'll have to talk, about that. And in the book of Romans, we find election, regarding salvation, or is it? Because it talks about, Jacob and Esau. You know the text, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.

And that God made the choice, before either of those, did anything, before they were even born, it was determined, that the older, should serve the younger. And this too, is a common text, that our Calvinist friends, used to support the idea, of election, predestination, etc.

I don't think, it is teaching that at all. And we will see that, in Romans. So what comes into play here, in Acts, so powerfully, is the need, for belief.

belief, and the life changing, situation, that always accompanies belief. Because, nobody can have, a personal encounter, with Jesus Christ, and ever be the same.

It is absolutely impossible. One other quick reference, and that is in Acts chapter 17. Would you turn to it please? Acts chapter 17, right across the page. This is a remarkable passage, as is, well they are all, remarkable passages.

[40 : 13] But, what I want you to look at, in particular, has to do, with their coming to, Thessalonica, and they are, sorely mistreated there, literally, dragged out of town, and, city authorities, are involved, and we read that, in verse 10, see Paul is, Paul and Silas, they are taking these lumps, everywhere they go, to preach this gospel, it is costing them.

I mean, they have been, beaten within an inch, of their lives, with rods, and stripped, and naked, and left for dead, and it is, just, they are paying, a horrendous price, for preaching this gospel, and yet, they just continue doing it, continue right on, teaching, and preaching, the same thing, that gets them, into all this trouble.

You would think, that logic would say, hey guys, shut up, just cool it, will you? When you go into a town, you've got your beliefs, but keep them to yourself, because these people, don't want to hear it, they don't appreciate that, it will just get you killed, shut up.

He probably felt like Jeremiah, his word, was like a fire in my bones, and I could not, forbear, I had to preach, what I knew, regardless of the price, and that's what they did.

And, they mistreat them, in Thessalonica, set the city, in an uproar, verse 5, the Jews becoming jealous, take some wicked men, from the marketplaces, a bunch of ne'er-do-wells, that hang around the marketplace, looking for somebody, to rip off, and verse 6, they were dragging Jason, and some of the brethren, and the authorities, and these men, who have upset the world, have come here also, well, they caused a real stir, wherever they went, they stirred up the crowd, and the city authorities, and, and then, verse 10 says, the brethren, immediately sent, Paul and Silas, away by night, to bring, slip out of town, in the dead of night, so they won't see you, and they arrived, and they arrived, and they arrived, and went, into the synagogue, of the Jews, now these, were more, noble minded, than those, in Thessalonica,

[42 : 45] I looked up that word, I was quite fascinated by, what's it mean, to be noble minded, and the word, in the Greek, is we would translate the word, E-U-G-E-N-E-S, Eugene's, and we have a masculine name, called Eugene, probably everybody here, knows somebody named Gene, or Eugene, Gene, and the word, in the Greek, simply means, good genes, like we use, the word eulogy, when somebody offers, a eulogy, at a funeral, the word, the Greek, E-U, means good, and the, the, the logy part, means words, so it means, somebody stands up, and says good words, about the deceased, that's a eulogy, and if you are noble, you have good genes, think of that, that means you are well bred, if you are noble, in the biblical sense, you are well bred, what that means is, you will give thoughtful, deliberation, to other points of view, you do not allow yourself, to be overridden, by your prejudices, and your biases, but you are secure, enough within yourself, to listen intently, and respectfully, to another point of view, weigh it, and evaluate it, without just condemning it, out of hand, and that's what many people, do with the gospel, they just dismiss it, scrap it, indifferent to it, ignore it, whatever, but if you are, of a thoughtful, deliberate, persuasion, if you have had, a good upbringing, and you have been taught, values, and respect, and how to listen, and evaluate, and weigh an argument, and assess something, you will say, you know,

I'm not sure, that I believe that at all, but, I'll look into it, you know what you are, you are a Berean, you will say, I'm going to search this out, and see if there's any validity, to this, I'm not going to take,

their word for it, and by the way, a Berean, is not gullible, a Berean, doesn't believe, whatever comes down the pike, a Berean, does some fact checking, a Berean, investigates, they look into it, they get the information, they do the research, that's what these people did, and they are so delightful, they are completely contrary, to the crowd before, in Thessalonica, who just, in a knee jerk reaction, wanted to get up a mob, and run them out of town, but these, they are more noble, these Bereans, what a great compliment, to pay someone, and calling them, a Berean, they were more noble minded, than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word, with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily, to see whether, these things were so, and you know what happened, when they did, verse 12 says, many of them, therefore believed, along with the number, of prominent,

Greek, women, and men, wow, that's priceless, that's the way, to go about, proclaiming the gospel, it helps a lot, to have an audience, like that, that will give you, a respectful hearing, and be willing, to weigh it, and evaluate it, what a refreshment, they must have thought, boy, it's really different here, than it was, where we've been before, and I'm sure, they really appreciated, the difference too, so the emphasis, is on belief, and it has to do, with that commitment, and when that commitment, takes place, in the heart, of the individual, in the core, of their being, when they make that decision, and it is a definite, deliberate decision, act of the will, that is called, the response, of faith, that is your response, to what God says, he did, in and through Jesus Christ, and your act of faith, is your response, to that, unbelief, is also, a response to that, where it's, rejection, and that too, is a decision, because, you cannot, not, make a decision, not to make a decision, is making a decision, that's why Christ said, he that is not with me, is against me, oh no,

I'm not against him, I'm just kind of like, right in the middle, no you're not, until you're on his side, you're against him, there is no in the middle, and it could well be, that everybody here, has made that decision, I'd like to think so, but it's something, that I do not take for granted, so, I ask you prayerfully, to consider, whether you have, managed, all three, of those steps, that are so critical, to belief, the notitia, the essentia, and lastly, the fiduciary, you see, each one, is based on the one, that goes before, nobody goes from zero, to fiduciary, nobody, nobody goes from zero, to essentia, you have to start, with the very first one, everybody does, all over the world, everybody does, you always start, with the first one, then you move on, to the second one, but if you don't make, that third step, which is the act, of the will, then you have not, believed, in the Lord Jesus Christ, in a way, that regenerates, that makes a difference, pray with me please,

Father, the simplicity, of this message, is astounding, and yet, it is so critical, and we fear, so little understood, by the masses, even some masses, calling themselves, Christian, really do not, connect the dots, and see the implications, we pray, that will not be true, of anyone, within the hearing, of this message, we want the clarity, of it to come through, in a way that, only the spirit of God, can administer it, we trust you to do that, thank you for the simplicity, and at the same time, that great profundity, that is built in, to the power of belief, how it actually alters, not only eternal destiny, but it alters standards, and norms, and values, and agendas, for the present, here and now, because if anyone, be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things, have passed away, behold all things, have become new, thank you for, this marvelous message, and for the privilege, of communicating it, in Christ's wonderful name, amen.