Real Liberation

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[0:00] Acts chapter 16, I'm going to start reading in verse 11 and go through verse 18.

! A Roman colony.
We remained in this city some days, and on the Sabbath day we went outside to the riverside where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.
One who heard us was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul, and she was baptized and her household as well.
She urged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us. As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.
[1:17] She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation. And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.

And it came out of her that very hour. So over the last several decades, we've seen the arrival of many different kind of liberation movements.
The goal of these movements, they say, is to free people from their oppression and inequality so that they can be elevated to a higher station in life.
We've seen different kinds of liberation movements. The abortion movement is a liberation movement, talking about, they say, women's health and the woman's right to her body, right?
So they say it's a liberating thing for the mother. Sexual identity is a current liberation thing that, you know, some boys are really girls and some girls are really boys.
[2:24] Another major one right now is critical race theory. Are you guys familiar with critical race theory? You've probably heard it. It's called CRT. No movement, though, has sought to organize people's social status, remove children from wombs or rearrange body parts while leaving the condition of the heart untransformed is truly liberating.

So none of these things are truly liberating because none of them can affect the heart. Those kinds of liberation movements actually end up oppressing others since they repress the truth.
Abortion is not liberating because it leads to murder and it is the oppression of an innocent life.
Sexual identity is normalized by culture, but those who often have sex change operations feel oppressed themselves.
Many of them battle with depression because they're living a lie. They're trying to conform their bodies to match a genetic code that it doesn't have.
Leah Thomas, for example, another way that that is oppressive is, have you guys, you know who Leah Thomas is? The pen swimmer. He's a man who identifies as a woman and he is crushing biological women in that sport.
[3:45] He's winning all the competitions. He's shattering all the records. That's oppressive to real women, to have a man parading as a woman and giving them no chance to win.

Critical race theory, again, doesn't solve racism truly, but it breeds racism. It causes racism. It teaches people to be racist.
There's a couple of good books to read about that and other issues. One is Fault Lines by Vody Bauckham and the other one is Christianity and Wokeness by Owen Strand.
Fault Lines by Vody Bauckham, Christianity and Wokeness by Owen Strand. And they really dig deep into how that is the case. It's not really solving the issue of racism, but it's actually causing

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people to be more racist and to be more oppressive.
Another liberating thing they say is taking money from the rich to give to the poor. And this is another kind of a critical race theory thing as well.
[4:48] Take money from the rich, give it to the poor, try to equal things out and everything will go well. That's the idea. But those who come up with these ideas, they always fail to take into account that people are sinful.

And so their idea sounds good in theory, but in practice, it produces something else. And so talking about that, Adrian Rogers said, friend, you cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom.
And what one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government can't give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody.
And when half of the people get the idea, they don't have to work because the other half's going to take care of them. And when the other half get the idea, it does no good to work because somebody is going to get what I work for. That, dear friend, is about the end of any nation.
And Adrian Rogers died 20 years ago. And he saw that coming. And now that's what we see, right? We see a lot of our people who should be adults are still behaving like kids.
[5:51] They're still living at home. They're still living off of mom and dad. And we see that in our culture, that there's a real problem with laziness. I mean, we've got so many jobs that are open and available in our own community that no one is filling because people don't have to work anymore to make money.

And they think that that's liberating. But what it's actually causing is a worse problem for our society. There's only one way to experience true liberation and genuine freedom.
And that is to have a heart set free from the bondage of sin and death. That's what Jesus said in John 8, 32. If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.
The truth will liberate you. Such freedom does not come through human effort. As Jeremiah asked rhetorically, can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do no good who are accustomed to do evil.
The radical transformation, true liberation from spiritual death to eternal life, from darkness to light, from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom comes only to those who were born not of the blood nor of the will of the flesh nor the will of man, but of God.
[7:07] Only through the new birth does such transformation and liberation come to a person. And when someone has been transformed by the gospel, it truly liberates them because a lot of the problems that we have in our culture that we're trying to solve through these movements, man, if people would just follow the example of Jesus, the wealthy will be generous.

And, you know, like we see in Galatians, the gospel is the real thing that ends racism because it brings down the wall separating Jew and Gentile and all different kinds of people.
That's the real answer. That's what we really need in our world is for people to follow Christ. The Bible says that there are only two types of people in this world. Those whom, as Romans 8, 2 says, the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
And those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, as Ephesians 2, 1 says. And so in Acts chapter 16, 11 through 18, we encounter two women. The first is Lydia, the first recorded Gentile convert in Europe who was truly liberated.
The other is a nameless, demon-possessed slave girl who tupefied those enslaved to sin and Satan. So the main idea that emerges from this text for our study is this.
[8:26] Everyone is either liberated by Christ or enslaved by Satan. Everyone is either liberated by Christ or enslaved by Satan. You are in one of those two categories, every one of us.

This passage of scripture opens with the missionary team of Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke in the port city of Troas. Troas was a city located across the agency from Greece on the western shore of Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey.
The missionaries had been directed there by the Holy Spirit, who, if you remember, had closed many other doors of ministry and sent them this direction. Paul had that vision of the Macedonian man who was pleading for them to come over and to help us.

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And so in response to that vision, Luke notes that immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. And so on their way there, they encountered a woman who was liberated by the gospel.
And so Lydia is the liberated woman. Lydia is the liberated woman. In verses 11 and 12, it says, So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace and following day to Neapolis and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.
[9:42] We remained in this city for some days. Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great.

The city was connected to the Roman highway system and was named a colony of Rome by Octavian, the emperor Octavian. And so as a Roman colony, Philippi was a self-governing city and exempt from taxes, and its citizens had the right to own land, which was different from many other parts of the Roman world.
Verse 13, it says, And so as we've seen, this was Paul's custom.
Each time he entered into a new city, he would often visit the synagogue first. As a rabbi and as a student of the well-known and respected Gamaliel, Paul could usually flash those credentials to get a hearing from those who were in the synagogue.
However, to form a synagogue required the presence of 10 Jewish men who were heads of households. And apparently Philippi's Jewish community was so small that they were not able to form such a synagogue.
[11:00] In such cases, then, a place of prayer would be established in the community. And so that's what's going on here. Lacking men to lead them. These women found a place to congregate, a place to meet, and there they would pray and probably read the Old Testament and discuss what they read.

And so to be taught by a traveling rabbi for these ladies would have been seen as them as a great privilege. You know, they haven't had someone who had been able to come and share the Word of God with them probably in some time.
And so they would have been eager to accept Paul and his companions. And it's significant that the first people Paul preached to in Europe were women. Because Paul is often mischaracterized as a chauvinist by those who reject his teaching about the role of women in ministry.
But Paul was not prejudiced towards women. He was eager to speak to these women and to share the gospel with them. Paul's attitude was, in fact, in sharp contrast to that of his fellow Pharisees. A common prayer that a Pharisee would make to God was a prayer of thanksgiving that they were not a Gentile, that they were not a slave, and that they were not a woman. But Paul's treatment of these women also was counter to Greco-Roman culture as well.
[12:20] They treated women as property. But Paul was different. In fact, he valued the ministry of women in the church, as he mentioned, for example, Phoebe in Romans chapter 11.

And then in Philippians chapter 4, he addresses Iodia and Syntyche. If you remember, they were having an issue. And he pleads with them to resolve it for the health of the church.
They were significant members of that community. In the beginning of verse 14, it says, Because Lydia's hometown was the city of Thyatira, which was located in the Roman province of Lydia, it is possible that Lydia was not so much her personal name as her name in business.
And so she may have been known as that Lydian lady. And so that's where we get the name Lydia for her. Thyatira may sound familiar to you because it's one of the seven churches that is mentioned in Revelation chapter 2, verses 18 through 29.
And Thyatira was well known for its purple dye. So unsurprisingly, Lydia from Lydia was a seller of purple fabrics.
[13:40] And that's Hazel's favorite color. So Hazel would have liked Lydia. And we probably would have bought a lot of things from Lydia for Hazel.

Purple dye was expensive because it was hard to make. It was either made from the glands of the Murex shellfish. Anybody know? Heard of the Murex, M-U-R-E-X, shellfish?
Okay. Or from the roots of the matter plant. M-A-D-D-E-R, matter plant. Anybody heard of the matter plant? All right. So there you go. They were pretty rare things to find, apparently.
And purple dye and purple garments were expensive because they were most often worn by royalty. And probably because they were probably because the dye was so hard to find.

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And so just like anything in our culture, the rare it is, the more expensive it is. And the more wealthy people want it to be able to show how truly wealthy they are. And so royalty would often wear the color purple and so would wealthy people.
[14:44] And therefore, it being a rare commodity and something that wealthy people wanted, that would have meant that Lydia was probably a pretty wealthy woman herself.

That Lydia had a house large enough to host the missionary team and then later to be the place where the Philippian church would meet for church, where they would gather, signifies that she probably was, in fact, a wealthy woman.
Luke mentions that Lydia was also a worshiper of God. And that's familiar to us because that sounds familiar to how Cornelius is described in Acts chapter 10. Lydia was a believer in the God of Israel.
However, as was the case with Cornelius, we see here that God was the one truly seeking her, just as he was the one who's truly seeking Cornelius.
In Romans chapter 3, verse 11, Paul wrote, No one understands, no one seeks for God. Jesus declared in John 6, verse 44, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.
[15:52] And so Lydia's conversion, like the conversion of Cornelius and like the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, illustrates the importance of this principle, that God is the one who is the seeker, not man.

God is the one who seeks. God is the one who saves. And so in the rest of verse 14 there, it says that the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
And so there we have another proof of God's sovereignty in salvation. He is the one who opened Lydia's heart. It does not say that Lydia opened her heart to God.
It does not say that Paul opened her heart to God. It was God who did it. It was God who opened her heart to him. And so our job is like Paul's.
It's to open our mouths. It's to share the gospel. Like in Jesus's illustration of the farmer, we go out and we scatter seed.
[16:54] And then we go home and we go to bed and we wake up the next morning and we find out what the results are. It's God who causes the growth. We scatter the seed.

The spirit does the rest. He is the one who causes it to take root. He is the one who causes the gospel to grow in our hearts. Remembering God's sovereignty and salvation is the foundation of a proper perspective of evangelism.
Salvation does not depend on our clever evangelistic strategies or the skills of the preacher or a masterful presentation.
Listen to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3, 6 through 7. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.
Earlier in the book, Paul explained his evangelistic approach in 1 Corinthians. And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.
[18:03] For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power.

And so although Paul was a very smart man, he was a scholar. He knew the scriptures. He recognized still that persuasiveness saves no one.
Manipulation saves no one. Walking down an aisle saves no one. However, many in our day act as though God were wholly dependent on us to save people.
I like what A.W. Tozer said. He said, Probably the hardest thought of all for our natural egotism to entertain is that God does not need our help.
We commonly represent him as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated father hurrying around, seeking help to carry out his benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world. But as said the lady Julian, I saw truly that God doeth all things, be it never so little.
[19:09] The God who worketh all things surely needs no help and no helpers. Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen, but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support.

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I fear that thousands of young persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation his love has gotten him into and his limited abilities seem unable to get him out of.
God gives us the privilege to be used by him to share the gospel as he saves people. And it is his expectation that we be the ones who communicate the gospel message with our mouths.
We share who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, and how a person can be saved. And the only way that a person can be saved. But we must remember that as we do that, that we do not try to manipulate anyone.
We are not thinking it's all about me or how I look or how I present myself. It's God who saves people. Our job is to share the gospel and to do it very clearly.
[20:32] Be clear with the content. To present the gospel clearly requires invoking the power of the Spirit and then leading the results up to God. For example, Billy Graham.

A man of God who was used mightily of the Lord. And I know that I've talked to many people who have gone to a Billy Graham crusade.
Many people who said they were saved at a Billy Graham crusade. What was it about Billy Graham that made him an effective preacher? Simplicity, wasn't it?
I mean, it was clear what Billy Graham was saying. You knew what he was communicating it. And I could take some lessons from him too because he spoke clearly in that southern accent.
Was he from North Carolina originally? That southern drawl, which also just sounded like your neighbor next door, right? Yeah.
[21:31] But he spoke clearly and slowly. And people heard the gospel from him. And that's what made him, I think, so... Or part of, I should say, what made him such an effective evangelist.

In verse 15. And so we should copy the same way. It's just clear presentation of the gospel. And leave the results up to God. Verse 15. And after she was baptized in her household as well, she urged us saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.
And I like the part afterwards. She prevailed against us. So you can see that Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke, they're probably like, no, no, no.
No, no, no. But she was insistent. And like a good, strong Christian woman, newly Christian woman, she got her way. So I guess there's a lesson for us too, right?
For us men. Okay? The godly woman prevails upon you. She wants to be hospitable. Letter. The first step of obedience after salvation is baptism.
[22:35] The gospel spread from Lydia to those in her household, and they were baptized with her. Lydia had already, again, began to show the fruit of the Spirit, one of those fruits of the Spirit, which is to be hospitable.

Romans 12.13 says, Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Hebrews 13.2 says, Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
1 Peter 4.9, show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1 Timothy 5.10. And this specifically speaks to women in the church.
And having a reputation for good works. If she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.
And then Titus 1.8 is specifically for the leaders of the church, describing the characteristics that they should have. But hospitable. A lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.
[23:41] And another reason why it was such a nice thing for Lydia to open up her house to Paul and his team was that in the ancient world, inns were not great places to stay.

They were dirty, and they were often unsuitable for Christians because most of the time an inn was really a brothel. And so, not a place that these guys would have wanted to stay.
A place they would have wanted to minister to the people in, right? But not a place that they would have wanted to stay. And so, that Lydia was baptized, that she, you know, the gospel was spreading through her whole household, that she was hospitable to Paul and his companions, that later she opened up her house to the church, all proofs that this woman was truly liberated by the gospel.
Then we move on to verse 16, and we encounter a slave girl, the slave girl who was the woman in bondage, the woman in bondage. So, as the church began to take form in Philippi, Satan moved to

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attack it.
Here, as in Samaria, in Acts 8, 9, and Cyprus, in Acts chapter 13, was once again the clash of light and darkness.
[25:02] Satan seeks to destroy the church. Satan seeks to destroy churches from within and from without. But in this case, at least, both of those attempts proved to be unsuccessful.

His attempt to attack the church from within unfolded as the missionaries in verse 16, it says, were going out to the place of prayer. There they were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune telling.
The Greek text literally reads where it says spirit of divination that she had a python spirit. That designation derives from Greek mythology in which the python was a snake that guarded the oracle at Delphi.
Eventually, the python, according to their mythology, was killed by Apollo, the god of prophecy. And so, since it was believed that Apollo spoke through the oracle at Delphi, the term python came to refer to anyone who was thought to be in contact with Apollo.
In modern terms, to us, she would have been a medium in contact, truly, with not the dead, but with demons. And this was leading her owners to considerable gains.
[26:18] So, people wanted to go to the slave girl and have their fortune told or whatever and would pay a lot of money to do that because they believed that she could do it, that people had that ability.

I got this quote from John Polhill. He said, So, agri like being a medium, being able to foretell the future or tell the future, whatever.
No commander, he said, set out a major military campaign, nor would an emperor make an important decree without first consulting an oracle to see how things might turn out.
And so, a slave girl with a clairvoyant gift was thus a very profitable person for someone to own.
Now, here's the thing that we need to say before we continue on is don't get involved with any of this stuff.
I mean, I'm looking out at you and I don't think that any of you are, but it's bad. It's demonic and Christians have no business talking to psychics.
[27:24] We have no business consulting mediums, even horoscopes. Don't base your life based upon whatever the daily horoscope says. It's all based on the same stuff or palm readings or psychics or Ouija boards.

They sell, I don't know if they still do, but they were selling Ouija boards in Walmart and Target. In fact, I saw them at a Toys R Us one time.
And Toys R Us is out of business, but they're selling Ouija boards in Walmart and Target. Those are scary things. So, don't mess with any of that stuff.
So, if you have your Ouija board, go burn it tonight in your fireplace. Verse 17. She followed Paul and us crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God who proclaim to you the way of salvation.
Now, we could read that and think, well, what's wrong with that? She's saying things that are true, and she was. Yet it was a subtle and dangerous attack. This was Satan's attempt to sow a tear amongst the wheat.
[28:30] What the demon-possessed girl was saying was absolutely true. But the father of lies is willing to speak the truth when it suits him, disguising himself as an angel of light, as 2 Corinthians 11 says.

Some of his most effective and diabolical work is done in the name of Jesus Christ. He often uses a little truth to ensnare a lot of people in a false system of religion, like Jehovah's Witness, for example, or Mormons.
They claim Christ, but they claim a different kind of Christ. There's enough truth in there that even some Christians, if they don't know better, would think of the Mormon religion as just another denomination of Christianity.
It is not. They preach a different gospel. They preach a different Christ. So do the Jehovah's Witness. Since the demon-possessed girl was agreeing with the Christian preachers, the natural assumption would be that she was part of their group.
That's what people would have thought. Oh, that little demon-possessed girl, I don't know if it says that she was a little girl. In my mind, I imagined her being little. That slave girl, she's the one who

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tells all our fortunes, look, she's with these Christians.
[29:45] And so it was sending a mixed message to that culture that Satan would have wanted to send. However, she was causing harm to the cause of Christ in that city.

And so like his Lord Jesus Christ, Paul wanted no publicity from Satan. And so in verse 18, it says, And this she kept doing for many days.
So finally Paul had had enough, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out of her that very hour.
So what about exorcism? What about exorcism? The book of Ephesians gives clear instruction on how we are to have victory in our lives in the battle against the forces of evil.
The first step is placing our faith in Christ, Ephesians 2, 8 through 9, which breaks the rule of the prince of the power of the air over us. We are then to choose again, by God's grace, to put off ungodly habits and to put on a godly nature, to do godly things, to walk in holiness.
[30:58] This does not involve casting out demons, but rather it involves the renewing of our mind by reading God's word, spending time with Him in prayer, as Ephesians 4, 23 says. After several practical instructions on how to obey God as His children, we are reminded that there is a spiritual battle.

It is fought with certain armor that allows us to stand against, but not cast out, the trickery of the demonic world in Ephesians 6, 10. We stand with truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer.
Ephesians 6, 10 through 18 says. So, these were apostles, and this was a different set of circumstances.
They had the ability to cast out these demons. I think Satan works in different ways today. We look at our world, and if anybody would tell me there's not a demonic presence and demonic forces at work, I would say, are we living in the same world?
Because I see that everywhere, and I'm sure that you do too. I mean, gosh, just read the news. We see that there are all kinds of horrible things happening, and they're happening at the instruction of Satan.
[32:18] It appears that as the word of God was completed, the Christians had more weapons with which to battle the spirit world than the early Christians did. The role of casting out demons was replaced for the most part with evangelism and discipleship through the word of God.

See, they didn't have some of the things that we have now. Since the methods of spiritual warfare in the New Testament do not involve casting out demons, it is difficult to determine instructions on how to do such a thing.
If necessary at all, it seems that it is through exposing the individual to the truth of the word in the name of Jesus Christ. That's what we should do. One time, this was back in Leavenworth, we had a guy at our church who was convinced that his sister was demon-possessed.
And so he called me and he said, will you come to my house? And they lived right next to one another.
He was a single man. She was living with their dad. And he said, will you come to my house? And I want to make a plan. And I want to go in there. And I want you to confront my demon-possessed sister.
[33:25] And so I think I'd been a pastor for maybe two years at this point. And so they didn't teach us anything about exorcism in seminary class, you know.

So I didn't have any holy water or anything like that. And I don't, you know, that's just a bunch of whatever, malarkey. So I said, I'll go and I'll talk to your sister and we'll share the gospel with her. And, you know, we went and met in his house and we sat down and he had this whole plan. This is what we're going to do and yada, yada, yada. And I just kind of went along with him. And then we went to the house and she answered the door.
And I'll tell you, she looked possessed. Well, she really just looked like she'd slept in until that afternoon.
Like we just got her out of bed, really. And we went and sat in the back room. And, you know, he started talking. And, you know, he felt like there was this moment where the demon had entered into her.
[34:28] And she just kind of stared at me across the way. And he's over here talking. And we just kind of made eye contact. The only thing I thought is she was just staring at me angry. And the only

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thing I thought was don't break eye contact with her.

So I just looked right back at her and smiled. And then she finally broke eye contact. And then he finished up. And then I just shared the gospel with her.
And she said, well, the problem I have with the church is that they're all hypocrites. And all the pastors are hypocrites. And so we had a conversation about that. And she lightened up.
She didn't become a believer. But she let us pray for her. She didn't crawl on the walls. Or her head didn't spin around. And then afterwards she offered to make us lunch.
Yeah. She said, well, you stick around. We'll have lunch. And I really couldn't stay. I had to go. But, you know, she had a lot of issues. She had a divorce that was hard for her to deal with.
[35:29] She was on a lot of medications for different reasons. And she was probably taking more than she should have. Is that a form of demon possession? I mean, gosh, we know that we're responsible for a lot of the decisions that we make, right?

So we can't just blame everything on Satan. And we know that men are sinful. And sinful men will do sinful things. But she definitely was oppressed in a lot of different ways.
And so I understand where he was coming from. But it was nothing like what we read in Scripture. I mean, we have all of the Bible together now.
We have the gospel. And whenever we come across anyone, that's what we share. It's the gospel that saves people. It's not holy water. It's not, you know, a crucifix that we press up against someone's forehead.
It's the Holy Spirit who saves people. And we are the messengers. We share the gospel. We leave the results up to the Lord. And in her case, I wish she would have been saved in that moment.
[36:33] She wasn't and isn't as far as I know. But it was an interesting experience. That was an interesting day. I had stories to share with Danny that day when I came home.

But again, these two women typify all of humanity. Everyone is either liberated by Jesus Christ or they're enslaved by Satan. And the only path to freedom is that of the one followed by Lydia, listening to the gospel, having your heart opened by the Lord to respond positively to it.
So three applications for us to think about as a result of this study is, first of all, as I've said repeatedly, we share the gospel and God does the rest.
We share the gospel and God does the rest. Secondly, the gospel is what truly liberates sinners. It's our preaching the gospel. It's the Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who empowers our words and ultimately is the one who opens the heart of the person to receive it. But that's the message that we proclaim.
[37:41] That's the message that God uses to liberate sinners. And then lastly, don't give Satan opportunity to work in the church. Don't give Satan opportunity to work in the church.

And so some of these things, especially this last point, is just a practical way is to obey the Lord's instruction. When we know that a brother or sister in Christ in our church is living a lifestyle that's incompatible with their confession, then we have a responsibility to confront that brother or sister in Christ with the truth.
Too often what we like to do is excuse it and just kind of sweep it under the rug. But when we do that, it's not going away. And Satan eventually uses that in some way to create problems within the church.
And so we can't think that when we gather here on Sunday or on Wednesday or that we're safe inside of these walls because Satan is always at work trying to destroy the church.
And so that's why it's so important that we not give him an opportunity in our lives. And we confront our brothers and sisters in Christ speaking the truth in love because we genuinely care not just about our church and its witness and God's work here, but that believer.
[39:14] We care about them and we want to make sure that they are not welcoming something into their life that will cause them a lot of pain and hurt, if not in the present, eventually in the future.

So let's not give Satan opportunity to work in the church. Okay, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time that we've had together.
God, we thank you for your word and its instruction. Lord, we thank you that you are the one who truly liberates us from our sins. God, we know that we live in a world that is always coming up with a new philosophy or a new idea or they're rehashing old philosophies and they're putting a fresh coat of paint on it and saying that this is what is going to liberate us.

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This is what's going to help us. But it's all garbage. They're all lies. God, we pray that we would do what you've commanded us to do, which is to be light in darkness, to be salt in this world and to declare the truth, to declare the reality that the only thing that liberates anyone from sin is Jesus Christ.
And so, Father, we pray that we would like the examples we see of Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke and Scripture and so many others.
[40:32] Lord, that we would open our mouths, that we would declare the truth and trust you with the results and the hope that many would be liberated and come to faith in Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

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