



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Kings 13: 14-21

Spring 2024

"The Prophet's Death"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are coming to the end of our study in the life of Elisha, and I'm going to cover quite a bit of ground in chapters 6 and 7, and then touch on some other events. But then come to chapter 13 and the death of Elisha the prophet; and I think that's the text we'll focus on in the reading of Scripture, and then we'll read quite a bit of other Scripture as we go through the passages. But turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings chapter 13, and I'll read verses 14 through 21.

¹⁴ When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" ¹⁵ Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. ¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." And he put his hand *on it*, then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands. ¹⁷ He said, "Open the window toward the east," and he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, "Shoot!" And he shot. And he said, "The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed *them*." ¹⁸ Then he said, "Take the arrows," and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground," and he struck *it* three times and stopped. ¹⁹ So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed *it*. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times."

²⁰ Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year. ²¹ As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet.

2 Kings 13: 14-21

And you may wonder, how did they toss the body into the grave of Elisha? And I can only speculate on that, but I know that throughout Israel there are ancient tombs. In fact I used to walk by one going to class at the Hebrew University, an ancient, first century tomb. They are carved into the stone, and there would be a rock, a stone, placed over the entrance. So I suspect it was something like that; they could open it up and throw this body into Elisha's grave—but they didn't expect that would happen, and a man was revived.

Well, we'll cover that when we come to it in our final lesson on the life of this great prophet. Let me begin with a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. We thank You for this time together; what a good time it is to begin the week with the saints and with the Word of God that governs our lives. It is our authority for faith and practice, and we see the importance of that throughout these passages that we will consider as we take this last lesson of the life of the prophet Elisha.

Father, guide us in our thinking, help us to understand what we are considering this morning. May the Spirit of God teach us—teach us the meaning of the texts that we look at and the application of it. And as we see this, as we consider the issues that we will cover, we see the importance of Your Word. And may that be impressed upon each of us, the importance of the Word of God. And we possess it. What a privilege.

And so LORD, teach us; build us up in the faith; give us confidence in You. That's really what the Word of God should produce within us, an understanding of who You

are—Your person, Your work, Your promises, and Your faithfulness to us. Instill that within our hearts, Father, this morning.

And Father, we pray for the needs that we have. We are material beings, completely dependent beings, dependent upon You and the circumstances of life. And we have been reminded of that throughout this city as the power has gone out, and we pray that You would restore it in some of the houses where it hasn't been. We thank You that so much of it has been taken care of, but those that are still without power, we ask that You would bless, and restore us to some normalcy. We thank You for Your blessings, and we also think of those who are recovering from surgeries.

And LORD, we also think of Vacation Bible School, which is coming up in the next few weeks, and we pray that You'd bless all who have prepared for that and will participate in it, and that it will be a glorious and blessed time for many children, as it has been in the past. So we pray Your rich blessing upon that.

Bless us now, LORD. Prepare our hearts for a time of study together, and may this be a profitable time together. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) We've been looking at some of the final events in Elisha's life, "Elisha the prophet", (at least we are this morning). And the first event is a famine in the city of Samaria. That is covered in chapters 6 and 7 of 2 Kings. And then secondly, we're going to look at the death of the prophet in 2 Kings 13. The idea that joins these passages together is the Word of God—believing it and obeying. In both events, the importance of that is shown by the failure that followed disobedience.

The Word of God is powerful. When the church understands that and practices it, it is strong. When it ignores God's Word, doesn't preach it and doesn't live by it, then it is weak and ineffective.

That explains the Reformation, the great revival that swept 16th century Europe, and affected the world for generations. Martin Luther said that in a sermon a few years after the 'Diet of Worms'. (It's one of the most unfortunate words to describe a diet. But the Germans pronounce it 'vorms'—so, 'the Diet of Worms', 'the Diet of Vorms'.)

At that trial, before the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, and the best minds in the Roman Catholic church, Luther would not recant his writings and his defense of the Gospel: "Here I stand." he said. Luther became a hero to the first Protestants who portrayed him as, 'a godly knight in armor', as 'Sampson pulling down the temple of the Philistines', and as 'a second Elijah'. They honored him greatly, and they even began calling themselves Lutherans. Luther objected to that; he didn't like it. In his sermon he explained, "It wasn't I who did this." he said. "I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word. I did nothing. While I slept, the Word did it all."

The Word of God has always been powerful and effective. And that is demonstrated in 2 Kings chapter 7, in the most difficult of times, in what would seem impossible circumstances.

Now in chapter 6, the scene: It is set with the king of Syria, Ben-Hadad, invading Israel and began a siege of the city of Samaria. (Samaria was the capitol of the northern kingdom.) A siege was one of the cruelest tactics of war. It, in some ways, was worse than sacking cities, for the prolonged attack on a city added starvation to the other horrors of war. People who couldn't contribute to the defense of the city, (old men, women and children, the defenseless), who had sought refuge behind the walls of the city were considered 'useless mouths'. They consumed the supply of food, and were often driven out into the hands of the enemies.

But eventually, even with them gone, the food runs out and people are forced to eat whatever they can. It happened in Samaria, and it's described in chapter 6, verse 25; "There was a great famine in Samaria; and behold they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for 80 *shekels* of silver, and a fourth of a kab of doves dung for 5 *shekels* of silver."

Hunger deprives people; and it drives them to cruelty toward one another and desperate measures, like eating the most unsavory things. In European sieges, there are accounts of people eating house pets and stray animals. Rats were prized when they were put up for sale. People would boil their leather shoes and eat them...and grass and

weeds and garbage. A witness to the siege of Sienna, Italy, in the 16th century wrote that, "Nothing's more dreadful than famine. Nothing's more dreadful than the hunger that is caused by these sieges, which eventually leads to cannibalism."

Well, it has done that more than once, and it did that in Samaria in this event. One day the king, who at that time was Jehoram, the last descendant of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, was walking on the wall of the city when he learned of two women who were practicing that very vile thing. And we read that he was shocked by the news and what had occurred. He tore his clothes, and verse 31 states, "Then he said, 'May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today.' "

And then he sent an assassin to Elisha's house. He blamed Elisha the prophet of God for the famine, (and not the Syrians). No reason is given. Elisha was in the city with him, suffering along with all of the people, the privation of this siege. But this is what unbelievers do: They may not give a thought to God in the good times—but when they experience hardship or tragedy, they blame God. They get angry with God—and that becomes their justification for their unbelief.

That was this unbelieving king. He didn't repent of his idolatry, Baal worship, or the religion of Jeroboam that set up those two golden calves—one at Dan in the north, and one in Bethel in the south part of the northern kingdom. He didn't repent of any of that. Instead he blamed 'the prophet of God', which means he blamed God. So he sent off an assassin to Elisha's house and followed behind with an entourage of officers.

Elisha was ready for the visitors. He's a prophet and he knew the purpose of their visit. The elders of the city were sitting with him when he told them that the king had sent an officer to take off his head. When they arrived, Elisha had the door blocked to prevent their entering and carrying out the assassination.

Then the king spoke to Elisha, "Behold, this evil is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" (ibid. vs33). In other words, 'I have tried trusting Yahweh. I've tried trusting the LORD, but it hasn't worked. Things have only gotten worse. I'm finished with that. I'm finished with faith.'

The Elisha answered, and here we come to, really, the main subject of the passage, chapter 7, verse 1; "Then Elisha said, listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.' " In other words, the king's faith failed by a day; in 24 hours the famine would end, inflation would be erased, prosperity would be restored. That was the prophecy, the Word of God. The nightmare was over; there would be an abundance of food and commodities, all in one day.

It seemed to defy reality. How could crops grow in time to replenish the depleted supplies, the whole food supply? It seemed incredible.

It was too incredible for one man there to believe. We read in verse 2, "The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning...", (he was an important official, he was a personal assistant to the king and he was a skeptic), "...Behold," he said, "if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" (vs2b).

Now, he may have been thinking there of the flood in Genesis chapter 7, verse 11, where we're told that God opened "the windows of heaven", and rain and water poured down—and so he's using that, it seems, as a way of magnifying the impossibility of this prophecy. Not even wide open "windows of heaven", in which grain and food may pour out onto the land and the city, could supply their need.

But Elisha called it "the Word of the LORD", and he said, "Listen", (to it!). And this officer said, 'It's not true. It's impossible!' ...just as men do to this very day, when they hear the Word of God, 'That's impossible!' It was a rebuke of Elisha, and a rejection of God's revelation. In fact, he mocked it.

So Elisha had a second prophecy. "Behold, you will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat of it." (vs2c).

The LORD doesn't require that we understand *how* He will fulfill His promises—He asks us to *believe* them...and those who won't, will suffer loss.

Now, at verse 3 the scene shifts to a place just outside the city. Four lepers were at the gate. It was the place where they would go to beg for bread. [These were some of

those lepers that Jesus mentioned, while preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth; who, 'in the days of Elisha', He said, 'were not healed, while Naaman the Syrian, the Gentile, was.' (Luk 4:27).] They were outside the city, where they had to be according to Leviticus 13, verse 46, and cut off from society.

It was a lonely, desperate life. They had found a little fraternity among themselves, and they were together. But they, interestingly, the outsiders, the outcasts, the despised and rejected would be the heralds of good news and lead Israel to its blessing—though they themselves had no knowledge of Elisha's prophesy and what he had said.

They were outside the city, considering their future and fate. They were not getting any bread because there's none to be had. They were beggars, and they were living off the kindness of others. But the famine had dried up every source of charity, so they asked themselves, "Why do we sit here until we die?" Verse 4, "If we say, 'We will enter the city,' then the famine is in the city and we will die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. (*the Syrians*) If they spare us, we will live; and if they kill us, we will but die.' " In other words, 'There was no hope in the city, but they might find some compassion among the Syrians. It was at least worth a try.' So at twilight, as evening approached, they went to the camp of the Syrians and, "...behold, there was no one there." (vs5c). But there was lots of stuff lying around.

They were mystified; but the writer, the historian, explained in verses 6 and 7, "For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and the sound of horses, *even* a sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, 'Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.' Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, *even* the camp just as it was, and fled for their life."

It was divine intervention. The LORD has unlimited resources and ways to bring about His will; things that seem impossible to us are not impossible to Him. He made the

Syrians hear some sounds that caused them to panic and flee for their lives, leaving all their food and their treasures behind.

And the four lepers began to plunder the camp. Verse 8, "When these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, and carried from there silver and gold and clothes, and went and hid *them*; and they returned and entered another tent and carried from there *also*, and went and hid them." Suddenly, these men who were doomed to a life of poverty and misery, were rich. They were overjoyed.

And then their consciences began to bother them. Verse 9, "Then they said to one another, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; if we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.' " They reported the news to the watchmen at the gate of Samaria, who went to the king and gave him the news, the good news—"the gospel", if you will.

And the king was as skeptical of the fulfillment of the prophecy that he had heard the day before, as the officer was of the prophecy itself. Skeptics. He thought it was all a ruse, a clever deception designed to draw his army out into the open where the Syrians could ambush them, then capture the city. He gave no consideration to the prophecy, no consideration to "the word of the LORD." But one of his servants intervened and suggested that he take five horses, (probably all that was left in the city that had not been eaten), and send some soldiers out to test the king's theory. They did. In fact, they went all the way to the Jordan River and found no Syrians, only a trail of their clothes and equipment, all along the path of retreat. (vs15).

Then the messengers returned to the king and we read in verse 16, "So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of fine flour *was sold* for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD."

He's good for His word.

Now you wonder what happened to those four lepers. We don't know. They don't appear again in this narrative, this story; but we might imagine that they were hailed as heroes. I'm sure that was the case. And yet, what had they done? —Delivered good news; reported the prophecy of Elisha. They could have said what Luther said. 'We did nothing; the Word did it all.' Which is a way of saying, 'The LORD did it all.'

We never know how the LORD is going to fulfill His Word and bless us. But He will. His Word is reliable. Twice in the New Testament it is affirmed that God "cannot lie." That is impossible. That's how Paul makes that clear; it's "impossible for God to lie." Titus chapter 1, verse 2; and Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 18. In other words, we can trust His Word—always. It never fails.

That is proved again when the second prophecy Elisha gave was fulfilled. The officer that mocked the prophecy in verse 2 saw it fulfilled with his own eyes, but he didn't get to eat any of it. While he stood at the gate, he was crushed to death by the hungry mob rushing out of the city. (vs20). His death testifies to the veracity of God's Word, and the danger of doubting it.

Do we do that? Circumstances can become hard, they can become challenging, and we might be tempted to despair and be disillusioned. How did you respond to the power going out last Tuesday morning? I didn't respond very well, I'll confess, *[Laughter]*, but I made it through, and praised the LORD; and I know some of you are still waiting patiently. But we could find all kinds of illustrations to ask that question in regard to it.

I think Paul saw this in his own life, from his own experience—but also in the early church among the young saints who come out of paganism; many of them Gentiles who faced opposition and hardship, and faced rejection, sickness, and death—as we all do in many ways. That's when we need to lean on the LORD—not look away from the LORD.

Paul counseled the Philippians in Philippians chapter 4, verse 6, "Be anxious for nothing"—there was a circumstance that he's addressing, but we get anxious over all kinds of things. Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (verses 6&7). Then verse 19, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Do we believe that? The problem is not circumstances. The problem is theology—bad theology. The problem with us is, *Our God is Too Small*, to quote the title of one of J. B. Phillips' books.

That was a problem for the family of God in Genesis 18. God promised Abraham and Sarah descendants; they would be, 'as numerous as the stars of the sky.' But that was years earlier, and Sarah was now at the ripe old age of 90. The hope of that promise probably had long since begun to fade.

So when the LORD visited the family and told Abraham that, 'next year at this time Sara will have a son', the text says, "Sarah laughed", (Gen 18:12)—not with joy but with disbelief, skepticism. She was a woman of faith, the woman of the faithful; she is listed in the chapter of faith, in Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 11. But the whole idea seemed ridiculous to her, 'I'm 90 years old. Abraham's 99 to 100. It's laughable!'

The LORD challenged her. It's great verse, a great statement full of meaning; He said, "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" (vs14). That can also be translated, "Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?" No; there is no impediment or problem that He cannot overcome, no great blessing that He cannot give.

The only things I know Scripture says that He cannot do is, lie and deny Himself. He cannot contradict Himself in what He has said and who He is—and He can no more fail to be faithful than He can fail to hold up this universe. He's always reliable. He is always the truth; otherwise He would cease to be God...and that's impossible.

So we should never doubt His Word. Sarah did, but the next year she had Isaac. Nothing is too hard, and nothing is too wonderful for Him to accomplish. He has countless ways of meeting all our needs, encouraging our soul, and proving Himself faithful to His Word and to His people.

And we see that here. I'm sure, when Israel saw the size of the Syrian army that surrounded the city, 'their hearts melted', to use a biblical phrase. They were no doubt terrified by it. But what they didn't realize, (and what the Syrian army didn't realize), is that the size of the enemy army was a blessing—a blessing in disguise. It was great, it was large, so that the provisions left behind would be great enough to feed a whole city, and bless that city. So, trust the LORD. Believe His Word. He's always faithful.

Now, there are three other events in Elisha's ministry between this one and the end—one in chapter 8 regarding the widow Elisha helped in chapter 4. Her husband had since died, and she had lost her land during a famine.

Providentially, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, was talking to the king of Israel, talking about Elisha's ministry to him, and telling him about how he helped that woman and raised her child from the dead. And the king was very interested in what he was saying when, amazingly, she appears there to make her request for her land to be restored. And Gehazi looks and says, 'That's her.' And so the king is impressed and restored her land to her.

And what that shows, I think at least indicates, is how Elisha's influence was great, so great that even when he was not present he helped this woman. His influence was not only great there in the land, it was great internationally, in the sense that it went beyond Israel.

We see that next in chapter 8. Elisha met Hazael and prophesied that Ben-Hadad would die, and Hazael would be king in his place. And he also prophesied that he would be a menace to Israel—and both were true. He became the king—and he became a fierce opponent of the nation Israel.

And then in chapter 9, Elisha sent one of his young prophets to anoint Jehu king of Israel. Which was significant, for Jehu carried out a purge on the house of Ahab and eradicated Baal worship in Israel.

Elisha's last days are recorded in chapter 13, verses 14 through 21. He had become ill. His ministry was over 60 years when King Joash, the grandson of Jehu came to him, (and verse 14 says), "wept over him." He said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen." (And you remember, those are the very words that Elisha spoke of Elijah when he was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.) But they were equally appropriate for Elisha. He was the real army of Israel. God did mighty things through His prophet. He captured the Syrian army, you'll remember. He was a king maker of both Israel and Syria. His prayers were better than chariots and horsemen, and his prophecies more powerful than armies.

So as he lay dying, the king of Israel came to him for a blessing. It was a secular blessing, not a spiritual one, but Elisha was willing to help him. (Now of course, Elisha knew that he was not the source of victory. The real chariots and horsemen of Israel is the Lord God—spiritual understanding that Joash the king lacked.) Still, Elisha helped. And again, God's blessing and victory is through God's Word. But it requires obedience by the king...faith leading to obedience.

Elisha used symbolic acts to communicate his message. Verses 15 through 17, "Elisha said to him, 'Take a bow and arrows.' So he took a bow and arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, 'Put your hand on the bow.' And he put his hand *on it*, then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands." (It's probably a way of showing that his purpose was with the king and signaled God's blessing upon what he was doing.) "He said, 'Open the window toward the east', and he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, 'Shoot!' And he shot. And he said, 'The LORD's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed *them*.'"

Next he instructed the king to take some arrows, (weapons of war), and strike the ground. He did—he obeyed again, but he only struck three times, and quit.

Verse 19, "So the man of God was angry with him and said, 'You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed *it*. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times."

Now Elisha didn't tell Joash how many times to strike the ground. Still, he didn't listen for Elisha to tell him to stop. He stopped of his own, on his own—and he stopped too soon. So it was another failure to fully obey "the word of the LORD", a failure to persevere in it. This was a symbolic form of prayer. Each time the king struck the ground it was as though he were praying that God would give him victory in war. He would have three victories, but there would be no more—and not enough to completely finish with their enemy, Syria.

The lesson for us is, 'Persevere in prayer.' Prayer is vitally important for a successful Christian life. Paul instructed the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

Paul himself prayed only three times for the removal of that 'angry affliction', what he called "the thorn in the flesh" given to him to, 'keep him from exalting himself' (2Cor 12:7). So he prayed only three times, but the reason he stopped with three was because the Lord answered him, that He would not remove it. Instead, He told the apostle that, 'His grace would be sufficient for him', and Paul rejoiced at that. (ibid. vs9). Otherwise, I suppose Paul would have continued on in prayer, seeking to change his condition, which was a very difficult and debilitating condition.

It's easy, though, to give up on prayer. I think all of us have experienced that when we don't get answers immediately. We want things quickly, and they don't come in God's time quickly. Sometimes they do, but not always.

Now I've told this story before, and others have told this as well, but it applies very well to what I'm saying. George Muller, as you know, was a man of great faith. He built and maintained orphanages in England by faith, trusting the LORD alone to provide.

He also prayed for souls. He prayed for over 50 years for two sons of a friend of his youth. He was convinced that they would be brought to faith. Praying that prayer for those men for over 50 years is quite a challenge, but he did it. And he continued, and

was convinced that they would be brought to faith—and they were, a few years after his death. His rule was, ‘Never give up until the answer comes.’ And he persevered in prayer without ceasing—and the LORD answered.

Perseverance in prayer is an act of obedience to God's Word; and it's a sign and evidence of faith. We stop praying because we lose confidence; we stop believing; we think it's not effective, it's not being answered.

But we don't know that; and so, we're to continue at it.

Even so, the LORD is gracious. He's always gracious to us, even when we fail in our own acts of obedience in our prayer life, or our study life.

The chapter ends with His faithfulness, at least our passage ends with it, with the record of the three victories that Joash won over the Syrians—which shows, again, that the LORD is faithful to His Word and answers the prayers that we give. And He's faithful.

The account of Elisha's ministry concludes on a unique event and after the prophet died and was buried, when a band of Moabites attacked while an Israelite was being buried. Verse 21. "As they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band; and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up on his feet."

That's a fascinating and almost as an unusual event to conclude Elisha's ministry as the one that concluded Elijah's ministry. One writer commented that, "Elijah went to heaven without dying and Elisha kept giving Israel life after dying." It's true—and it's amazing. But what's the point of the miracle? What's its meaning? Obviously it was God's witness to, and confirmation on, the faithfulness of Elisha—his life as a prophet.

But perhaps more than that, it's a way of saying that even after the death of a faithful saint, who trusted the LORD and lived in obedience to God's Word, his or her ministry lives on.

Whether or not that's the meaning, I can't really say, but that is certainly true, and a great encouragement to us to be faithful and obedient servants all through our life. Faithful to the LORD—and it will have effects well beyond our life.

John Newton's godly mother was long dead when he was caught in a fierce storm at sea. But the instruction she had given to him, and the Scriptures she had had him memorize as a boy, all came back to him. He believed and he was saved out of a wicked life. The influence of a faithful servant of the LORD lives on; though they are dead, they still speak.

One of our long time members was in college when a fraternity brother gave him a sermon by Donald Grey Barnhouse, who had died years earlier. But his voice lived on, and Paul was saved. That's the power of the Word of God, the truth of God, taught by men and women across the ages. As Luther said, "While I slept, the Word did it all." And it will to the end of the age.

So, we are to believe it, and we are to obey it. We are to trust the LORD. When we are doing His will, He will provide in spite of the circumstances, and He will use it all to His glory, and to our benefit. So may God strengthen us in our resolve to do that, and to be faithful men and women to His Word, and He will bless us and make us a blessing. The Word, the Good News, the Gospel is simple. The good news of salvation is simple. Paul and Silas told it to the Philippian jailer, who had come to the end of himself, fell at their feet and said, "What must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." (Acts 16: 30-31). He did, and he was—and so was his entire family.

And you, too, if you are here without faith, if you've not believed, you will be saved at the moment you believe the good news of salvation, putting your faith in Christ the Savior, the Son of God, He will receive you, justify you, make you one of God's sons and daughters and children. May God help you to do that—and then help you and all of us to live faithfully to His Word.

(Closing prayer) Father, we thank You that we do have that great hope, which is a certainty. And we have a home waiting for us, a glorious future that's eternal, a glorious kingdom, and a new heavens and a new earth; and it's all certain because of Your work through Your Son, which has made it so. We thank You for His sacrifice for us. May we live with that hope, and may we live by faith trusting Your Word daily. We pray these things in Christ's name.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. Amen.

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