

# At Midnight

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This message was preached by Pastor Dan Lindsey on  
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We are in Acts 16, verse 23, this morning:

*“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeking the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”*

Pay attention to two words in verse 25. The two words are: **“at midnight.”** Everybody has in their life a midnight. Things are dark, and the difficulties rage. Paul and his friend Silas preached the gospel, and for that have been thrown into prison. They have been beaten, and their hands and feet had been made so they can’t move very much. They are in stocks. It’s midnight. A young couple had been taken into a room of a hospital and told that their child is severely disabled. It’s midnight. A family stands and looks at the charred remains of their house, all is gone. It’s midnight. The day of the funeral has arrived. It’s time for her to say goodbye, in this life, to him. It’s midnight. A teenager has committed an awful sin, and mom and dad’s hearts are broken. It’s midnight. A church that used to have an effect upon it’s community, touched the world for Christ, is divided and splitting, and countless Christians’ hearts are broken. It’s midnight. A country is divided under uncontrollable debt. It’s midnight. A marriage is ended. Children's hearts are broken. It’s midnight.

Some of you may be going through a midnight right now. I want to give you three things in the midnight hour: a **song**, and then we are going to see a **sinner**, and finally **salvation**, all at midnight.

## I. A Song at Midnight – Verse 25

*“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”* Physically Paul and Silas were in a mess, and it was definitely a midnight hour. Beaten, their feet locked in stocks, pain and misery, for what? For preaching Christ, for loving people? And in their midnight hour the Bible says Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. Though physically they were in prison, and physically they were going through a midnight hour – their heart, their soul was lifted above all of that. And they prayed, and then they sang praises to God. To God above. Too miserable to sleep, they rested their souls in the Lord through prayer, and through music. Now you can drown in your depression if you want to in your midnight hour, or you can learn, as these Christians did, to turn your heart above it all through prayer and by praising God by song.

Hold your place here, go with me to the Psalms, the longest Hymn book of the Bible. Psalm 42. It’s obvious in Psalm 42 that the Psalmist is going through a difficult time, even though he begins in verses 1 and 2 talking about how his soul pants after God like a deer pants after the water brooks. Then in verse 3 he says: *“My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me Where is thy God?”*

In verse 4 he says, *“when I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.”* He attended a place of worship.

Then he says in verse 5: *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.”* It feels like he's just been buried in his ocean of problems. *“Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.”*

Now when the billows and the waves came over Paul and Silas, and they are in prison – when they could have drowned in their depression and discouragement in their midnight hour – they learned to lift their soul above it all and to pray and sing praises to God.

You will need to learn some of the great hymns from our hymnal. You may not need some of them this moment, but you will. Teach those great hymns to your children. You will want to draw from that well of encouragement. Such as the song written by a man whose children died when their ship sank, It is Well With My Soul. Or the song Dawn played this morning on the piano, an excellent rendition of Day by Day - “and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here.”

Psalm 77:6 says, “*I call to remembrance my song in the night!*”

Now, back here in Acts 16, verse 25, it says, “*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them.*” And the prisoners heard them! You see, you are not the only one going through a midnight hour. There are other people in the same building and

**You are not the only one going through a midnight hour. Others huddle in the darkness, most of them without God and without hope. They are looking for some ray of sunshine in their midnight hour.**

in the same situation. Others huddle in the darkness, and most of them, perhaps all of them, are without God and without hope. But they are listening. And they are watching. And they are looking for some ray of sunshine in their midnight hour.

Somebody else is burying a loved one. Somebody else has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Somebody else is having family problems back home. Somebody else is in a struggling church. Somebody else is in the same hospital.

As Paul and Silas begin to lift their soul above their situation and pray and sing – they not only minister to themselves – but are touching some people down the halls.

Hold your place here again and go to Psalm 40. The writer says, “*I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set*

*my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”* The Psalmist believed that because God had brought him up out of the horrible pit, out of miry clay, and set his feet on a rock, that he should worship God by music, by a song. And then he says that other people are going to see that, and they are going to turn to the Lord, too.

You know, music is a way of reaching people. And sometimes the only thing that people know about our God is what they see in us as we are going through our midnight hour. For some that will be the only occasion that they will know us.

Years ago we knew a family that were missionaries to Bolivia. They had a little girl whose name was Ruth. We became acquainted with this family because Ruth, like our daughter, Stacie, had cerebral palsy. But Ruth, though she had cerebral palsy (brain damage), was a very intelligent little girl. Though she didn't walk exactly right, or hold her arms exactly right, and sometimes it was a little difficult to understand her speech – Ruth, at a young age came to know Jesus Christ as her Savior. I don't remember much about Ruth's parents, although they were missionaries. What I remember is little Ruth, whose life was sometimes like a midnight. Struggles with cerebral palsy and all of the orthopedics that came along with that. One time we were in a children's hospital up in Seattle with our daughter, and there was Ruth. You know what Ruth did? She witnessed to her doctors and her nurses about Jesus Christ. Ruth did not make it through her teenage years. She died. But in her midnight hour, in the last hours of her life, she spoke to those around her about Jesus Christ. If Ruth can do that, can you be a testimony for Jesus Christ in your midnight hour?

A song at midnight. The Lord can give one to you if you will trust him, Christian.

## **II. A Sinner at Midnight – Verses 26-29**

There is an earthquake that happens that drives the jailer of the prison from his apathy, from his indifference concerning the things to God, to his own personal midnight. The earthquake releases the prisoners from their prison cells and from the stocks that they had been put in. In the darkness the keeper of the prison does not know if the prisoners escaped or not,

everything is dark, the lights are out. He assumes that the prisoners have escaped due to the earthquake. Back in those days, the Roman law said, if you allowed a prisoner to escape – you would be executed. So these men took their jobs pretty seriously. (Of course, an earthquake is an overwhelming experience, and the Roman government may have let it pass – we just don't know.)

But verse 27 says, “*The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out a sword, and would have killed himself...*” I want you to focus on those words for just a moment. He would have killed himself! Often when a person is going through a midnight hour, and this man has been plunged into one – many people think of suicide. There is hardly a person who gets through life without thinking of taking their life. For many people it is a fleeting thought; comes to mind – NO! - and passes through. But for others, it is one that lingers on. He would have killed himself. And this year, thousands of people will. This man is lost. He doesn't know anything about God. He is in the darkness. It's midnight. It's an earthquake. He is confused. He is emotional. He is distraught. He doesn't know if he can face the next day, the next moment. And he draws out his sword. He is very close to taking his life.

Let me tell you something about this man. This man is but a moment from the lake of fire. He is but a heartbeat from an eternal hell. And Christian, if you think your midnight is bad, think about those who this day, right now, are in eternal hell, a prison from which there is no escape. Remember, in your midnight hour, there is probably a lost person that you are going to come in contact with that you would never have otherwise.

When I was a child I used to listen to Oliver B. Green on the radio. I believe he was from South Carolina. He would always close his program by saying, “Lord,” (in his southern voice, which I can't do), “Please save that sinner nearest hell. For Jesus sake. Amen.” I wonder who that is in this room today.

So we read in verse 28, “*Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*” That man needed somebody, a believer in Jesus Christ, to stand in the way and say, “Put the sword up.” And that person was Paul, Paul who was going through his own personal midnight. He'd experienced the same earthquake. Paul could have run away, the door was open. The stocks had been loosed. He could have

gotten out of his midnight. He could have run away, but he stayed. He stayed in that place to be a testimony to a lost man. He didn't run.

I remember, when our daughter, Stacie, was alive that there were some difficult times. But we discovered that there were hundreds and hundreds of other parents who were going through situations just like us. We learned to take all kinds of literature and tracts, and so on, to children's hospitals, to the neurologists, the orthopedic surgeons, and those who worked on wheelchairs, those who dealt with her seizure problems. Because in those waiting rooms were people who needed to know Christ.

Verse 29 says, *“He called for a light.”* “Bring me some light,” the jailer says. A lamp to see. And by the way, isn't that just the picture of a sinner who is asking for some light in the darkness. The Bible says, in Luke chapter 1 verse 79, *“To give light to them who sit in darkness and to guide our feet in the way of peace.”* And as the call comes ringing o'er the restless wave – send the light! And there are souls to rescue and souls to save – send the light, that blessed gospel light.

### **III. Salvation at Midnight – Verses 29-31**

There is a song at midnight; a sinner at midnight. There is a third thing I see today, and it's in verses 29 to 31, and that is: salvation at midnight. Let's read it, *“He called for light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

This man suddenly became interested in something he must have not been very interested in before. At the midnight hour of his life, when the earthquake struck, and he pulled out the sword to take his life, there was one thing he wanted to know: “Could

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you tell me how to be saved?” There are some people like Lydia, at the beginning of this chapter who was down at the river bank, and it's a calm prayer service, and Paul comes and preaches of the gospel and Lydia gets saved. Then there are some people who are cold and hard and tough, and it's going to take a midnight earthquake to shake them to their knees. What's it going to take to bring you to your knees? Dare we pray for some

people we are concerned about to be saved to be brought by some midnight earthquake to their knees? The Bible says in verse 29 that he came in trembling, and he fell down before Paul and Silas. This man, who had previously been involved in beating these prisoners and holding these Christians illegally, now comes in trembling. He is convinced; he is convicted; he is repentant; he has had enough, and he is down on the floor before them saying *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*

Before I was a Christian, a man came into our house and was telling me about Christ and my response to him was basically: “Yeah, I’ll think about it sometime.” Hey man, I had my life planned, and being a Christian and being saved wasn’t really part of it at that point. And he looked at me and he asked: “Dan, don’t you let anything worry you?”

Isaiah 66 verse 5 says, *“Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word.”* Once again, church, wouldn’t it be wonderful if we trembled at His word, that when His word was preached and taught we would see sinners trembling at His word? In James chapter 2, the Bible says that the demons believe in God, and it says we should believe in God and do as well. The demons, the devil, also believe and tremble. They are not saved, but at least they tremble when they think about God and the things of God.

**His question indicates that he knew he needed to be saved from sin and hell - he just didn't know how.**

And so he comes in trembling, repentant. He is down, but he asks the question, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* The question indicates that he knew he needed to be saved, he just didn’t know how. Perhaps he had heard enough to know he needed to be saved from sin and hell and condemnation, and we do. But what do I do to be saved? And you know, that there are multitudes around you, that if you told them they needed to be saved, they would have no idea what you are talking about anymore. And you've got to tell them. This man’s concern is off the trivial now. And a lot of what we think about in life and the things that we watch on television and all that kind of stuff is just trivial, junk – compared to this: What do you have to do to get saved from hell?

Verse 31 says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house.”* The man that gave that answer, the apostle Paul, along with his friend Silas, the man that gave that answer, wrote Romans,

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Corinthians, and others. He is the one that explains to us in great detail how to be saved in the book of Romans, who warns the churches of Galatia not to depart from the gospel, because it is the only way to be saved. And so he gives us this answer, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”* And we will talk about that, Lord willing, next week. The salvation of this man’s family.

**The man who wrote Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Corinthians and others said directly that the way to be saved is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”**

Notice his answer: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. My father, my dad, really respected Jesus. So in our house we didn’t just call him “Jesus.” We called him the Lord Jesus or Christ, always in honor, always in respect. When Paul said this is how you are saved, I’m going to tell you who to believe on, you must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ, the last word, is Messiah, Anointed One, the One promised through all the Old Testament.

Jesus is His earthly name. “Thou shalt name Him Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.” The name “Jesus” reminds us of the life that He lived here; of His birth, life, death, burial, resurrection. Jesus dying for our sins at the cross, the gospel.

And then Lord, Lord Jesus Christ. Mister, if you want to know how to be saved, you have to come to Jesus as Lord. He is going to be your Master. He is going to be your owner. He is going to be your boss. He is your Creator. He is your Lord. You want to be saved – believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The means of salvation is by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, totally trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to give you eternal life, to give you salvation. It’s not by works that we do. This is the prime opportunity if baptism had a part of salvation – to say it. Paul didn’t say it. This is the great opportunity if being a part of a particular church would take you to Heaven, this would be the time to say it. The question has been asked. Paul answers it directly. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved.”* Not trusting self, not trusting a religion. Not even trusting a prayer. Not trusting walking the aisle. Not trusting baptism. Not trusting communion. Trusting Jesus Christ the Lord.

On the day I got saved, March 28 1975, (I'm going to shock some of you) I did not ask Jesus in my heart. I did not pray a sinner's prayer. Sitting in the living room of my parents' home, I believed. I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. I trusted Him, and Him only, nothing more, nothing less. I'm saved. That's the way to be saved. Look only to Christ. Trust Him.

Verse 34 says: *“And when he brought them into the house, he set meat or food before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all of his house.”* The midnight hour was over. The sun was coming up. The earthquake was over and a man had been changed. A man who was on the edge of hell itself who just about took his life a few hours earlier is having the time of his life because he is saved. And if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved, too.

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