



Good morning and welcome to our Outdoor Service! I want to welcome both campuses of CPC; next year we'll be welcoming three campuses!

I wanted to start off this morning with a personal confession. I love new socks. I love how they feel, how they fit, and how they look. I love new socks. Wearing new socks with new shoes is like a spiritual experience for me. Anyone else like me? There is just something about new stuff that I love.

What if I told you that God is obsessed with new things as well? He loves the new. Because of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, all things will be made new. The Old Covenant becomes the New Covenant. The Old Commandment becomes the New Commandment when 600 rules are boiled down to two—love God and love others. Old Wine becomes New Wine. A New Heaven and a New Earth will one day replace the old. In heaven the Bible says we'll get a New Name and we'll also sing a New Song. More than anything, God loves making new things, beautiful things out of our lives. The Bible describes a complete transformation that occurs when a person trusts in Jesus Christ. We become a New Creation and put on a New Self. 2 Corinthians 5:17 puts it this way, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

I believe that one of the greatest proofs for the truth of Christ and the reality of His resurrection is the changed lives of Christians. I've seen hardened criminals, like Steve Aurell, one of our staff members, come to embrace Jesus. I've seen drug addicts, who've been in and out of rehab finally get clean and sober after putting their faith in Jesus, like my mother. I've seen marriages on the rocks, reconciled because of Jesus' work in the lives of both spouses (many of you can say amen to that). God is in the business of making us new. It's the thing He loves to do.

You may be wondering, how does God change someone? Can God change my life? Does this apply to everyone? I want to share a story from the Book of Acts that highlights God's work in the lives of three very different people—a rich business woman, a suffering teenager, and a blue collar guy. Turn to Acts 16.

Lydia

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira

named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us (verses 13–15).

The Apostle Paul, young Timothy, Silas and Dr. Luke, because of various circumstances, have been led to the city of Philippi. The first to respond to Paul's message is Lydia. She was a "worshiper of God" which meant that she was a Jewish convert. Lydia was also a sharp business woman. She was a dealer in purple cloth which was extremely rare and expensive. This cloth was made from a purple dye only found in a specific shell fish. She was like the California importer of Coach purses and Seven Jeans! Paul and Silas sit down with Lydia and tell her about the Message of Jesus Christ. They explain to her Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They told Lydia about how God in His love and mercy sent His one and only Son so that we could experience forgiveness and find a purpose in life and have a hope for the future. As they were sharing, God opens her heart to understand and respond to the Gospel. That means that Lydia came to believe and have faith in Jesus Christ. She was the first Christian convert in Europe!

For a rich business woman like Lydia, she could have used all kinds of excuses not to follow Christ. "I'm too busy." "I'm successful, important, and powerful, why do I need Jesus?" Maybe your success, wealth, and power has left you not sensing a need for Jesus. When a person comes to faith in Jesus, He makes them new. Look at what happens in Lydia's life. She insists they all come over to her home. She wants her family to hear the message of Jesus and respond. The result is that her entire household believe and are baptized. We learn later that the first church in Philippi began meeting in her home.

Some of you are here this morning and you need to know that God is opening your heart to hear and respond to the message of Jesus Christ. He is working on you. If you can't relate to Lydia, maybe you can relate to this next person Paul and Silas come across.

A Teenage Slave Girl

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her (verses 16-18).

This helpless teenage girl was a demon-possessed fortune teller who earned a ton of money for her owners. She was their “cash cow.” I can’t even begin to imagine how this girl was abused, mistreated, and used. There was nothing more awful than being a slave girl in the First Century. She was completely broken and under the worst type of bondage we can imagine. This girl, under the influence of a demon, was following around Paul and Silas trying to discredit their ministry by shouting out theological statements. Imagine if a crazed girl was following me around every day screaming theological truth to anyone who would listen. This was not a very effective means of evangelism! In fact, it was hurting the missionaries’ work in Philippi. Paul got annoyed and cast the demon out. I love the fact that the Apostle got annoyed. He was human.

Honestly, we don’t know exactly what happened to the slave girl afterwards. We are not told. Because her story is sandwiched between two other conversion experiences, I am convinced, like many scholars, that she hears the Good News of Jesus, responds, and begins meeting with the new church in Lydia’s home. Make no mistake, this was a dramatic conversion! Sometimes, God works this way to set someone free. I call this an out-of-the-box experience. Some of you here today are in bondage to drugs, alcohol, sex, and power, but God wants to make you new. He wants to create something beautiful out of the mess you’ve made in your life. Some of you have been set free from those things and can share about God’s amazing work in your life. When a person comes to faith in Jesus, He makes them new.

The problem for Paul and Silas is by exorcising the demon, they exorcised the slave owner’s source of income. The slave owners were furious. They drag Paul and Silas into the marketplace and press charges against them. Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown into prison. Seems like the Enemy wins. Whenever the church develops, Satan tries to obstruct God’s servants. That was true in the book of Acts, it’s still true today. For our North campus, we’ve endured some big obstacles with trying to move into our new Crestmoor campus in San Bruno. Part of the issues have to deal with permits and paperwork. However, there is no doubt that we’ve run up against spiritual opposition from the Enemy. In the 40-year history of our church, we’ve faced assaults on every front from Satan as well. As our South campus develops, you bet we’re going to face spiritual attack there as well. For Paul and Silas, it wasn’t the end of the story.

The Philippian Jailer

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone’s chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household (verses 25–34).

This jailer was probably a retired Roman soldier. I imagine him as a tough, blue collar kind of guy. Night sets in and the jailer falls asleep. Paul and Silas are bloodied, exhausted, in great pain, thirsty and unable to sleep because of the shackles. This is no doubt their darkest hour as missionaries. How did they respond? Paul and Silas pray and sing! Are you kidding me? There is no indication that they even prayed to be released.

As they pray and sing, all the prisoners were listening to these joyful followers of Jesus. They pray and sing because worshipping God encourages and strengthens our heart when we’re suffering. Paul and Silas had no idea what God was going to do but they knew He would use this situation and turn it for good. I don’t know what painful circumstance you are in. When we come to understand that God uses all our suffering for His good and that He has a plan, we’ll stop complaining and start singing.

God sends an earthquake that set the prisoners free. The jailer’s job was to guard these men at all costs. If anyone escaped, Roman authorities would kill him. It was late and dark and the jailer assumed that all the prisoners were gone. He prepares to take his own life. Paul shouts out, “We’re all here!” Humbled. Convicted. In awe of the power of God, the jailer falls at Paul’s feet and asks, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

How would you have answered the man? Come to church? Read your Bible? Go see Pastor Rob? Get baptized? Paul keeps it real simple, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” That’s it. It’s that simple. The jailer, right at that moment, places his faith and trust in Jesus Christ and God changed his life. He made him new.

A simple man like the jailer could have coasted into retirement. He had lived a long and good life. Why change anything at his age? What difference could Jesus make in an old timer’s life anyway? Sometimes God uses a crisis like this to shake up and wake up a person’s life. When a person comes to faith in Jesus, He makes them new. The rugged, mean jailer immediately washes their wounds, brings them to his home, feeds them, and his family are all baptized. That is real life change! Just like Lydia’s family, the jailer’s family all come to faith in Jesus Christ.

God loves to get a hold of a person so that He can also get a hold of their family. For some of you, you may be the only Christian in your family. Continue to pray for them. For others, God used you to bring your entire family to faith in Christ. You should thank God for that, because it doesn’t always happen that way. The Philippian jailer was filled with joy because he and his household believe in God and their lives where changed.

Who do you relate most to? Lydia? The teenage girl? The jailer? Racially, socially, psychologically these three were world’s apart. Yet all three were changed and made new by the same Gospel message and welcomed into the new church in Philippi. I relate most probably to the teenage slave girl. I came from a non-Christian home. My father is still in prison and I’ve never met him. My mother was a drug addict during most of my childhood. Thankfully she is clean and loves Jesus now. I tried to fill the void in my heart with sports, academics, drugs, alcohol, and sex only to find myself even more empty.

At 17 years old, I was invited to a service a lot like this and finally heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. That night, with tears in my eyes, I believed in Jesus Christ and committed my life to Him. For me, it took an entire year for God to work in my life and change me from the inside out. By my senior year, I was a completely changed young man. Jesus made me new. He gave me a new hope and purpose for my life. I am just as surprised as any of you that today I’m a pastor!

If you are not a follower of Christ, Jesus wants to make you new. Like the Philippian jailer, you may be asking, “What must I do to be saved? Believe in Jesus Christ. The message of Jesus is that you and I are sinners. That we’ve all done things, said things, and thought things that were far from God’s heart. God loves you so much that He sent His one and only son into the world to do what we could never do—pay the penalty for sin. Jesus lived among us and experienced all that we experience but never sinned. He was then beaten and crucified on a cross. Three days later He would rise from the dead defeating Satan, Sin, and death.

If you are a follower of Christ, what is one area in your life that you have not allowed Jesus to make new? Is there something from your past holding you back? Is there an area of brokenness in your life that you’ve been ignoring? As we embrace Christ and are made new, He helps us to rid ourselves of the “old” areas of our lives that are not part of His new creation. When a person comes to faith in Jesus, He makes them new.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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