



Jeff Sweeten

*Thus Saith the Lord*  
is presented by the

## **Park Heights Church of Christ**

1300 E. Boynton St.  
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### **Schedule of Services**

#### **SUNDAY**

9:30 a.m. Bible Class  
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship  
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

#### **WEDNESDAY**

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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# *Thus Saith the Lord*

## **BELIEVE ON THE LORD**

By Jeff Sweeten

The black art of lifting verses from their context in order to support an unbiblical belief is nothing new. It is, however, an abuse of God's intended meaning and eternally damaging to those who buy into the lie. Therefore, understanding what God means when He says what He says cannot be understated. One hackneyed instance is found in Acts 16:31.

The preaching of Paul and Silas was not always gladly received (Acts 2:41); it was often attacked (Acts 4:18; 5:40; 7:59-60; et al.). Acts 16 finds them preaching in Philippi (v. 12) and being surprisingly well received but the warm welcome came to an abrupt end when a fortune-telling female, "*who brought her masters much profit,*" began to expose the them as men of God with a Divine message. Not wanting the accolades of Satan or his minions, Paul silenced her "*in the name of Jesus Christ*" and that was the end of her masters' profit-sharing. Outraged, her masters brought trumped-up charges against the preachers, who were beaten and imprisoned. These hardy souls were not whiners, so they began to sing praises to God in their cell and it literally brought the house down. An earthquake convinced the jailor his life was past tense, so he drew his sword to accommodate his expected sentence for losing the prisoners. He was a hair's breath away from death when Paul yelled from his cell, "*Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.*" In panicked relief, he threw himself at the apostle's feet and asked, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" Now, here's where the account gets sticky.

Many sincere God-seekers have been told that the catch-all for salvation is in Paul's response: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.*" Some preach faith alone since no other element necessary for salvation is mentioned in Acts 16:31. But, wait! Put this text in its context. The jailor could not be baptized to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-6) because he had neither confessed Christ (Matthew 10:32-33) nor repented (Luke 13:3, 5), and could do neither because he didn't know that "*without faith it is impossible to please Him*" (Hebrews 11:6). So, Paul initiated this man's journey of faith in and obedience to Christ (Romans 1:5); he didn't end it.

What "de-contexters" miss is that the Philippian jailor was told what he needed to hear based upon where he was. He was a heathen, ignorant of the Christ. The context explains where this process proceeded. They spoke the word of the Lord to him and his household (v. 32; faith, Romans 10:17), then the jailor displayed a changed heart in washing their stripes (v. 33; repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:10), and "*immediately he and all his family were baptized*" (note: in every conversion in Acts, baptism is mentioned). Notice further, after the baptisms there was rejoicing, not before.

My friend, context is vital to understanding God's Word.