

# When a House is a Home

## By Arvid Carlson

Today we should like to look into the Book of Acts for the first in the series of these messages on the Christian home. Let's turn to Chapter 16 beginning at verse 31 where the Philippian jailer asks the question: What must I do to be saved? And they said Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house and they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house and he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized he and all his straightway. And when he had brought them into his house he set meet before them and rejoiced believing in God with all his house.

For these ensuing broadcasts I will be speaking to you as I said on the general theme of the Christian home and today I would like to direct my attention to the subject: When a house is a home? - basing our thoughts upon this text which I have just read for you we might also use the duplicate topic of the model home. The first of anything is usually its model or its prototype. In assessing the qualities of the Philippians jailors household one can easily call it the first Christian home in all of Europe. It is my personal opinion at least that Lydia's household did not comprise a family in spite of the fact that the revised standard version refers to it as such. Professor Lumby in the Cambridge Bible says that households in the New Testament might also mean and includes slaves and freed women. Be that as it may we are not being facetious to say that the jailer's home is open for inspection but that it is not for sale. Money cannot buy a home like his. If you desire such a model home you must come to the same person and in the same way in

which the jailer did. Houses are built and bought and sold but homes must be created and even better yet redeemed.

Little did this jailer realize that his would be the first Christian or the first model home in all of Europe but the promise of Acts 16:31 declared it; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. Please observe that his house did not become a home until all of his family were in the fold. Indeed it is not surprising that they all came in considering the fact that in the east the father is the head of the house. Therefore he determines the matters of policy and religion.

Whether this gives ground for household salvation is open to debate but it is assuredly a fact that if the sheep take the lead the lambs will follow. What qualities then constitute a house a home. What ingredients comprise a Christian home. This is the proposition we must answer today and we shall do so by citing chief three chief characteristics of such a home. First of all a house is a home when Christ is its head. Sociologists agree that home life must have a unifying center. Psychologists also agree that inner happiness can only come from an integrated personality.

Life cannot run smoothly when there are two centers of supreme interest. This is one reason why there are so many marital breakdowns in today's world. Our homes in America are completely saturated with conflicting loyalties resulting in nothing but a grand civil war. The New

Testament expressly declares that Jesus Christ must become that unifying center to both our lives and our homes. When he takes over the heart and the home, Peace and Harmony will reign supreme. If the members of the household are not together in spiritual things they will fall apart in all other things.

Unity is dependent upon the headship of Christ and upon his person and work meaning the same thing to all of the members of the family. It is well to notice how this jailer's home became truly Christian. His first step was that of conviction of sin. The record says he came trembling to Paul in silence. We have no proof that he had ever heard the word of God before unless he had listened to the conversation and the singing of these two prisoners. This simply points up the fact that a man must realize that he has lost before he can fully realize his need of Christ. Stanley, the discoverer of Livingstone in Africa reported that he found men on the Dark Continent who never knew they were black until they looked upon a white man. How needfully it true of every man who comes to faith.

The second step was that of the contrition for sin. Again the record says he fell down before them. The jailer did not cry out in desperation. What must I do to be saved merely because of the earthquake. Such quakings were common to that part of the world and still are. Nor did he merely fear the anger of his gods. Nor was he afraid of the prisoners escaping. They were all present and accounted for. I definitely believe he was under conviction of sin and wanted to repent of it.

The third step in the process was that of conversion. The scriptures tell us that he rushed their stripes a pretty good evidence that this cruel cold callous and calculating jailer had experienced a change of heart. In one moment he is flogging the prisoners in the next. He is washing their stripes. John Chrysostom, the the golden tongued orator of the early century said in reference to the jailer's experience and I quote "the jailer washes them and he himself is washed. He washed them from their stripes and he in turn was washed from his sins".

In this instance conversion was instantaneous. Paul and Silas did not present this man with 10 easy lessons in salvation. They didn't have to do so. No man could have been more ready for the grace of God than this penitent jailer. This is not to say of course that some conversions are like a sunrise stealing upon us in some gradual fashion until the light has fully dawned. However such was not the experience of this man. He received Christ the moment he repented and believed.

This leads us to the fourth step in his experience namely that of confession. The record simply declares that he was baptized and all of his house. Baptism is the outward testimony of an inward work. It is God's object lesson to the world which needs to see the gospel as well as to hear it. You're not a soldier in the army when you march beside the army on parade. You are a soldier when you have been issued a uniform and when you wear it the New Testament makes more of baptism than most of us do. In this case it was even more than a testimony.

It was this man's identification with Jesus Christ. It was the badge of sins forgiven. It was the final seal in crowning Jesus Christ Lord of all. Thus a Christian home is a home where every member is a Christian and Christ is Lord. How about your home today. Who is the head of your home. What is the unifying center of your family. And better asked Who is the integrating factor in your house. This leads me to consider a second quality of such a home, namely a house is a home when the Word of God is its food and drink.

Please notice that the entire household was in on it. I must be fair to the text and mention that infants play no part here. For the record says that Paul and Silas spoke on to him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house indicating the fact that the message was intelligible to every person present and every member heard it with joy. There wasn't a gospel hardened individual in the entire family. The Gospel didn't fall off like water off a duck's back. This is too often the case in many of our so-called church homes.

Most of our children raised in such homes take the gospel completely for granted and so do their parents. Unfortunately some children are merely influenced by the word they are not changed by it. This is the reason why we must be born again by the word of God which live earth and abide it forever. The crying need of many church homes is simply more of the word. God has not promised to bless anything else. Thank God for the fact that Paul and Silas did not give this

family their own opinions and their own panaceas for the happy home. They gave them the word and in my judgment this is the only means by which to nurture our children.

Let me emphasize that parents must do it and not pass off the responsibility to Sunday school teachers youth sponsors or pastors. In an age when the average youth has spent more hours in front of the boobtube than he has in his entire undergraduate education. It is absolutely indispensable that we fill his mind with the word of God to the greatest degree possible and this responsibility must begin in the home. A house is a home when Christ is the head but a house is a home also when the Word of God is its food and drink.

And thirdly a house is a home when joyful service is its atmosphere. Victor Hugo once wrote a house is built of logs and stone of tiles and posts and piers; a home is built of loving deeds that stand a thousand years. This would have been even more true if Victor Hugo had said a Christian home is built of loving deeds that stand a thousand years. Never was a family so enriched and so suddenly as the Philippian jailer's family that night in a single evening his sins were washed away including those of his family.

His home was united in Jesus Christ a beachhead was created for the Gospel and the nucleus of a church was born in Europe. Who knows where that chain reaction ended. The next day I believe that kids at school heard the gospel for the first time. The magistrates at the Civic Center

met a born again believer for the very first time, the neighbors heard the message of redeeming love. For the first time in their lives this family became a witnessing family. How do I know? Because it says so? No, not because it says so but because the story doesn't end with Paul and Silas his departure.

A church was born. A witness was established in Europe. The Philippians church was among the dearest of the churches to the heart of the apostle Paul and from what we can determine from church history the church continued to live on for many many years to come. All because this jailor's family became a serving family available to Christ and His kingdom for an effective witness in that city. A family like that could never live a dull moment. A family like that would have exciting things to relate. At every supper table. There is a sad note in this story not written on the pages of holy writ but inscribed indelibly in marble ruins on the plains of Phillippi.

One can stand in that spot today and Mark the place of the city jail, the market place and the large Christian church which must have flourished there for generations following. But one looks in vain for the perpetuated witness. Ruins everywhere but no church ruins everywhere. But no Christian homes. I should be fair to say however that the keeper of the prison in 1954 when I visited Philippi was a genuine believer in Jesus Christ and a solid example of his prototype of Acts 16. However the light of the Gospel had left that city in the early centuries undoubtedly because no one passed on the torch to his neighbor.

Let me ask you what kind of a home you have today. Is it a place where Christ is head and where he feels at home? A place where the word of God is honored and read a place where joyful service is an atmosphere? If not, why not allowed Jesus Christ to become Savior and Lord of your home as well as of your heart. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

Our God and Father we pray that many a Christian home may be established today as a result of this word from Thy Word and we pray your blessing upon those homes that are already Christian and already serving you with the word of God and in a joyful way. And we pray that this may be a good day for all of our Christian homes across the nation. This we ask in the name of Christ our Savior. Amen.

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