

To seek out and baptise new believers

Christ Church: 31st October 2021 10.00 am. & online

Acts 16: 6-34

Re-reading 'Through gates of splendour' by Elisabeth Elliot, widow of Jim Elliot martyred in seeking to reach the Aucas in Ecuador. They taught the good news, they sought conversions, they baptised.

But **conversion** has dropped out of our vocabulary, cf 50 years ago. Other than in 'conversion therapy' today. *Jim Elliot sought it.* A turning round and facing the other way. We need to refocus on conversion, especially today, Halloween.

And we need adult baptism to become normal in this church. Because people are being converted. Here at Christ Church, not in Far East, not in Zambia, not in Argentina, but here.

To seek out and baptise new believers implies conversion, through a crucified Saviour and a risen Lord. Acts is a book about conversion: 3,000 at Pentecost, Saul's in Acts 9, two families in today's reading.

God is at work in conversion

- 1 Acts 16:9 – a powerful dream. God guiding, God calling.
- 2 Acts 16:14 – the Lord opened Lydia's heart. Description of conversion.
- 3 Acts 16:18 – invoking the name of Jesus Christ.
- 4 Acts 16:26 – the earthquake. A 'get out of jail free' card!

It's not usually that dramatic! But when you became a Christian, when you see someone else turn round, it is a miracle of God, the most powerful miracle you will ever see. Conversion is God's work.

We also have to be at work in conversion

But God uses us! Check out our part in the four points above.

- 1 OBEY! Acts 16:10 – They got ready and went, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there.

- 2 SPEAK! Acts 16:14 – it was Paul's message which had to be preached.
- 3 SUFFER! Acts 16:23 - it involved beating and in prison to be in the right place at the right time. *Cf Jim Elliot's death.*
- 4 PRAY! Acts 16:25 – They were praying in the stocks.

God looks after the circumstances, he'll sort an earthquake if we need one, it is he who opens people's hearts – but it does not happen without our involvement in obeying, in speaking, in suffering perhaps and in praying.

God uses us! *Picture of partnership: child and father hand in hand.*

We are to seek out new believers, to expect conversions, and then to baptise. Is this on the CC MAP? It should be foundational.

But notice what happens after conversion: v15 – "when she and the members of her household were baptised...." And the jailor v33 – "he and all his household were baptised". We have whole families coming to faith and being baptised. We need to seek this too.

Application

- 1 Are we as a church praying for God to work in conversion so we have new believers? Home groups, prayer meetings, in our own prayers each day?
- 2 Are we as a church working with God by telling people the good news, by obeying his call, by suffering if necessary?
- 3 Do we teach that all need to repent of their sin, trust in a crucified Saviour and then serve a risen Lord?
- 4 Are you ready to turn your life round? To accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness? To follow him as Lord? To be baptised?

I suspect if we saw someone converted this morning we would be delighted but shocked – when we should expect it. It should be a normal part of church life.

To seek out and baptise new believers implies conversion, through a crucified Saviour and a risen Lord. Are we expecting this at CC?