

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Acts 16:25-40

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In Acts 16:25, right in the middle of the story (and I'll go back and set the context), it says, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake," not just an earthquake, but a great earthquake. How many of you felt that earthquake in the middle of the night. I went, "WHOOAAAH!" Have you ever heard a pastor scream in the middle of the night? Freaked out. I was just on the phone with my friend from Hilo, Hawaii, by the way, when I went to bed that night. It's rockin' and shakin' over there. The last thing I said before I went to sleep was, "Well, we'll pray the whole island doesn't blow up," you know, and I hung up. A few hours later, "BOOOAAHH!" I thought God was pouring out His wrath upon me or something like that.

"And suddenly there was a great earthquake," verse 26, "so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands," or chains, "were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas," and here's his question, "And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway," or immediately. "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Now, as I pointed out in verse 30, we have the most important question that anyone could ever ask. An important question would be: Does God exist? Where did the universe come from? How did life begin? What is the purpose of life? What happens after a person dies? Those are all important, great questions, but I believe the most important question that we could ever ask is that question found in verse 30, "...what must I do to be saved?" because Jesus said it like this, "What would it profit a person if he gained the whole world and then lost his soul in the process?" What profit would there be if you live to the ripe old age of 85, 90, 95, or 100 and you had all the wealth, the pleasures, and all the things the world could afford, but you die and spend eternity in hell separated from God? What profit is there? You can gain the whole world but if you lose your soul (which by the way, everyone has a soul and it is eternal) then the question is what profit is it? It's no profit. So, "...what must I do to be saved?" will determine where you will spend eternity—either in heaven or, I believe, in hell.

What were the circumstances that led up to this question in verse 30? Well, last Wednesday night we saw Paul and Silas at the end of Acts 15 taking off on their secondary missionary journey. The favorite missionary journey of mine is Paul's second journey. By the way, Paul had

three journeys; and if you study a map, there's a fourth trip that he took, but it was as a prisoner being sent to Rome. Technically, it wasn't really a missionary journey. There were three missionary journeys; the first, second, and third.

The second journey we saw started at the end of Acts 15. Paul went to Lystra and found Timothy. He had Timothy circumcised, and he took off. It was Paul and Timothy. Then, Luke joins the group, and we find them in this place called Troas. They saw a vision of a man at night from Macedonia, which is across the Aegean Sea to the west (which by the way, Macedonia is northern Greece, it's the continent of Europe), and says, "Come over and help us." Paul said, "We were sure that God was calling us, so we woke up the next morning and booked passage across the Aegean and came into Philippi. When we got into Philippi, we went down by the riverside (making a long story short) and there was this small group of women there. A man said, "Come help us," but when they get there they find a woman. You know, a cool thing that I didn't mention last week is that Christianity elevates women. The Jewish rabbis thought it was a bad thing to give the law to a woman; but Jesus gave the gospel, the good news, to the woman and elevated her to a rightful place. Paul didn't say, "Oh, those are just a bunch of women. There's no need to bother with them," but they went and shared the good news with them. The first convert on the continent of Europe that changed the world was a woman. Her name was Lydia. The Bible says that God opened her heart and she believed.

Paul, Silas, and Luke stayed at Lydia's home. They were walking through the city of Philippi preaching the gospel and a demon-possessed girl was following them around crying out, "These men are the servants of the Most High God. They show you the way of salvation." After days of this, Paul finally got tired of Satan advertising his ministry, and he rebuked the spirit in this woman and casts the demon out. She was saved and believed in Jesus; but the men who owned her, and gained profit by her divination and fortune-telling, were upset. They get this false accusation trumped up against Paul and Silas, "These men, being Jews, do teach customs contrary to Roman law." They were arrested, beaten, and thrown into prison without a trial or hearing. It was all illegal. They grabbed them, beat them up, stripped their clothes off, put them in this inner prison, and this is what's happening here beginning in verse 25.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." This has always amazed me. I mean, I gripe when I travel. If any of you travel with me, you know Pastor Miller is kind of a griper. He kind of gets tired and doesn't like the food, the sleeping, and the travel, and he starts to become a griper—pray for me—especially, if I'm arrested, thrown into jail, beat up, and I haven't done anything wrong. I'm freaking out at this point, okay? The last thing I want to do is praise the Lord but not Paul and not Silas.

Do you know the Bible says that God gives us songs in the night? Anyone can sing in the daytime, right? Anyone can sing when the sun is shining, the birds are chirping, a kind of a zippity doo dah kind of a song, you know, where everything is roses and wonderful and it's a great day; but when it's dark, difficult, hard, and we don't know what God is doing or why He's allowing this...maybe we've been accused or attacked and people have come against us. Here they are. Their feet and hands are in stocks. They're in an inner prison. Their backs are

bloodied and bruised. They hadn't done anything wrong, and Paul turns to Silas (this is a little sanctified imagination. It doesn't say it in the text. I'm reading it in the white space) and says, "Let's praise the Lord! Let's sing." If I were Silas I'd go, "No, way! I'm not going to sing. I'm mad at God right now. I'm bummed out. I'm not gonna go to church this Sunday because of the way God let this happen, and I'm certainly not going to give Him any money in the offering because this is really a drag." He didn't respond that way. They began to praise the Lord, singing praises unto God.

Ask God to give you a song in the night. Ask God to put a song in your heart even in the difficult times, even in the dark times, even in the times when you don't know what's going on in your life. The Spirit will fill your heart and give you a song, and I believe that the fact that Luke adds in verse 25, "and the prisoners heard them," indicates that they were a witness and a testimony. If they'd sulked, complained, and griped (like I might have), then they certainly wouldn't have been a witness.

Notice what happens, "And suddenly," God sent an earthquake, "so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." It's midnight in the prison. They're singing praises, and God sent an earthquake. Someone said God was tapping His foot to the music, and the prison began to shake and the doors were opened. I believe this is a miracle. This was a divine intervention. It also indicates the power of praise. When you're in a dark place and you begin to choose to praise the Lord and worship God, then He sets you free. He performs miracles. He does wonders.

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." Why is that? Because under Roman law, if a jail keeper had someone in their prison or jail and they escaped under your watch, then whatever their sentence was, you took it. It would seem as though some of the guys in the jail at that time were due to be executed. They were going to be killed; and if they escaped, then the jailer would be executed or killed. Rather than being executed, he was going to commit suicide. This was a dark moment in this man's life. He had really hit rock bottom. He thought the prisoners had all escaped. The doors were opened. They're all gone, so he takes out his sword, possibly to run himself through or to slice his throat, and at that very moment Paul cried out (verse 28), again an amazing thing, and said, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas."

I would have basically said, "Look, when you hear him hit the ground, then we book it out of here." Again, Paul's heart to reach the lost, to share the gospel, to reach out to those who are in need, he says, "Do yourself no harm. We're all here." Again, the Philippian jailer then grabbing a light, came in trembling before Paul and Silas. Kneeling down, he said to them, "... what must I do to be saved?" What did he mean by this question "saved?" I believe that he's talking about saved from sin. What do I need to do to be forgiven? What do I need to do to have eternal life? What do I need to do to know that when I die I'll go to heaven? What do I need to do to know that my sins are forgiven, that I will go to heaven when I die?

The Bible says that when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they brought sin and death upon the whole human race. The Bible teaches that everyone has sinned. Everyone has fallen short of the glory of God. The Bible teaches there's no one righteous, no not one. Not one of us is good enough to get to heaven. We all inherit sin and are separated from God because of our sin, and we all individually sin—we break God's laws, we break God's commandments. The question, "what must I do to be saved?" implies that there are only two classes of people—I want you to think about this—there are the saved and the unsaved. There are those who are going to heaven, and there are those that are going to hell. There are only two groups of people. There's the broad road that leads to destruction and the narrow gate that leads to eternal life and to heaven, two roads, two gates, two destinies—heaven or hell.

The Bible says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This implies that the jailer...and maybe tonight in your own heart, you realize that I'm lost. I'm not going to heaven. I believe that you can know when you die you're going to go to heaven. I believe that you can have an assurance of eternal life. I believe that right now, right here, you can know beyond any doubt that when you die, you're going to go to heaven—that you can be saved.

What made the jailer realize that he was lost? Well, maybe he had heard the slave girl days before saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God and they show us the way of salvation," or maybe it was the testimony of Paul and Silas, the fact that in the dungeon they prayed and sang praises to God. Maybe he was listening to and watching them. Maybe you've been watching a Christian, listening to the way they talk and the things they say, the joy that they have in their life, and maybe that appealed to him. Maybe it was the earthquake that God sent to wake him up. I believe it was a miracle. Maybe it was the hopelessness of his own life as he knew that he would die or be executed. He took out his own sword and was going to take his own life. Either way, we see that this man was ready to commit suicide. He had reached the end of his rope. He needed to know, "what must I do to be saved?" He wanted to know what the conditions were of salvation. Here they are. I want you to look at it with me in verse 31.

What do you need to do to get to heaven? What do you need to do to be saved? The answer (verse 31), "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," not saved if you're lucky, saved if you're a good person, saved if you go to church on Wednesday night, just you believe on Jesus Christ and you will be saved. He didn't say, "You have to live a good life." He didn't say, "You have to go to church." He didn't say, "You have to be baptized." You can't clean up your life to get to heaven. You can't join a church and get to heaven—religion cannot save. You can't be baptized and get to heaven. You can't be circumcised and go to heaven. Rites, rituals, and religion can't save. Here it is. Step 1, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to "believe?" This is kind of a back-to-basics night. Some of you are thinking you're just kind of getting an evangelistic sermon, and it's true. That's what this is, but we need to go back to basics either to know how to share the gospel or we need to hear the gospel. When someone says, "What must I do to be saved?" You don't say, "Well, uh, you need to come to church," or "You need to get baptized," or "You need a Christian haircut." You

need to believe on Jesus Christ. What does it mean to believe? It means to put your faith and your trust in Jesus Christ. It's very simple, Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." We are saved by grace through faith. It's not of ourselves. It's a gift that God gives us; that is, salvation, lest any man should boast.

You know, anyone can believe. A young person can believe. An old person can believe. An intellectual person can believe. A non-intellectual person can believe. An educated person can believe. An uneducated person can believe. Any race, creed, or color, you can believe. Here's what it means to believe—simple, but simply profound—it means to trust in, rely on, cling to, put all your faith, weight, and trust in Jesus Christ. You got that? We sing, Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to thy cross I cling. I'm not trusting in anything I am or I've done or I can do, I'm simply trusting in what Jesus did for me upon the Cross. You don't have to be strong. You don't have to be smart. You don't have to be good. You simply have to put your faith and trust in Christ—who died, was buried, and rose again from the dead. That's the gospel. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Amen? We understand that, and we share that. It's the power of the gospel that changes people's lives.

When the thief was hanging on the cross for his sins being executed, and he turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when You go into Your kingdom," Jesus said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." It's that simple—simply putting your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. John 3:16 is another great one to parallel Ephesians 2:8-9, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth," trust in, relies on, clings to, puts their faith, "in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What do we put our faith in? We need to have an object to our faith. Here it is. Look at the text again, "...the Lord Jesus Christ," He is the object of our faith, not our good works, not our righteousness, not our good deeds, but we put our faith in Jesus Christ. You know, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you'll not be disappointed. Have you ever had someone disappoint you that you trusted? Ever have someone disappoint you that you put your faith in? I want you to know tonight, Jesus Christ will never disappoint you. Amen? If you trust Him, He'll never let you down. He won't forsake you. He'll never leave you, and He will save you.

Why do we put our faith in Jesus Christ? Because He's God, John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh," (John 1:14) "and dwelt among us," He took on humanity, and because He died on the Cross, when He died on the Cross, it was God in flesh taking our place, dying in our stead; and because He rose from the dead (it's called the resurrection of Jesus Christ), He's the One whose coming back again—Jesus Christ. He came from heaven. He died on the Cross for your sins. He was buried. He rose again from the dead, then ascended back to heaven, and guess what? He's coming back! I love that! That's going to make the news. That's going to be big news. I wonder if CNN will cover that. Let's see them put a spin on that one! Jesus Christ is coming again! He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father,

but by me.”

Notice also verse 31, “...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and,” here’s the assurance, “thou shalt be saved.” He tells us how to be saved, by believing. He tells us Who to believe in, the Lord Jesus Christ; and then he tells us what will happen, you will be saved. Again, this speaks of the surety of salvation. The Bible says, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hearth us: And...we have the petitions that we desired of him,” and we know our sins are forgiven. We can be forgiven of sin’s penalty, power, and the very presence of sin altogether. My question tonight is: Have you believed on Jesus Christ? Have you trusted in Him?

When you are saved, your life will change. I want you to notice it there beginning in verse 31. He says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” That doesn’t mean that by your faith in Christ, your family automatically goes to heaven. You have to individually and personally trust Jesus Christ. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you’ll be saved. If your husband believes in Jesus, he’ll be saved. If your kids believe in Jesus, they’ll be saved. They are not automatically saved. There is no family salvation. God has only children, no grandchildren. “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord,” they shared the gospel with this jailer, “and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night,” the jailer gets converted and takes them home, “and washed their stripes,” an indication that his heart has now been changed. The Bible says, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” This cruel, heartless man is now washing their stripes, “and was baptized,” a public confession. Immediately he was baptized, “And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” He washed their wounds—he had a new heart, new life; he confessed Christ publicly—he was baptized; and he rejoiced with his whole family. He was born again.

Notice verses 35-40. “And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.” That’s interesting. It doesn’t say why. Why, all of the sudden, after beating them, throwing them in prison, are they just going to let them go? They must’ve felt that they were treated unjustly, and they wanted to let them go. “And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul,” that’s the jailer, “The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly,” notice that, “uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily;” no way! in my King James Bible, “but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. 40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren,” notice, “they comforted them, and departed.”

The jailer is converted. His life is changed, and the next day the magistrates send word that Paul and Silas are to be released. You would think they would be elated, “Oh, great!” Let’s go.

Let's get outta here," but Paul pulls his Roman citizenship on them. He says, "Not on your life! They beat us publicly, unaccused, without a trial, threw us into prison, and now they think that we're just gonna secretly walk away?" Why did Paul press this issue? Well, to begin with, you can't beat a Roman citizen, especially without a trial. The magistrates had broken their own Roman law (by the way, Philippi was a Roman colony) and Paul is saying, "Look, you guys are actually in danger right now. You're the ones that have broken the law." They could've been punished severely for that. Paul is actually saying, "You guys broke the law. You did it wrong!"

Why doesn't Paul just forget it and just leave? This is why, I believe, because had he secretly in silence just kind of went out of the city, there would've been suspicion and a cloud hanging over the head of the Christians that were left behind in Philippi. The citizens would've wondered, "Who were those men? What did they do wrong? Why were they in prison? What was going on? Why did the magistrates beat them? Who are these Christians?" There would've been kind of a cloud of suspicion hanging over their heads. Paul did it so that the Christians that were left behind would not be persecuted by the Roman government, so he goes to Lydia's house and comforts, encourages, ministers to, and spends time with them.

I want you to notice in verse 40 it says, "And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." That indicates, those "they's" there, Luke stayed behind in Philippi. Luke and Timothy are with them, but only Silas and Paul were beaten and thrown in prison. The "they" now, instead of "we," indicates that Luke, the beloved physician, who had a pastor's heart, most likely stayed behind in Philippi. He stayed there to teach, encourage, minister to, and pastor them. Whenever people come to know Jesus...and by the way, I love the foundation for this church in Philippi.

As I pointed out last Wednesday night, the first convert was Lydia. She was a seller of purple. Whether it was purple dye or purple garments, we don't know, but she was a saleswoman. She was very affluent. She had her own house. She was very well to do. She was a business woman. She was from the upper crust of society. She was probably a Gentile. She was probably a God-fearer. She believed in the God of Israel, but she was the first convert. The second convert was at the bottom of the social ladder. She was a slave who was demon-possessed, so we might say a very messed-up individual. The third convert in Philippi—the foundation of this first church in Europe—was a blue-collar worker. He was the prison guard. He was probably a Roman soldier, kind of the middle class—the hard-working, middle class guy. You have three individuals who became the foundation for the church in Philippi. What a motley crew the church is. Amen? The cool thing is that the ground is level at the foot of the Cross—rich person, poor person, middle class hard-working person, business person, educated person—we all come the same way, by faith and trust and belief in Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

What must I do to be saved? I want you to go back to this closing question, verse 30, because I want to close with it. What must I do to be saved? Verse 31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You might be here right now tonight and you haven't believed

on Jesus Christ. Maybe you believe with your head that there is a God and that God exists, but you haven't trusted in Him. You see, the Bible definition of "believe" isn't just head knowledge that God exists or even that Jesus is who He said He is. The Bible's definition of "believe" or faith or trust is committing yourself to Jesus Christ. It's taking that step of saying, "I trust Jesus, and I trust Jesus alone." The jailer was saved before he was baptized; and actually, it's interesting, there's no mention of repentance. It's assumed that he saw himself a sinner, "What must I do to be saved?"

Salvation is so simple that we stumble over it. That's the problem. It's so simple that it's like, "Well, no. I have to do something," or "I have to be smart enough," or "I have to work hard," or "I have to deserve or merit it." No. The Bible says Jesus paid it all on the Cross, and all we need to do is trust what He did, that finished work. That's what salvation is. It's a free gift that God wants to give you. He wants to give you that gift tonight. Maybe you've been coming to Revival Christian Fellowship for the last many weeks or months and you've been coming on Wednesday nights. I haven't given an invitation for many weeks; but tonight, before we close, I want to ask if you're here tonight and you don't know that if you died you'd go to heaven, you don't know for sure your sins are forgiven, do you know what? Jesus brought you here tonight to hear this message. Jesus brought you here tonight to give you this opportunity. You can be saved. You can be forgiven. You can know that when you die, you're going to go to heaven. Your heart can be clean. All of the sin of your past—and no sin too great—can be washed and cleansed, and you can have eternal life and become a child of God. You can leave church tonight a brand new person in Christ. Amen?