

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

By J.C.Settlemoir

The question is in the Bible!

So is the answer!

“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved: and they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16;29-31).

This is the only place in the Bible where this precise question “What must I do to be saved?” is found. Surely this is the high point of the Bible on this subject. All the questions and doubts raised on this issue are here settled once and for all.

The question is clear, concise, specific. The answer was plain, spontaneous, direct, definitive. No extras were introduced. This is the inspired answer. While the throne of God stands there can be no other answer to the question “What must I do to be saved?”

There are three distinct parts to this text:

1. The Question, and it is from the Lord;
2. The Answer, and it is from the Lord;
3. The Response, and it too is from the Lord.

## I. THE QUESTION IS FROM THE LORD

How does this pagan jailer come to ask this question? No man ever asked this question unaided by the grace of God.

Look at the background. Paul and Silas were in the region of Derby and Lystra, about six hundred miles from Philippi where the jailer lived. They were in Asia, he was in Macedonia. The Aegean Sea lay between them. Furthermore, Paul and Silas were determined to go east not west! But the Holy Spirit “suffered them not.” (Acts 16:6-7).

They then go to Troas, a coastal city and there await further orders. While there, Paul had a vision: “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.” (Acts 16:9).

Immediately they determine to sail into Macedonia. As they sail, their ship is guided by the great unseen hand. The sea cannot swallow that ship. No wind can blow it off course, nor will any mis-judgment on the part of the captain or crew abort the voyage. They must sail “a straight course,” to their destination. (Vs 11).

When they arrive they pass through Neapolis to Philippi. Here they attend a prayer meeting by the river on the Sabbath day where the Jews usually met. Apparently, only a few women showed up but Paul spoke to them and Lydia and her household were saved.

Now while they were on the way to this prayer meeting a girl possessed with a spirit began to follow Paul and the others and gave testimony that these men were of God.

After several days of this Paul grew weary of it and cast the spirit out of the girl. Her masters (for she was a slave) having lost their ability to profit by this girl caught Paul and Silas and haled them before the rulers. Without trial they whipped these preachers and cast them into prison.

The jailer put them into the most secure part of the prison and went to sleep. He cares nothing for the pain they endure from the severe lacerations of the whipping.

But this is just another link in God's plan. He sends an earthquake, throwing open the doors of the jail and loosing their stocks. The jailer is awakened in a start. When he sees the doors are opened he takes out his sword to kill himself, for he supposed the prisoners had run away. The penalty of losing prisoners was death. But Paul cries out: "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here!"

Now the earthquake is past, the prisoners are all safe and the fear of reprisal from the authorities is gone. Thus the question: "What must I do to be saved?" is not concerned with physical death, either from judicial or natural causes. The jailer's question is a soul-question.

It is clear that the Lord brought this jailer to the place where he would ask: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

## II. THE ANSWER IS FROM THE LORD

The answer is spontaneous! "They said (vs 31), that is, both Paul and Silas responded in unison. There was no need to sit down and discuss the response to be given. They had before determined from both Scripture and the Spirit's instruction what men were required to do in order to be saved. Instantaneously they give this answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

The disciples had just been through the "works for salvation" idea in the great council at Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15. What was the considered answer? Is anything, any work, required in order to be saved? If so this would have been the place to lay it out.

Here were the apostles. Here were the elders. Here was James, the Lord's half brother and the pastor of the Jerusalem church. Surely, if there was any work required for salvation,

whether an ordinance, ritual, or any other thing, then this is the place it would have been enunciated.

But listen carefully to the response of the council. Here is the question: “Is there any work required for salvation?” This would include circumcision (the particular thing which brought this council together, (Acts 15:1) or any other act done by ourselves or others.

If any work, and deed, any ordinance had been required for salvation then it is unthinkable that this meeting would have failed to mention it. Circumcision is not essential to salvation. What then? Could it be church membership? Could it be tongues? Could it be keeping the Law? Could it be baptism? The Lord’s supper?

Peter’s reply is, No, (Acts 15:7-11).

The answer of the elders is, Nay!

The answer of James is, Negative!

The answer of the church is, An absolute negative!

Finally we learn in the 28<sup>th</sup> verse the answer of the Holy Spirit was also a resounding negative!

These inspired negatives cancel out all the false answers given since the foundation of the world!

Furthermore, the Lord Himself taught this same truth during His earthly ministry (Lk 7:50; Mat 9:2; Mk 10:52, see margin; 9:23; Mat 15:28; Luke 18:42), all which serve only as a sample.

The message of God's grace has ever been the same:

“Come, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,

God's free bounty glorify;

True belief and true repentance,

Every grace that brings you nigh.”

“If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isa. 8:20).

### III. THE RESPONSE IS FROM THE LORD

Now we consider the response.

When the jailer hears the answer to his question he immediately responds--he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why does he believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Only an hour before the jailer was a darkened pagan under the power of Satan. But now he sees the light of God. He is saved! But how? How did he come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

The question was from the Lord. The answer was from the Lord and so was the response. Faith is the gift of God. Jesus said: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him....” (Jn. 6:37,63).

God's prevenient grace not only prepared the preachers and sent them to Philippi, sent them to jail under this man's authority, but grace was also working with the jailer. This is

why he asked the question. Now when he hears the answer he believes it and so does his family. The gifts of faith and repentance are but the evidences of that sacred and abiding work of regeneration (Acts 11:18; Eph 2:8; Jn 3:5; I Jn 5:1).

Notice there are here none of the things so often required by men. The jailer is directed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he willingly, gladly does so. This response is from the Lord!

The question, What must I do to be saved, came from the Lord.

The answer, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, came from the Lord.

The response of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ was from the Lord!

Here in this brief interchange we have the culmination of the gospel of all grace: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! Christ also said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is believing on Him and that is what Paul and Silas said. This is what the Word of God requires of every man. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!

Now think about this great theme. Who gets the glory? The Lord.

Who receives the blessing? Every believer.

Don't ever be satisfied with any answer but this one. The question is in the Bible and so is the answer.

The Bible will never misguide you!

