

“What Must I Do to Be Saved?”

- I. The all-important question.
- II. The amazing answer.
- III. The life-changing results.

Dear Christian friends,

While working on this sermon last Friday I tried coming up with a CATCHY THEME – one that would stick in our minds. **Unfortunately** nothing came to mind. But then I had an “**epiphany**” – a revelation. It’s pretty obvious that these verses are all about the jailer’s question, **“What must I do to be saved?”** That question may NOT BE CATCHY but it should stick in our memories. **“What must I do to be saved?”** is 1)the all-important question. It has 2)an amazing answer with 3)life-changing results. So let’s look more closely at that question – “WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”

I. The all-important question.

I hope that we all agree that **“What must I do to be saved?”** IS the all-important question. **“What must I do to be saved?”** goes TO THE HEART of our personal relationship with our Creator. It determines where we will SPEND ETERNITY – **with the devil** in hell’s eternal punishment or **with God** in heaven’s eternal glory and rest. NOTHING can be more important than CORRECTLY ANSWERING this **all-important** question!

Unfortunately for many people this is NOT the **most important** question in their life. MORE IMPORTANT – more pressing – are **questions like** – “WHAT’S for supper? What time is the game? **What’s** the stock market doing? **Where** can I find a job?”

“What must I do to be saved?” was probably not the FIRST QUESTION on the minds of these prisoners in the jail of the Greek city of Philippi. More likely it was “HOW can I get out of here? **What’s going to happen** to me now?” FOR THIS JAILER at first his BIG CONCERN was not **“What must I do to be saved?”** but “HOW can I keep these prisoners from escaping?” He had been **“commanded to guard (Paul and Silas) carefully.”** So **“he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.”** With that taken care of he could turn his attention to MORE PLEASANT things like, “What’s for supper?” God, however, was about to SHAKE THINGS UP in his life!

“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken.” This was no ordinary earthquake. God was obviously at work in it answering Paul and Silas’ prayers and hymns. **“At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.”** ALL the prisoners were free to escape. The jailer assumes they all have. What prisoner WOULDN’T TRY to escape **under these circumstances?**

Under Roman law when prisoners escaped the jailer received their sentence. **If the prisoners** were sentenced to life in prison the jailer was sentenced to life in prison. If the prisoner was sentenced to die the jailer was sentenced to die. **“When (the jailer) saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.”** Paul shouts to stop him – he assures the jailer, **“We’re all here.”** Nothing is MAKING SENSE to the jailer.

He ***“calls for lights, rushes in and falls trembling before Paul and Silas. He brings them out and asks, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”***

We’re not told what ALL LED the jailer to ask this **all-important** question. Paul took it as an HONEST question. God had gotten the **jailer’s attention** and the jailer would soon get God’s AMAZING ANSWER.

“What must I do to be saved?” IS the all-important question and God IN LOVE still works to get people’s attention. **Sometimes** God needs to use a 2x4 on us – a devastating illness – a **terminal diagnosis** from the doctor – a crippling car accident – financial ruin, etc. SUDDENLY our priorities in life change all around. ***“What must I do to be saved?”*** becomes the ALL-IMPORTANT question.

“What must I do to be saved?” is a very personal question AND an honest confession. It’s PERSONAL – I’m not asking “What must THEY DO to be saved?” but “What must **I do** to be saved?” It’s a confession – “I NEED to be saved! I’m in BIG TROUBLE with God and I don’t know how to MAKE THINGS RIGHT with Him.”

“What must I do to be saved?” becomes the **all-important** question when I take an honest look at MYSELF – my heart – my life – my thoughts, words, actions – my desires and feelings – **take an honest look** at myself IN THE MIRROR of God’s law – His 10 Commandments. I’m not guilty of making a FEW MISTAKES or POOR CHOICES. I have ignored and defied my Creator’s **clear will** for my life. With my choices and actions I have bluntly told almighty God I DON’T CARE what He has to say – I’ll do what I want. I’ve done that EVERY DAY of my life – countless times each day. ***“What must I do to be saved?”*** HOW can there even be any hope for a sinner like me? Ah, hear...

II. God’s amazing answer.

“They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.’” What an AMAZING answer! It’s NOT a you might – you probably – there’s a good chance – ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you WILL BE saved.”***

“Believing” is not an OUR DOING something **for God** but OUR RECEIVING **from God**. ***“Believing”*** is a trusting – a relying on – a putting our confidence – NOT IN OURSELVES – not in how sorry we are for our sins – not in how sincerely we want to **do better**. ***“Believing”*** is relying on – putting our confidence – ***“in Jesus.”***

“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.” A person can’t believe in Jesus if he hasn’t heard about Jesus. ***“Faith comes from hearing the message!”***

The facts are SO SIMPLE – so FAMILIAR to us – but may they ever be AS PRECIOUS to us as when this jailer and his family heard them for the first time from Paul and Silas. Jesus is God Himself – the eternal Son of God born our **flesh-and-blood** Brother. Jesus took our place under God’s law and took care of everything for us to be saved. We owed God a whole life of **perfect love** – perfect obedience – perfect trust. We can’t even live five minutes of such a perfect life. Jesus actually did live that perfect life and He gives us all the credit for it. We deserved death and hell – to be forever “forsaken” by God because of our sins. The **sinless** Lord Jesus took the blame for the sins of the whole world and was punished in our place. Jesus endured the death and hell we had coming. Jesus was ***“forsaken”*** – we are forgiven. Just don’t leave Jesus dead and buried! Jesus rose triumphant from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus lives – ***“nevermore to die.”***

“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.” What an AMAZING answer! God doesn’t have DIFFERENT ANSWERS for different sinners and different sins.

WHOEVER the sinner – WHATEVER all the sins might be – **“believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”** Trusting in Jesus and all He’s done for us we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE that God has forgiven all our sins – that we are reconciled with our Creator – that we are going straight to heaven when we die.

“Immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Today we remember what a PRECIOUS GIFT from God Holy Baptism is. Baptism is not us opening our **hearts and lives** to Jesus. Baptism is God entering our hearts and making us Christians.

The word **“baptize”** simply means to “wash – use water.” Yet as Luther put it so clearly in the catechism, “Baptism is not just plain water, but water used by God’s command and connected with God’s Word.” Through this **“washing of water and the Word”** God gave us **“rebirth”** – brought us to trust in Jesus as our Savior – God **“washed away”** our sins – **“clothed”** us with Jesus’ perfect life – adopted us as His children – promised us eternal life in heaven. Oh treasure your baptism! LIVE your baptism – you ARE a child of God – an heir of heaven!

Yes, God’s amazing answer to this **all-important** question has...

III. Life-changing results.

We see these **life-changing** results in Paul and Silas. They knew God’s **amazing answer** to that all-important question. They just had to share God’s answer with others. If they had just kept their mouths shut they would have saved themselves SO MUCH hardships and sufferings. But no – they HAD TO SHARE their Jesus with others. They just couldn’t hide their Christian faith.

So they came to Philippi. They’ve been false accused of **“throwing the city into an uproar.”** Their civil rights as Roman citizens have been violated. WITHOUT any investigation or trial they were **“stripped – severely flogged – thrown into prison with their feet in the stocks.”** What would YOU have been doing under such circumstances? What language would you have been using? See the LIFE-CHANGING results of the gospel! Paul and Silas were **“praying and singing hymns to God”** and doing so so that the other prisoners could hear them. No foul language – no bitterness – anger – resentment. No keeping quiet or being ashamed of the gospel. Years later as a **prisoner once more** Paul wrote to this jailer, his family and the other Christians in Philippi, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”**

See the LIFE-CHANGING results in the jailer and his family. Hours earlier he was DESPAIRING and SUICIDAL. Now he’s **“filled with joy, because he had come to believe in God.”** Trusting in Jesus as his Savior he now had God’s love – forgiveness – peace – promises – presence. HOW could he not be **“filled with joy”**?

Before this ONLY CONCERN was that Paul and Silas **not escape.**; That their backs were bleeding and **in shreds** from the flogging – that the stocks caused their **aching legs** to cramp – that they were hungry – TOO BAD! TOUGH LUCK! Now he **“takes them to his house – washes their wounds – feeds them.”** Touched by GOD’S love how could he not show such love to others – especially to Paul and Silas? Saved by God’s grace how could he live a **selfish, SELF-CENTERED** life?

See the LIFE-CHANGING results in your life! You do see them, right? Others can see the DIFFERENCE JESUS MAKES in your life, right? Knowing God’s AMAZING ANSWER to that **all-important** question of **“What must I do to be saved?”** – how can our lives NOT be totally changed around? Amen.