

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

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(Edited, condensed, and arranged by Michael Shank for the Marion church of Christ web site)

There are some serious questions being asked in our world today. People want to know what the future holds. Will there be another attack such as we witnessed on "9/11/01"? Is there life on other planets? Will we find a cure for cancer in our lifetime? These are important questions, but they pale into insignificance compared to the question asked by the Philippian Jailor as recorded in Acts 16:30: "*Sirs, What must I do to be saved?*"

This question is important because it has to do with eternity. It has to do with the soul and its relationship to God. The Jailor recognized that he was lost and asked Paul and Silas, his prisoners, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*"

The first step in coming into a state of salvation is to recognize that one is lost and is in need of a savior. The Jailor had come to this point in his life. Paul and Silas began to answer the man's question by saying, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.*" *And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized*"(Acts. 16:31-33).

Please consider some salient points regarding the salvation of this man and his family.

1. Salvation is personal. He asked "What must *I* do to be saved?" He didn't ask about some deceased ancestor who perhaps had never heard of Jesus. He recognized that *he* was in need of salvation.

2. Salvation requires obedience. The Jailor knew there was something required of him. Many religious leaders deny that man has any responsibility in his salvation. To many the word "*obey*" is a "four letter word" to be avoided. The Bible is clear that there is something about the gospel one must obey. (See Matthew 7:21; Acts 6:7; Romans 6:16-18). The Jailor knew there was something to do. Later, when he learned the truth of the gospel from Paul and Silas, he complied with its demands (see Acts 16:33).

3. Salvation is from above. Salvation does not come from man but from God. Men have devised their own systems of salvation rather than submitting to God's plan for redeeming man (see Romans 1:18-32; 10:1-3). The ancient prophet Jeremiah exclaimed, "*O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.*"(Jeremiah 10:23).

4. Salvation requires both belief *and* baptism. In answer to the question, "*What must I do to be saved?*", Paul and Silas told the Jailor, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.*" The Jailor took the two prisoners, cleaned their wounds and listened to their answer to his question regarding his salvation. Following this study session, "*immediately he and all his family were baptized.*" A meal followed the baptism as they rejoiced in the salvation of this fine family (Acts 16: 34). Notice, "*having believed in God with all his*

household." It is clear that the comprehensive expression "*having believed in God*" includes **repentance** as well as **baptism** and **faith**. Frequently in the New Testament believing and obedience are used to represent the same idea (see John 3:36; Hebrews 3:18-19; 4:3-6 and compare John 3:16 with Hebrews 5:9).

Other examples of how people were saved include:

- 1. The Jews at the Feast of Pentecost** (Acts 2).
- 2. The Samaritans** (Acts 8:5-13).
- 3. The Ethiopian** (Acts 8:35-39)
- 4. Saul of Tarsus** (Acts 9:1-18; 22:3-16; 26:1-23)
- 5. Cornelius**, the first Gentile convert (Acts 10:34-48; 11:1-18)
- 6. Lydia** (Acts 16:13-15)

In each case of New Testament conversion, we note the following:

1. One must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "*...if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*" Jesus also said, "*...he who does not believe will be condemned.*" Belief in Christ implies complete reliance and surrender, not just a mere "mental acceptance."

2. One must repent of sins. Repentance is a "change of mind" that results in a change of conduct. Jesus said, "*...unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13:3,5). In the first gospel sermon recorded in the book of Acts, the apostle Peter, by inspiration commanded repentance "*for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38).

3. One must confess the name of Christ. Jesus said, "*Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*" Confession, therefore, is not a confession of sins, or some kind of a testimonial. Biblical confession is exemplified by the Ethiopian convert as he asked "*What hinders me from being baptized?*" Philip said, "*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*" And he answered and said, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*" Evidently the young preacher Timothy, upon his conversion, had made the same confession. The apostle Paul reminded him of this when wrote, "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses*" (1 Timothy 6:12).

4. One must be baptized into Christ. Jesus said, "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved...*" (Mark 16:16). Many who heard the apostle Peter preach the first gospel sermon, "*...were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*" Ananias told Saul to "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16).

Please search each case of conversion given in the Book of Acts and notice that **not once** is anyone told to "pray the sinner's prayer." No one is told to "just ask Jesus to come into your heart" and you will be saved! In **every case of conversion**, recorded by inspiration, people were converted by believing the *facts of Gospel* (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4), obeying the *commands of the Gospel*, (repent of sins, confess the name of Jesus, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:1-6; 6:16-18; Matthew 10:32-33). Upon obeying the Gospel, one receives the *promises* of the Gospel (salvation, [remission of sins] and the gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:39; 5:32).

Those who thus "obeyed the gospel" (Acts 6:7) were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). Having experienced the "new birth" (John 3:3-5, compare Romans 6:3-6) they became "*new creatures*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). When people today do what they did, they can become what they became "Christians" (Acts 11:26), members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

If you have any questions concerning this most important of all questions, "What must I do to be saved," please contact us immediately! We want to assist you in your obedience to Jesus Christ, and may God be with your search for His truth.