

## The Most Important Question of All

[Acts 16:22-34](#)

There are many important questions being asked around our world today. Many are asking, “*When will the economy pick up?*” The United Nations is asking, “*What should we do about the nuclear problem in Iran?*” The whole world is asking, “*What will be the results of a war in Afghanistan?*” Our nation is asking, “*Are we safe, or will there be another terrorist attack on our nation?*” Everyone is asking questions, but it also seems that no one is asking the most important question of all.

In this text, a sin-hardened, pagan jailer asks the most important question that has ever been uttered in the history of the world. He asks, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” If you look at these verses, you will see that there are some other great questions that this jailer might have asked that night. He might have asked, “*How did the doors of my prison get opened?*” Or, “*Why haven't all my prisoners escaped?*” Or, “*Who am I going to blame for this?*”

Instead, he asks a question that gets to the heart of his problem as an individual and to the heart of the problem for every person in the entire human race. He asks, “*What must I do to be saved?*”

I would like for us to examine that question today. As we do, I want you to ask that question within your own heart. For a few minutes today, stop asking questions about all the things that are happening in your life, and ask yourself the most important question in the world, “*What must I do to be saved?*”

This passage not only poses the question, it also provides the answers. Let me share those answers with you. I want to preach for a while about *The Most Important Question Of All*. Let's take a look at our text.

**Act 16:22** And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

**Act 16:23** And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

**Act 16:24** Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

**Act 16:25** And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

**Act 16:26** And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

**Act 16:27** 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.

**Act 16:28** But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

**Act 16:29** Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

**Act 16:30** And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

**Act 16:31** And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

**Act 16:32** And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

**Act 16:33** And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

**Act 16:34** And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Look back at verse 30. The jailer asked, “Sirs what must I do to be saved?” This man’s world has just been turned upside down, and there are many things he could have said or done, but this question is the first thing out of his mouth. Let’s first look at:

## I. The Reason for This Question

### A. It Was Provoked by Fear

**Act 16:27** 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.

This jailer believed that he was going to die. Under Roman law, that is just what would have happened to him had he lost his prisoners. It was the fear of his own punishment and death that drove him to the feet of the Apostle Paul that night in Philippi.

Every person who gets saved comes to Jesus by faith. However, the road that leads them to Him may be different for all! Each one of you listening this morning that have come to Christ were saved in exactly the same manner, but we all travelled different paths to get there. Our testimonies are as unique as we are. The characters we see in the Bible are no different.

- **Paul.** This gentleman believed in God. In fact he was a Pharisee. Problem was he believed Christianity to be a blasphemy, and he was busy choking Christianity out in its own blood until he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul was a religious, but had never trusted Christ.
- **Lydia.** If you go up the page from our text, the Bible tells us of this woman who was a wealthy merchant. It says that she worshipped God, but her heart wasn’t opened until she “attended” to those things Paul was talking about. She was a religious person but had never understood the Gospel.

- **and the Jailer** . Our jailer wasn't a believer, but he was in the presence of believers. There are a lot of things that can be gleaned concerning the events in this passage, but what jumps out to me concerning this story is how it seems that God moved heaven and earth to bring one man to a saving faith.

Point here is this, some people come to Jesus to escape Hell and the wrath of God. Others come because they are moved by the cross. In each case however, there are specific events that happen to bring us to that moment. Thank God for whatever He uses in your life to “awaken you” and to bring you to Jesus!)

## **B. It Was Provoked by Faith**

It is interesting to note that this jailer did not take the time to secure the prison or the prisoners. His first thought was for his own salvation. Many have read this and thought that he is just trying to save his skin. I think he was interested in saving his soul.

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**Act 16:28** But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

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**Act 16:30** And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

You see, as he lay down in his bed that night to sleep, there were two men in that prison who were engaged in worship. As they sang about Jesus and, no doubt, shared the promises of Christ from the Word of God, this man heard them. His heart was pricked and he experienced a “*spiritual*” awakening as well as a physical one. He had probably never given God a moment's thought before that night, but what he saw and what he heard were used of the Lord to open his spiritual eyes.

That is how salvation beings for every person in the world.

- They are dead to God and to all He represents. ([Eph. 2:1](#)).
- Then, through the awakening ministry of the Holy Spirit, ([John 16:8](#)), the sinner is made to understand his sins, his future in hell and the gift of God in Christ Jesus.
- This is called conviction, ([John 6:44](#)), and it is a blessed gift of God!

In our passage, God used both the physical and the spiritual to open this man's heart to the truth of his need. Whatever it takes in any life to do this is a price worth paying! The physical is all around us now. People are worried about a whole lot of things, Covid, the Taliban, Afghanistan, Iran and nukes, the economy, money, jobs, crime, etc. Turn on the news and they will give you more than enough to worry about. But what I am not seeing, and it is key in this passage, is worship. I want to issue a challenge to everyone here this morning. For the next 40

days, if you are not already doing this, I want you first of all to get yourself to Sunday worship. Next, I want you to turn your radios, phones, whatever to a Christian station, or playlist and just let it play so that anyone coming into your space hears it. Next, I want you to be happy, I mean Forrest Gump happy, no matter what the situation – water off a ducks back happy. Finally, I want you to be purposely caught in acts of worship and adoration. Sing, hum, or whistle to those songs, give all praise and glory to God, and be seen praying over that breakfast, lunch and dinner. I believe if you do this, if we do this collectively, there are going to be some “spiritual awakenings” in those around us, and we too will be asked the most important question. We’ve seen the question. Now, I would like you to look at:

## II. The Response to This Question

Notice that:

### A. It Involved a Person

**Act 16:31** And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Paul points the jailer to the “*Lord Jesus Christ.*” Jesus is lifted up as the sinner's only hope for salvation. This is what the Bible teaches.

**Act 4:12** Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

**Joh 14:6** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

I know that we live in a society that seeks to find the good in all religions. And, there are aspects of all the religions of the world that make them appealing to certain people. I also know that there are good people in all religions. I also concede that all religions produce “good” things after the flesh. However, I also know that the only way any person, anywhere can ever be saved is by receiving Jesus Christ as his Savior! It may sound narrow-minded and exclusive to men, but that is just what the Word of God teaches!

Just as a reminder:

- Jesus is the One Who left heaven to be born in human flesh. ([John 1:1, 14](#))
- He is the same One Who lived a perfect, sinless life while here. ([1 Pet. 2:22](#))
- He is the One Who died for you on the cross. ([Rom. 5:8](#); [Rev. 1:5](#))
- He is the One Who arose from the dead on the third day. ([Matt. 28:1-6](#))
- He is the One Who ascended back to Heaven and now sits on the right hand of God. ([Heb. 10:12](#))
- It is His blood alone that saves. ([1 Pet. 1:18-19](#))

- And it is He Who will return someday to retrieve His people and judge the world. ([Rev. 22:12](#))

You are welcome to try any method you please to get to heaven, but only Jesus Christ can save your soul! Notice now that:

## **B. It Involved a Plan**

### **Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,...**

The jailer is told to *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."* That is, he is to place his faith in Christ and His work alone for salvation. At this point, the jailer surely does not know all about the message of the Gospel, but the basis for salvation, *"faith in Jesus"*, has been established.

This is where so many people miss salvation. They cannot grasp the fact that people are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Once, a missionary in Africa was attempting to translate the Gospel of John into the language of the natives. He became stuck on the word *"believeth"* in [John 3:16](#). For weeks he tried to find a suitable word in the native tongue to translate that all important word. Then one day a young native man came running down the path that led to the missionary's house. He came up on the missionary's porch, out of breath and flopped himself down in a chair and said, in the native tongue, *"It feels good to cast my whole weight upon this chair!"* The missionary knew that he had found his word. Faith in Jesus means to *"cast your whole weight upon Him."*

Ladies and gentlemen, that is also the definition of trust. If you are a bit confused about this concept, I would invite you to at this very moment look down at your feet. Now ask yourself, Self, why is my rear end not positioned adjacent to those fine looking shoes that I am gazing at. Now take your hand and touch the chair that is between your rear end and the floor. You have cast all your weight upon it, without thinking about it I might add, trusting that it would do what it is advertised to do. We do the same with Jesus, we cast all our weight upon Him to save us, and then we continually cast all our weight upon Him for everything else.

A man who lives in a second floor apartment keeps a rope ladder in his room in case there is a fire. He believes that the rope ladder is strong enough to support his weight and that the wooden rungs will allow him to reach the ground safely. He believes that in his head, but it is not until he actually throws that rope ladder out of the window and commits his whole weight to it that he will know for sure that it can support him.

So it is with many people! They have an intellectual understanding of the truth and they believe it in their heads, but they never fully trust it by faith. Listen, if you are trusting Jesus plus anything else, you simply are not saved! He must be trusted exclusively! I urge you to cast all your weight upon Him! Back to our text and we see that:

### C. It Involved a Promise

**Act 16:31** ...and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

“*thou shalt be saved*” - The word “*saved*” is a glorious word! It means “*to be rescued from all harm and danger, to keep safe and sound.*” I like being saved! The promise is clear: believe on Jesus and you will be saved! That promise is still good today! No one who has trusted Jesus need ever fear being cast in to Hell. If your faith is in Him, you have His word on your security.

**Joh 6:37** All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

**Joh 6:38** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

**Joh 6:39** And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

**Joh 6:40** And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

**Joh 10:28** And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

**Joh 10:29** My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

**Joh 10:30** I and *my* Father are one.

Finally, I would like you to see:

## III. The Results of This Question

### A. It Led to Salvation

**Act 16:32** And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

**Act 16:33** And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

**Act 16:34** And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

[Verse 34](#) tells us that after he heard the Gospel, [v. 32](#), he believed and was saved. And notice, not only him, but his entire house. Remember, that's how it works! You see, there is a difference between historical faith and saving faith. Historical faith believes the facts of the Bible, saving faith embraces the Christ of the Bible.

Think of it this way, when you are out driving and come to a bridge across a river, you just cross it. You don't know who built it, when it was built, what the weight limit is, what kinds or grade of materials were used in its construction or whether it will hold you up or not. You just go on across that bridge with all the faith in the world.

But, when it comes to your soul, you will trust everything to save you but the one thing God said would do the job. Why is that? Every plan of salvation in the world has been tried and all have failed! The only one that works is salvation through grace by faith.

**Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:**

**Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

Remember what I said earlier? If you are trusting in Jesus plus anything else you are not saved. That's heavenly math folks.  $1+0=1$ , but  $1+1=0$ . In other words, Jesus plus nothing else equals Jesus, but Jesus plus anything else equals nothing.

Have you trusted Jesus and Him alone for your salvation? The second result of the jailers question was that:

### **B. It Led to Service**

As soon as this man gets saved, a change becomes evident in his life. Look at verse 23 and 24.

**Act 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:**

**Act 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.**

Now please look at verses 33-34.

**Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.**

**Act 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.**

In [verse 24](#), he dealt harshly with Paul and Silas. The word "*thrust*" means "*to throw or cast a thing without caring about where it falls.*" Yet, in [verses 33-34](#), he is seen washing their stripes, and feeding them from his own table. He is a new creature and He demonstrates this by being baptized and by serving the men of God. This is the experience for every person who comes to Jesus by faith! They are forever changed by His power!

**2Co 5:17** Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Before you were saved you did what you wanted to, and most of the time didn't care who or what it affected. After you are saved, you still do what you want to. The difference is that your want has been changed. There will be a new desire to live for God and to be a vessel in His hand for His glory.

**Jas 2:18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

**Eph 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Has your want changed? Do you still live for self, or do you have a real desire to bring the Lord glory? Do you have a concern for others? Remember we love a God that we can't see, by loving on others that we can? Has your faith developed feet? Have you been changed?

The final result I would like you to see this morning is that:

### C. It Led to Satisfaction

**Act 16:34** And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

The Bible says that this man "rejoiced". He is filled with happiness and praise to the Lord. I can hear him at the dinner table, *"Paul, when I heard you and Silas singing at midnight, I thought you boys had lost your minds. Now, I know Who you were singing about!"*

Meeting Jesus makes all the difference in life! He transforms the dead into the living, the lost into the found, the miserable into the joyful, and the sinner into the saint. He fills the hearts of His children with peace, joy and permanent satisfaction!

Well, I am going to close this out, but before I do, I gotta ask you. Do you know what I am talking about? Has Jesus lifted the curtain of gloom from your soul and given you His perfect, profound joy? I can promise you that there will be no doubt if He has!

Also, what is the main question that has your attention today? Are questions of war, the economy, the pandemic, and the troubles of the world bringing you fear and confusion? Let me encourage you to ask yourself the most important question of all, *"What must I do to be saved?"* What is your answer that question today? Eternity hinges on your answer! Think about it, and let's talk.