

Nursing Home Message No. 35  
ACTS 16:31

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

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This afternoon, I want to tell you about two preachers who were thrown in jail, and how that incident was used by God for the salvation of souls and the founding of a church.

Paul and Silas were preaching in Philippi, doing the works of God. Then one day they met a girl who had the spirit of divination. We're not exactly sure what that means, but it probably means she was something like a modern fortune teller. But we do know from the Bible that her works were the works of Satan himself.

Now a group of men in the city used this girl: they exploited her talents for financial gain. She did the work and they received the money. If you trace many of our modern sins back to their basic motives, you'll find this kind of greed behind our modern sins too. Paul later wrote in I Timothy 6:10, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

Well Paul saw the plight of this poor girl and with the power given to him by God, he cast out the evil spirit from her. This stirred up a hornets nest! The men who used the girl saw that they were going to lose money, so they pounced upon Paul and Silas and brought them to the court where they were accused of teaching false customs.

The magistrates commanded that they be beaten, so many stripes were laid on the poor preachers' backs. Then they were locked up in the stocks in the inner part of the prison.

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But God had not forgotten His servants. In spite of the beating and the prison and the stocks, Paul and Silas were able to sing and pray at midnight. They were in great pain, the blood was drying on their backs, they were securely fastened in the stocks, but there was a song in their hearts, because Christ lived within them. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who

are the called according to his purpose."

When God heard the prayers and songs as they rose up to his throne, He sent a mighty earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. All the doors were opened and all the prisoners were set free from the stocks and chains. The jailer rushed out of his living quarters. The jailer was an honorable man serving in a highly trusted position. He thought that all the prisoners placed in his charge had escaped and, preferring death to dishonor, he drew out his sword and prepared to kill himself. But Acts 16:28 records that "Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."

At that very moment, the Holy Spirit of God convicted the jailer of sin and convinced him that he had not been following the best leaders. Acts 16:29 and 30 records, "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 Paul and Silas replied in Acts 16:31:

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

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So Paul and Silas, always on the alert, preached a gospel sermon to the jailer and all that were in his house. The jailer, who had locked them in the stocks the night before, now tenderly washed the stripes on their backs. Then the jailer and his family were baptized and, after that solemn ceremony, all of them sat down to eat, rejoicing that salvation had come to the jailer's heart and home and family.

Here is an excellent picture of salvation in simple form:

First the jailer became convinced that he was a sinful man; that just being honorable and trustworthy was not enough.

Second, he heard the Gospel message.

Third, he believed and was saved.

Fourth, he gave evidence of his conversion by washing

the stripes of Paul and Silas.

Fifth, he was baptized in obedience to the righteous command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, sixth, he rejoiced in the knowledge of his salvation.

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Acts 20:21 tells us that there are two conditions for salvation, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." All through the Bible repentance comes before faith. Repentance is a change of mind and heart toward God. So why did Paul and Silas only tell the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Because it was obvious to them that he was already repenting. When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" he was simply saying, "I've had a change of heart; I'm willing to do whatever you say." So, in effect, Paul and Silas were saying, "You've repented of your sin, now place your faith in Jesus Christ and you'll be saved."

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When the jailer cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "That's all in the hands of God: if He wants you to be saved, He'll save you." Some people believe that. They go through life expecting God to do something to save them. But He has already done everything necessary to save anyone who will come to Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Turn over a new leaf, live a good life and you'll be saved." Every year, many people make New Year's resolutions to live a better life. Most of those resolutions get broken. But even if you kept every resolution perfectly, that would not mean that you had met Christ and been saved. Nicodemus was a good moral man: he had to be to become a member of the Sanhedran; the governing body of Israel. But in John 3:7, Jesus told him, "Ye must be born again." Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Treat everybody right, be kind to everybody, and you'll be saved." A preacher was called upon to conduct a funeral, and a member of the dead man's family said to the preacher, "He wasn't a Christian, he never joined a church. But he never harmed anybody: he treated everybody right." And this person thought that the man had gone to heaven because of that. But that is not enough. Salvation is based upon the way you treat Jesus Christ, not the way you treat others. If you get right with Christ, you will surely treat others in the right way, but just being a good friend or a good neighbor doesn't save anyone. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Join a good Christian Church, and you'll be saved." Now, I believe that anyone who has had the tremendous experience of conversion to Christ will want to join a church. But just getting your name on a church roll without a previous experience with Christ is an empty gesture. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Be baptized, and you'll be saved." Many churches seem to teach that baptism is the door into the kingdom of God. But in John 10:9, Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." I read about a prominent man who was dying. He was unconscious. A preacher came in, poured some water on the man's head, and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." How many sins did that wash away: **NONE!** Baptism is an outward thing, but salvation is an inward thing. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Live a good and moral life, and you'll be saved." We ought to always live a good and moral life, but you can be the best and most moral person in the entire world and still wind up in Hell. Your goodness can never save you. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment of all, He replied in Luke 10:27, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Every one of us has broken that commandment, and so every one of us deserves to go to Hell. Thank God that Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

When the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul did **NOT** say, "Give some money to the church, and you'll be saved." We ought to give as a matter of love for Christ, but even if you gave

a billion dollars to the church, that money would not save you. Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

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A little girl was once born into a Montana rancher's home. A neighbor gave her a Newfoundland puppy and the little girl and the dog grew up together as inseparable companions. When the girl was five years old, the dog had become a giant: Newfoundlands are very big dogs. One day the girl's father went to town and left the gate open.

The little girl slipped out of the yard and the dog went with her. She was not missed for more than an hour. When the father came home and found her missing, he was frantic. The father and mother searched high and low, but it was several hours before they found the little girl up in the mountains. Her dress was torn, her face was covered with dust and tears. She was asleep and her faithful dog was guarding her.

Her father saw blood on the dog and knew there had been a fight. He looked over in the bushes and found two dead wolves. He knew then that the dog had killed them when they attacked the little girl. The dog had been seriously wounded. The man took the girl and the dog home. The girl was not harmed, but the dog died the next day.

The man and his wife wept over the dog. They made a coffin for him and buried him. Then they placed a stone over his head which read, "Oh, how we loved him."

If this man and woman loved a such a dog who saved their daughter, how can you refuse to love Jesus who died for you?

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The jailer in Phillipi didn't have the Bible to tell him about Jesus: it hadn't been written yet. He couldn't go to church and hear the gospel: the church in Philippi wasn't there yet. But you can't use any of those excuses. If you want to go to Hell when you die, you'll have to climb over the Bible, over the church, over all of the sermons you've ever heard (including this one), over the call of the Holy Spirit, over my prayers for you, and over the Love of Jesus Christ Himself!

During the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee reported the death of one of his young officers. He had been a fine Christian

and greatly admired by all the men. His body was taken home to Alabama. As the casket was rolled in the front door, his mother stood there, the tears streaming down her face. But she was also singing, "Washed in the blood of the lamb."

Don't you want it to be that way when you die?

Then, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"

Hallelujah!        Amen!

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