

The Greatest Question Ever Asked

No. 198

Introduction.

- I. Near the middle of the first century Paul and Silas were placed in prison at Philippi because they had cast a spirit of divination from a slave girl. While they were in prison at Philippi, there was a great earthquake shaking the foundations of the prison-house and opening the doors of the cells. The frightened jailor started to take his life supposing the prisoners had escaped. Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm; for we are all here." The jailor came and fell down before Paul and Silas and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"
- II. Through the ages man has asked many great and important questions, but none have been as great or as important as this one asked by the jailor. This is the greatest question ever asked. If I did not believe this with all my heart, I would quit preaching and pursue something more important in life.
- III. In answer to this question, let us consider several passages in the New Testament. (Rom. 6:23; Tit. 2:11; Eph. 2:8, 9).
 - A. Paul declares in these passages that man is saved by the grace of God.
 1. Grace means "unmerited favor." Man is saved by the unmerited favor of God.
 2. There is absolutely nothing man can do to earn or merit his salvation. If a man attended every service of the church and had a million works to his credit, he still could not say to God. "You owe me salvation." Salvation is a gift of God.
 - B. With this in mind, we need to re-word the question of the jailor. We should ask, "What must I do to be saved by God's grace?"
- I. **The Need Of Salvation** - In order to be saved by God's grace, a person must first realize the need of salvation.
 - A. He must realized he is lost and doomed to suffer eternal punishment in hell. Until a man comes to this realization, he will not be saved. He will feel no need for Jesus Christ and His atoning blood. When a man comes to the realization he is lost, he will ask with great urgency, "**What must I do to be saved?**" This is what prompted the jailor to ask this question.
 - B. There are many people today who **do not realize they are in a lost state**. This is especially true of those living good moral lives.
 1. The **good moral man** often says, "I don't drink, I don't gamble, I don't cheat and I don't go to the bars." Because of this negative goodness he thinks he is going to be saved and actually deserves to be saved.
 2. **If this were true, Jesus Christ died in vain**. It was needless for Christ to die if morality alone will save. A man could live a good moral life before the death of Christ and can certainly do so today.
 3. The truth of the matter is, "**Morality will likely keep us out of jail, but it will not keep us out of hell.**"

The good moral man will burn with the drunkard, the thief, and the fornicator if he does not accept Christ. (2 Thess. 1:8, 9; John 14:6).

II. **Sacrifices** - A person must also make sacrifices to be saved.

- A. Christianity **demands the best of an individual**. It is not a cheap religion as some try to make it. It requires that one make great sacrifices of his time, talent and money. It demands one give his heart totally to Christ.
- B. Those unwilling to sacrifice these things will never be saved. (Matt. 16:24).
 1. Children may have to **go against the wishes of their parents**.
 - a. Several years ago there was a **16 year old girl** who came up to a preacher with tears in her eyes. She said, "I want to be a Christian." The preacher said, "Why don't you become a Christian, the baptistry is ready and I will be happy to baptize you." She said, "I can't do it. My mother and father would hit the ceiling." Even though she was encouraged to become a Christian, she left the building without being baptized. She returned about an hour later and was baptized for the remission of sins.
 - b. She had decided it was more important to please the Lord than her parents. (Matt. 10:37a).
 2. A young person may have to **give up a sweetheart**.
 - a. One time a **teenage girl, who was attending college**, went to talk with a preacher about the boy back home. He was not a Christian and hated church and fought against it. Yet, she was seriously thinking about marrying him. The preacher told her, in order to please God, she might have to give up that boy.
 - b. Can you imagine her planning to marry a fellow who was going to do his best to keep her from serving Christ? She needed to make a sacrifice to please her God and to have a happier life herself.
 3. A husband or wife may have to **give up a mate**.
 - a. Once there was a **woman who had quit attending church** because her husband had forbidden her to come. When the preacher pleaded with her to attend services in spite of what her husband had said, she said, "You don't want me to have a divorce a divorce, do you?" In reply the preacher said her husband would not divorce her because he loved her and the children too much. But he said if it came to that, there is one thing worse than divorce. "That's going to hell."
 - b. I fully agree. This is the worse possible thing that could happen to a person.
 4. A person will have to **give up everything he loves more than God**. (Matt. 19:16-22).
 - a. Jesus did not command the ruler to sell his possessions because it is wrong to be rich. He commanded him to put away his riches because He knew that the ruler loved his riches more than God.
 - b. If we love anything more than God, we too must put it away to be saved. God will not take second

place. He must be first or not at all!

III. **Believe On The Lord** - A person must believe on the Lord to be saved. (Jn. 3:16; 8:24; 20:30, 31; Acts 16:30, 31).

- A. The question should be raised, “**What does it mean to believe on the Lord?**” Some say it simply means to believe on Jesus as God’s Son.
- B. The Bible teaches, however, that believing on the Lord means much more than this.
 - 1. There are millions of people who believe Jesus was or is God’s Son who will spend eternity in hell. Why? Because they do not obey the Lord.
 - 2. **Saving faith must obey.** (Jn. 3:36; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 15:14; Heb. 5:9).

V. **Repent** - A person must repent to be saved. (Lk. 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30).

- A. What does it mean to repent?
- B. In order to answer this question, we need to spend a few minutes discussing what repentance is not.
 - 1. Repentance is **not conviction of sin.**
 - a. There are many people who are fully aware of their sinful state who have never repented.
 - b. These men on the day of Pentecost are examples of this fact. These men were “pricked at heart” because they had killed Christ, but they had not repented. (Acts 2:38).
 - 2. Repentance is **not fear.**
 - a. During the World War I **there was a fellow drafted into the army** and sent to France. He had a good Christian mother, but he was not a child of God. When he arrived in France, the bullets were flying. He got an old fashioned dose of battle field religion. He wrote to his mother and said, “Mother, just as soon as I get out of this place I am going to church every time the doors are open.” When the war was over, he returned home, but he never obeyed the gospel.
 - b. He was afraid, but he did not repent.
 - 3. Repentance is **not sorrow.**
 - a. The jails are full of people who are sorry, but some of them are sorry simply because they have been caught and are being punished.
 - b. Next time they plan to be smarter and not apprehended.
 - 4. Repentance is **not reformation.**
 - a. A man can reform without repenting. For example, a man might quit drinking or smoking because

it is destroying his health.

- b. The fact that he does quit does not mean he has repented to God for these wrongs.

B. What is repentance?

1. Repentance is produced by godly sorrow and leads to a change of life.

- a. Repentance means a person turns from sin and lives a life of righteousness. It means a person who is unforgiving becomes forgiving. It means if a person is a thief he must stop stealing. It means if a person is a killer he must stop killing. It means if a man is living in adultery he must separate from his unlawful life.
- b. One time there was a **Christian man who lost his first wife because of death**. Naturally, he was lonely so he began to seek companionship. He became interested in a married woman and he took the woman from her husband. He destroyed another's man family. The only thing he did was trot down the aisle and say, "I have sinned." Yes, he had sinned, but he had not repented. He still intended to live with his unlawful wife, and was not sorrowful he had destroyed the other man's home.

2. An unknown author has written:

“ ‘Tis not enough to say, ‘I’m sorry and repent’ And then go on from day to day, Just as I always went.	“Repentance is to leave The sins we loved before, And show that we in earnest grieve By doing them no more.”
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VI. **Confess His Faith In Christ** - A person must confess his faith in Christ to be saved.

- A. One must openly acknowledge Jesus as God's Son and as His Savior and Lord.
- B. If we are ashamed to confess Christ before men, we will be eternally lost. (Mk. 8:38).

VII. **Be Baptized** - A person must be baptized to be saved. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:16).

- A. As we study the New Testament, we find that in every case of conversion after the cross, baptism was required for salvation. (Acts 2:37, 38; 8:12, 13, 36-38; 10:48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 22:16).
- B. These people had to be baptized to be saved. There was no salvation apart from baptism. We must be baptized today to be saved by God's grace.

Conclusion.

- I. After a man has been buried in the waters of baptism, he must come forth the water to live a new life in the service of Christ. (Col. 3:1,2).
- II. **You can be saved today by doing the things we have studied together from God's word.** Will you obey the Lord? Don't put it off! Salvation is too important to postpone. If you were to die today, where would you spend eternity? Come to Jesus as we stand and sing.

