

## ACTS 16:30

### GREAT QUESTIONS OF LIFE: WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

“What must I do to be saved?”<sup>1</sup>

**I**f fear many vital, even essential words are disappearing from common usage today. Society as a whole is becoming linguistically impoverished. Some words have been misappropriated; they will never be returned to their proper place in English vocabulary. “Gay,” for instance, once meant joyful or happy. To say someone is gay today has an entirely different meaning; and those who wish to identify themselves as “gay,” are anything but joyful. Other words simply disappear. Increasingly, as I read correspondence and watch postings on on-line forums, I witness fewer and fewer people who appear able to distinguish between the contraction “you’re” (for “you are”) and the possessive pronoun “your.”

Because the Faith permits itself to be influenced by the culture in which it is immersed (instead of influencing culture), people of faith reflect this same deficit with even more alarming consequences. We seldom hear the pulpit speak of being saved, or speaking of redemption. Modern church goers are decidedly uncomfortable whenever the preacher speaks of being lost. “Hell” has become an explicative rather than a place of eternal punishment for those banished from the presence of the Living God. The consequence of our neglect is that those who are lost are not being warned of their peril; and the saved are unaware of their responsibility to turn those who are lost from their imminent danger. Moreover, the redeemed are woefully ignorant of the precious treasure that we possess in God’s salvation.

Two articles posted on CNSNews this week illustrate the danger facing the Faith. The first item, a report of census data released for England and Wales, reveals that fully one-quarter of the British population refer to themselves as either atheists or agnostics—they have no affiliation with any faith. Moreover, the fastest growing religion in Great Britain appears to be Islam. The number of self-identified Christians has dropped significantly during the last decade. Figures released in the United States reflect a similar, though less pronounced, trend.<sup>2</sup>

The Faith once delivered to the saints competes for the souls of family, friends and colleagues midst a cacophony of voices in the marketplace of ideas. When we speak the language of Zion, understanding what we are saying, we will not only have a hearing, but we will present the superior plea. When we no longer are convinced of the veracity of our argument and when we cease to employ the language of Zion, we become merely another voice contributing to the din of competing shouts and cries within this dying world.

In another article discussing the reaction of unions to the passage of right-to-work legislation in Michigan, the head of the United Auto Workers is quoted as saying, “Labour, civil rights, faith community, LGBT, environmentalists—all of us got to come together and stand up for an America that has prosperity for everybody.”<sup>3</sup> Why is the faith community lumped in with these groups? Such compromise would have been unthinkable even a few short years ago!

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<sup>2</sup> Patrick Goodenough, “British Census: Islam Fastest-Growing Faith in England; Christians Drop to 59% of Population,” December 12, 2012, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/british-census-islam-fastest-growing-faith-england-christians-drop-59-population>, accessed 12 December 2012

<sup>3</sup> Susan Jones, “UAW Chief: Michigan Law ‘Part of a Right-Wing Agenda,’” December 12, 2012, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/uaw-chief-michigan-law-part-right-wing-agenda>, accessed 12 December 2012

Let me say again with emphasis, I fear that we preachers don't speak often enough of being saved. Consequently, the members who occupy the pews of our churches are mute concerning the salvation of the Lord, not having been taught by us who are the shepherds of the flock. They are silent in the face of their children turning from righteousness, quiet as their colleagues desecrate the Faith, unmoved by the plight of the lost about them.

Perhaps the use of such language appears trite, clichéd, out of date; or possibly we imagine we have grown too sophisticated to speak of people being lost. Whatever the reason, our generation is impoverished because of the paucity of preaching that calls lost people to be saved. We witness few people asking the question, "What must I do to be saved?" in our churches; and the reason may well be that we have ceased speaking of being saved, or even living as though we were saved.

The question that is now before us was asked by a man who had observed the Faith in action. Paul and Silas were conducting a missionary trip that had led them to cross the Hellespont into Europe. It was the first penetration of the European continent by those who were following the Faith of Christ the Lord. The missionaries had been powerfully used to turn some to righteousness and even to set at liberty a young woman in thralldom to demonic powers. Because she was freed from demonic possession, her owners realised they were deprived of a source of considerable income. Enraged, they engineered imprisonment of the missionaries.

Listen as I read the account of all that happened as recorded for us by Doctor Luke. "As [the missionary band was] going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.' And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour.

"But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, 'These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.' The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, 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 wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God" [ACTS 16:16-34].

Contrary to much of modern church mythology, the Faith under pressure more often results in the salvation of the lost than does the Faith in times of prosperity, plenty and peace. Though we preachers give lip service to this truth, we seldom witness the reality of what we preach being put into practise. We read Paul's words in **2 TIMOTHY 3:12**, but we are uncomfortable with them. "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." We are uncertain whether we want to embrace such a costly position because we have grown so comfortable with the world.

The child of God under pressure provides opportunity for those watching to witness the power of Christ revealed through the response of the faithful. Unexpected power was witnessed through trials in the life of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul wrote the Corinthian Christians this insightful, and neglected, admonition. "To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong" [**2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10**].

For years I've heard preachers offer those who were willing to receive it the message of life. It was commonly said in the middle years of the last century, "The cost of being a Christian is high, but the benefits are out of this world." It was meant to emphasise the truth that life as a follower of the Son of God would make demands on the disciple; but God has promised rich rewards. We who are born from above, we who are saved, always have the presence of the Son of God with us even now. We have immediate access to the Throne of God. We have confidence that because we are accepted in the Beloved Son that God hears our prayer and that He will answer in accordance with His will. We are adopted into the Family of God and we have an eternal inheritance. We know that our treasures are laid up in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" [**MATTHEW 6:20**]. We have the privilege of being called by the Name of God's own Son. "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" [**2 CORINTHIANS 5:1**]. We who are saved have all this, and Heaven too. No wonder that the child of God can sing songs at midnight! No wonder that the child of God does not run every time the devil's crowd barks! We stand firm, confident in the promise that we have been accepted in the Beloved [see **EPHESIANS 1:6**].

If we spoke more of the salvation of the lost, if we were more clear in defining what it means to be lost, if we were more definite in pointing out the mercies of Christ the Lord, there is no doubt that we would more frequently hear this question asked by those honestly seeking life, "What must I do to be saved?" Salvation is not the purview of a select few; it is the free gift of God offered to all. The church does not control who will be saved; those whom the Lord calls will be saved. It is our responsibility to declare the message of life, to warn sinners of the consequences of delay and to exalt the salvation of the Lord. We do this through living godly and holy lives, through prayerfully seeking the salvation of family, friends and colleagues, and through telling all who will receive our witness of the great things that the Lord has done for us. This is the practical application of the Master's command, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" [**MATTHEW 28:19, 20**].

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “LOST?”** It has been said that all the world may be divided into one of two groups—saints and aint’s. Based on biblical revelation, that sounds about right. Saints are those individuals who have been redeemed, saved, born from above. Ain’ts, well, they are just the remainder of mankind; and they are lost. What does it mean to be lost?

Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” [LUKE 19:10]. On another occasion, the Master cautioned those who listened to Him as He taught, “What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost” [LUKE 9:25 NKJV]? Clearly, the Master was persuaded that there are individuals in this world who must be classified as “lost.” Moreover, Jesus stated that seeking and saving such lost individuals was the reason He came. Let that sink in! Jesus did not come to show us a better way, nor did not come to teach us or provide us with a model. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus also told a series of parables that reveal His seeking heart. Listen to this extended passage as recorded by Luke. “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” So, just as a shepherd is concerned about one lost sheep, so the Saviour is concerned about one lost soul.

Jesus continued with another parable designed to emphasise His compassion and concern. “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” If a woman would expend precious time and energy searching diligently for her lost dowry, then we should not be surprised that the Son of God would focus on searching for those who are lost.

Jesus then told a parable that undoubtedly touches the heart of every father and the heart of every mother. I assure you that this parable of the lost son certainly speaks to my heart. Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found’ ” [LUKE 15:4-32].

To be lost implies that one is unprofitable. God created you for a purpose, and if you are lost, you are unprofitable for His purpose. To be lost means that you have no ultimate purpose to your life. How tragic for anyone to one day realise that she has been a “vessel of wrath prepared for destruction.” You do remember how Paul spoke of such individuals when writing the Romans? “Who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory” [ROMANS 9:20-23].

To be lost means that your potential for good will never be realised. To speak of that which is good is to speak of that which is godly. Good, as defined by the world, is always with a view to personal benefit. However, the derivation of the word “good” is “god.” Thus, from a biblical perspective, to speak of someone as good is to speak of that one as reflecting the glory of God. That one who never achieves her potential cannot be said to be good. Moreover, it is only as we are doing the things God has appointed us to do that we have hope of being good.

You may recall an incident recorded of Jesus during the waning days of His ministry. “As [Jesus] was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: “Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.”’ And he said to him, ‘Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.’ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” [MARK 10:17-22].

“No one is good except God alone!” Therefore, the one who does those things that characterise God reflect in pale measure what it means to be good. However, one cannot be good, because one cannot do in his or her own strength the things that define God. This dilemma drove the Apostle to the Gentiles to the point of despair. “I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Of course, Paul recovered quickly and acknowledged the answer to the question and instructs any who will receive the truth. “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin” [ROMANS 7:21-25].

To be lost means that you are outside the precincts of divine mercy and love. To be lost means that you are separated from God and devoid of hope. Paul speaks of those who are “separated from Christ” as “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” [EPHESIANS 2:12]. To be lost means that one day you must hear those dreadful words, “I do not know where you come from. Depart from Me, all you workers of evil” [LUKE 13:27]! To be lost means that regardless of how religious you may have been, regardless of how many prayers you recited, regardless of whether you united with a church or even served in some religious order, regardless of how pious you imagine yourself to have been, you shall one day hear those awful, dark words, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” [MATTHEW 25:41].

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “SAVED?”** I do not want to depreciate the peril lost people face. There is no mistaking the fact that there are people listening to this message who are lost. I would perform a grave disservice were I to downplay the danger posed to the lost soul. However, neither do I wish to present only the negative, the danger of being lost. If I will do the will of God, I must speak of the mercies of God and the glorious prospect of salvation for those who are saved, both to encourage the redeemed and to draw the lost to seek God’s mercy.

What did the jailer in Philippi witness in the missionaries? What would induce him to ask how how to be saved? What did he witness in the response of Paul and Silas to their situation? The missionaries had been falsely accused. They were seized and incarcerated unjustly. They were stripped and then beaten with rods before being thrown into prison where their feet were fastened in stocks so that they could not rest during the long night.

How would you react were you treated thusly? Would you curse and threaten? Would vile words of vituperation fill your mouth as you castigated your tormentors? The missionaries had the example of the Master Himself. We will do well to recall the words of Peter to believers. “To this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly” [1 PETER 2:21-23].

In the midnight hour, the missionaries were praying and singing hymns to God. I note an interjection in ACTS 16:25 that is easily overlooked—“and the prisoners were listening to them.” How many prisoners were present is not revealed; but those that were present were listening! And you may be certain that if the prisoners were listening, then the jailer was listening as well. What were the preachers singing? In that day, psalms were commonly sung. After the final Pascal Meal was finished, we read that the disciples and Jesus sung a hymn [MATTHEW 26:30]. Thus, I am on reasonably solid ground when I say that the missionaries were not singing a dirge or bemoaning their situation.

Because they were praying as well as singing, I must believe they were singing a hymn or a psalm. Several times in Scripture we are admonished to encourage one another with the hymnody of the Faith. “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” [EPHESIANS 5:18-20].

Another time this comforting truth is taught is COLOSSIANS 3:16, 17. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

In **1 TIMOTHY 3:16** we have an example of what was likely an early hymn of the Faith.

“He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
seen by angels,  
proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory.”<sup>4</sup>

We don’t know the melody, but we do have the words. Another place in this same letter where Paul appears to cite a hymn is **1 TIMOTHY 1:17**. “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

We may be certain that these men who had been brutalised were singing praises to God. “Glory, Father, they broke our skin; but they didn’t break our spirits! Hallelujah! I count myself blessed that I was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ Jesus my Lord.” What power is in the testimony given by the Apostle while in prison! “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have” [**PHILIPPIANS 1:29, 30**].

I love black spirituals. One song that has blessed me many times over was performed over twenty years ago by “The Mighty Clouds of Joy.” In part, that song expresses joy and faith.

Teach me to sing at midnight, songs of joy, hope and praise.  
Though it be darkest at midnight, I know you’ll hear my song of faith.

The same song I sing in the daytime,  
Is the same song I want to sing at night.  
Teach me to sing at midnight,  
The same song I sang today.

Teach me to pray at midnight, prayers of joy, hope and praise.  
Though it be darkest at midnight, I know you’ll hear my prayer of faith.<sup>5</sup>

To be saved means that we will ever have the presence of the Lord Christ with us. Jesus promised, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” [**MATTHEW 28:20b**]. Well has He been named Immanuel, which means “God with us” [see **MATTHEW 1:23**]. This child of God has this precious promise from the Master Himself, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him” [**JOHN 12:26**].

In practical terms, this means the child of God can live victoriously. It means that we are overcomers and not overcome by the evil of this fallen world. We are cautioned by the Apostle, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” [**ROMANS 12:21**]. We are also taught, “Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” [**1 JOHN 5:4, 5**]?

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<sup>4</sup> Other places where hymns may be cited in the New Testament are: **PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**; **COLOSSIANS 1:15-20**; **EPHESIANS 1:3-14**; and **1 PETER 1:3-5**

<sup>5</sup> ©1987 by Rev. Earl Pleasant Music Company/BMI

To be saved means that we who believe have immediate access to the throne of God; we are assured that we will be heard when we ask anything of Him. Jesus Himself has promised, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” [JOHN 14:13,14]. We have this promise as His people, “This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us” [1 JOHN 5:14].

To be saved means freedom—freedom from guilt, freedom from fear, freedom from condemnation. Jesus is recorded as saying, “If you abide in My word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” [JOHN 8:31,32]. This glorious affirmation was immediately followed by this statement of freedom for the believer, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” [JOHN 8:36]. Add to this liberating statement these promises recorded from the pen of the Apostle. “The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death” [ROMANS 8:2]. “The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” [2 CORINTHIANS 3:17]. “For freedom Christ has set us free” [GALATIANS 5:1]. Consider one final testimony of the freedom we enjoy in Christ Jesus our Lord. “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” [GALATIANS 5:13].

No wonder, then, that the child of God can face trials, testing and tribulation with confidence. With the brother of our Lord, the child of God has learned to “count it all joy” when facing trials. The believer knows that “the testing of [her] faith produces steadfastness.” She is confident that steadfastness, when it has its full effect, results in perfection and completeness, so that she is lacking in nothing [see JAMES 1:22-4].

As he opens his first missive, Peter writes a comforting word to suffering saints. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls” [1 PETER 1:3-9].

The world has yet to see the impact of one believer who lives full out for God. What would it be should one someone, perhaps you, should vow before God, “I will serve You with my whole heart. I will serve You unreservedly and without equivocation I will obey You.” That one child of the Living God could be the one individual who brings revival, exposes the insipient rot of unbelief that has infiltrated the Faith in this day and encourages the saints to stand in the face of irreverence and unbelief that runs unchecked throughout our western world today.

One believer, seizing upon the promises of the Risen Saviour could again demonstrate the power of God in a new and fresh way that would astonish and unsettle the unbelieving world. Sometimes it seems to me that modern evangelicals are fearful of living full out for Christ. I have heard so many reasons why the Spirit of God no longer works among the churches today that I am sick of hearing such tripe. I read in the Word of God, and I wonder if we believe it, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” [HEBREWS 13:8]. If He is the same, then the power that was revealed through the Apostles is the same power available to us now.



**WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?** And that brings us to the heart of the message. You who stand outside this most holy Faith, do you not realise the peril in which you stand? Do you not see the mercies of God that are extended to you even at this time? Do you not sense the deficiency of soul that condemns you? You need not continue estranged from God; nor need you continue to labour under censure as one who is lost. Christ Jesus the Lord has already provided for your salvation. You need but accept the life and the freedom that He offers.

When this jailer in ancient Philippi witnessed the genuine joy and courage that suffused the incarcerated preachers, and when he saw the equanimity with which they faced the injustice, he was drawn toward the Faith. People of God, we need to realise the impact of our lives on outsiders. Jesus taught us, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” [MATTHEW 5:16]. The Apostle Paul emphasises the impact of our lives on those outside of the Faith when he writes the Philippians, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” [PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16]. To Titus, he urged that the people of God be taught practical theology, “showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour” [TITUS 2:10].

So, you who stand outside this grace, how shall you be saved? The answer is that God Himself must save you. He does so as you believe the message of life—that Jesus died because of your sin and raised to life that you might be declared right with the Father. To the jailer, Paul testified, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” [ACTS 16:30]. It is not through believing that He lived that the lost are saved, but it is in believing Him. It is through believing that He not only died because of your broken, fallen condition, but that He conquered death, rising from the tomb, and that He will receive you just as you are. You need not clean up your life, because you cannot clean yourself. He must cleanse you, making you holy and pure.

The Apostle John writes both a precious promise and a dreadful warning in these words, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” [JOHN 3:18]. These words are followed shortly with this, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him” [JOHN 3:36].

The issue is too important to neglect. Permit me to multiply the statements for your welfare. Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” [JOHN 5:24]. Again, Jesus has promised, “This is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” [JOHN 6:40]. I would, with your indulgence, point to a final passage to encourage you to believe. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” John then writes in the very next verse, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life” [1 JOHN 5:12, 13].

For years I have concluded messages by pointing to the promise of God given by Paul. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is my Master,’ believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with the Father and with the mouth that one confesses and is set free” [ROMANS 10:9, 10].<sup>6</sup> Believe this message; believe and be saved. Do it now. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> Free translation by the author