

# What Must I Do To Be Saved?

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**Bible Text:** Acts 16:25-34  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 15, 2007

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Thank them for the ministry in song.

Let's turn to the Acts of the Apostles, please, chapter 16, and read this familiar story to many of us this evening, the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16, and reading at verse 25. Over the next couple of Sundays, I'll be preaching in Memphis in Tennessee in the United States, and also through the week and value your prayers, those of you who are God's people, that God's hand would be upon the ministry of the word. These are ministry meetings that I've been invited to speak at and so we would ask that you would remember us before the throne of grace in prayer.

I want to talk to you tonight on a very simple question, the question is: what must I do to be saved? And we're reading in Acts 16 and we're reading at the verse 25.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 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. 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. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

May the Lord bless to our hearts the public reading of his own precious word.

Bishop Taylor Smith was honorary chaplain to Queen Victoria and was also chaplain general to the British forces during the first world war. On one occasions when he was chaplain general to the British forces, a minister came to him applying for a vacancy, a chaplaincy. Instead of giving the man a direct reply, the bishop looked at him for a few moments and then drawing his watch from his pocket in a dramatic gesture, he glanced at him and he said to the man, the minister, he said, "I'm a soldier on the field of battle and I'm dying and I have three minutes to live, what have you got to say to me?" Utterly taken aback by this strange questioning, the minister stood there dumbfounded. "Quickly," urged the bishop, "Time is fleeting! There are only two or my three minutes remaining, is there nothing that you can say to me that will help my soul?" Still no answer. The bishop's voice grew very grave as he went on, "There is now but one minute between me and death, between me and eternity, have you no saving word to speak to me?" Feeling that somehow he must save face, the minister fumbled for his prayer book. The bishop waved it aside and he said, "No, no, not that now." Because that applicant had no message for a dying man, his appeal was dismissed. He did not receive the appointment. On the battlefield of life tonight, there are countless multitudes, multitudes of men and women whose spiritual condition is as desperate as the predicament of a dying soldier, have we got a message for them? Have we got a word from God for them? Can we offer them a Gospel that is capable of being summarized in a sentence? What do we have to give them that will meet them at the point of their desperate need?

Well, look at this amazing scene in Acts, that Paul and Silas, two Christians, two servants of God, have been unjustly charged, they have been cruelly beaten, and finally they're in prison. Can you see them? They're backs are bleeding. They're wounds are unwashed. All around them are the outcasts of society. There's no running water. There's no such thing as a toilet. You can imagine it, rats and lice and vermin and all around them the outcasts of society. The stench would be unbearable. What were these Christians doing? What were these servants of God doing? Were they complaining? Were they grumbling? Were they questioning God's plan and purpose for their lives? No, in fact we're told that they're praying, they're singing, they're witnessing, they're worshiping. In fact, they make such an impact on the jailer that he comes before the servants of God and he cries, "What must I do to be saved?"

Now listen, the Apostle Paul is faced with a situation similar to that in which the bishop pictured the minister. He's called upon to preach the Gospel to a man who's on the verge of committing suicide. How does he do it? How does he go about it? Listen to what he says, he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." My friends, I don't know everything that happened that brought that jailer to the point where he cried, "What must I do to be saved?" but I want to suggest to you tonight three things. First of all, there was a problem that brought him low. There was a problem that brought him low, it was the problem of his sin. You see, no one ever turns to the Lord Jesus Christ until they first sense their need to be saved. Here was a man who had a sense of conviction.

You say, "Preacher, what's conviction?" It's an awakened consciousness of sin. It's sensing your desperate need of Jesus Christ. You see, no one has ever cried, "What must I

do to be saved?" until they sense their need of a Savior. This word "saved" here simply means deliverance, deliverance from trouble. You say, "What kind of trouble was this man in?" Well, the jailer wasn't talking about physical deliverance; he wasn't talking about being delivered from an earthquake, that had already passed; he wasn't talking about social deliverance; he wasn't talking about being delivered from the government that was going to punish him and discipline him if he let the prisoners flee. No, he was thinking about spiritual deliverance. You see, my dear friends, to be saved means to be saved and delivered from your sin and this was the problem that brought him low. It was the problem of his sin.

I wonder has sin brought you low tonight? I wonder is your marriage on the rocks because of sin? I wonder is your life ruined because of sin? I wonder have you thought about committing suicide because of sin? You know, in this sophisticated 21<sup>st</sup> century, we don't like to use the word sin too much. We're calling it now a mistake, a misjudgment, a stumble, and can you imagine going to the United Nations tonight and saying, "You know, we've got the problem of the world, the problem of the world is sin." They would laugh you out of court because they're a generation of humanists. Do you know what they believe? They believe that man is the sum total of his environment and his bodily chemistry, just the situation that he lives in and the chemistry of his mind, and so they tell us that man is to be pitied but not to be blamed, man is weak but he's not wicked, he's just like a computer that has been programmed wrong.

But the Bible says that our problem is sin. Sin is defined in the Scriptures. You say, "What is sin?" Sin is the transgression of the law. Is that not what John says? Sin is the transgression of the law. You see, God has given us 10 laws, he's given us 10 rules, he's given us 10 commandments, the Decalogue, the moral law of God, and when we break one of those commandments, we sin. But you know, the Bible goes a step further, it says this, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all." You say, "I don't think I've broken many of the commandments of God." No? My dear friends, if you've broken any of the commandments of God tonight, in God's sight you're a sinner. You see, if you tonight were dying laying over a fire that was suspended and you were being suspended by a chain and there were 20 links in the chain, if one of those links broke, how many of those links would need to break before you fell into the fire? Twenty or one? Just one. My dear friend, tonight how many of God's laws do you have to break before God looks upon you as a sinner? Ten? No. Just one.

Sin is the transgression of the law. Sin is the failure to do what we ought to do. The Bible says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Is there anyone here tonight would stand up and testify, "I've always done everything that I ought to have done"? You see, you're a sinner. The Bible says sin is the transgression of the law. The Bible says that sin is the failure to do what we ought to do. The Bible goes a step further, it focuses in a little bit closer, it says sin is human goodness without the Lord. In the book of Proverbs, we have an interesting phrase, it says, "A high look, a proud heart, the plowing of the wicked is sin." Here's a farmer, some of you are farmers tonight, here's a farmer and he's out in the field and he's using the tractor to plow and God says that's sin if he doesn't know me. You say, "Is there anything wrong with plowing?" No. "Is there

anything wrong with farming?" No. "Is there anything wrong with produce?" No. And yet God calls it sin. Indeed the Bible says, "We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The Lord doesn't say that our sin is as filthy rags, he says that our righteousness, our goodness, our human goodness without God is just like a filthy rag. Have you grasped that tonight? You're just not going to hell for the bad things that you do, you're going to hell for the good things that you do without God. Do you know what that term "filthy rags" means? It describes the oozing, putrefying, corrupting sores of a leper, that loathsome rag that you would take and burn. God says, "In my sight this is what I think not about your so-called badness, in my sight this is what I think about your so-called goodness."

You say, "Preacher, how could it be sin for a man to plow in the field?" My dear friends, because an unsaved man is in himself, because an unregenerate man is in himself wicked, depraved, sinful. Everything he puts his hand upon he contaminates. Everything he puts his hand upon he defiles. Do you like fresh fruit salad? That's my favorite sweet. Can you imagine the person who's preparing that sweet for you and they've got vile open sores on their hands? Do you still like it? Well, it's nothing to do with the grapes, the apples, the oranges, the bananas, whatever goes into that fresh fruit salad, there's something wrong with the chef. There's nothing wrong with the plowing, it's the man who does the plowing that is contaminated. You see, the Bible says that the worst form of badness is human goodness without Jesus Christ. This is the sin tonight that lies in all of our hearts that defiles man, it degrades man, it destroys man, it damns man.

Sin is defined in the Scriptures. Ah, but listen, sin is defeated in the sins. It doesn't mean that Christians are perfect but have a look at these guys. I mean, here was a man who found himself guarding a couple of Baptist preachers and you say, "How do you know they were Baptists?" Well, they were in jail, weren't they? And when this man said, "What must I do to be saved?" he knew that there was something that was called salvation and he knew that Paul and Silas knew how to be saved. You see, here were a couple of prisoners, here were a couple of prisoners and they were witnessing for the Lord.

I wonder did it go something like this. When they were being beaten, Paul and Silas would say, "Do you see these wounds? These wounds remind us of the wounds of the Lord Jesus. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. And do you see these stripes? These stripes remind us of the stripes of Christ, by whose stripes we are healed." And when they shoved Paul and Silas into that inner dungeon, they would have said, "Look, you're putting us into a dungeon but we're only here a little time. Jailer, there is another dungeon, it's called hell. There's another prison cell, it's called the lake of fire and you'll suffer there eternally. Sir, we know that you're only obeying orders, we know that you don't understand what you're doing, but we want you to know that God loves you, that Christ has died for your sins, and all night long we'll be praying that you'll come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior."

I know they witnessed. I know they witnessed to this jailer for he came before Paul and Silas and said, "What must I do to be saved?" Tell me tonight if someone shared God's

way of salvation to you, that colleague in the workplace, that friend in the office, and they have spoken to you about your soul, that colleague on the farm, that farmer down the road, and they've spoken to you about your soul, they've spoken to you about Christ, they've spoken to you about eternity, they've spoken to you that there's a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, has the Gospel ever disturbed you? Has it ever awakened you? Or are you at the place tonight where you're ready to cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Funny prisoners, weren't they? Witness to the lost, and then, of course, they were waiting upon the Lord. It says they prayed. I don't think Paul and Silas were praying, "Lord, get us out of jail," they were praying, "Lord, get this jailer out of the prison house of sin. He's in a far worse state than we are." They weren't praying, "Lord, get the shackles off us," they were praying, "Lord, get the shackles of sin off him." Oh, they were witnessing to the lost and they were waiting on the Lord and they were worshiping at the throne, for they were praising God, there were songs at midnight. I tell you tonight, Christ can only give you that song. The devil can give you songs when everything is going fine, but only Jesus Christ can give you songs in the darkest night.

I'm here to tell you tonight that the Lord Jesus can give you a joy that the world cannot give and that the world cannot take away, and they're just praising the Lord and the Bible says and the prisoners heard them and that word "heard" is a very interesting word, it means that they were listening with attention, they were giving attention to all that was taking place around them. You see, this was a strange situation. In prison you might hear guys groan but you will never hear them pray. In prison you might hear guys curse but you'll never hear them praise. But these prisoners were different. They were singing at midnight and the prisoners heard them and here's a jailer who's impressed by the response of genuine Christians in their darkest hour.

I wonder tonight if you've been impressed by the reaction of genuine believers in the midst of their trials? You've visited someone recently, a Christian in the hospital, you've seen them going through trials, you've seen them going through times of sorrow, their heart has been breaking, yet they testify, "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." I wonder, my dear friend, have you been confronted by the reality of the Gospel, by the reality of Christianity and the people that you know, someone who's been genuinely saved by the grace of God, someone who's got new life, someone who's got new aspirations, someone who's got new appetites, someone who's got new interests? This is the very thing the prisoners heard, for here are two prisoners who are praising and praying and witnessing and the Lord it also and he said amen with an earthquake. This was jailhouse rock.

Can you imagine the shock the jailer received? He was fast asleep. He felt confident that everybody was locked up for the night, the prisoners were secure, and then suddenly and unexpectedly and dramatically and miraculously the place was shaken, the doors were opened, the bands were broken, and the jailer thinking that the prisoners were gone pulls out the sword, he's about to commit suicide for there's a law that says if one goes free, it's your life or his, and so he says to himself, "They're gonna do it. I'd better do it myself." And Paul says, "Man, do thyself no harm," and here are two evangelists and they're

waiting to be of help to lead these burdened soul to Jesus Christ. You see, the Lord was working in his life and he was just bringing them to the place where he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Tell me tonight, has the Lord been working in your life? Has the Holy Spirit of God been working in your life? Have you lost your job recently? Has God been showing you how transient and temporary wealth is? I wonder is the pressure so great upon you tonight that in these past weeks and months you've felt like committing suicide? I wonder has the Lord been using that pressure, that crisis at home to make you sit up and get life into perspective? And through on means or another, God has been using various circumstances in your life to bring you to the place tonight where you're ready to cry out, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?"

The problem had brought him low but, secondly, a person that brought him nigh. You say, "What did Paul and Silas say to this man who was burdened and broken because of his sin?" Well, God's servants said something very simple, something very sublime, something very scriptural, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Do you know tonight there's only one who can bring you into a right relationship with God? Do you know that? Do you know tonight there's only one who can deal with the sin problem in your life? It's the Lord Jesus. Paul writing to Christian people said this, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Jesus Christ."

In preparation for a discussion period on a Christian radio program, an interviewer went on the streets of Philadelphia to ask people one question, "What is Christianity?" And he was surprised at some of the answers that they gave. Here's what they said. Some said that Christianity was an organization. One said it was the American way of life. Another said it was a tool used by the capitalists to repress the poor. And when the interviewer tried to help them and nudge them along by asking a different question, he said, "Well, who's Jesus Christ?" The answers were just as diverse. Some said he was a good man. Others said they weren't sure who he was. Others said they had no idea who Jesus Christ was. Paul and Silas declared the salvation is in the person of Jesus Christ.

My friend, here's the Gospel tonight. Let me give it to you in a nutshell: Christ is the answer to your every need. He's the answer. You know, when they said Lord, they meant that he is the Supreme One. The Lord means boss. You see, you can't be saved tonight unless you're willing to make him Lord of your life, unless you're willing to step off the throne of your life and enthrone the Lord Jesus. You must confess him as Lord. Do you know what the Bible says? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Are you willing tonight to crown him Lord or your life? To acknowledge him as Savior and Lord from this day forward? When they said Lord, they meant that he was the Sufficient One. When they said Jesus, they meant that he was the Saving One.

The name Jesus is his earthly name, it means Jehovah Saves. It speaks of the one who died on Calvary's cross. It speaks of the one who shed his ruby royal blood for sinners

lost. You see, my dear friends, God just cannot overlook sin. He cannot sweep sin under the carpet. And my dear friend, tonight, listen, your sin must be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell, but God cannot overlook sin, and in order to provide redemption for your sin, the Lord Jesus Christ had to become your substitute. He had to die in your room instead. The one who knew no sin, did not sin, in whom was no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And when they said Lord, they meant that he was the Supreme One. When they said Jesus, they meant that he was the Saving One. When they said Christ, they meant that he was the Sufficient One. The word Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Messiah, God's Anointed One, God's Sufficient One, God's Chosen One.

My friends, there's only one way to be saved tonight. God's only got one Christ. He's only got one Messiah. He's only got one Mediator. Peter said, "Neither is salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Salvation is not found in a code tonight, it's not found in a creed, it's not found in a church, it's found in Jesus Christ. You say, "Preacher, I believe in the plan of salvation and I'm saved." No, my dear friends, you're not saved by the plan of salvation, you are saved by the man of salvation and his name is Jesus Christ. Do you know him as the Supreme One, the Saving One, the Sufficient One?

The problem that brought him low was his sin, the person that brought him nigh right into the presence of God, Jesus Christ, ah, but notice thirdly there was a principle that brought him through, it was the principle of faith. You say, "How do I get saved tonight? How do I get right with God?" Well, look at the simplicity of salvation: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's as simple as that. Here's the Gospel tonight and the Apostle Paul and Silas are taking the Gospel and they're reducing it to its most elementary term. They say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Not in a creed. Not in your church. Not in your baptism. Not in your ritual. Not in your rites. Not in your good works but in the Lord Jesus Christ, in that glorious, living, dynamic person who is alive forevermore and mighty to save.

You see, my friends, tonight it's not believe about Christ. I think most of you here tonight believe everything about the Savior. It's belief on Christ. You say, "Preacher, what's the difference?" Well, I heard the story of this wealthy Christian who was very fearful of flying. I mean, he knew an airplane could go up into the air and fly, but he could never get on one. He had enough money to buy a ticket anywhere in the world, it wouldn't cost him very much, he was a very wealthy man, he had plenty of money, loved to travel, but everywhere he went, he wanted to drive. He wanted to take his car. One day another Christian said, "And will you ever want to fly?" He said, "Not me." "Why not?" "Well," he says, "you know, intellectually I've got it in my mind, I realize that that plane can go along a runway and it can lift right up into the air. I know these planes can fly. I believe it but emotionally I can't get on." And he would drive anywhere he went and then one day he said to himself, "You know, I'm a grown man. Everyone else is flying and flying is probably more safe than driving." He said, "I'm gonna fly." And so he bought himself a ticket and he got on and he buckled himself in, and I'm sure it was white knuckles all the way but he made it. You say, "What was the difference?" Before he believed about a plane but when he got on and buckled himself in, he believed on the plane.

My friend, have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you taken the step of faith? Have you committed yourself to Jesus Christ? You say, "What'll happen if I do?" Well, notice not only the simplicity of salvation, notice the certainty of salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." There are no ifs, no buts, no maybes, no perhapses, no conditions, no restrictions. The promise is Christ says if you come, you'll be saved. Isn't that amazing that no one who ever came to Jesus Christ was ever turned away? He says, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me. Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." My friend, listen, if he doesn't cast you out tonight, what'll he do? He'll just take you in.

What a beautiful scene we have at the end of Acts 16. Here's a whole family that's trusted the Lord and they're sitting down together and they're sharing a meal together because they have believed on the Savior. What must I do to be saved? I wonder has God brought you to that place tonight. I wonder has God just been weaving the circumstances of your life and in his providence tonight he's brought you to this hour and it's in your heart tonight and it's almost on your lips, "What must I do to be saved?" Our answer tonight is just the same as the Apostle Paul, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Well, we have a lot of talk in these days about the Titanic, haven't we? They've been down to see the other one. Maybe they'll be able to bring Titanic home. Four years after she went down, a young Scotsman stood in a meeting in Hamilton in Canada, he said, "I am a survivor of the Titanic." He said, "When I was drifting alone on that terrible night when so many perished, the waves brought John Harper of Glasgow on a piece of wreckage near to me and he said to me, 'Man, are you saved?'" He said, "No sir, I'm not." He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And the waves brought him away again. A minute or two later, the waves and the wind brought John Harper back and he said to me again, he said, "Man, are you saved now?" He said, "No sir, I'm not." He said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Shortly after that, John Harper went down. "And there," he said, "alone in that awful night with two miles of water underneath me, I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was gloriously saved. I am John Harper's last convert."

Will you believe tonight? Will you take that step of faith? Will you come to the Savior now?

Let's pray.