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HOW TO BE SAVED

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The importance of salvation cannot possibly be overestimated. The need of salvation is the greatest of all human needs. The neglect of salvation is the most calamitous of all human blunders. The greatest blessing that can possibly come to any man is salvation. He who has salvation has the only real life-assurance policy -- a policy that carries eternal benefits with all premiums paid in advance.

Our Lord emphasized the importance of salvation when He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell", (Matthew 10:28). The rich man expressed the need of salvation when he lifted up his eyes in hell and cried for water to cool his burning tongue. All classes and ranks of men will realize the need of salvation in the day of judgment, and will cry for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

The salvation we are talking about is salvation from the eternal consequences of sin. Salvation from the eternal consequences of sin includes deliverance from everything that robs men of peace and plenty and happiness in the world to come. The saved are delivered from the wrath to come. The salvation we have to offer is not deliverance from a present and temporary poverty, but to a future inheritance laid up in heaven - an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. The salvation we have to offer is not deliverance from shameful treatment by a godless world, but the assurance of future and

eternal glory. This salvation does not deliver from disease and pain and death in this low land of sin and sorrow, but it guarantees a resurrection day when there shall be no more death, nor pain, nor crying. The salvation we have in Christ does not stop the present flow of tears, but assures us of a day when God shall wipe away all our tears.

To seek peace and prosperity and happiness, while neglecting salvation, is like traveling a road with a dead end -- you will some day come to a sudden stop and realize that all your time and energies have been spent for naught. The pursuit of happiness without salvation is like traveling the sands of the desert. The satisfying draught which you think you see and which you hope will slake your thirsty soul, is but a mirage and will give way to the hot burning sands of a dry and thirsty land, where your soul will give up in hopeless despair.

Sin is an awful fact in human experience. It has wrought terrible havoc with the human race. Sin has been defined as any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God. Remember that sin is against God. It may be defined as a state of mind and heart at enmity with God. A breaking out in acts of rebellion against God, the Supreme Lawgiver and Governor. Sin is something more than a slight misdemeanor for which God gives man a scolding; sin is a species of high treason against a thrice holy and righteous God and is to be punished by confinement in the lake of fire. Sin is something more than a pimple on the body politic, which may be cured with a little salve of social service; sin is a terrible moral leprosy that eats out the very vitals of individual well being. Sin

is something more than a puncture of good resolutions on the highway of life; it is a blowout that sends the car of life off the highway to glory and into a lake whose billows are flames of fire. Sin is so terrible that it required the agonies of Calvary to satisfy the justice of God against it. Sin is so terrible that the poor sinner who misses salvation can never satisfy justice by anything short of eternal punishment. He can never say to God, "I have suffered enough, I have paid my sin debt to you." He may, like Cain of old, say: "My punishment is greater than I can bear," but such a confession will not remove the curse.

We have before us, an earnest question: "WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?" This question comes from a frightened and trembling jailer - a hard-hearted man, who a few hours before had cruelly treated God's servants and but a few minutes before had threatened suicide, when he thought his prisoners had escaped. When he had been assured by one of his prisoners that none of them had escaped and that there was nothing to fear from the Roman law, he is seized with fear of God and cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The jailer felt salvation to be a dire necessity. He did not ask, "What can I do to be saved?", but "What must I do to be saved?" He was determined to be saved if it were at all possible. He was in dead earnest. He was not thinking of joining a church for business reasons, social prominence, or family ties, but in the fear of God. He wanted to know how he could escape the wrath of God in the day of judgment.

We have often remarked about the salvation of the unlikely. The New Testament record of conversions includes a dying thief, a fallen woman of Samaria, Saul of Tarsus, University student, proud pharisee, and this Philippian jailer. We would have expected the chief priest and elders and scribes and pharisees to be saved. They were the religious leaders in the time of Christ and the apostles. Looking at salvation from the chance angle, they had a much better chance to be saved, but to them the Lord said, "The Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Salvation does not always come to the man of the better chance. In our day we hold meetings when certain people will be upon our hearts and in our minds; we pray for them and plead with them to turn to the Lord, all to no avail. Maybe some obscure sinner or some man or woman scarcely known with few or no friends in the congregation will slip into the services and find the Lord, or rather will be found of Him. All this is evidence that God's ways are not our ways and that salvation is sovereignly bestowed. This is not said to disparage prayer for sinners, for we believe in praying for them, but to emphasize that salvation is of the Lord. We cannot select the sinners that are to be saved. Our choice is not always God's choice.

There is no person too bad to be saved. That which keeps many from being saved, humanly speaking, is that they are too good to be saved. No self-righteous person can be saved as long as he holds on to his self-righteousness. No man trusts Christ as long as he is trusting himself. To trust Christ is to distrust self. To hope in Christ is to lose hope in self. To be fond of Christ as Saviour is to be sick of self, sick of sin.

We will now look at the plain answer to the question: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

The jailer was fortunate in that he put his question to those who knew the correct answer. Many have not been so fortunate. There is no question that receives such conflicting and contradictory answers as the question of how to be saved. If the jailer had asked a pharisee, he would have said, "You must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses." This same question receives many contradictory answers today. Some would say that there is nothing to be saved from and that we must get rid of delusions and clear our mind of can't and superstition. Some would say, "If you have gone wrong in the past do the best you can in the time to come." Others would say, "Come be baptized and receive the grace of regeneration in holy baptism; and then come to the sacraments and be faithful and loyal to the church, which has apostolic succession in it", or "Set yourselves to work and toil and labour." Even others would say, "Don't trouble yourselves about such whims. A short life and a merry one; make the best of it and jump the life the life to come". But Paul and Silas gave a united answer: They said, "**BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED.**"

Now here is the correct answer to our question, and the important thing is to understand the answer. Let us analyze it for that purpose

1. From the answer we learn that salvation is in a person. The preachers pointed the jailer to a person, not to a church, an ordinance, nor to his own works. They pointed him to the same person John the Baptist pointed to when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Here is an elemental truth that is not sufficiently grasped by many. Salvation is not in human deeds. We must not tell the inquiring and penitent sinner to do this and that, or to try this or that, we must hold up before him a person, even the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation. Salvation is not in human perspiration, but in divine redemption; it is not in sacrifice of the sinner, but it is in the sacrifice of Christ who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Salvation is not in going to places, physically, but in going to a person, mentally and heartily. Salvation is not in our own obedience to the law of God, but in the

obedience of Christ, who was obedient unto death even the death of the cross. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous". (Romans 5:19).

2. Our text tells us that salvation is through faith in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ", were the words of Paul and Silas. In salvation the sinner does not minister to Christ, but Christ ministers to the sinner. We are not saved by serving Christ. We are saved by trusting Christ. We are not saved by toiling for Christ. We are saved by resting upon Christ. The Greek preposition in our text is "epi", which means to rest upon and the thought is that our faith must rest upon Christ for salvation.

3. Saving faith must take into account the full name of the Saviour. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord is His divine name; Jesus, which means "Jehovah saves," is His human name; and Christ which means God's anointed, is His title. Saving faith recognizes the Lordship of Christ and is accompanied by the spirit of obedience. When Saul of Tarsus had seen and trusted Christ, he immediately said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No man has saving faith who says in word or thought, "I will trust Christ to save me, but I do not love Him and I am not going to obey Him." Christ is more than a fire escape from hell; he is that to be sure, and the only fire escape; but He is also Lord and saving faith works by love. Faith and love are both the fruit of the Spirit and are born in that birth from above. People who say that if they thought they could be saved by faith in Christ and never be lost, that they would trust Him and then take their fill of sin, need to see that saving faith does not dwell alone in the human soul. Faith and love are companion graces, and where love is there is no delight in sin. Faith works by love. The jailer did no works to be saved, but he was rich in good works after salvation. He took the preachers and washed their stripes. He was baptized, straitway. He fed the preachers. He showed his faith by his works. He was working out his salvation, because God had worked in him both to will and to do. Saving faith is still interested in succouring slandered and persecuted preachers of the truth. Saving faith is still interested in prompt obedience to the command to be baptized. Saving faith is still manifested in feeding preachers who give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. My dear readers, whose face I cannot see, but whose heart God knows, how is your faith causing you to behave? Do you have a faith that gives you strength to work six days, eight to twelve hours, and then makes

you too weak to sit two or three hours in God's house on the Lord's Day? Does your faith allow you to attend dinner parties and beach parties, while neglecting the services of the sanctuary? Does your faith allow you to swear and drink and then justi-

fy such conduct on the ground that you are not under law but under grace? Beware, my professing Christian, lest you be guilty of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ". (Jude Verse 4).

After telling the jailer to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul and Silas spoke unto him the word of the Lord. They explained to him the work of Christ in redemption, thus giving him a reason for faith in Him. They answered the jailer's question by telling him to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and followed their answer up by explaining why he must believe in Christ to be saved. This is also our order of procedure. The sinner must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because Christ is the one who settled our sin debt with God. Sin is a debt and must be paid in the coin of righteousness. The very thing that nobody has, of himself, for there is none righteous, no not one. The moral and spiritual bankruptcy of every sinner is set forth in our Lord's parable of the creditor, "which had two debtors: the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke 7:41,42). Men may differ in the amount of their sin debt. Some owe more than other, which means that some will be punished more severely than others; but, when it comes to the liquidation of the debt, there is no difference, for it is said of all sinners, "they had nothing to pay." God forgives the sinner because the sin debt has been liquidated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is abundant reason for trusting Him.

Because Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. Violated law is the one and only source of eternal danger for any man. The law will not punish a man who obeys it, but it says, "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them". (Galatians 3:10). Since all have sinned, then all have been cursed. The only way to escape the curse is to be redeemed from it. This Christ did. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". (Galatians 3:13).

Oh sinner, this is how we escape the just deserts of our sin against the government of God. In infinite wisdom and love Christ took the place of sinners and on Calvary He became the target for the Firing Squad. This is why salvation is through faith in Him. This is why we dare not tell any sinner to do aught for salvation other than to pin his faith and hope to the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Him now and be saved from the wrath to come.