

BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH
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AN EARNEST QUESTION AND A PLAIN ANSWER

By: C. D. Cole

What must I do to be saved?

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, Matthew 10:28, *“And 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.”* The rich man expressed the need of salvation, when he lifted up his eyes in hell, Luke 16:24, *“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”* All classes and ranks of men will realize the need of salvation in the day of judgment, Revelation 6:15-16, *“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us 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. I Peter 1:4, *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,”* 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 quench 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.” After Cain had killed Abel his brother, Genesis 4:13, *“And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.”* But 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 jailor, a hard-hearted man who a few hours before had cruelly treated God’s servants. Acts 16:23-30, *“And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard 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 every one’s bands were loosed. 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. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, *Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 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?*" The jailor 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 indeed earnest. He was not thinking of joining a church for business reasons, or family, or social prominence; 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 persecutor of saints, and this Philippian jailor. We would have expected the chief priests 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, Matthew 21:31, "*...Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the 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, some man or woman scarcely known, and 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: Acts 16:31, "*...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,...*"

The jailor 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 jailor 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 cant 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. And some would say, "Set yourself to work and toil and labour." And some would say, "Don't trouble yourself about such whims. A short life and a merry one; make the best of it and jump 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.**"

THE ANSWER ANALYZED

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 jailor to a person, not to a church, nor an ordinance, nor to his own works. They pointed him to the same person John the Baptist pointed to. John 1:29, "*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, 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. Sal-

vation 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. Romans 5:19, "*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*"

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, Acts 9:6, "*...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 fruits 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, we 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 jailor did no works to be saved, but he was rich in good works after salvation. Acts 16:32-34, "*And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in*

his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." 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. And saving faith is still interested in succoring 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 reader, 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 in the sanctuary? Does your faith allow you to swear and drink, and then justify such conduct on the ground that you are not under law but under grace? Beware, my professing Christian, Jude 4, "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."

WHY SALVATION IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

After telling the jailor 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 jailor'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,

1. 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, Romans 3:10, "As it is written, 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 in Luke 7:41-42,

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both..." Men may differ in the amount of their sin debt, some owe more than others, 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.

"Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow."

2. Salvation is through faith in Christ, 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, Galatians 3:10, "...Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." 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, Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:..."

There was once a revolution against the government of a certain country. Some of the rebels were captured and were

brought out one morning to be executed. As they stood lined up to be shot a young man standing off to one side cried out, "Captain, just a moment; There is a man in that row who has a family, and they need his help at home. I have no one to care for. Will you let me take his place?" The captain answered; "Yes you may," and at once these two changed places. The captain gave orders to the firing squad to fire and all in the row fell dead, the young man with the rest. Could the government justly touch the man in whose place the young man had died? No, he died, in a sense, and paid the penalty through his substitute and was declared a free man from all his offences. The man went home and later prospered in business and built a monument on which he had these words inscribed: "In memory of the man who gave his life for me."

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 for the firing squad and on Calvary He became the target. 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. Trust Him now, obey Him in baptism promptly, and give your life to monumental service in His name.

TAKING A LOOK BACK

From BSBC church minutes:

At a church meeting held at Bryan's 19th August 1786. Ambrose Dudley, Moderator, John Mason, Clerk Recd. Into fellowship Robin a negroe man belonging to Mrs. Chapman. Query, whether we Consider persons Members of the Church before or after Baptism, referred to next meeting...Ambrose Dudley nominated to take the Pastoral Care of this Church, Henry Roach, William E. Waller, William Ellis and John Mason for Elders, John Darnaby, William Tomlinson and Joseph Rogers for Deacons referred to the next meeting.

At a church meeting held at Bryan's 16th of Sept. 1786. Ambrose Dudley, Moderator, John Mason, Clerk. References from last meeting, a Query whether we consider persons to be Members of the Church before or after Baptism. Answered after Baptism—References Concerning Brother Dudley taking the pastural care if the Church Continued. Nomination of Elders Continued—

At a Church meeting held at Bryan's the third Saterdag in October 1786—Ambrose Dudley, Moderator, John Mason, Clerk. References respecting Brother Ambrose Dudley Call to take the Pastural Care of this Church. Taken into consideration. Agreed that Tomorrow be appointed a day of fasting and Prayer to Almighty God for his Divine blessing on his accepting the Call. Agreed to continue the references respecting Elders and Deacons to the first Saterdag in November and the Day following to be appointed a Day of Fasting and Prayer. Recd. Into fellowship John Tandy by Experience.

Sunday, October 22 1786 Met agreeable to appointment and our beloved brother Ambrose Dudley agreed to take pastural Care of this Church being unanimously Called by the Church. Recd. By recommendation Mary Young, Mildred Wlaler and Anna Mason.



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 3175 Briar Hill Road, Lexington, Kentucky 40516
 Phone 859.299.9164
 Web Site: www.bryanstation.com
 Email: mail@bryanstation.com
 Alfred M. Gormley, Pastor
 Don Waltermire, Assistant Pastor

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