**LIFE’S GREATEST QUESTION**

**ACTS 16:25-34**

IT IS NOT HOW MUCH FAME, FORTUNE, OR FUN WE HAVE.

 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION. And yet it is extremely sad how few ask it! Many who have been driven up to it like this jailer would never have thought it unless God had sent some distress to rouse them.

 This man was asleep till the earthquake happened, and *then* his mind was suddenly filled with a subject which he had never thought of before. What will God have to do to get your attention?

 **God wake us up to the ugliness of our sins.**

 Willie Nelson, before IRS caught him, when still had money, built his own golf course on his own land. Someone asked him about “par” (explain). They asked what par was on his course. He said, “*It’s my golf course, par is what I want it to be.*” He pointed at the first hole, “*that’s a par 47, yesterday I birdied it*”.
 That’s how a lot of people approach sin these days, they think they can just define it for themselves…nevermind what God says about it…they “*feel*” it’s ok!
 It’s secular humanism…and no matter what evil happens, from OK City to Columbine from the twin towers to anthrax, from suicide bombings to the recent child abductions, whenever evil happens, the talking heads are all over the TV saying, these people aren’t *wicked*, they’re just sick…they’re not *evil*, they’re just sick…yes, they’re sick alright, they’re sin-sick!

 The Bible points out the very root of the problem and calls it what it is: sin! We’re born with a sin nature…we aren’t born with a spark of *divinity*; we’re born with seeds of *rebellion*. And sin’s penalty must be paid.

 Here is a man in the condemned cell: no man will say that he is not in terrible danger. Why? Because he is condemned *already*. Even so judgment has been already pronounced upon every sinner. No, your head might not be in the gallows today, but *it is coming*.

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 It used to be fabled of the ostrich that when pressed hard by the pursuer, it buried its head in the sand, and endeavored to persuade itself that it was safe because it ceased to see the danger. But the bird of the desert is *too wise* to do anything of the kind; yet sinners are not. Whether, however, they forget it or not, it is there. “*But he that believeth not is condemned already*.”
 That’s the bad news…the good news is: Jesus Christ came into the world to save us from sin!

**I. THE MEANING OF SALVATION**

 The word saved comes form the Greek word “sozo”; which means to be delivered. But what are we delivered from?

**A. THE PENALTY OF SIN—**Romans 6:23, “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” The apostle Paul calls it the “body of death”.
 In ancient Rome, they killed criminals in several gruesome ways: crucifixion, thrown to wild animals, and another way: when convicted of a capital crime, many were executed by being attached to a cadabre, a dead body, usually of someone who died of a loathsome disease like leprosy…they would tie the corpse to the back of the criminal, who was required to work, eat, sleep w/ that dead body tied to him…as it decayed and decompose, the disease would overtake the criminal, who would then die a slow, agonizing, humiliating death, attached to that cadabre.
 The Bible says we all have a body of death that is tied to us; it’s called “sin.” But praise God, Jesus came to save us from the penalty of sin.

**B. THE POLLUTION OF SIN—**When we get saved, the Lord says, I’ll not only keep you out of hell (what most people think they’re saved from in total) but I’ll give you a new *nature*…I’ll clean you up from the inside out…I’ll give you *power* to get *victory* over bad habits, to *learn* a better way to live, how to *get rid of* the things that don’t belong in your life, and *replace* them with much better things.

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 Years ago a man in England was in prison, but he was pardoned by the queen. A friend delivered the message to him saying, “*I’ve got great news: you’ve been pardoned! You can go free!*” His prisoner friend showed no emotion. The friend went on to say, “*Don’t you understand? The queen has set you free.*” That prisoner unbuttoned his shirt, drew it back, and revealed a large cancerous growth in his chest that was eating away his life. Then the prisoner said, “*Ask the queen what she can do about this?*”
 It’s not enough for us to be saved from just the penalty of sin; we must also be saved from the pollution and the power of sin.
 Not just the sin that would send us to hell, but the sin that will continue to wreck our life right now.
 Not just the sweet *by and by*, but the nasty *now and now*.

 No wonder the author of “Rock of Ages” wrote:
“*be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure!*”

 The Bible says sin shall no longer have dominion over you…there’s no sin you *cannot gain victory over* by the power of Christ…yet some of you continue to be led around by the nose by Satan himself, and you think you have no control over it, but I’m here to tell you that Jesus has broken the power of sin in your life, and you need to claim the victory and say, “*enough is enough, I’m claiming the victory today!*”

**C. THE PRESENCE OF SIN—**Revelation 21:27, “*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*” What must I do to be saved?…saved from what? Sin!

That’s the meaning of salvation…

**II. THE MAN OF SALVATION**

**v. 31** believe on what? No, believe on Who!
 People claim to believe in God.

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 Every person in hell will believe in God.
 People claim to believe in the plan of salvation.

 You cannot be saved by the **plan** of salvation…you can only be saved by the **MAN** of salvation. (Jesus Christ)

 Salvation is not in a plan/prayer/It’s not by works/a feeling/not by trying/not by baptism/good intentions/not by signing a church membership.

 Salvation is in Jesus Christ, alone. Forsaking All I Trust Him (faith).

**(1) He is the Lord**; and this word is expressed by two words, one of which is Jehovah, and denotes His eternal existence; the other is a term of authority and dominion, which bespeaks Him the Ruler of all things in heaven and earth. As such He is to be worshipped by us; and we find, in fact, that He was frequently worshipped upon earth.

**(2) He is Jesus**. This name expresses that office which He took upon Him for our salvation, and proposes His as the only name given under heaven whereby we may be saved. And if it is His office to deliver us from sin, then we are all under the dominion of sin till He redeems us from the power of Satan unto God.

**(3) He is Christ**, the anointed of God; that Person who, by the power of the Divine Spirit, is ordained to be our Prophet, Priest, and King.

 If we call Him Lord, Lord, we are to do the things which He saith.

 Faith is only as good as its object…is Christ the object of your faith?
 Salvation is in Jesus Christ, alone.

**III. THE METHOD OF SALVATION**

 The question is: “What shall I do?” as though anticipating some

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great requirement. The answer, perplexing many by its simplicity, is, “Believe.”

 And what *is it* to believe? Well, that depends on what is to be believed. “Jesus Christ died to save you.” Do I believe that?

 Then *emotion* and *action* are both called forth, I sorrow *for* sin, and flee *from* sin; His love calls forth my love, and my faith works by love.

 Let the object of faith be a person, and trust is its essential element. To the **banker** whom I trust I give up my money. To the **physician** whom I trust I commit the care of my diseased body, and I take his medicines, though they be poisonous. To the **Saviour** whom I trust I commit my all. I lay my sins upon Him, and He *bears* them; I forsake sin, for He *commands* it; I lay cheerfully hold on His promises and He *fulfils* them.

 “Believe” (v. 31) Not God, *as* God, for the devils believe in God. They go further — as the effect of their faith they tremble. They do more than some of you have done.

 Not *in*—mentally, intellectually, but *on*—emotionally, spiritually.

 There was a man who wouldn’t fly. When he asked about it, said, “*I know intellectually its ok, but emotionally I can’t handle it.*” One day he realized, “*I’m a grown man, wasting lots of time, I’m gonna’ do it.*” He bought a ticket, got on board, buckled himself in and made his destination. He may have had white knuckles all the way, but he made it!

 What was the difference? Before he believed in airplanes but now he believed on the airplane.

 If you were sitting in a house and I noticed it was on fire and ran to the door to tell you. You could only be considered to truly believe in me if you *ran out* of the house.

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 BELIEF REQUIRES SEVERAL THINGS.

 Our belief implies an *obedience* to the commandments of this Divine Person; and this obedience is the evidence He expects of our faith. If we call Him Lord, Lord, we are to do the things which He saith. And therefore:

**3.** The belief of a Christian implies a *conformity* of character between the believer and the person in whom he believes. The likeness between the Master and the disciple is universal in all professions. If Jesus had been a great warrior then certainly His followers would have excelled in the military art. If He had been a master of worldly forms, then we should have been all for elegance and niceness of outward appearance. But as He was none of these, but a preacher of righteousness, a physician of souls, a guide of the blind, and a comforter of the afflicted, and a sufferer upon earth for the glory of God and the salvation of men; the qualifications which show us to be believers must be of the same sort.

 Millions believe in Jesus Christ, (head), but will split hell wide open one day because they’ve never believed on Jesus Christ (heart), they’ve missed heaven by **18 inches**!

**CON:** CHILD JUMPING INTO PARENTS ARMS. Some think God is going to drop them.

 You often go across a bridge you know nothing about. You do not know *who built* the bridge, nor of what *material* it is made; but you walk over it, and ask no questions. And here is an arched bridge *blasted* from the “Rock of Ages,” and *built* by the Architect of the universe, *spanning* the dark gulf between sin and righteousness, and all God asks you is to walk across it; and you start, and you come to it, and you stop, and you go a little way on and you stop, and you fall back and you experiment. You say, “*How do I know that bridge will hold me:*” instead of marching on with firm step, feeling that the strength of the eternal God is under you.

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YOU CAN BE SAVED:

**1.** The body saved — from fresh inroads by sin; from its members being instruments of unrighteousness; from the sting of death; from the victory of the grave.

**2.** The soul saved — from unholy affection; from raging fear; from guilt; from despondency and despair; from the discord of the passions; from ungodly impulses; from evil influence.

**3.** The spirit saved — from fatal ignorance; from damnable folly; from vain and evil imaginations; from ruinous error. Body, soul, and spirit, all saved!

Saved! Saved from all evil now in part, and hereafter saved in absolute and everlasting perfection.

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