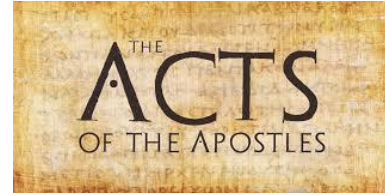


We ask all kinds of questions don't we?

- What's your name?
- What do you do for work?
- Are we there yet?
- What should I wear today?
- What's for dinner?



All of these questions are important and relative to daily life.

But there is one question, and only one that is the most important question and is relevant to daily and eternal life.

"What must I do to be saved?"

Indeed,

An important questions it is.

When we talk about "being saved," it means saved to Christ - from God's wrath.

Sin must be judged. Christ took the judgment on the cross and when one believes, that person's judgment is applied to Christ and that person is considered "saved" from the judgment.

One of the simplest examples of how this works is found in Acts 16.

The chapter opens with some of Paul's exploits that I will summarize.

1. Paul met young Timothy and took Him along
2. Paul has a vision to go to Macedonia
3. They went to a river to pray and met a woman named Lydia.
4. She responded to the Gospel and she and her whole household had been baptized

v.16 Now things begin to go sideways

It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

"divination" *puthon*,

Having a spirit of Python, a Greek fable where a huge serpent predicted future events.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Any form of divination is demonic as Satan is called;

Rev 12:9 *...the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

She was;

v.17 *Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."*

She was telling the truth.

She did this for a few days and Paul got really annoyed.

Paul commanded the demon to come out of her in the name of Jesus, and he did.

Her handlers got really upset and dragged Paul and Silas to the authorities who threw them into a prison.

v.22 *The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.*

v.23 *When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;*

v.24 *and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

"inner prison" deepest, darkest part of the jail

Their bleeding backs were not washed

Their legs were stretched in wooded stocks which added more discomfort;

All for witnessing to Christ in a pagan land.

v.25 That magic word shows up – But

But means something contrary or unexpected is going to happen.

What was it?

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

v.26 *and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.*

There are two miracles here. Which one would you say is greater?

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

v.25 they are praying and singing

v.26 an earthquake broke the prisoners' chains and opened the prison doors

I would say whatever changes the heart is a greater miracle.
The implication of "singing" is that they were celebrating God.
They knew their suffering was for His sake.

v.27 *When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.*

The guard was going to kill himself because he was responsible for the prisoners and thinking they escaped, the Romans would come and take his life.

v.28 *But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"*

Now think of this.

Bleeding, beaten and locked up, yet
He cries out to the jailer, "we are all here."

There was something about Paul and Silas that this jailer had never seen in anyone before.

v.29 *And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,*

He knew something had happened, something out of the ordinary.

And now, the most important question:

v.30 *and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

Why this question?

I believe the jailer saw his own self in contrast to Paul and Silas.

He probably heard the Gospel presentation from them but distained it, or at least rejected it.

But now,

Something happened in his life that told him he needed it.

Notice the simple answer to the most important question:

v.31 *They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Ie.

If you believe, you will be saved.

If those in your household believe, they too will be saved.

v.32 The Jailer took them home

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

Remember that they were in the dungeon with bleeding backs?

v.33 *And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.*

William Barclay said;

"Unless a man's Christianity makes him kind, it is not real."

v. 34 I guess the jailer was no longer fearing for his life since his conversion experience.

And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Now he's in trouble. How is he going to explain the missing prisoners, and they're at his house! And they're eating his food!

When you walk with God, there is nothing to fear.

v.35 *Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."*

v.36 *And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."*

In summary;

We have 3 classifications of people here representing the whole world:

1. Lydia – a wealthy business woman from Thyatira – she represents the top end of the social scale
2. The demoniac girl who told fortunes for her masters – she represents the low end of the social scale
3. The Jailer – A Roman middle class soldier – he represents the middle of the social scale.

This was the whole gamut of society which shows that the Gospel is for the whole world.

Finally,

You may suffer for following Jesus, but your faith and character can lead to the salvation of the one who is causing the suffering.