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The Question We Should All Ask

Acts 16:25-34

Introduction

1. We ask questions all our lives.
2. When we were toddlers we asked questions like . . .
 - a. What's that?
 - b. Why is the sky blue?
 - c. Where does the sun go?
 - d. How much further?
3. As we age, the nature of our questions change:
 - a. If you are a student in high school, you have asked questions like . . .
 - 1) What will the test be over?
 - 2) Will it be essay, fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice?
 - 3) For what percentage of my grade will it count?
 - b. If you own a car or a home, you have asked the mechanic, repairman or contractor, "How much will the repairs cost?"
 - c. When we have a health issue there are certain questions we ask our doctor.
4. All of us have certain life questions which we ask:
 - a. What do I want to do for the rest of my life?
 - b. Where can I find a job?
 - c. Do I want to get married? If so, what traits do I want to look for in that special someone?
 - d. Where will we live?
 - e. Who will take care of me when I get old?

5. Of all the questions we each will ask throughout our lives, there is one which is more important than any other question we will ever ask.
6. It is the question "What must I do to be saved?"
 - a. Every person who has ever lived or who will ever live is the creation of an all wise, all powerful, sovereign God.
 - b. According to Scripture all of us have sinned and thus fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23).
 - c. The wages of our sin, what we earn for ourselves because we have sinned is death (*Acts 6:23*), eternal separation from God in hell — the place He has created for the devil and his angels.
 - d. So, the question we should all ask is "What must I do to be saved?"
7. This question is the focus of our lesson this morning and it is the one question each of us would do well to answer for ourselves.

[Let's begin by looking at . . .]

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I. The Circumstances Which Prompted The Question

A. AN ENCOUNTER WITH A SLAVE GIRL

1. Paul and Silas enjoyed some success in Philippi with the baptism of Lydia and her household.
2. One day, as they went down to the riverside to the place of prayer where they had first met Lydia and those with her, they were followed by a slave-girl who had in her a spirit of divination.
3. Her owners profited through her fortune-telling.
4. On this particular day, as she followed Paul and Silas she kept crying out, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation" (v. 17).
5. This went on for several days until Paul turned to her and said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" (v. 18).

6. Instantly, the spirit came out of her.

Slide 3**B. PAUL AND SILAS ARE BEATEN AND THROWN INTO PRISON**

1. When her owners realized what had happened, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the market place where the judgment seat was located.
2. They first accuse Paul and Silas of causing a public disturbance:
 - a. “These men are throwing our city into confusion” (*Acts 16:20*).
 - b. In making this charge they also appeal to the anti-Jewish sentiment in the city by denouncing Paul and Silas as “Jews.”
3. The owners of the slave girl then accuse Paul and Silas of advocating non-Roman customs (*v. 21*).

“These men . . . are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or observe, being Romans” (*v. 21*).
4. They incited a mob to rise up against Paul and Silas along with the magistrates who tore off their robes and ordered them beaten with rods (*v. 22*).
5. Following this, the chief magistrates had Paul and Silas thrown into the local prison where they commanded the jailer to “guard them securely” (*v. 23*).
6. He, in turn, “threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks” (*v. 24*).
7. Instead of complaining about their ill treatment, Paul and Silas “about midnight . . . were praying and singing hymns of praise to God” (*v. 25*).

Slide 4**C. THE SUDDEN EARTHQUAKE AT MIDNIGHT**

1. At midnight, there was an earthquake — it shook the very foundations of the prison.
2. Immediately, “all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened” (*v. 26*)

3. The jailer awoke, saw the doors of the prison opened and assumed everyone had escaped.
4. Not wanting to face the disgrace of the punishment which came with falling asleep while on duty, he decided to take his life by falling on his own sword.
5. But Paul called out to him, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" (v. 28).
6. The jailer called for a light to be brought to him and when he went into Paul and Silas' cell, he fell down before them trembling with fear (v. 29).
7. After bringing them out he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (v. 30)

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II. Why Is This Question So Important?

A. APART FROM JESUS CHRIST, EVERYONE IS LOST

1. Consider this word, "lost," for a moment.
2. It is a frightening word.
 - a. Many of us have seen the child who suddenly is unable to find his or her parents in a crowd of people.
 - b. Perhaps we have known of an individual out in the woods or on a trail and he or she did not which direction to go in order to reach safety.
3. Today, there are those of us know someone who is spiritually lost, but doesn't realize that he or she is lost.
4. Whether they feel it or not it is a reality:
 - a. "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10).
 - b. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
5. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) — eternal separation from God.
6. This person is going through life pursuing all of the things which make life enjoyable, but they are oblivious to . . .
 - a. The impending reality of eternity.

"... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment"

(Hebrews 10:27, NASB95)

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b. The fact that they will stand before the Judge of all the earth.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10, NASB95)

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B. EACH ONE OF US ARE JUST A BREATH AWAY FROM ETERNITY

1. We think we are invincible, especially when we are young, but the truth is we are all so frail.
2. Not one of us is guaranteed tomorrow morning.
3. David wrote, “Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow” (Psalm 144:4).
4. James added, “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14, NASB95)
5. How many thousands of souls have been lost because they did not ask the question in time?
6. If we could open the door of the world of those who are lost and they could utter only one word of warning, I believe that word would be “Now!”

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C. NOTHING ELSE WILL MATTER WHEN WE STAND BEFORE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH

1. Money matters a great deal to most of us, and we spend our lives trying to get enough to live comfortably.
2. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy who was preaching in Ephesus and told him to “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17, NASB95)

2. However, all the gold of King Solomon will not get us into heaven.
3. We can spend our lives making sure that we get plenty of exercise, watch our diet and maintain our health, but as Paul said, “bodily discipline is only of little profit” (1 Timothy 4:8) — it holds no advantage on the day of judgment.
4. We may be known for a lifetime of good deeds, but they are not sufficient to get us into heaven.
5. As the prophet Isaiah once said, “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isaiah 64:6).
5. The only thing that will matter is whether or not we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, Jesus (Romans 5:10).

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”
(Romans 5:10, NASB95)

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III. How Are We To Understand Paul’s Answer?

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved . . .” (v. 31).

A. “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS . . .”

“... unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24, NASB95)

1. Does believing in the Lord Jesus mean that all we must do is accept intellectually that He is the Son of God and Savior of the World?
2. Others “believed in Him” but it made no difference in them:
 - a. “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” (John 12:42-43)
 - b. “You believe that God is one (there is one God, KJV). You do well; the

demons believe, and shudder.” (James 2:19)

3. Faith in Jesus is more than the mental acknowledgment that He is the Son of God.
4. The jailer had no doubt heard of the proclamation of the slave girl that Paul and Silas were “bond-servants of the Most High God” and that they were proclaiming “the way of salvation” (v. 17).
5. But did he know who Jesus was and what it was that Jesus wanted Him to do with his life?

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B. BELIEF MUST BE FOLLOWED BY BAPTISM

“And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.” (Acts 16:32–33, NASB95)

1. One of the things which Jesus told His disciples to do was to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).
2. He then told them “he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
3. This is what Peter told those gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, who themselves had asked what they must do (Acts 2:38).

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“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38, NASB95)

4. It is what Ananias instructed Saul, later known as the apostle Paul, to do in Damascus (Acts 22:16).

“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” (Acts 22:16, NASB95)

5. It is what continues to save us, as Peter wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor (1 Peter 3:21).

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“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21, NASB95)

6. The jailer’s baptism and the baptisms of those in his household were not an afterthought, nor was it to join the church of our Lord there in Philippi or any other church for that matter — it was to save them from the penalty which their sin required.
7. The same thing happens today — when we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as our Savior, and when we respond in obedience to His will by being baptized, He promises to save us.

Conclusion

1. There are many important questions you may ask throughout your lifetime, but none are as important as the question, “What must I do to be saved?”
2. This question involves your soul’s eternal destiny:
 - a. Those who are saved spend eternity with God in a place where there is no death, mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 21:4).
 - b. Those who are lost will suffer eternal separation from God and torment in the place which God has prepared for the devil and his angels — hell.
3. This morning we have answered the question, “What must I do to be saved?”
4. Now, I must pose another question to you — Have you done what you need to do in order to be saved?