**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Conversion of The Philippian Jailor**

The Book of Acts records several cases of conversion which show us how people became Christians when the gospel was first preached. They tell us what people did to be saved. Since the gospel that was preached then is the same gospel that is to be preached today, we conclude that what they did to be saved is what we must do today to be saved. Whatever was necessary for those first century persons to do for salvation is exactly what is necessary for us to do in order to be saved. And so as we study these cases of conversion we are studying what is necessary for our salvation.

Today I want us to consider the conversion of the Philippian Jailor recorded in Acts 16:25-34.

In verses 20-24 we read of the apostle Paul, and Silas, his preaching companion being beaten with rods and thrown into prison. The jailor was commanded to keep them securely. *“Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”* Though they had been beaten and placed in stocks, Paul and Silas' spirits were not broken. At midnight, these two dedicated Christians lifted their voices in prayer and in singing hymns of praise to God. The prisoners heard them. Verse 26 says, *“Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.”* Now, the jailer had been asleep. When he was awakened by the earthquake and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword in order to commit suicide, assuming that the prisoners had escaped. Someone might be thinking, “Why would he try to kill himself just because his prisoner had escaped?” The reason is that Roman law stated that anyone who had charge of a prisoner and allowed that prisoner to escape would suffer the same penalty that the prisoner was to suffer. Suicide would have been a kinder and gentler way to die, as the Romans sure would have required the life of the jailer in this instance. Paul perceives that the jailer is about to kill himself and calls out with a loud voice to him, *“Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.”* None of the prisoners had escaped. The jailer then calls for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. He brought them out of the inner prison and asked them, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*  They said to him in verse 31, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Now some people will stop right there and close their Bibles, and say, "That’s all you have to do to be saved, just believe in Jesus, faith only." But the word “only” is not in the verse. They didn’t say “only believe” and you will be saved. And also this is not where the story ends. Verse 32 says, *“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”*  Paul and Silas had more to say in teaching them, than what is stated in verse 31. Verses 33 and 34 says, *“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”*

This man is rejoicing because now he is saved from his sins.

Consider with me some observations about this case of conversion.

First of all this case of conversion teaches us that there is something man must do to be saved. When the question was asked, “What must I do to be saved?” it was answered with something to do. As a matter of fact every time this question is asked or one similar to it is asked in scripture, the answer is always something to do. When the Jews on the day of Pentecost ask, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”* Peter, the apostle, told them to do something. He told them to "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…”* (Acts 2:38) There are those who believe that all men will be saved regardless of what they believe are do. These passages teach otherwise. Paul and Silas are saying to the Philippian jailer that in order for him to be saved he must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Belief in Jesus is something we do. In John 6 and in verse 28 Jesus is asked the question, *“What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”* *“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”* (v. 29) Belief in Jesus is a work that God commands us to do. Faith is a work. Either we choose it or we do not. And only those who choose to believe in Jesus will be saved. Jesus said to some Jews in John 8:24, *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*

Secondly, this case of conversion is NOT teaching us that salvation is by belief alone. As we mentioned some people believe that this passage teaches salvation by faith alone, and what they mean by that is that one is saved the moment he believes in Jesus. They mean that one is saved “at the point of faith and without further acts of obedience.” This passage teaches that one must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, but it does not say that one is saved the moment he believes in his heart without further acts of obedience.

The question is, what does it mean to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? What does it mean to have faith in Jesus?

The Bible teaches that saving faith is a faith with obedience. It is a faith that will show itself in works. James says in James 2:14, *“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”* The question here is can faith without works save a man? James is saying, No, faith without works cannot save him. He said in verse 17, *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* In verse 24 he says, *“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”* The only time in scripture where the phrase “faith only” is found is here in this passage, and James says that justification, which means being free from the guilt of sin, is not by faith only. Yes, we are justified by faith, but it is a faith that shows itself in obedience.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is filled with examples of saving faith. In the last verse of chapter 10 the Hebrew writer says, *“But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul.”* But what does it mean to have faith unto the saving of the soul? The Hebrew writer answers that question for us in the very next chapter, chapter 11. He shows us what it means to have faith by showing us what faith did in the lives of others, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. In verse 7 he says, *“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”* Notice, “By faith Noah…prepared an ark for the saving of his household.” Noah did not simply believe and cause the ark to appear. He believed and “PREPARED AN ARK.” He built it. The building was a demonstration of his faith. The building was counted as an element of his faith. Without the obedience there would have been no saving faith.

Heb. 11:30 says, *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.”* This is a reference to the 6th chapter of the book of Joshua. God tells Joshua “I have given Jericho into your hand…” But God commands Joshua that certain ones are to march around the walls of the city before the walls would fall and the city be given to them. The priests are to blow the trumpets. At a certain time the people are to shout, and then the walls would fall. But the Hebrew writer said that the walls fell “by faith.” We understand that the marching, the blowing of the trumpets, and the shouting of the people were essential for the walls to fall and for Israel to take the city. But at the same time the walls falling was by faith.

The fact is the marching was faith. It was faith in action, faith expressed, faith embodied. That is what true, genuine faith is, faith in action. Faith without the action is a dead faith and that will not save.

And so when the Philippian jailer is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, what kind of faith is that? It is an obedient faith, a faith in action. That is the only kind of faith that will save.

And that is the kind of faith that the Philippian jailer had. It says in verse 33, *“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.*

Notice, the jailer, the same hour of the night, washed Paul and Silas’ stripes, where they had been beaten. Would not this indicate repentance? The jailer may not have actually beaten Paul and Silas but it is likely he watched and consented to the beating. Also he showed no compassion upon them after the beating was over because he locked them in stocks in the inner prison. It doesn’t seem that he had done anything to ease their pain. But after he had heard the word of the Lord preached, he took them and washed their stripes. This denotes a change in his conviction about the gospel and these preachers. Washing their stripes was a manifestation of the fruits of repentance. Repentance is necessary for salvation (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19). A person who has saving faith will repent.

The text also says that the jailer and his household were baptized "immediately" that night (v. 33). Why were they baptized in the middle of the night? This was sometime between midnight and day break. Why did Paul go to the trouble of baptizing them immediately? If baptism is necessary for them to be saved then we can understand why they did it immediately. You don’t wait to do what is necessary for salvation? Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 22:16) Baptism is necessary for one’s sins to be washed away. You don’t wait to do that. A person who has saving faith will be baptized immediately to wash away his sins.

When the jailer returned from having been baptized, the scripture then says, *“Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”* Having repented and was baptized he is now able to rejoice. He is saved. But notice it says, “he rejoiced, having believed in God…” His response to the gospel in repentance and baptism is included in believing in God. Saving faith includes repentance and baptism.

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