

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 18TH–19TH, 2024 // BAPTISM

“WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?” (ACTS 16:16–34)

Philippi was a Roman colony, and as such was dominated by the pagan practices of Roman worship.

- One practice was the worship of the god Apollo, the god of knowledge, truth & “prophecy.”
- The Greeks/Romans believed that the python guarded the temple of Apollo, and that people would frequently become possessed with a “pythian spirit.”

Those possessed with the “pythian” spirit could supposedly communicate with the supernatural and those beyond the grave.

- Generals would often consult these people before marching off to war, and others would look to them for advice, wisdom, and insight, much like a modern-day psychic or medium.
- As you can imagine, the python-possessed slave girl was an absolute gold mine for her master!

As the apostle Paul and Silas are in Philippi preaching the gospel, the demon-possessed slave girl begins to follow them around disrupting their ministry.

- So Paul, “having become greatly annoyed,” turns to the girl and says to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!”
- When the spirit leaves, the slave girl’s masters became angered at this loss of income.

The masters of the slave girl bring Paul and Silas before the government officials and charge them with spreading and teaching an illegal religion that was upsetting the peace of Rome (vs. 19–21).

- Paul and Silas were beaten with wooden rods and thrown into the inner cell of a prison with no trial, hearing, or opportunity to defend themselves (vs. 22–24).

Imagine for just a moment how unpleasant, painful, and uncomfortable Paul & Silas are as they are in prison.

- They’re naked from the waist up, their feet are in stocks, their backs are bloodied and bruised, and they’re essentially in solitary confinement.
- History tells us that in ancient prisons, there weren’t any toilets, so prisoners would essentially sit in their own and other prisoners’ filth.

IMPRISONED AND IN BONDAGE

Paul and Silas are beaten and put into a literal prison with chains and stocks, while the slave girl was both a literal slave to her masters and in spiritual prison in bondage to a demonic spirit.

- All three characters are in bondage and unable to set themselves free.
- This is a perfect picture of the human condition apart from the saving power of God.
 - Sin, selfishness, and rebellion against God (Jn. 8:34)
 - An addiction, compulsion, or vice (1 Cor. 6:12)
 - Hopelessness, discouragement, or despair (Acts 16:27, 1 Kings 19)
 - Apathy, complacency, and indifference (Rev. 3:2, wake up, Prov. 15:19, way of thorns)
- Try as we might, our human condition is such that we can’t set ourselves free from these prisons.

In spite of all of their justifiable reasons to feel self-pity, Paul and Silas begin to sing and pray.

- As they sang and prayed, there was a great earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison, and immediately, everyone’s bonds were loosed (vs. 25–26).
- The jailer in charge of the prison woke up and realized the doors were open and that if the prisoners had escaped, he was a dead man.

He decides to end things himself and draws his sword to kill himself when Paul and Silas call out to him, telling him that no-one has escaped and everyone was there (vs. 27–29).

- He goes to them, trembling with fear, and falling down at their feet.
- Paul & Silas essentially saved this jailer’s life by choosing not to lead a mass exodus of prisoners out of the jail after God sent an earthquake.

So now, convinced of the power of God and the soul-saving message of the gospel, this jailer asks the million-dollar question—“what must I do to be saved” (v. 30).

- The fact that the jailer asked this showed God was already at work in his heart.
- This jailer was first convinced of his own need to be saved—that in himself, he had no shot of saving himself or making himself right before God.

Not only that, but he was also aware of the fact that there was a Savior who could and was willing to save him.

- Finally, he was willing to do whatever God required of him in order to respond to God’s offer of salvation.
- The response to his question was simply, “believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”
- Not only simple, but counter-intuitive.

“BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED...”

It was the power of the Lord Jesus that saved:

- The slave girl from her bondage to Satan.
- Paul & Silas from their prison chains.
- The jailer and his entire household’s souls.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...”

- He can save you from hell, death, and your sins.
- He can save you from any chains or bondage that enslave you.
- He can save you from hopelessness & despair.

Every religion in the world teaches that in order to get to God, we must “DO” works.

- But it’s IMPOSSIBLE for us to do enough to make ourselves right before God!
- The gospel teaches that the work is DONE—we must simply place our faith in the Lord Jesus.
- This means we “repent” of our sins, we stop trusting in our own works, and we trust in Jesus to make us right before God.

As Paul & Silas were brought to the jailer’s house, they further explained the gospel to him and all in his house.

- Upon receiving the message of the gospel, the first response of everyone who believed in Jesus was they were immediately baptized.
- We complicate this topic of baptism so much, but it’s so clear in this passage and others in the NT: we’re to be baptized when we receive Christ!

DID BAPTISM SAVE THE JAILER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD?

No, vs. 31 makes it crystal clear that the Lord Jesus is the One with the power to save.

- Baptism is not what saves us, Jesus saves us.
- Baptism is what we do in response to the salvation we’ve received—it is our outward, public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
- Baptism is a response to Christ’s work in saving us, not a work we do to save ourselves.

BECOMING A CHRISTIAN IS SO MUCH LESS ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AND SO MUCH MORE ABOUT YOUR FAITH AND TRUST IN WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR YOU.

- God does the work—the calling, the saving, the delivering, and the leading.
- We are simply called to respond through believing in Jesus and confessing our faith in Him.

SAVING FAITH IS A MATTER OF THE HEART

- Repentance (Psalm 51:17)
- Faith in Christ, not in ourselves (Ephesians 2:8–9)
- Surrender (Proverbs 3:5–6)

A CHRISTIAN IS SOMEONE WHO CAN CONFIDENTLY SAY:

- I’m a sinner unable to make myself right before God.
- I believe Jesus died for me, the death I deserved b/c of my sin, and rose again.
- I’ve repented of my sin.
- I’m trusting in Christ to be made right before God.
- I now want all the world to know it.

WHAT IS WATER BAPTISM?

BAPTISM IS ...

Something we do physically that symbolizes what God has done in us spiritually.

- Baptism is how we, as followers of Jesus, profess an active faith in Jesus Christ.
- Baptism symbolizes the washing and cleansing of sin we experience in salvation (Titus 3:5, Acts 22:16) and shows that we’ve been forgiven and cleansed!

An ordinance of the Church that symbolizes the union we share with Christ in salvation (Rom. 6:3–4, Col. 2:12).

- Baptism shows that our old self and old way of life have been crucified and buried with Christ.
- Baptism shows that, just as Jesus was resurrected, we’ve been raised to a new kind of spiritual life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A symbol for beginning the Christian life and is given to those who have already begun the Christian life (Acts 2:41).

- Baptism doesn’t save us, it shows outwardly what has already taken place inwardly (Acts 16:14–15, 32–33; 1 Corinthians 1:16).
- If it isn’t accompanied by true saving faith in Christ, baptism is a pointless act (Acts 16:30–31).

WHY DO CHRISTIANS GET WATER BAPTIZED?

JESUS COMMANDED IT

- Matt. 28:19–20

JESUS MODELED IT

- Matt. 3:16–17

BELIEVERS IN THE EARLY CHURCH WERE BAPTIZED

- Acts 2:37–41

“DO I HAVE TO GET BAPTIZED?”

- When we ask that question, it already proves that our hearts are in the wrong place.
- Once we grasp the lengths Jesus went to for our redemption, we should want to do ANYTHING He asks us to do.
- *Have you been set free from your bondage?*
- Can you say with complete certainty that you have believed in the Lord Jesus—that you have repented of your sins and put your faith in Him?
- If so, have you ever been baptized as a profession of your faith in Him and a declaration to the world that you belong to Him?