

“LIFE’S ULTIMATE QUESTION”

Acts 16:14-34

What is life’s ultimate question? After a google search, I ran across a website that listed the most important questions of life. The list includes...

- **Where did I come from?**
- **Who am I?**
- **Why am I here?**
- **How should I live?**
- **Where am I going?**

These are certainly thought-provoking questions; however, I do not believe that any of them should be considered *life’s ultimate question*. The man who asked this question lived approximately 2000 years ago. He was a Roman soldier who was stationed in the colony of Philippi.

Paul and Silas were Christian missionaries. They sensed that God wanted them to go to Europe and tell them about Jesus.

When they arrived in the Roman colony of Philippi, they immediately began to look for opportunities to share the gospel. Lydia, a businesswoman, heard their message. The Lord opened her heart to respond to the gospel. That's when the story gets really interesting.

Read Acts 16:14-21

A strange thing happened. A young lady who had become a slave began to follow them around. She was demon possessed, and because of her dark powers she produced a lot of money for her owner.

Wherever Paul and Silas went, this demon-possessed girl sarcastically announced that they were servants of God. Because of this huge spectacle, Paul cast the demon out of her. Finally, she was free!

Her masters were not pleased. Their money-making venture was over. So, they instigated a

riot. The rowdy crowd quickly turned against Paul and Silas. What happened next is totally amazing.

Read Acts 16:22-24

If I were to lay this story out in scenes like a play, I would title the first scene...

1. THE CRISIS

Acts 16:25–27... But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; **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. **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.

Paul and Silas had been beaten severely. Blood oozed out of their wounds. They must have been in great pain. The Roman jailer shoved

them into their jail cell and placed their feet in the wooden stocks so they couldn't escape.

Wait. Can you hear it? From the inner prison there is the sound of singing. Paul and Silas were singing praises to their God, and they were praying.

That's when it happened. An earthquake shook Philippi so hard that the foundation of the prison shifted and the doors to all the cells were all thrown open. The stocks that held their feet securely fell to the floor. All they had to do was to get up and walk out.

When the Roman jailer saw the open doors, he automatically assumed that the prisoners had escaped. He drew his sword from its sheath and prepared to pierce his own heart. Suicide was a better option for him than the swift, merciless justice that the Roman army would inflict upon him for allowing prisoners to escape—earthquake or no earthquake.

Just as he was about to plunge the sword into his heart, he heard the voice of Paul ...

Acts 16:28... But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

Paul and Silas were still there in the inner prison when they saw the jailer rush in to check and make sure the prisoners were still there. All the prisoners were still there. The jailer was all shook up!

- **Who were these men?**
- **How could they worship their God in these conditions?**
- **Why didn't they escape?**

He had heard about the faith of these men and about their power in casting a demon out of the young girl. That kind of news travels quickly. With all of this swirling around in his mind, he ran into the jail cell of Paul and Silas and fell down before them. That's when he asked *life's ultimate question*.

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Let's step out of this scene and let me talk to you for just a minute. You do understand that God uses circumstances to get your attention, don't you? It could be...

- **A fracture in your marriage**
- **A death of a loved one**
- **A financial setback.**
- **A frightening medical diagnosis**
- **A breakup with your boyfriend/girlfriend**

Like the Roman jailer, it's time to seek an answer that meets the deepest needs of your soul.

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Okay, we've examined *the crisis*. Now let's move to...

2. THE CONVERSION

Acts 16:30–31... and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” **31** They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Here is life’s ultimate question— “What must I do to be saved?”

**YOUR RESPONSE TO LIFE’S
ULTIMATE QUESTION IS CRUCIAL.**

You can believe in the Lord Jesus...

- **If you are on your death bed**
- **If you are a senior adult, a middle-aged adult, a teenager, or a child**
- **If you’ve made a mess out of your life**
- **If you’ve lived a good, moral life**

“What does it mean to believe in Jesus?” you ask.

“Believe” means to trust, to rely on. I don’t know what this Roman jailer had been trusting

for his eternal destiny. Maybe it was his macho self-sufficiency or his devotion to one of the many Roman gods. Whatever it was, he had to turn away from it and place His faith in Jesus alone.

Acts 4:12... “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

John 6:47... “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.”

To believe in Jesus meant that he would have to agree with who Jesus really was. Jesus was God’s Son who became a human being in order to save people from their sins.

To believe in Jesus meant that he would have to fully embrace what Jesus did. God’s perfect Son offered His body and His blood to God the Father as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Three days later He was raised from the dead! This was God’s way of affirming the saving work of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

This Roman soldier and then his entire family responded to the good news of Christ by believing in the Lord Jesus. God forgave their sins, saved their souls, and gave them the gift of eternal life. Hallelujah. What a Savior!

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Okay, let's step out of the story again. I must ask you to listen to God's voice that is speaking through His Word. He's pounding your heart with life's ultimate question—"*WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED.*" It's a relevant question. It's the most important question you will ever be asked. Your soul hangs in the balance...

Mark 8:36... "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"

Don't gamble with your soul. It will last forever either in heaven or hell. It's the most important part of you. Will you believe in Jesus? In a few moments, you will have an opportunity to seal your commitment to the Lord Jesus. Come to Him in saving faith today!

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We've dissected this amazing story into its component parts. These include the crisis and the conversion. Now I want you to see...

3. THE CHANGE

Acts 16:32–34... And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. **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*. **34** And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

When the Roman soldier and his family heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit opened their heart to believe in Christ. They were radically changed.

Look at this rough soldier now washing the wounds of Paul and Silas. See the activity of the entire family as they scurry around to prepare a meal in the dead of night. What a

remarkable transformation the Lord Jesus had made in their lives!

Then, I want you to picture these two great men of God leading the family down to the river for baptism. One by one they identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. They weren't ashamed of their Lord. They would never be the same.

Romans 6:3–4... Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Your life will never be the same after you believe in the Lord Jesus...

- **He forgives your sins.**
- **He saves your soul.**
- **He promises eternal life to you.**
- **He sends the Holy Spirit to help you.**
- **He anoints you to share the gospel.**

Here's the crux of the story...

**YOUR RESPONSE TO LIFE'S
ULTIMATE QUESTION IS CRUCIAL.**

There are many important questions that you must address during your life. But none of them is more important than the question—*What must I do to be saved?* It is life's ultimate question! How will you respond?

- **Believe in the Lord Jesus.**
- **Follow the Lord in believer's baptism.**
- **Come and pray for people to be saved.**
- **Renew your commitment to the Lord.**
- **Join the family of God here at CFBC.**