What Does it Mean to Be Saved?

In the Bible, the book of The Acts of the Apostles records a story about an encounter that Paul had with a slave girl that was possessed by a "spirit of divination" who made her masters money by fortune telling (Acts 16:16). At the time, Paul, a new minister of the Gospel, was staying in the home of a woman named Lydia along with her husband. Paul, an unmarried man, was a recent convert from Judaism to The Way (Acts 9:2), as these early Christians were referred to. The label "The Way" was applied to followers of Jesus, and actually came from the mouth of Jesus Himself as recorded in the Gospel of John. Jesus said:

> "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)

The story in Acts unfolds with the possessed woman following the group including Paul and crying out "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." As if she wasn't troublesome enough, she kept following the group. After many days, Paul was annoyed and turned to the woman and said "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." (Acts 16:18). After this, the evil spirit which had provided her with certain magical abilities shortly left her body. This angered her masters, who had now lost their source of income. So the slave girl's masters dragged Paul and his companion Silas off to the magistrates. When the slave owners made their case against Paul and Silas before the magistrates, they made the following accusation:

> "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful to us, being Romans, to receive or observe." (Acts 16:20-21).

The men's accusers managed to stir up such a commotion that the magistrates became very angry and commanded that they be beaten with rods, even though they had not been convicted of any crime. After they had been severely beaten, they were thrown into the highest security area of a prison, and as an extra security measure were bound in stocks. Then, Paul and Silas began doing an amazing thing. Much to the amazement of their fellow prisoners, they began singing hymns to God and praying! And the prisoners were listening to them.

Next, an amazing thing happened. An earthquake shook the prison and immediately all the doors of the prison were opened and everyone chains were removed. This caused great fear for the head of the prison, since he assumed that all of the prisoners had escaped. Under the Roman government, this would have resulted in his execution. Because of this, the Philippian jailor drew his sword to kill himself, since this would be much preferred to becoming a victim of the Roman system of justice, even though he had nothing to do with the miraculous opening of the prison. Paul cried out to the jailor, telling him not to harm himself, that all of the prisoners were still there. Then, Paul asked for a light to be brought into the dark confines of the inner prison, and began to speak to the jailor there. The jailor asked:

> **"What must I do to be saved?"** (Acts 16:30)

Paul told him:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and all your household." (Acts 16:31)

Paul and Silas then proceeded to speak the word of the Lord to the jailor and all that were in his household. After this, the jailor took them and washed their wounds, and was baptized along with all his family. That was all there was to it. The jailor heard the word of God, and was saved. As an outward expression of his faith, he was baptized, identifying himself as a believer in Jesus Christ.

Grace means "unmerited favor." The jailor **WAS** saved by:

- God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, which came by hearing God's word.

The jailor **WAS NOT** saved by:

- His good works
- Going to church
- Being a good person
- Thinking kind thoughts
- Giving to charity
- Being approximately 51 percent good or more
- Following the Golden Rule
- Having a second cousin that was a preacher

The Bible says that we are saved by "grace, through faith, and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) The Bible also records that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:13) And, in Second Corinthians 6:2 "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The Book of Acts in the New Testament tells a story about a rich ruler that desired to hear Paul's testimony of salvation through faith in Jesus. But he said that he would do it at a "convenient time." The time never came for this man; God never forces himself upon a person. For another example of another man that put this important decision on the back burner, refer to the story of Felix in Acts 24:24-25.

I have been called as a messenger. If you decide to move forward and place your trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, speak to Him in prayer in the privacy of your home. Remember, it is not the prayer that saves you, but the fact that you are deciding to place your trust completely in Jesus. And the first thing that I would do immediately afterwards is to speak with other Christians about it.

There are three ways you can go: (The following material adapted from Gospelcom.net. Refer to links on the left side of this page.)

1. **T**o say yes, to accept God's free gift of salvation by putting your trust in Jesus Christ.

2. **T**o say no, to reject God's offer of salvation. The Bible says that those who make this choice will spend eternity separated from God in a place called Hell.

3. **T**o say maybe, to try to put off the decision to a more convenient time. The Bible does say that God is patient, wanting everyone to come to the point of accepting His gift of salvation (II Peter 3:9). But none of us is promised that we will be here tomorrow, and because of this "x-factor" of death, trying to put off our decision by saying maybe automatically puts us in the "no" category.

If you believe and are sorry for your sins you would pray something like this:

Father in Heaven,
I know that I am a sinner
and need forgiveness.
I believe that Your Son Jesus
died in my place,
to pay the penalty for my sin,
and rose again for my salvation.
I want to turn from my sinful ways,
so I now ask you,
Lord Jesus, to come
into my life as my Savior
and my Lord.
In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Jim Hill