

# The Conversion of the Jailer

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome here for this Sunday, July 6th. My name is Kent Dixon and it's my joy to be the pastor here. I don't often say this, but get to be your pastor, which is super humbling. And there, as many of you know, there aren't many days that go by when I go, Pastor? Lord? Really? Really? Six years in? Really? I'm a pastor. Is that right? So, uh, fear not that I'll suddenly become full of myself and lose my way, because that ain't gonna happen.

This morning we're continuing in this ongoing sermon series, Acts to All the World. And through this series, we've been exploring the New Testament book of Acts. And as I've said before, we're here again this morning. We'll be jumping over some sections in Acts. So, when you take note of, you know, when I highlight a passage on a given Sunday, there'll be times when you'll say, wait a minute, last Sunday was this chunk, and then whoop, we jumped a big piece.

But there are so many stories to tell, and so many things that I want to cover, and so many things that I need to, I feel I need to highlight, that we're going to try and do that. So, I can't do it all, and you probably don't want me to, well, maybe you do want me to do it all, but maybe we'll revisit one day. But you'll see that we're jumping ahead a little bit.

Because, again, it's packed with details, and there's some specific things that, as we go forward now, with the goal of completing this series by the end of this year, God willing, I want to get through what we can get through.

So, last week we learned that Paul and Silas met with some women down by the river in Philippi. And they share the gospel with a woman named Lydia, and Lydia believed and then was baptized.

[ 1 : 4 5 ] Acts 16, 16 to 24, so I'll just cover this little middle chunk quickly. It tells us about an encounter with a slave who was a fortune teller, and she made money for her owners through her skills, apparent skills.

So, Paul appears on the scene, he casts a spirit out of her, and then, guess what? She could no longer tell fortunes.

So, obviously, their meal ticket gone. Her owners, her masters, were furious with Paul and Silas for messing with their situation, right?

So, following that event, Paul and Silas continued to preach to people at the river. That's something they did regularly. And ultimately then, because of this situation, they were brought before the authorities in the local area.

So, these people were angry, and they brought them up on charges for messing with their situation. And Paul and Silas wind up in prison, and that's where we find them this morning.

[ 2 : 5 0 ] So, jumping ahead, Acts 16, 25 to 40 is our passage for this morning. So, if you want to open your Bible to that passage, I will read it for us as well.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

At once, all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul shouted, Don't harm yourself, we're all here. The jailer called for lights. He rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought him out and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

They replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

[ 3 : 58 ] At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Then immediately, he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them.

He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole household. When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order, Release those men. The jailer told Paul, The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace. But Paul said to the officers, They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison.

And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No. Let them come themselves and escort us out. The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, oops, they were alarmed.

They came to appease them and escorted them from prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters, and encouraged them.

[ 5 : 12 ] Then they left. The conversion of the jailer. That's our sermon title this morning, and so here we are again, exploring a different kind, or a different example, of individual conversion.

So in this story, we see some familiar factors at play. A miraculous event happens. A sincere desire is displayed by someone to follow Jesus. They hear and receive the message of the gospel.

There's a demonstration of obedience in baptism. And then also a change in behavior and action follows the conversion. Those are the things that we see.

The jailer asks such an important question. What must I do to be saved, he says to Paul and Silas. So let's break this down for a moment.

Romans 6.23 says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. So Paul there makes it very clear that salvation is our greatest need.

[ 6 : 19 ] It's just that simple. And even more impactful, Paul establishes this kind of transactional perspective to salvation. Now hear me out before you begin to panic.

Ooh, is there a price for salvation? Paul speaks of the wages of sin, right? He's talking about a transaction of sorts there. That we actually receive something for our sin, but not in a good way. Sin has a cost that is conveyed here. The payment we receive for it ends in death. That's the reality of the consequences of sin.

And that death is apart from God, period. But then conversely, God offers us a free gift. He offers us eternal life that is made possible only through the sacrifice of Jesus, only through relationship with Christ.

If someone asks you or me today, what must I do to be saved? How would we respond? We can make that a rhetorical question for now.

[ 7 : 27 ] While the conversion of the jailer is a powerful story, it's important to recognize what is not mentioned here that is still important to salvation. So hopefully that gets your attention.

So what isn't mentioned in the jailer's conversion? Well, the first thing that isn't mentioned is the need to repent from sins. It's not mentioned in this story.

Luke 24, 46 and 47 says, He told them, this is what is written. The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

When the apostles preached, Jesus wanted it to be made clear that the repentance from sins was an important factor. Peter preached repentance in his first two sermons that we've studied in the past.

This will feel like a million years ago. But Acts 2 and Acts 3, there were two sermons there. Peter preached repentance of sins. Paul also preached repentance in his sermon in Athens, which we'll see in a little bit of time in Acts 17.

[ 8 : 39 ] So just because a clear message of repentance from Paul or Silas or a recorded repentant response by the jailer isn't mentioned in this story, does that mean it's not necessary?

Interesting. The second thing that isn't mentioned is a need to confess Christ. Matthew 10, verses 32 to 33 says, whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven. Jesus taught that it was important to declare and confess him to other people.

If we want Jesus to remember us to his Father and our Father, we need to remember and confess our allegiance to him. And I'd suggest that this also needs to be done without fear.

Romans 10, verses 9 to 10 says, if you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, what does it say?

[ 9 : 51 ] You will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Paul states so clearly there that confessing Jesus with our mouths is a direct link to salvation. 1 John 4, 15 says, if anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.

Confessing that Jesus is the Son of God, my friends, is the key to staying connected to him. So should we conclude that the confession of Jesus somehow isn't necessary or important because it's not mentioned in the jailer's conversion?

I'm going to tell you it would be irresponsible for me to suggest or for you to perceive that just because repentance and confession are not clearly spelled out or demonstrated in this account. They must not be necessary for salvation. I hope I haven't given you that impression. So let's consider what is mentioned in this story. The first thing that is mentioned is believing on, believing in, the Lord.

[ 11 : 07 ] When the jailer asked what he needed to do, Acts 16, verse 31 says, they replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.

Seems pretty clear, right? The jailer was told to believe in Jesus and this is consistent with what Jesus himself taught about salvation. In John 3, verse 36, Jesus said, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them. In John 8, verse 24, Jesus said, I told you that you would die in your sins. If you do not believe that I am He, you will indeed die in your sins.

So it was correct that the apostles often made faith in Jesus of clear importance in their preaching. because it's only by faith in Jesus, only by believing Him, declaring His name, that we can have true life in that name, both now and into eternity.

Romans 10, verses 9 and 10 says, if you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. I said this a moment ago, right?

[ 12 : 32 ] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Do you see the connection? Profession of faith, salvation.

Believing in our hearts, declaring with our mouths, leads to righteousness. So faith in Jesus is imperative to salvation because of what the Bible says about it over and over and in so many different ways.

What's the second thing that's mentioned? Well, the second thing is the importance of baptism. We notice from our passage that the jailer and his family, his household, were baptized immediately, right?

And we've talked about this many times, that there's a confession, there's a belief, there's a surrender to Christ followed by baptism. That's how the progression works. So similar to what we've read elsewhere in other cases of conversion, baptism usually follows conversion almost immediately.

Peter emphasized in his preaching that baptism was for the remission of sins. Paul was told that his own baptism, do you remember when that happened to him?

[ 13 : 46 ] His own baptism, he was told, was to wash away his sins. In 1 Peter 3, verses 21 and 22, Peter wrote that baptism saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels and authorities and powers in submission to him.

So when we get a full picture in appreciation of what's revealed about baptism in the New Testament, we can hopefully better understand why it was received as soon as possible by those who heard the gospel.

remember last week I talked about, do you remember the story of the Ethiopian? He goes, yeah, I believe this and where can I be baptized? Right? He was looking for it to happen quickly.

The third thing that's mentioned is that conversion and baptism included the jailer's household. Interesting. Because our passage this morning states that Paul spoke the word of the Lord to all who were in his house, all who were in the jailer's house, implying that they were all able to listen and they were all able to understand how Paul communicated it.

And then the jailer rejoiced, we hear, having believed in God with all his household, we hear that again, suggesting that everyone believed, right? This was an entire group of people that believed and obeyed and followed.

[15:18] So everyone had the ability to understand and believe and act upon, even more important, what they had heard. So there's nothing here to preclude what we've already concluded.

That repentance and wholehearted faith are necessary requirements for someone that's considering baptism. Right? It is, like I said, a natural progression.

So this morning we've explored another conversion story from the book of Acts. And as I think about all of you and myself, we all have our own conversion stories, right?

Calvin gave his devotion yesterday morning at the breakfast. He talked about that, being bold in declaring how we met Jesus. Be bold in telling our story of relationship with Christ.

That's critical. It is our witness. It is the value. I mean, what is the greatest, most valuable possession you have? I hope it's not your car. Sure, you want to care for those things.

[16:23] Maybe they're important in some ways. What is your most valuable possession as a follower of Jesus? Would you like everyone to have that possession as well? As we know, there's many elements to preaching the gospel.

And next Sunday, I'm going to talk a little bit about preaching and what my own view of the importance of it is. But as we know, there's many aspects to it, and many aspects to someone converting to Christianity, choosing to follow Jesus.

Just like each one of us has a different story, a different how, a different why for how we met Jesus. So, there are also many potential factors and steps.

Why does Paul mention faith in response to the jailer's question when he asks what he needs to do to be saved? Well, the answer really needs to take into consideration the spiritual state or condition of an individual.

So, not everyone is at the same point in their journey, right? When someone is asking about Jesus, asking you to tell them about Jesus, tell me the old, old story, right? When someone is asking, where are they at in their own journey?

[17:38] Because you're not going to talk heavy theological concepts to someone who's just saying, I know I need something in my life. I feel lost and alone. Help me, right? Versus someone who says, I've explored many different world religions and they all leave me feeling empty.

What do you have that I need? The first thing that the jailer needed was to believe in Jesus. Important first step.

For the 3,000 people that we've talked about that converted at Pentecost. They already believed at the time they asked their question. So faith wasn't mentioned in that story.

But it's still implied. It's still an important factor. So what answer, I asked this earlier, what answer should, if someone asked us today, what must I do to be saved?

Our answer, friends, needs to be dependent upon the person's spiritual state or condition, right? And how do you learn that? In relationship with someone.

[18:43] In a relationship of trust and vulnerability and honesty and care and love. If someone has yet to believe in Jesus, they need to begin with belief.

If they already believe in Jesus, then they need to repent and confess their sins and then be baptized for the remission of, for the forgiveness of, their sins.

God's word outlines everything we need to believe in Jesus. Everything we need to follow him. Everything we need to share that gospel story with others.

Following Jesus is, as many of you can attest to, I'm sure, it's a lifelong journey of trust and commitment. But in return, we become heirs of God's love and his grace.

And we have the awesome calling to join God in his mission to draw the world back to him. My brothers and sisters, I encourage each of you to answer that amazing call in your life.

[19:57] Amen.