

The Message that Turns the World Upside Down

A Five Part Series from Acts 16 & 17

Part I – Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ

(Acts 16:25-34)

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6/9/08

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction to Series

A. This week I plan to bring 5 messages from Acts 16 & 17 that proclaim 1 message of the Gospel. And I've taken the title for this series from Acts 17:6 where certain Jewish enemies of the Gospel referred to Paul & Silas as: "These that have turned the world upside down..." Now borrowing that phrase, we will consider this week how in reality, Paul's message of the gospel message, actually turns one's world upside down. And so I've titled the series, "The Message that Turns the World Upside Down."

B. We will examine the record of Paul's visits to 4 cities of Macedonia as recorded in Acts 16 & 17 i.e. of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, & finally Athens.

C. Background

1. This is Paul's 2nd missionary journey. Recall how Paul & Barnabas split up as Barnabas took John Mark and Paul chose Silas to go with him.
2. In chapter 16, we have the record of how God the Holy Spirit led Paul & Silas to take the Gospel to Macedonia (to these cities which lie in present day Greece).
3. And from Troas, they go to the chief city of that part of Macedonia of Philippi.
 - (a) Paul found no synagogue in Philippi, but on the Sabbath he went outside the city to a place of prayer by the river. There he spoke to a group of women, including Lydia, God's 1st convert under Paul's ministry in Europe.
 - (b) On the way to the place of prayer, Paul exorcised a slave girl as recorded in Acts 16:16 of a girl who because of her ability (apparently derived from her being possessed by a demon) to foretell the future (soothsaying) made profits for her owners. Having lost this source of profit, they brought Paul and Silas before the authorities which ultimately led to their being beaten and thrown into prison.
 - (c) Think of the irony of conventional wisdom of man of that surely God wouldn't be a part of this sort of lack of success. They must be acting contrary to His will in coming to Macedonia.

II. C. Introduction to Series / Background (Con't.):

(d) And from here, beginning in Acts 16:25 is where we'll begin today as we will first consider a Bible story known to many involving the conversion of the Philippian jailer.

II. Introduction to Today's Message:

A. The title for today's message, "Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ," is taken from Acts 16:31 where Paul & Silas declare to the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." What a definitive declaration setting forth clearly that those who believe shall (without doubt) be saved! This is speaking of eternal salvation from sin and its consequences. So that makes it incumbent upon us to accurately understand what it means to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." What does that mean? That's what we will be considering today.

III. Discussion of the Text (Read Acts 16:25-34).

A. Interest is providentially stirred up

1. An earthquake takes place. ó Something shakes you up and gets your attention ó awakens one. A word to the indifferent: "Don't take this lightly?" We're speaking about eternity.
2. God graciously shall call His people in the day of His power. This Jesus Christ upon whom men are called to believe on ó has purchased that very calling for them as the fruit & effect of what He accomplished on their behalf at the cross.

B. The Nature of the Question: (And it is the most natural question for us to pose (see vs. 30)).

1. The literal translation of that question is "What is necessary for me to do that I may be saved?"
2. It is a good question in the sense that it shows an interest in eternal things. And it will prove to be a fruitful one, but only if one properly understands and heeds the answer given.
3. Note the underlying presupposition in the question: Note that as with many questions, it presupposes something. Here that something presupposed is this: That there is something necessary for me to do in order to be saved. Many questions are like that. E.g. ó The question, "Are you feeling better?" presupposes that you weren't feeling well previously.
4. And the presupposition in the question of vs. 30 is as natural to fallen man as taking our next breath. We don't even have to think. Just tell me what is necessary that I must do.

C. The Nature of the Answer (Vs. 31):

1. A Correction by way of contrast: Let me suggest to you that the answer given here is one which corrects the presupposition embodied in the question rather than confirming it. Yet it also provides the relevant information that is needed.
2. Examples:
 - (a) If you ask, “What kind of tree do quail nest in?” and I answer, “Live Oaks” I would be giving you an answer while confirming the assumption embodied in your question that quail do nest in trees. But that would be incorrect. But if I correctly answered the question of “What kind of tree do quail nest in?” by replying, “They nest on the ground,” not only would I have given you the relevant information that you needed, but also one that would have corrected the erroneous assumption that quail built their nests in trees.
 - (b) Perhaps a more applicable example would be if I invited you to a dinner party and you politely asked, “What would you like for me to bring?” If I answer, “It’s all being catered. The food’s prepared and completely taken care of.” I would be telling you it is all finished. So rather than answering your question so as to confirm the assumption that I would like for you to bring something, my answer corrects your assumption that I would like for you to bring something by telling you it’s already taken care of by someone else.
3. Likewise in verse 31 when Paul and Silas answer, “***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...***” they are telling the jailer that there is nothing he can do but rather he is to believe on, trust, rely on another, based upon what He (the other) alone has done.
4. The folly of thinking otherwise can be likened to the foolishness of telling a corpse that they must do something in order to have life? As silly as that sounds, that is exactly what we first imagine when we interpret a phrase like this in isolation from the testimony of other scripture which declares to us our spiritual deadness. That is, we tell men who lack spiritual faculties or who are unable to believe or that if they will believe, they can as a result of their believing gain life and that eternally. The scripture describes even those to whom God gives life to as those who were “***...dead in trespasses and sin***” (Eph 2:1).

In John 6:44 our Lord said, “***No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: ...***” This shows us that the nature of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is not a matter of something you do in order to obtain life, but rather that having life given to you in Christ, He is revealed to you that you might trust in Him and Him alone for all the doing.

IV. From Immediate context of Acts 16: Now in the immediate context, I want you to notice some things.

- A. God uses means ó the preaching of the Gospel, to reveal Jesus Christ for there, in the Gospel, is where He is distinguished. The gospel here in Acts 16:32 is called “...*the word of the Lord...*”
1. (Read vs. 32). God didnø leave the jailer with his false presupposition that there might be something he could do to be saved. God, through Paul and Silas proceeded to reveal some things.
 2. And thatø what we endeavor to do in proclaiming His Gospel ó for therein is the object of God-given faith set forth so as to distinguish Him from all counterfeits.
 3. Rom. 10:13-14: In Romans 10:13-14 consider how this is restated as God says through Paul, ***“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?ö***
 4. In Psa. 119, the Psalmist speaks of how ***“thy word hath quickened me.”*** (Given me life).
 5. And in I Cor. 1:21 we read, ***“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom <i.e. ó by manø wisdom> knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”***

Oh what a blessing to hear this word of reconciliation ó whereby we see how a holy God can be reconciled to me a sinner!

B. This word (that reveals Him) is the Gospel: Now we know that this, the gospel wherein Christ and His righteousness are revealed is the word they delivered by considering further this immediate context. As we proceed through chapter 16, Paul and Silas are released from prison. And picking up in chapter 17, we read: (Read 17:1-2). [Comment on this being his ømannerö ó suggesting that his reasoning out of the scriptures is the same as the word of the Lord mentioned in 16:32.]

C. øMust Needsö (17:3)

1. And note how this is described more fully in verse 3 (Read 17:3).

IV.C “Must Needs” 17:3 (Con’t.):

2. Any gospel alleging that salvation is conditioned on the sinner ó Denies the necessity spoken of here. So we see that the Christ upon whom this Phillipian jailer was to believe on (trust in, rely on) was one who òmust needsö have suffered and risen. So I ask you if your notion of this Jesus Christ is such that he must of necessity have died and risen again ó or is that merely an arbitrary note of biblical history. For He to be one upon whom you can rely on for eternal salvation, then what you believe concerning Him and the gospel that identifies Him, must necessitate His death and resurrection. Weøll develop that more fully tomorrow as Iøll show that if and when one believes HOLY SPIRIT (including having imagined that my believing played some causal role in my salvation), that in reality this denies the Christ who òmust needsö have suffered and risen.

V. Summary:

Look back at our text and consider the picture we have of one being brought to the truth. First,

- A. Attention is gotten: God got this oneø’s attention. I pray that likewise He will shake the ground of any who might be indifferent to all this as He does for all those He grants spiritual life.
- B. 2ndly, note that in vs. 28, Paul said, òDo thyself no harm.ö As evidenced by the presupposition in the question of vs. 31, thatø’s exactly what we will do unless God intervenes by the power of His word (by His gospel of salvation conditioned on Christ alone) wielded in the powerful hand of the Holy Spirit to reveal unto us His truth, in the word of His power whereby we see how and why Christ òmust needsö have suffered. Otherwise, we will fatally persist in the notion that salvation is conditioned on the sinner in some way, or to some degree.
- C. Word of encouragement. Good news ó youø’re under the sound of the Gospel god uses. As we read earlier, in Rom. 10:14: ò***How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?***” Even this day ó youø’re privileged, for youø’ve heard with the natural ear the Christ in the Gospel wherein His righteousness is revealed ó that which necessitated His suffering and death ó

í the gospel which calls men to look solely unto Him as the author and finisher of the objective faith rather than directing men to placing faith in their believing ó faith in their faith. My prayer is God will give you spiritual ears that you might hear effectively and thereby be drawn to Him in God-given faith.

V. Summary: (Con't).

D. May God Speak to You today through His word: Heed God's word. Believe ON ó trust and rest solely on ó the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the merit of His very righteousness and that not enhanced by, nor appropriated or procured by your act of faith, but rather procured by Him and appropriated to the sinner by God's judicial imputing (or accounting of it to them) in the very same way their sins were accounted to Him that He might bear them in His death on the cross.

In God-given faith we see how He õmust needsö have suffered and rose victorious and rejoice in the certainty of salvation found there and there alone ó in that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou Shalt Be Saved”

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.

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