

Evangelistic Sermons

(Doctrinal Series)

by

William Edward Biederwolf

Grand Rapids

Michigan

CHAPTER SEVEN -

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:32).

People who don't want any sensation connected with religion ought to give this incident a wide berth. If ever there was an exciting time it was when the Philippian jailer got converted. There was something doing every minute.

There are a lot of church people who are mightily scared about a little excitement when it is connected with religion, but they'll yell like maniacs on the Board of Trade and throw a fit of frenzied enthusiasm over almost anything else that interests them if there is only half an occasion for it.

Sensation, by the way, when the last word has been said, means life and where there is no sensation you are sure to find death. There is a sensationalism in the pulpit which no sensible person would endorse for a minute. But, on the other hand, the church has had to tolerate an extreme conservatism and a chilling conventionality which have brought paralysis with them, and between the two, I don't know but what the excitement of the former is quite as tolerable as the mildew and dry-rot of the latter.

But, the thing that many of you call sensationalism is nothing less than blood-earnest passion translated into action. It is sanctified enthusiasm at work. If Paul had lived in our day he would have been branded sure. He would have been called a sensationalist and might have landed in jail sooner than he did. If you want sensational preaching you have to go to the Bible. When the people wouldn't listen to Jeremiah he threw himself down on the street, stretched out on his back and preached. He made them take notice.

What kind of preaching do you suppose Jonah put up at Ninevah if it wasn't sensational? John the Baptist was the sensation of his day as he came out of the wilderness in camel's hair and the skin of a wild beast, crying, "**Repent, repent!**"

If the people who complain of the extravagant gestures, the pulpit pounding and general acrobatic sermonizing of some of our modern evangelists and preachers, would read history they would discover some worthy exemplars in many of the greatest preachers of the world. A contemporary of John Knox said that even in his old age when he had to be helped up the pulpit

stairs he would soon be preaching with such extreme vehemence that he was "like to ding the pulpit to blads," whatever that means.

The people of Wotton called Rowland Hill a mad man, and he said in his defense, "While I passed along yonder road I saw a gravel pit cave in and bury three men alive. I hastened to the rescue and shouted for help, they heard me in the town almost a mile away. Nobody called me a madman then. But when I see destruction about to fall on sinners and entomb them in an eternal mass of woe, and cry aloud if perchance they may behold their danger and escape, they say, I am beside myself; perhaps I am." But preachers, listen, if this is what it means to be a madman, then GOD hasten the day when our pulpits will be filled with maniacs.

Now I want to tell you how the conversion of the Philippian jailer came about. Paul, you know, was a missionary; he was a traveling preacher. Really he was more of an evangelist than anything else. Of course he was well known on the streets of Philippi.

He had been holding some special meetings, and one day a young girl who had the devil in her bawled him out on the street. She had it in for the meetings. There is always a set of senseless, gadding, gumchewing girls who pass up a proposition like this for the same reason this girl did. They've got the devil in them. Well, Paul decided to stop the girl in her mad, wild career and he rebuked the Devil in her and the Devil came out of her, and then Paul discovered that he had stirred up a hornet's nest sure enough.

There was a set of Godless, degenerate rascals who had been coining this poor girl's shame into money, and they said: "Here, this'll never do." Instead of thanking GOD that the girl had been saved they commenced to cuss and complain and said their business was being hurt. Well, any business that's so damnably rotten that it can be hurt by any manifestation of the power of GOD ought to be hurt. Any business that religion can hurt is a good business to get out of.

And so these promoters of this brutal and devilish traffic, when they saw that their hope of gain was gone, laid hold on Paul and Silas and hustled them off to the chief Magistrate, to the Mayor of the city.

And this little machine politician, who held his office at the hands of the gang, ordered them to be beaten and sent to jail. Well, it seems that it has always been pretty much that way in this old unbalanced world. Tyrants sit on thrones while saints are sent to the scaffold, the flame and the dungeon. A pit for Joseph; a lion's den for Daniel; a torch and fagots for John Huss; a dungeon for Paul and Silas.

It says the jailer thrust them into the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. Jails are miserable enough now but in those days they were something fierce.

Come on now, and let's pay a visit to the Philippian jail. It's midnight, but you'd never know it, for in the dungeons it is always night. I've been in these dungeons. The chill and the odor of the damp, foul air are with me tonight again in memory. Now listen to the heart-sickening sounds. The groan of poor victims who have not seen the sunlight for years, the cough of the consumptive wasting away, the wail of despair, the deep sigh, the clanking chains of some poor culprit as he rolls over in his dreams, the shriek of some poor soul in a nightmare of horror and the curses of those who are crying out against their cruel fate, and you say, "GOD pity the poor

prisoners."

But now listen, someone is singing. Singing praises to GOD. And now listen again. They are in prayer. And we say, "Why, Jailer, these are strange sounds for a place like this where everybody else is groaning and cursing. Come, take us to them." And in a moment, we are standing in front of two prisoners, sitting on the cold ground, their backs running blood from a recent beating they had gotten, their feet fastened tight in wooden sockets. It is Paul and Silas holding a prayer meeting at midnight in a dungeon.

And we say, "Why, Jailer, have you got these two men here?" And he says, "I didn't mean to put them here but I was commanded and had to do it. No such prisoners ever came into this place before. They said, 'Good evening Jailer,' when they came in; their faces wore a look that has tarried with me since the hour they entered and while I made them fast in the stocks they talked to me about a strange, new hope and I have been disturbed in my soul."

But while in our imagination we are standing there in the gloom of that dungeon, suddenly there is a great earthquake. It is GOD's "Amen" to the prayer of Paul and Silas. Some people don't believe that prayers are answered, but here is one that was answered with a bang. The foundations of the old jail commenced to rock, the iron bars began to twist and the huge walls go down with a crash. The doors burst open and every prisoner's bonds are loosed. The jailer knew he would be held responsible if anyone escaped. He would have to give up his own life as a penalty. That was Roman law. So he drew his sword and was just at the point of killing himself, when Paul cried: "Stop! Stop! Do thyself no harm; we are all here," and when he saw that Paul had spoken the truth I can see him fairly rush up to the two evangelists and out of the depths of a troubled and yet grateful heart cry, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**"

"**What Must I Do to Be Saved?**" What a tremendous question that is! Of all the questions ever uttered by the human soul there is not one in all the universe of GOD in the answer to which are involved such tremendous issues for time and eternity. Have you ever asked it? Have you ever been worried about it? If not, let everything else go; shove everything else aside. There's only one important thing for you to do and that is to honestly ask the question and get the right answer.

"**What must I do to be saved?**" Now let's look at Paul's answer. He gave that trembling jailer one compact, thrilling, tremendous answer. He told him what to do. I sometimes think if it had been in our day he would have told him a few things not to do.

There's been so much fool speculation, so many perversions of the Gospel, so many delusions and isms in general it is no wonder an anxious soul sometimes gets bewildered.

1. I think he would have said in the first place: "*Don't get an idea that you've got nothing to do.*"

Don't think you can do as you please about everything and do nothing about JESUS CHRIST and be saved anyhow, some time and in some way. there is a certain kind of religion today that teaches something pretty much like that, but, as Finney said, "It's an outrage on common sense," and many a man has lost his soul by clinging to a vain hope like that.

It was reported sometime ago that a steamer picked up a fragment of a chair from the Titanic and written on it was found the farewell message of John Jacob Astor to his loved ones, and it closed by saying: "We will all meet in Heaven." The relic has been sent to his family.

I would not tear away with ruthless hand the comfort of hearts that are bereaved. I hope, if the incident is true, that John Jacob Astor was not deceived. I hope he did the thing in the last hour that Paul told the Philippian jailer to do; for if he did not, then he was a victim of this soul damning delusion I am talking about, for a record like his could never have furnished him a hope of Heaven like that. No. There is something to do.

2. Then I think Paul would have said today, "Don't get an idea that you can't do what GOD commands you to do."

Suppose you would take your boy down to the Mississippi river and say to him, "Son, jump across that river," and he would say, "Papa, I can't," and you would say, "Never mind, you jump across that river or I'll tan your hide." You'd be a fool if you told him to do it and a wretch if you punished him because he didn't. But that would be just as fatherly and just as reasonable of you, as it would be for GOD if He had this thing of your salvation fixed up with impossible conditions and then damned you or allowed you to be damned because you didn't meet them.

There is something to do and every man who really wants to be saved can do it. "**What must I do to be saved?**" Now what answer did Paul give to that question?

Did he say, "Get out of this place quick before there's another earthquake." No. It wasn't that kind of salvation the jailer was inquiring about. He wanted to be saved from sin - from its awful curse.

Well, what did Paul say? "Go to the Chicago University?" No, he'd have gotten in wrong sure thing there.

What did he tell him? Give up your bad habits, quit your meanness and be decent? No. That's nothing but reformation. It's like whitewashing a rotten house or tying artificial flowers on a rose bush.

Did he tell him to follow his conscience? No. For that might have been seared and landed him in hell. A man's conscience has got to be educated.

Did he tell him to go and join the church? No. That couldn't do the business. The church won't make you a Christian any more than the insane asylum makes you a lunatic; something's got to happen to you before you get there.

Did he tell him to change his environments? No. If your watch doesn't run you can't make it go by putting it in some other pocket or by hanging it on a rose bush. It has to be fixed up on the inside. And that's what's the matter with you.

Did he tell him to wait until the excitement was over? No. He knew the angels would shout over

one sinner that fell on his knees and he wasn't afraid of a little noise himself. It's worth it. You know Billy Bray, the Cornish miner, said that if they put him in a barrel, he'd shout "Glory" through the bung hole.

"What must I do to be saved?" Well, what did Paul tell him to do? Listen. Just one thing. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."**

And now what does that mean ~ It sounds simple enough but some people make it mean too much; others make it mean too little. Believing on the Lord JESUS CHRIST is not the same thing as believing something about Him. To believe something about a man is merely the result of a mental operation. To believe on a man is to put your confidence in him and trust him for what he can do for you. When the Bible says: "**Believe**" it always means in the latter sense, in the sense of confidence and trust.

What Paul is talking about here is faith. He was telling the Philippian jailer to put faith in the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Now there is only one kind of faith. Get that set - tied right in the beginning. A man says, "I want to believe but I haven't got the right kind of faith." Well, if you've got any faith at all you can be dead sure it's the right kind. There is only one kind and it's the same kind you exercise every day in regard to the actions of your whole life. There are different degrees of faith. You may believe in one person more than you do in another but it's the same kind of faith every time. And it's at the bottom - at the basis of all commercial life and all social life and all domestic life and everything else, and controls practically everything you do.

You'd have a queer experience and a mighty disappointing time if you moved about with no faith in anybody. You'd go down town in the morning hungry because you had no faith that your wife will prepare you any breakfast. She said she would, but that is another thing. You'd go to the hotel and the waiter brings you a tempting meal, but you leave it untouched because you are not sure that the proprietor does not mean to poison you. Business returns are good and you start to the bank to make a deposit, but on the way you discover you haven't enough faith in the cashier not to believe that he's a rascal. You want to go to Chicago; you start for the depot, but stop on the way because you lack faith in the management's word that they would run the train as the schedule said they would. You have a killing pain but you suffer on because you are suspicious of the surgeon.

"Oh," says the banker, "you preachers are impracticable; you are too visionary; you talk too much about faith; that doesn't interest the business man except for a few moments on Sunday morning." But how long could a banker run his bank if it wasn't for faith?

And every time a man makes a deposit in the bank he's exercising faith in the banker - faith in his ability to run the bank - to wisely invest its funds, and faith in his character, that he won't beat it off to Canada with the boodle.

So, let me say it again; believing without trusting is no faith at all. It begins and ends in mere

mental operation. Faith in the ultimate sense, is an act of the will. I may believe the doctor is able to cure me. I show my faith in the doctor when I trust my case to his care. I may believe the banker to be a good financier and an honest man. I show my faith in him when I shove the "mazooma" under the wire wicket.

When some scientists asked a lad to allow himself to be lowered over a cliff to get a rare specimen of flower the lad replied, "I'll go if my father will hold the rope," That's faith; faith in the strength of his father's arm and the love of his father's heart.

Don't make the word mean too much. Don't give a man the impression that he's got to wade through some laborious dissertation or philosophical discussion before he can understand what faith is. Don't get an idea that the salvation of JESUS depends upon anything so mysterious and unexplainable as that. If it did, it would be all up with the most of us. Don't make it mean too much.

On the other hand, don't make it mean too little. A man says, "I believe in JESUS CHRIST: I've always believed in Him!" but when I ask him what he means, I find that he is talking of mere mental acquiescence.

Paul said in another place, "**If thou shalt believe in thine heart!**" and it's heart belief and not head belief that does the business.

To believe that a ship is seaworthy and can carry you over the water to Europe is an exercise of the head. But when you trust yourself to the ship to make the trip, that is a matter of faith. And so you may believe all you want to about CHRIST but that will never save your soul. You believe on CHRIST when by an act of your will you trust yourself to Him so that He can save you. And the very minute you so trust Him, that very minute you are saved.

You say, "Is it as simple as that?" Yes, blessed be GOD it is. And you can see why, when you stop a minute and ask. who it is you are to believe and trust in this way.

Well, who is it? The verse tells you. It is the Lord JESUS CHRIST. In some passages He is called the Lord; in others, JESUS; then again He is called CHRIST. But when Paul answered the jailer's question he brought in all three names together and said, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.**"

1. In the order we think of it, we are to believe on Him first of all as *JESUS*. He is called JESUS to emphasize His redemptive office. "**Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.**" There's no use to quarrel with GOD about His plan of salvation. Here's a man who thinks it's a sign of humility to call himself an Agnostic. It's more often a sign of intellectual laziness. The Agnostic says. "I don't know."

When I was holding a meeting in Greensburg, Pa., the pastor of the church told me about the conversion of the noted infidel, Richard O. Waggoner, of Toledo, when he was an old man and how he burned up his infidel library in the furnace of the church of which this man was then the pastor in Toledo. He was always a great man to argue, had a commanding presence and was afraid of no one. Bob Ingersol lectured one night in Toledo. He told all about it. how there wasn't

any hell. I guess it must have been the time when a fellow half drunk got up in the audience and said, "Bob, your lecture on hell's all right but I want you to be sure about it, for I'm depending on it." Well, the next morning Waggoner met him in the lobby of the Boody hotel, and there was a big crowd around, and Waggoner said,

"Ingersoll, is there a GOD?" and Bob said, "I don't know."

He said, "Ingersoll, is there a future life?" and Bob said, "I don't know." And Waggoner said, "Ingersoll, is there a Heaven?" and Bob said, "I don't know?"

And he said, "Ingersoll, is there a hell?" and Bob said, "I don't know." And Waggoner said, "If you don't know, why in thunder are you talking so much about it and charging us fellows a dollar a piece to hear you do it?"

Infidelity has been non-suited in the court of reason long ago, but the little four-flushers are not all dead and there are a lot of little fellows who seem to get a certain kind of satisfaction out of knifing the religion of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

They do most of their thinking between their chin and their nose and if they'd only do a little more of it above their eyes, providing they've got the stuff to do it with, they might discover something yet that they'll need pretty badly before they die.

If GOD's plan don't seem reasonable, who knows but maybe we haven't got brains enough to see it. He says:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

It's GOD's business to save you. It's your business to let Him do it. You have sinned and some of you have gone the limit; and I don't care how much you know or how much you've got, you are on the road to hell. You've got to pay the penalty unless it is remitted. GOD passed sentence upon you because it is GOD's law you have broken and GOD is the only one who can remit the penalty. But He couldn't merely pass it up. He couldn't just let it go.

Never accuse GOD of being indifferent to sin. He didn't dare to be. But Jesus volunteered to meet the demands. And when I accept Him and believe on Him as my Saviour, GOD lifts the sentence of death off me and I'll never be asked to pay the penalty because through the sacrifice of Jesus I am saved. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."**

2. Then we are to believe on Him as Lord, He says in John 3:13. **"Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am."** He is called the Lord to emphasize His kingly office.

You are to believe on Him as King and let Him reign in your life.

As Lord and King He is my protector and my helper.

The Devil's a king too, and don't you get an idea that he won't try to give you a good run for your soul; but thank GOD, he's no match for the Lord.

"Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees."

And the hour never dawned, the crises never came when my Lord and my King couldn't make the dust fly underneath the devil's hoofs.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

3. Then you are to believe on him as *CHRIST*. And this name is used to emphasize His priestly office. He is the Anointed One of GOD and as the Great High Priest He is standing just now before the throne of GOD interceding for all who believe on Him and accept Him.

Don't you feel like asking me to stop preaching now, so you can sing, "Hallelujah, What a Saviour!" A JESUS who redeems, a Lord whose arm is swift as a ray of light to help me when my feet commence to slip, and if I should go down, a CHRIST to stand before GOD and make it right. Yes, Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and what I said a while ago, I repeat: The very minute you believe on Him that minute He will save you.

"Well," you say, "preacher, you don't mean to preach instantaneous conversion, do you; that a man can be saved in a minute?" Yes, sure thing. You might as well expect to shoot a gun off by inches as to expect a man to be converted by degrees. I was born by the side of the Tippecanoe and I can swim as easily as I can walk. I have saved a number of people who got in beyond their depth and I never found one of them yet who didn't want instantaneous salvation from drowning. Suppose I had stood on the bank and cried, "You fool, you; how did you get in there?" Wouldn't he or she have cried, "For Heaven's sake help me out quick and we'll talk about that later?"

And if I'd come to you and say, "Look here; you're so low down and so far gone GOD will have to work on you 48 hours at least before you can have any assurance of salvation?" Why, you'd say, "I can't wait 48 hours to be saved; I may be dead and in hell before that time; what I want is to be saved and saved now."

And say, friend, that's what you need. I pray GOD that you may see it tonight. If you can't die for your own sins then some one must die for you.

They hung a young man sometime ago for the murder of his father. Shortly after, his mother died and confessed that she had done the deed. In a fit of anger she struck her husband a blow that killed him. The son came suddenly and was washing away the wound and some one looked through the window and saw him and supposed him to be the criminal. That young man died for his mother. You say "It was wonderful he never exposed her." But he loved her enough and he was brave enough to die for her.

Some one might do that for you and you would escape the clutch of justice here, but there is only One whose death for you could atone for your sins in the sight of GOD. I've told you who He is. I've preached Him to you tonight.

The story of Arnold Winkelreid is old but is so thrilling and so inspiring that it must not be forgotten. A great army was marching through Switzerland and everywhere its path was marked with blood and the ghastly ruin of war.

The Swissmen, rich-veined with patriotic blood, had gathered from the mountains and the valleys to fight for their homes and their fatherland. But they were untrained and armed only with whatever weapon they had found and they could not break the well-formed phalanx of the enemy as they marched close together behind their shields and threatening spears. and the Swiss said: "We are lost; our homes must perish and our land go into bondage."

Then Arnold Winkelreid stepped out and he said:

"Men of Switzerland listen to me:"

And they said. "What will you do?"

And he said. "This day I will give my life for my country. In yonder valley lies a happy home where wife and children await my return. but they shall see me no more. Follow me." he cried. "I will break the lines and then do your duty and fight every man as best he can and Switzerland will be free." And single handed and alone he sprang forward and right where the spears were thickest he ran and shouted as he ran.

"Make way for liberty;
Make way for liberty."

A hundred gleaming spears were turned to catch him on their points, but as he gathered them up in his breast the enemy broke its ranks and through the gap made by his gallant sacrifice the Swiss poured in terrific onslaught and won at last a battle the like of which the world had never heard.

No wonder when you go to Switzerland today and mention the name of Arnold Winkelreid that the faces of the people of those world-famed hills and valleys will light up and their eyes will fill with tears because of his blessed memory.

But there was One - two thousand years ago who did a grander thing than that and whose sacrifice set a whole world free. All the powers and principalities of evil were lined against us and the hosts of Satan black-pinioned from hell held us at their mercy. Every method of attack had failed; every divine maneuver for our rescue had been thwarted by the wiles of the Devil and our sinful weakness and humanity stood hopeless and undone.

Then JESUS CHRIST stepped out and the hosts of Heaven said: "What will you do?"

And He said. "I will this day give my life for the world."

And He came and said to the battered and besieged sons of men: "Follow me, and I will break the lines and then do your duty and fight every man as best he can and you shall all be free."

And single handed with the instrument of His death He rushed upon the ranks of hell and into His own bosom. where dwelt the soul of GOD. He gathered all the fiery darts that hell could hurl and opened the way of salvation for all who will follow Him. Will you follow Him today?

~ end of chapter 7 ~
