

Michael Fuller shopped for a few items in his local WalMart. He came to checkout with a microwave and a vacuum cleaner which amounted to \$473. The 53 year old Lexington, NC man laid down one bill to pay. The cashier looked and wondered if she was on camera and this was a joke. The bill was a one million dollar bill. Fuller wasn't joking or producing any other real money to pay. He perceived what he had to be worth a great amount and he expected to receive good things in return. Unfortunately for him he now is in jail because one million dollar bills don't exist. What he thought was good wasn't good enough.

We're not that different. We come before God and think at times that we can provide what's necessary to pay for our ticket into heaven. We come with things we perceive have value. We consider them good. Because we think we have good things to offer we think we should get good things in return. Unfortunately we find out just what value our "good" is worth.

Paul runs across someone a lot like that, just like us in fact. In the book of Acts read as the second lesson Paul and his traveling partner Silas are in Philippi. The man they meet is a jailer. The story of how they meet is intriguing. What we're really interested in is the question of the jailer to Paul and Silas and God's answer...

**What must I do to be saved?  
God answers through his Word  
God answers with baptism**

Their payday was gone. A young slave girl possessed by an evil spirit who could tell the future was making them a fortune. When Paul and Silas threw that evil spirit out she could no longer tell the future. The owners of the slave girl were mad so they stirred up trouble to have Paul and Silas thrown in prison. The jailer could have cared less about Paul and Silas. Whether they deserved to be in prison or not he treated them terribly, causing them much pain. Paul and Silas didn't complain. They didn't sit around feeling bad for themselves. They sang.

Praise came out of their mouths directed to God. Songs and prayers which they couldn't help but sing. And everyone around them took notice. **"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them."** It was an impromptu worship service. No prisoner there that night could escape the reaction Paul and Silas were showing. In their worst moment, alone and locked up, they were still praising God. No one expected what happened next.

Earthquakes are not uncommon in that part of the world. But this natural event was being used for supernatural purposes. **"At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose."** The prisoners were free but probably before anyone could react the jailer came. He was in charge and if anyone was missing he would be in trouble. He saw the prison front doors open. He couldn't go any further. The thought of facing his bosses after prisoners escaped was more than he could bear. **"He drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped."** What a difference from Paul's reaction. When the jailer got into a tough spot that he hadn't even verified he was ready to bring everything to an end with suicide.

Like a death row inmate getting a last second appeal while strapped to the electric chair, Paul shouted, **"Don't harm yourself!"** Paul saved his life. He stared death in the face and lived, thanks to Paul. It got the jailer thinking. Something was different about Paul. Given the chance to complain, he didn't. Given the chance to flee, he didn't. Given the chance to see his tormentor killed, he didn't. So he asked, **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** Paul's response was to do nothing, because nothing he offered could make God happy. God offers him something. **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."** Jesus saved this jailer. God answered his question through his Word.

The jailer's reaction is all too familiar to us. We have in the midst of turmoil asked ourselves what we can do to get out of whatever mess we're in; and not just physical messes. Worst of all is the spiritual mess we find ourselves in at times. We get to thinking that we need to do something to save ourselves, at least show some effort. We perceive that what we can offer even has value before God. Our best works are offered on the scales across from our sins and we think they'll balance. In essence we're crying out **"What must I do to be saved?"** and yet we're avoiding and ignoring God's answers through his Word.

The answer to your every question about God and getting to heaven is found in the Word of God that speaks about Christ. It's through Christ that the whole world has been granted forgiveness. Christ is revealed as the world's Savior. He has completed his work. And God invites us to believe. Believe not because it makes sense or because you've got it all figured out. Believe because the message from the Word has the very power needed to make you believe. This isn't your work, it's God's. Because believing is a gift from God then all terror and guilt over sin is removed. The Holy Spirit replaces it with mercy, joy, and peace. There are no conditions, it's already done. The answer is in the Word of Christ. Christ Jesus saved you. You're saved! Believe it!

Adult baptisms are wonderful occasions that we don't see often. Many of you were brought into the Christian church through baptism as infants and we rejoice for that. But an adult baptism is a special thing too because someone once living outside the Christian church, who didn't know Jesus, and hadn't believed now believes. Someone on the road to hell is now going to heaven. Even Christ Jesus was baptized as an adult. God answers this question of what must I do to be saved with baptism, Christ's and ours.

Another impromptu event happened when Paul and Silas were taken to the jailer's home and a Bible study broke out. **"Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house."** Their young faith grew but God had given a way to make it stronger still. Paul and Silas took water combined with the Word of God and baptized the entire family of the jailer. As the water trickled over their heads they felt in a very real way the grace of God and forgiveness of sins. They were made children of God. God had answered with baptism.

Have you forgotten your baptism? Okay maybe you never really remember it firsthand if you were a child. But we miss something special if we forget that it happened or don't think about it often. We don't want baptism to become just another religious ceremony that is ultimately useless. We don't want to downplay it because it's just another human being performing it. We don't want to get caught thinking that baptism is too simple and we should do something splashy like give away a great deal of money or spend a lot of time volunteering. Many times we do want things to get noticed and we forget our baptisms.

Christ Jesus took on baptism not because he needed it for forgiveness but because you and I did. He had to be like us in every way. His baptism unites you to him through your baptism. Christ Jesus gives baptism its power and continues to do so. Your baptism is still as powerful today as when it was first applied. It's a priceless, free of charge, no strings attached means of grace. In a very real way the simple water combined with the Word of God applied to you washed your sins away. The priceless medicine swallowed up death and saved your life. Still today when sin troubles you point to a specific moment you know the Holy Spirit was working to connect you to Jesus. Remind yourself of being made God's child. God answered your questions on how to be saved with baptism.

Michael Fuller found out just how valuable his million dollar bill is from inside jail. Turns out the valuable thing he thought would buy him the goods he wanted was worthless. But before we laugh at him we need to look at ourselves. The jailer thought he could be saved by doing something or offering something good enough. Sometimes we do the same thing. We need to know the truth. What we can offer is worthless. Only what God gives saves. And he gives us Jesus. He answers our questions on how to be saved through his Word and with baptism. He answers all our questions on how to be saved with Jesus Christ. Believe in him and you will be saved.