

by Bill Crews

...saved?" was a pagan who knew nothing of Jesus and was at that moment unable to believe on Jesus. When he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house" (v. 31), he was not being told to "only believe," nor was he being told to "accept Jesus in his heart as his personal Savior" (something that many preachers today are always saying, but which the apostles of Christ never said). Furthermore, he was unable to believe on Jesus in any sense because he had never heard the gospel of Jesus. That is why the very next verse says, "And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house" (v. 32). Why? To enable them to "believe on the Lord Jesus" (please read Acts 15:7 and Rom. 10:17 and learn that one must hear the gospel or the word of the Lord before faith is possible). And what was their response to hearing "the word of the Lord"? "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes (from the earlier beating of v. 23 -- bc ), and was baptized, he and all his immediately" (vs. 33). The last verse (34) says, "And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his house, having believed in God." Notice that all that the man and his house did (being told to believe on the Lord Jesus, hearing the word of the Lord, obviously accepting it as true and manifesting repentance, and being baptized) is summed up as "having believed in God." This was not salvation by "faith alone."

The reason for so many "faith alone" preachers going straight to Acts 16:30 should be obvious. By reading only part of the story of the jailor's conversion, they have the Bible saying what they want it to say, except for the word "alone." Why not also read other cases of conversion where a question was asked in regard to salvation? The events of Acts 2:1-41 occurred on the first Jewish Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus. After hearing the gospel preached for the first time and being convinced that the Jesus they had rejected and crucified had by God been raised from the dead, a great number of Jews were pricked in their hearts and said to Peter and the other apostles (also Jews), "Brethren, what shall we do?" (v. 37). Verse 38 gives the inspired response: "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." In verse 41 we read: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." No salvation by "faith alone" here.

We have three accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul). These are in Acts 9:1-18; 22:3-16; and 26:12-20. The blaspheming, persecuting Saul was approaching the city of Damascus, where he had plans for further persecutions. His plans were put on permanent hold when Jesus appeared to Saul (in a bright light that left him blinded), and spoke to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul responded, "Who art thou, Lord?" Jesus answered, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." Then a convicted and believing Saul asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" To which question Jesus replied, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (please read Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10; and 26:12-15 for all the information.) A disciple by the name of Ananias was sent by the Lord to Saul to tell him what he must do. After coming to Saul, now a believing and penitent Saul, and restoring his sight, Ananias said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Saul's response is given in Acts 9:18: "And he arose and was baptized." Again, no salvation by "faith alone" here. By all means, read the Bible for yourself; read the context of every passage considered, and try to read all that the Bible teaches on a given subject.

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