THE GREATEST QUESTION EVER ASKED
(Acts 16:25-30)

I. Analyzation of the question.
   a. The word “what” shows that there is something required of the one asking.
      i. Man is not passive in salvation.
      ii. Peter told those on Pentecost to “save yourselves from this untoward
          generation”.
      iii. Paul said to “work out your own salvation”.
      iv. If we ask this question, there is an understanding that an individual must
          do something in order to be saved.
   b. The word “must” is an imperative word.
      i. There is something that a person has to do.
      ii. There is no option in this.
      iii. There is an absolute necessity involved in this.
   c. The word “I” indicates the personal nature of the question.
      i. There is no doubt that God has a role in our salvation and no one is
         implying anything different (Ephesians 2:8-9).
      ii. However, man does play a role in his or her salvation.
      iii. This also indicates the personal nature of salvation.
      iv. No one can be saved for you.
      v. This is you and I making the decision for ourselves in matters of salvation.
   d. The word “do” indicates activity on your part.
      i. Salvation is not passive but active.
      ii. You never read in scripture where inspiration tells a person he or she has
          nothing to do to be saved.
   e. The phrase “to be saved” shows the object sought by the one asking.
      i. Again, there is nothing more important than this.
      ii. Salvation of one’s soul is of the highest concern.

II. Illustrations of it being asked.
   a. The New Testament is our standard, so to it we must go to find the answer to
      this great question.
      i. What we have to do is look at each instance that the question is asked,
         not necessarily in those exact words, but with words with that idea in
         mind.
      ii. By looking at each instance, we will get to see the whole picture of truth
          on this matter.
      iii. This question, or one worded similarly, is found four times in the New
          Testament and one of those is under the Law of Moses.
   b. The first time we see it is when the rich young ruler comes to Jesus (Mark 10:17).
i. Jesus sent him to the 10 commandments because the Mosaic Law was in force at that time.

ii. Remember it was not taken away until the cross (Colossians 2:14), so it was still the duty of the Jews to keep it.

iii. Notice the young man’s reply (Mark 10:20).

iv. Jesus knew the young man had a problem and so, He addressed it (Mark 10:21-22).

v. The attitude of the man still exists today.

vi. There are those who will only obey some of the commands of God, as long as they are what they want to do.

vii. However, this is not the answer one needs to hear today because we are no longer under the Old Law, but under the New covenant.

c. The second time we see this question asked is in Acts 2, during the events of the Day of Pentecost.

i. (Summarize the events leading up to the question).

ii. Listen to how Peter, by inspiration, concluded the sermon (Acts 2:36).

iii. Then we read the question (Acts 2:37).

iv. Peter then, again by inspiration, answers them (Acts 2:38).

v. Why were they not told to believe?

vi. The answer is, they had been brought to belief by the sermon.

vii. They came to understand who Jesus was and the enormity of their sin.

viii. Peter told them to be repent and be baptized, putting baptism on the same level of importance as repentance.

d. Acts 9 is where we have the record of the third illustration of this question being asked.

i. We first meet Saul in connection with the stoning of Stephen and then as a persecutor of the church.

ii. While Saul was engaged in this persecution, he was so in all good conscience (Acts 23:1; Acts 26:9), which lets us know that our conscience is not a safe guide in religion.

iii. In Acts 9, we have the account of Saul meeting the Lord on the road to Damascus.


v. This encounter did not save Saul as some falsely teach.

vi. This encounter made Saul ask a question (Acts 9:6).

vii. Saul understood that he needed to do something and wanted to know what it was.

viii. He didn’t lack belief because he came to know exactly who Jesus was on that road.

ix. It wasn’t repentance, because we then read that he spent three days in fasting and prayer (Acts 9:9-11).
We read in Acts 22:16 what was lacking.

Salvation brings joy and Saul was miserable until Ananias came to him and baptized him, so we know Saul was not saved on the road.

The last illustration of this question being asked is found in Acts 16.

Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi because Paul had cast a demon out of a young woman.


There is our question, word for word.

The answer is in verse 31 (Acts 16:31).

However, the account does not end there (Acts 16:32).

Why would they preach to him the word of the Lord?

The answer is so that he could believe (Romans 10:17).

The result of the teaching they did is recorded in Acts 16:33.

The explanation of the various answers.

Why did we read three different answers to those who asked the same question while living under the New Covenant?

If we will take emotion and prejudice out, the answer is not hard to see.

The Philippian jailor did not believe in Jesus.

This man, if anything religiously, was a pagan.

He had likely never heard of Jesus before Paul and Silas entered his jail.

He was told to believe because he was not to that point yet.

Paul and Silas preached to him in order to produce faith in Christ.

Once that faith was present, the jailor, and others of his family, were moved to repent and be baptized.

The people of Pentecost were moved to belief in Jesus by the inspired words of the sermon they had just heard.

They were convinced by the preaching that Jesus was the Christ.

They didn’t need to be told to believe because they already did.

They needed to repent and be baptized, which about 3,000 did.

Saul, when spoken to by Ananias, was a believer who had repented of his sins.

He was repenting while he was praying and fasting.

He needed to be baptized to have his sins washed away.

Each was given a different answer because they each were at different points on the road to salvation.

But the important thing to realize, is that each did the same things and traveled the same spiritual path to salvation.

What if someone asked me how to far it is to Birmingham from my house and I told him it was about 50 miles?

He may travel into Jasper, ask the same question, and get a different answer.
ii. He may travel on to Dora, ask the same question, and get a different answer than he got the two times before.

iii. The answer given would depend on where he was in his travels to Birmingham.

i. The same is true for one who is traveling the road to salvation.

j. There is no point telling some to be baptized who had never heard of Jesus.

k. There is no point in spending time instilling a belief in Jesus as the Son of God who already understand that.

l. We must take up the plan of salvation with someone where he or she is and go from there.