

His name was Paul although it was not the name he was given at birth. He was born Saul of Tarsus and he was known for being a zealous persecutor of the early church shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection.

He experienced an amazing encounter with God and became zealous in his attempt to share the message of Jesus Christ around the known world. He traveled extensively outside of Israel and preached in places as well known as Greece and Rome.

Why would he do this? Why do real Christians feel the need to tell the story of Christ and what He has done for them? It is simple really. There is nothing like knowing that your sins are forgiven and that you have become a child of God. There is nothing that gives hope for help from our addictions and sinfulness like the power of a risen Savior.

Today I want to share the story of a family that came to faith. It was life changing. There is no memory greater in my growing up years than seeing heads of households step up and start following Christ.

The story:

⁶ One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

¹⁸ This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

¹⁹ Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. ²⁰ "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. ²¹ "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."

²² A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. ²³ They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. ²⁴ So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. ²⁶ Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! Acts 16:6-25 NLT

A Life-Transforming Request

When this earthquake happened the jailer rushed in and found all the cells open which is not a very encouraging sight for a jail keeper. Assuming that they all had fled, he prepared to fall on his sword rather than suffer execution. According to the Justinian Code he would have been executed for letting the prisoners escape.

²⁷ The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!”

Confused and trembling with fear, he is stopped from taking his own life by Paul’s gracious cry. He then asks the most compelling question he could have ever asked.

²⁹ The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
Acts 16:27-30 NLT

He had heard the testimony of the Pythoness, had handled Paul and Silas’s incarceration firsthand, and he had listened to their songs in the night. Now he cries out and asks, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

I have one question for you today? Have you ever asked that question?

Salvation is why Jesus came to earth. He came to save us from our sins and to deliver us from living in the flesh and wasting our lives by serving ourselves and our desires.

Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ who offers His own sinless life as a substitute for the guilty. He died that believers may live eternally. This idea of a sinner, treated as though he had never sinned because his guilt is borne by the Son of God Himself, is the central and most distinctive feature of the Christian faith.

Not only does salvation remove the guilt of past sins and the sentence of death but on a positive note it bestows the new status of adoption or sonship; we become “joint-heirs” with Christ. (1 Peter 3:7)

¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.
Rom. 8:17 NLT

I am not sure we understand the glory of this amazing opportunity afforded in Christ. I have watched people my whole life. It comes down to this; you have two ways to live your life; God’s way or your way. People who live for themselves come down to the end of their lives and all they have is nothing. They may have more toys than anyone else until they die and then it doesn’t belong to them anymore. They may have millions in the bank but the moment they die they have nothing.

All that they have achieved is left behind and they go into eternity to face our Creator God who will judge the whole earth.

On the other hand I have seen a man or woman come to Christ and receive salvation and whether rich or poor it doesn't matter because they turn their lives over to Jesus. And at the end of their life they leave behind a trail of lives changed and affected by the work of Christ through them.

His question was sincere and earnest and he received an answer that has resounded through the ages. He received a loving and truthful revelation.

A Loving Truthful Revelation

He asked a question of two of the first missionaries in the first century church. Paul and Silas left their homes and loved ones to travel and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.”³² And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household.³³ Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Acts 16:31-33 NLT

Why wouldn't he ask this question? He had listened all night to these two men that had been stripped and beaten severely singing and worshipping their God. There is no question in my mind that during this impromptu worship service that conviction had set into the heart of this jailer.

Do you ever wonder what they might have been singing?

Well since all they had was the Old Testament maybe they were singing a Psalm;

¹ Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him. ³ For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection ⁵ Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day.

⁶ Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

⁷ Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you.

⁸ Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished. ⁹ If you make the LORD your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, ¹⁰ no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. ¹¹ For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go.

¹² They will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

¹³ You will trample upon lions and cobras; you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet! Psalm 91:1-13 NLT

If it were me I might have sung this song from my childhood:

There's a peace in my heart that the world never gave, A peace it cannot take away;
Though the trials of life may surround like a cloud, I've a peace that has come here to stay!

All the world seemed to sing of a Savior and King, When peace sweetly came to my heart;
Troubles all fled away and my night turned to day, Blessed Jesus, how glorious Thou art!

This treasure I have in a temple of clay, While here on His footstool I roam;
But He's coming to take me some glorious day, Over there to my heavenly home!

Constantly abiding, Jesus is mine; Constantly abiding, rapture divine;
He never leaves me lonely, whispers, O so kind: "I will never leave thee," Jesus is mine.

Now that's what I might be singing but I suppose some of you sing this:

Higher than the mountains that I face; Stronger than the power of the grave
Constant in the trial and the change; One thing... Remains (repeat)

In death, In life, I'm confident and covered by the power of Your great love
My debt is paid, there's nothing that can separate my heart from Your great love

On and on and on and on it goes It overwhelms and satisfies my soul
And I never, ever, have to be afraid One thing remains

Your love never fails, never gives up Never runs out on me

Paul knew exactly what to say when the jailor asked the question. He gave a loving and truthful revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. ***Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.***

Bishop John Taylor Smith, honorary chaplain to Queen Victoria and the chaplain general of the British Army during World War I, was "Everybody's Bishop." He used to ask all the candidates for the chaplaincy one question:

"Now, I want you to show me how you would deal with a man. We will suppose I am a soldier who has been wounded on the field of battle. I have three minutes to live and I am afraid to die, because I do not know Christ. Tell me, how may I be saved and die with assurance that all is well?" If the applicant began to hesitate and talk about the true Church and the ordinances and so on, the good Bishop would say, "That will not do. I have only three minutes to live. Tell me what I must do." And as long as Bishop Smith

was Chaplain General, unless a candidate could answer that question, he could not become a chaplain in the Army.

A gospel message that can't save a dying man is not gospel. This jailer was saved by faith. If his life extended over many months and years, he discovered that the Christian life demands all. But he always knew that his salvation came through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Testimony of Anthony Perine

A Lasting Thankful Response

*Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. ³⁴ He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, **and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.** Acts 16:33-34 NLT*

There really is nothing like a family turning to God. Everything will be changed.

This man was a Philippian jailer. The city of Philippi would become known for being one of Paul's successful church plants. He started this church and when he wrote to them later no doubt this man and his family were part of the church.

Do you know what he would have heard from Paul his spiritual father? How about this:

³ Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. ⁴ Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, ⁵ for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. ⁶ And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1:3-6 NLT

⁸ God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰ For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. Philippians 1:8-10 NLT

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. ¹⁶ Hold firmly to the word of life; then, on the day of Christ's return . . ." Philippians 2:12-16 NLT

Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example. ¹⁸ *For I have told you often before, and I say it again with tears in my eyes, that there are many whose conduct shows they are really enemies of the cross of Christ.* ¹⁹ *They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth.* ²⁰ *But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.* Philippians 3:17-20 NLT

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. ⁹ *Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.* Philippians 4:8-9 NLT

Let me just talk honestly with you for a few moments today. I think sometimes churches like ours walk a very dangerous road. We don't do it intentionally but I think we have to be intentional about making sure that the message really and truly gets through to the crowd of people that attend here. We make you comfortable here and we do that intentionally. We hope and pray that you figure out why we are here and what being a Christian is really about.

You need to ask yourself today and answer the question: "have I truly been saved?" In other words, have you honestly ask God for forgiveness of your sins and committed your lives to him? I have watched person after person come through the doors of this church and they love the music and they love that fact that we get along with each other and it's a happy pleasant experience that has been well planned and thought out. Let's be honest it's a good place to be. And I have watched them go along with two lives as though that were normal. They have a Sunday morning life and they have the rest of their hours and days. It seems like nothing is sinful and nothing is off limits and whatever the world does you do and whatever the world thinks is fine you think is fine. Whatever makes the world laughs makes you laugh and whatever makes the culture go around seems to be the drum that you march to as well.

I have news for you and I have never been more serious than I am right now. Jesus Christ will change your life. If your life isn't changing for the better than according to the Bible standard you may need to rethink your testimony. You may need to double check and be honest with yourself and realize there is a chance you may not be a Christian at all.

I know I am not the judge but I beg of you to take your faith seriously. Come to Jesus and give Him your life. Surrender it all to Him.

It's as simple as surrendering oneself to God. The old phrase which is a reference to a muzzleloader was "lock, stock and barrel." Give yourself completely to God.

Have you been saved? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ daily?