

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“What if . . .”

(Jerry Fite)

We read a text of Scripture, and understand what the inspired author is saying. But is it applicable in all situations? So, to test our willingness to apply the passage to our lives, we may come up with some “What ifs”. We present to ourselves or others some possible scenarios to see to what extent we will follow the teaching. Thinking of “what ifs” is not bad in itself, for thinking ahead in applying Scripture in various situations is wise. However, “what ifs” are often presented as arguments for not accepting the truth of Scripture.

For example, an evangelical evangelist recently told a story of a recent plane trip he had when he encountered a nice man who believed one must be baptized in order to be saved. The evangelical believes that baptism is certainly important, but just as Paul and Silas answered the direct question of the jailor as to what one must do to be saved, the essential condition of salvation in his mind is: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved. . .”* (Acts 16:31).

This is where the evangelical preacher played the “what if” card. He asked the man who believed baptism is essential to salvation, What if you are on a plane and you are talking to someone about their soul and you get word from the pilot of the plane that the plan is going down for a crash landing. The person is not going to have the opportunity to be baptized before his death. Is there any hope for that un-baptized person? As the “what if” story goes, the person who believed baptism is essential could only shake his head and say, “There is no hope”. However, the evangelical preacher gives hope to the person, telling him what Paul said to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.”

This “what if” story did not change the inspired truth of Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16 or I Peter 3:21. It did draw out how committed to truth the nice man conversing with the evangelical preacher really is.

Here is a “What if” story stressing the essentials of faith. What if you are on a plane with

someone and you begin to talk to him or her about the importance of their soul and their eternal destiny. They want to go to heaven and are interested in knowing about Christ. However, before you are able to present unto them the saving gospel message, you are told by the man who has hijacked the plane that a bomb will go off in three seconds. Is there any hope for that un-believer?

Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (*Romans 10:17*). If saving faith were the result of a fearful experience, then the jailor could have said, “I believe!” after experiencing the earthquake and knowing the prisoners did not escape. However, in order to have the saving faith of *Acts 16:31*, you must hear the preaching of the word of the Lord of *Acts 16:32*. You were not able to do this in your last three seconds on earth. Without the preaching of the word of the Lord which produces saving faith, does this interested passenger have any hope? The truth of Acts 2:38 or Acts 16:31 is not changed by “what ifs”, but they may reveal how committed we are to truth!