

"Christian Baptism 2"

God works through baptism? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today, we'll explore how God's grace works in baptism, and there's a message for you, so stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We want to please God, because we love Him. We want to do His will and have no other intention. God desires that we believe, love, and obey Him. We're not interested in the traditions or opinions of men; we want to know what God teaches in Scripture. When the Bible teaches it, we know it comes from God and not man. We can trust the Scriptures. Let us know you're watching. We want to be a part of your life each week.

This lesson is a second in a series of two on baptism into Christ. We didn't have time in the first lesson to explore all the basics of baptism into Christ. And in the first lesson we focused on baptism in the four gospel accounts and the book of Acts. In this lesson our focus will be on the epistles.

Ephesians 5:25 to 27 says that, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." Now here Christ cleanses the church through the washing of water by the word. Earlier in Ephesians 1:7 the Bible speaks of how we have "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Well, how are we cleansed? Is it through the blood of Christ or through the washing of water by the word? The answer is both! In the physical sense, we are baptized in water; but in the spiritual sense, God washes and redeems us through the blood of Jesus Christ at the time of baptism. Well, we're going to explore this farther in a few moments.

Now if you want to study more about this topic, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from Romans 6:3 to 7.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter 6 verses 3 to 7. And in this passage he reminds them of what happened whenever they were baptized so that they would learn to live moral and good spiritual lives.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Yes, in baptism that's when we are freed from sin by the blood of Jesus. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for these letters of Paul and other letters in the bible that help us to understand more about our conversion and our salvation. Help us to put our faith and trust in You and to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.

What can we learn from Romans 6:3 to 7? First, when we're baptized into Christ Jesus, we enter a relationship with the Lord that we didn't have before. Baptism is the time of uniting us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We're baptized into His death; and that's when we come into contact with His blood. His blood is applied to our souls at the time of baptism. And that's why Ananias told Saul in Acts 22:16 to be baptized and wash away his sins. Because in baptism we die with Him; we're buried with Him; and we're raised with Him. In baptism we go down into that watery grave, and we're raised up with Him to walk in newness of life.

Second, I've heard people complain about baptism. But John 3 and verse 5 says it's a new birth, and Romans 6 says it's a death. Well, which is it? Well, it's both. Before you can be born again, you have to be crucified with Christ and die to sin. Before you're baptized, you're dead in your trespasses and sins. But in baptism you die to sin. And when you're raised up with Christ in baptism, you have newness of life—free from sin. Born again. When you're baptized, the old man of sin is dead, and you can now have a new life devoted to righteousness. Just as Jesus didn't have newness of life until He was raised from the physical grave, so you won't have new life until you're raised with Him in baptism from a watery grave.

Third, when we're united with Him in baptism, our old man of sin is crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away and that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Now this passage never describes baptism as some outward sign. That concept came from men who deny the necessity of baptism to salvation. Instead, baptism is the means by which God's grace unites us with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. And this is how God gets rid of the old man so that the new man can live freed from sin.

Fourth, the Bible here likens baptism to a burial. Now to bury a person, you must cover or enclose that person up in a grave. Baptism, as we've seen, means to dip or to immerse a person in water. The act of immersion in water is different than sprinkling or pouring water. One can readily see how immersion is like a burial, but sprinkling and pouring doesn't resemble a burial. The people who were baptized, people you can read about in the New Testament, were all immersed. The practice of sprinkling or pouring for baptism cannot be found in the New Testament. It was an innovation of men that was first practiced in later centuries. Immersion in water fits Romans 6 and verse 4 and the first century, while sprinkling and pouring that came many years later does not.

When we speak of the necessity of baptism to salvation, some usually quote 1 Corinthians 1 verse 17, where Paul said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." Some say baptism isn't necessary to salvation because of what Paul said, but remember what the Lord Jesus said of baptism in John 3:5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot (he cannot) enter the kingdom of God." You see, without the new birth, (and that takes place in baptism) you can't enter God's kingdom.

John 4 and verse 2 says that Jesus didn't baptize, but his disciples were baptizing. Paul saw his role as one who taught the gospel rather than one who does the immersing. This doesn't mean that he thought baptism is unnecessary to salvation; it simply means that he had a different function. And this situation is like the apostles who felt the feeding of the Grecian widows was necessary in Acts 6 but selected seven other men to do it, while they devoted themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Paul merely devoted himself to preaching, while others did the baptizing.

The next passage for us to consider is Galatians 3:26 to 27 which says, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Now

in baptism we not only enter Christ, we also clothe ourselves with Christ. We put Him on like a garment. When God looks at us as His children by faith, He sees Christ surrounding us. We're clothed in Him. Well, the only way you can put on Christ is to be baptized into Him. Faith and repentance are essential to our salvation, but baptism is when we put on Christ—and not before.

Next, let's consider Colossians 2:12 to 13: "having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses." Now baptism is a response to God's powerful working in forgiving our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus and raising Jesus from the dead. God is the active one in baptism as we noticed last week, and we are the passive ones. God works in baptism, and we receive His blessing.

When I hear people say baptism is a work, I agree with them. Baptism is a work that saves; but it's God's work not ours. Baptism is God working on us. God is the active One, and we are passive. The command, "be baptized," is a passive imperative. An active imperative means you must do something. A passive imperative means you must let someone else do something to you, and in this case it is God who acts upon us. In baptism we respond to God's love and submit to His will so that He works on our souls and in our lives.

In baptism God forgives our sins. In baptism God causes us to be born again. In baptism God adds us to His church. In baptism God washes away our sins, God puts us into the death of Christ, God buries us with Christ, and God raises us up with Christ. In baptism God saves us. When people say, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved," they're showing that they really don't understand God's work in baptism. You see, when you exclude baptism from God's saving grace, you're interfering with what God is doing to us and for us. We don't see baptism as some great work that we do to earn our salvation but as a great work that God does!

Titus 3 and verse 3 says, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Oh, what a terrible condition it is to be lost in sin and filled with unrighteousness. We were all like that before we came to Christ, and He showed His compassion on the cross.

Titus 3:4 to 7 continues, "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Now God acts on us by His mercy and grace in the washing of regeneration (that is the washing that causes us to be born again) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The early church fathers unanimously understood the washing of regeneration to be baptism. And nobody doubted it until 1500 AD, when men began saying the grace of God excluded baptism. God's grace doesn't exclude baptism; it works through baptism. He saved us by the washing of regeneration. Titus 3 and verse 5 says that "we are justified by His grace when He saves us in the washing of regeneration.

Now next, we consider 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism corresponded to Noah's ark, when water cleansed the world by removing the sinful, ancient world. Baptism saves like that by putting to death or crucifying our old man of sin and allowing us to walk in newness of life.

Now baptism doesn't remove dirt from the body. Instead, baptism is "an appeal for a good conscience." That is what Ananias was talking about when he told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16 to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." In baptism we call on God to wash away our sins and to give us a good conscience. When God washes away our sins in baptism, we can see ourselves as different people. That we're right in God's sight. God put away from us all the sin of our past and has saved us with the blood of Jesus Christ. We're free from sin, guilt, and fear.

When we respond to God in love and faith by repenting of our sins and are baptized, God saves us and washes our soul clean. No longer are we separated from God. Before salvation we have no hope and no relationship with God, but God saves us through the blood of Christ and that's applied in baptism. And this opens up a way for us to be justified and reconciled through Christ.

A defiled conscience robs us of confidence before God. God said in Isaiah 59:1 to 2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." While we're in sin, we can't have a clear or good conscience; but when God saves us at baptism, He grants to us the good conscience.

Now, someone asks, "Phil, don't you know about the household baptisms?" Yes, the Bible mentions the households of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and Crispus being baptized in the book of Acts. Paul says he baptized the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 1:16. Some say, "Surely, there must have been some infants or small children among those households." Friend, it's risky to assume children too small to act responsibly were being baptized.

In Acts 10:44 to 48, Cornelius and his family heard the word before they were baptized. They knew what they were doing. The same is true of Lydia in Acts 16:14. In Acts 16:34 the household of the Philippian jailer believed and rejoiced at their obedience. In Acts 18:8 "Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized." 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 15 says about the household of Stephanas that they "devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints." So, when you look closely at these examples of conversion, they speak of people able to listen, to believe, and to obey the Lord—not infants.

Now according to early church historian Everett Ferguson, Tertullian made the first explicit mention of infant baptism in his essay On Baptism in the second century. He opposed it as an innovation, mentioning first the innocence of the infants, who did not need the forgiveness of their sins. Ferguson noted that Tertullian was expressing the common belief of the early church.

Let's pray together. Father help us to do Your will the way You want it to be done. And not to read into Your word things that were never there. Father help us to be obedient. To do it out of love. In Jesus name, Amen.

Why become a Christian? Because you love the Lord, and you want to serve and obey Him, you want to live as close to God as possible, and because you want eternal life. Being in Heaven with the Lord is the greatest blessing of all. To become a Christian, you must believe and obey the gospel.

Now believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, means confessing your faith before others. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:15 to 16, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." You can't be saved apart from faith in Christ Jesus. We must be willing to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and treat Him as Lord. It's hypocritical to say Jesus is Lord but treat His teaching as if it were trivial or optional.

True trust in and love for the Lord Jesus means a change of heart. We will leave the way of sin to follow the Lord wherever He leads. We'll deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily and follow Him. Love, faith, repentance, and confession are necessary prerequisites to baptism. People who aren't committed aren't ready for baptism. We must come out of a corrupt world and live in God's love and truth.

When we come to be baptized with love and a penitent faith, our hearts are thankful for the Lord's sacrifice on the cross. Now after we're baptized, we come out of that water free from sin, united with Christ in his burial and resurrection, children of God, born again, and added to the Lord's church. We'll have eternal life, and nothing we'll ever do is as important as becoming a Christian.

We hope today's study of God's Word about baptism has blessed you or challenged you to think. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of our message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" on YouTube. And be sure to like the programs that you watch; because that helps spread the program. Now we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. And if you call or write and ask for one don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Because everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.