

"Be Baptized"

Is baptism necessary for the forgiveness of sins? We're asking what does the Bible say. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Stay with us, and we'll discuss this important topic!

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Whenever we encounter a controversial topic, let's go to the Bible to find out what God thinks and says about the matter. The Bible is inspired of God and has the authority of Jesus Christ and the apostles. It doesn't contain someone's opinion or some human tradition; it is truly God's holy word and deserves our attention and respect. There is no substitute for Scripture. Feelings and human customs are not on the same level as God's revealed word. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Many religious people often say well, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved." They believe a doctrine that was never contemplated in the church until the 1500s. They misunderstand baptism and say it's a work. They believe that since we're saved by grace and not by works, that baptism could not possibly be necessary for salvation. But this notion misunderstands the nature of baptism, as we shall see. Baptism is not a work of man but a work of God. The grace of God works through baptism and in baptism.

Now, no one should be baptized unless they also believe in Christ Jesus and love God. In the Scriptures, baptism into Christ follows a confession of faith and repentance. Faith and repentance are necessary to salvation. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. One leaves the old ways of sin to embrace the way of the Lord. The idea that baptism alone saves is as objectionable as the notion that faith alone saves. It takes a complete response to get right with God and to enjoy eternal life. We must die to self, if we wish to live eternally with God. Faith alone or baptism alone is not enough.

Well we offer this study on baptism free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you 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 have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

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

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to the Romans chapter 6 verses 3 to 7.

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.

That's a reading from God's Holy Word, Paul writing to the church at Rome and helping them to understand the nature of baptism. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for Your Word and for what it teaches us and how we can come to You to find the answers that we need in order to do what is right. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You may be asking the question well, "Why should I be baptized?" Well I want to give you several reasons that will make a difference in your life, your soul, and your destiny! The Lord Jesus and the apostles from the very beginning of the church emphasized the need for baptism, and no one has the right to set aside the commandments that are found in Scripture or to substitute other things for baptism. Many say one is saved by faith alone without baptism. And others suggest that one is forgiven by merely saying a "sinner's prayer." But no New Testament passage ever suggests salvation by a sinner's prayer; and no New Testament passage speaks of salvation by faith alone.

The doctrine of salvation by "faith alone" neglects other passages that require things necessary to our salvation. One cannot be saved, for instance, unless he loves the Lord (1 Corinthians 16 and verse 22); one will perish if he's unwilling to repent (Luke 13:3); and Jesus is the author of salvation to those who obey Him (Hebrews 5 verses 8 to 9). So, let's take a look at the Scriptural reasons why everyone out of love should be baptized into Christ upon his confession of faith and repentance.

First, you should be baptized because the Lord commanded it. In John 3, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews came to Jesus and recognized Him as a teacher who had come from God. The Lord Jesus told him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Well, Nicodemus said to Him well, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" (Well,) Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3 verses 3 to 7).

Now Jesus is speaking in the strongest of terms about something that must be done. And if you wish to enter the kingdom of God, you will not argue with the Lord. You will not try to find some substitute for an immersion in water. Baptism into Christ is an immersion and includes both the water and the Spirit. Titus 3 and verse 5 also speaks of this new birth including both water and Spirit. It says that, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, (and here's how He does it) by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." Now every ancient writer understood these passages to refer to baptism in water.

Second, when you're baptized, you will be united with the Lord. The gospel message tells the story of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism into Christ unites us with Christ in His death, His burial, and His resurrection. Now going down into the water and coming up out of the water is like a burial and resurrection. Romans 6 verses 4 and 5 says, "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."

Now Colossians 2 verses 12 to 13 gives a similar thought, it says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions." Baptism is an act of faith in the working of God. The command is to be baptized and that's a passive imperative, that is, you let someone baptize you. You see, someone else is baptizing you; they are physically working on you! God is spiritually working on you in baptism, uniting you with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and giving you newness of life.

Because baptism is a burial, baptism into Christ is a particular act. The primary meaning of the word "baptism" is an immersion in water, a burial in water. Some consider sprinkling water or pouring water

to be baptism, but they are substituting something that was never considered in Scripture. If God had wanted us to sprinkle or pour water, He would have used a different word than a word that speaks of immersion. A burial requires an immersion. Sprinkling or pouring a little water, as some do, cannot cause a burial. Now if you've been sprinkled, please consider your need to be immersed into Christ.

Third, when you're baptized, the Lord will forgive your sins and save you. The guilty people of Pentecost who crucified Jesus asked "what shall we do?" Well, Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now the purpose of repentance and baptism is to receive the forgiveness of sins. In fact, the New Revised Standard Version translates this, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." God's Word Translation says, "All of you must turn to God and change the way you think and act, and each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift." There are other recent translations that also bring this out clearly.

These guilty sinners knew that they had sinned in crucifying Jesus, the Lord and Christ. They needed a clean conscience. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3 and verse 21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal (that an inquiry) to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is when we appeal to God for a good conscience.

Fourth, you should be baptized to become a child of God. John 1 verses 11 to 13 says that, "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Well when do we become God's children? Well, Galatians 3:26 to 27 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Now the Bible never contemplates a saved believer who has not been baptized into Christ. As we've said before, the idea of someone being saved before and without baptism cannot be found in the New Testament and never arose until the 1500s. In Romans 6 and Galatians 3, the sons of God through faith were baptized into Christ, were crucified with Christ, and at that point, were freed from sin, and had clothed themselves with Christ.

Now merely believing doesn't make one right with God. Faith alone is not enough to save. Consider John 12 verses 42 to 43: "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Now here were believers who would not confess their faith and did not seek the approval of God.

James 2 verses 18 to 20 says, "But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'" You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?" James is not the only one who sees the necessity to showing our faith by our works.

Paul clearly says in Romans 1 and verse 5 that he "received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake." He argued in Romans 2 verses 6 to 8 that God "will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, (He'll give them) eternal life; but to those who are

selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.” You see salvation requires that we obey the truth.

Now Romans 6 verses 17 to 18 says, “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” Now, here it becomes clear: freedom from sin does not take place until one obeys from the heart!

No one can earn his salvation; and we can't work our way into heaven. Only the blood of Christ can wash away our sins. God saves us, and only God can determine how He saves us. Works of obedience are not like works of merit. Works of obedience are merely meeting God's conditions. They are like Naaman's dipping seven times in the Jordan River to receive healing from his leprosy. It's like the blind man's washing in the pool of Siloam to receive his sight. Well, neither one of these simple act earned the amazing blessing that they received. And just as God asks us to meet the condition of faith and repentance to receive salvation, so He asks us to be baptized.

Fifth, when you're baptized, the Lord will add you to His church. Acts 2 and verse 41 says, “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” They were added to the apostles as people who had committed themselves to Christ. They were baptized in obedience to Peter's message and to receive the forgiveness they were seeking. Acts 2 and verse 47 also speaks of people being added. It says, “And the Lord was adding to their number (that is the church) day by day those who were being saved.” The phrase “their number” refers to the people who are in the church. 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 13 gets specific, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Well, the New Testament reveals the urgency of baptism when people convert to Jesus Christ. Three thousand heard the word and were baptized on the day of Pentecost. And when the Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip about Jesus and His kingdom, they were baptized. The Eunuch didn't rejoice until after his baptism; he asked to be baptized. And Ananias, likewise, told Saul of Tarsus not to wait but to be baptized and wash away his sins. The Philippian jailer and his household considered baptism so important that they were baptized the same hour of the night. Way in the middle of the night. When the twelve disciples of John at Ephesus learned the whole truth about Jesus Christ, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now if baptism were unnecessary to salvation, why did all these people act immediately and urgently?

They acted urgently, because they knew baptism into Christ was necessary for their salvation and for their entrance into the eternal kingdom of God! They didn't want a day to go by outside of the promises in Christ and the grace of God. They also knew people who had not been baptized, were not yet in that grace or in the body of Christ. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to be honest with ourselves and to hear the words that You have spoken. And Father may those who have been asking about baptism come to understand the need for them to do what is right. As they place their faith in You. And Father we pray Your will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

When the Lord Jesus struck Saul of Tarsus blind on the road to Damascus, He didn't save Him at that time. Instead, He told him to go into Damascus and there it will be told him what He must do (Acts 9 verse 6). Paul went into Damascus and didn't eat or drink anything for three days (verse 9). Verse 11 says that Paul was praying. Now considering Paul's realization of his great sin against Christ—blasphemy, injuring people, the stoning of Stephen, and many other crimes—Paul must have prayed fervently, confessing his sins and seeking forgiveness.

When Ananias finally and reluctantly came to him after three days, he told Saul that he must, what he must do to wash away his sins. He didn't have him recite a sinner's prayer. He didn't tell him that faith alone was enough. He said in Acts 22 and verse 16, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Saul of Tarsus needed his sins washed away; he still had an unwashed soul! He needed to be washed in the blood of Jesus to be clean. Now that takes place when we're baptized into the death of Christ and crucified with Him. Only then will we be free from sin and not before (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7).

Now some teach salvation by faith alone or by a sinner's prayer, but you cannot find a single verse that teaches these things. We're saved by faith, but not by faith alone. And to believe this doctrine one must ignore other passages that show the necessity of love, obedience, repentance, and baptism. Don't pick one passage and ignore all the rest. There's a difference between the truth and the whole truth. Don't settle for anything less than the whole truth. Get right with God, and don't wait. You don't know what tomorrow will bring!

Well we hope that today's study about baptism has stirred you to consider your soul. And to think about what God says. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this 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. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. And we also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

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