

"God is at Work in Baptism"

God is still at work in this uncertain world, and He's busier than you might think. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're going to explore how God works in our salvation.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God isn't dead; He's not even sick. He's not like a man who must sleep. God is at work all day every day. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 12 verses 6 to 7, "Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows." God cares for us enough to hear our prayers, and God cared enough to enrich our lives with His inspired word, the Bible. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

James 1:17 to 18 says, that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." God gives us the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. God supplies our needs, because He cares for us.

We can thank God every day for the hope that He gives us, giving us new life that will last eternally. 1 Peter 1:3 to 4 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." God prepares us in this life for the life to come. And God causes our new birth in Christ, so that we can be His children forever.

We offer this study free on how God works in baptism. And 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 have materials free on our website www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Colossians 2:12 to 13, and explore how God is at work, yes, even in baptism.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 12 and 13. This particular passage discusses God's working in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and God's working in our salvation, and shows how that they are put together. Colossians 2, verse 12, "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." And aren't you thankful that Jesus was willing to die, and that how God raised Him from the dead, and how He forgives our sins.

Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that You have done so much to bring about our new birth, that You've done so much to send Jesus to pay for our sins, and that You've given us hope in raising Him from the dead and forgiving our sins. Father bless us and be with us today as we study, and may Your will be done. In Jesus name, Amen."

I sometimes hear people say baptism is a ritual. And some think of a ritual as a customary practice or religious formality that people go through in a prescribed way. They believe that rituals are works of men and mistakenly think of baptism as an act of "righteousness based on works." They thought

baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Now no one believed this until the 16th century. Prior to that time people understood that God grants forgiveness at the time of baptism.

People often think of baptism as something we do. And in reality, baptism is something that God does!

Colossians 2:12-13 explains, that "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." Now, who buried us with Christ in baptism? Who raised us up with Christ in baptism? Who forgives us? In baptism we're responding in faith to the working of God!

You see, baptism is indeed a response of faith to God's power, God's working. It's a response to God's love, to Jesus's sacrifice, and to God's power in raising Christ from the dead. In baptism we submit ourselves to God's work and to His will. Now if God could raise Jesus up from the dead, He can forgive our sins. We're showing our faith that He can work on us!

Now God causes us to be saved and to born again. The apostle John wrote in John 1:11 to 13, that "He came (that is, Jesus 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." You see, God gives a new birth to those who receive Him. Now to receive Him is to accept what He says about being the Son of God is true. To believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God means you're willing to follow Him.

When Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus and confessed that He was a teacher from God, Jesus told him in John 3:3 to 5, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that 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?' 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.'" Now without a birth of water and the Spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom and be saved. Now all of the ancient writers said that this passage (John 3:5) was speaking of baptism, which unites water and the Spirit in the new birth.

From John 1, we learned that we have to have faith to be a child of God; and from John 3 we learned that we must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. Well how does the Spirit work in our new birth? Well, 1 Peter 1:22 to 23 says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." Now the Holy Spirit inspired the word and the works through the word of God, the gospel is given to us to save us and to cause us to be born again. In James 1 and verse 18 this explains, that "In the exercise of His will (that is, God's will) God brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures."

You see, the Spirit works through the word to cause our new birth. How then does the water unite with the word? Well Ephesians 5:25 to 27 reveals how Jesus sacrificed Himself to cleanse those who enter the kingdom, which is the church. He said, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her (that is, make her holy), having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." Now we're

cleansed and sanctified by the washing of water with the word. Yes, the love and sacrifice of Christ works through the washing of water with the word. The washing of water is a reference to baptism, and the word to the gospel which teaches us to be baptized.

Now in Titus 3:3- to 7, there Paul explains, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. 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've done in righteousness, no, but according to His mercy (well how was it), by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of 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."

My friends, we are born again, and when we're born again the Lord adds us to His church. In Acts 2 and verse 41, there the Bible says about those who responded on the day of Pentecost, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." Now the baptized were added to the apostles. In Acts 2:47 it says, "And the Lord added to their number (speaking about the church) day by day those who were being saved." Now this phrase, the number, is a clear reference to the number that's in the church. The Lord adds you to His church when you are baptized. That's when you are forgiven and when God saves you. Being born of water and the Spirit allows us to enter the kingdom of God (John 3 and verse 5). Now we're not born of our will; we are born again by the will of God, when we receive the Lord and are obedient to His will. When we are baptized, the Lord adds us to His church. Now sometimes people talk about "joining" the church, but people by their own will do not join the church. If you're in the Lord's church at all, it's because the Lord Himself added you.

Now when we're baptized, God unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This is not merely a ritual; it is the dynamic working of God! Baptism is God's work on us. Romans 6:3 to 5, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we've 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've become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." We are baptized into Christ, into His death, buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

The word "united" in verse 4 is translated in the King James Version as "planted together." It says, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Now things that are planted together grow together, produce fruit together, and live together. And when we're baptized into Christ, God plants us together with Christ in His death and in His resurrection. We are planted in Him, and He is planted in us. Through baptism God unites us with Christ; and we are branches on His vine. Now baptism is no empty ritual. That's when God plants us together and unites us with Christ.

Galatians 3:26 and 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." Until you're baptized, you're outside of Christ; and once you're baptized into Christ, you're clothed with Christ. There's a great difference, an eternal difference, between being in Christ and out of Christ. God unites us with Christ and makes us His children when by faith we are baptized and clothed with Christ.

Now through baptism God causes our old self of sin to be free from that sin by doing away with our sins. Now Romans 6:6 to 7, speaks about what happens in baptism, and says, "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.” Now by being united with Christ in His death, you come into contact with His blood which cleanses us from sin. In baptism our body of sin is done away with, and God does that, and we are free! We’re no longer slaves to sin!

Later in chapter six, verses 17 and 18, there Paul says, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” Now by God’s grace we can change. We can leave a life that’s enslaved to sin and become slaves of righteousness. We change when we’re obedient from the heart. And when we lovingly submit to God’s instructions, God frees us from sin and makes us His servants. You can’t save yourself by yourself; God must save you! And He saves us when we in faith and love submit to the standard of teaching that He gives us. The idea that we’re set free by faith alone without any obedience simply ignores this passage.

There can be no doubt that God causes a change in our lives at the time we obey Him in baptism. That’s when we’re united with and clothed with Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” When God raised you and me up with Christ to walk in newness of life in baptism, everything changes. The old way of life is gone and now we are free to serve the Lord, to live in righteousness, and to enjoy all the blessings of Christianity. Ephesians 1 and verse 3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” I tell you, it matters whether you are in Christ or not! In Christ we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And we have an abundant life.

Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” When we’re baptized, God washes away our sins. And Paul had been praying for three days according to Acts 9 and verse 11, but you know what, he still needed to be washed from sin, In Acts 22 verse 16. Baptism is how we call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. 1 Peter 3 and verse 21 explains, “Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of the dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” When we are baptized, God saves us and hears our appeal for a good conscience. He cleanses our souls from sin and gives us that clean conscience. What a great God we have!

Let’s pray. “Oh Father, we’re thankful that You have a plan that can wash away our sins and make us Your children and add us to Your church. Help us Father to be faithful and to be obedient to Your will. In Jesus name, Amen.”

When God commands us to believe, we do the believing. When God commands all people to repent, we do the repenting. When God commands us to confess Jesus Christ with our mouths, we do the confessing. When God commands us to love Him with all our hearts, we do the loving. When Christ commands us to deny ourselves and take up our cross’ daily to follow Him, we must act. But when God tells us to “be baptized,” that’s something that we respond to by letting someone else act upon us. Physically someone else baptizes us, and we submit to it. Spiritually God acts upon us; and we submit to it. You see, God works on us in baptism.

Now God forgives us. God saves us. God sets us free from sin. God unites us with Christ. God causes us to be baptized into His death. God buries us with Christ. God raises us up with Christ to walk

in newness of life. God causes us to be born again by His will. God makes us His children. God adds us to His kingdom, the church. Now all this takes place when we're baptized into Christ.

And when someone says, "Well Phil, we don't have to be baptized to be saved," they reveal they have embraced a 16th century doctrine of faith only and missed the point. The New Testament never conceives of a child of God who has not been baptized into Christ. Why not confess your faith in Christ, repent of your sins, and from the heart obey the Lord by putting Him on in baptism. When you do God will wash away your sins, and make you His child, and add you to His church, and give you newness of life. Won't you consider being baptized today?

We hope that today's study about God's work in baptism has made you ask whether you've responded to the Lord according to the Scripture. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy 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. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just go to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry," and subscribe. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God and worship at church today. You need a church family, and there's probably a church of Christ in your area. Now if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.