

**DISCOVER
BAPTISM:
The Sign
Of The
Covenant**

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March 22, 2015

Sermon in a sentence: We give witness to our faith in Jesus Christ and His saving work at Calvary through the sacred covenant of water baptism in His name.

Congregational Reading: Acts 16:25-34

Scriptures: Acts 16:25-34; Rom. 10:5-13; Matt. 3:13-15; Acts 2:38-41; 1 Pet. 3:18-21

Acts 16:25-34 NKJV But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." ²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. **And immediately he and all his family were baptized.** ³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, **having believed in God** with all his household.

Life sometimes presents us with challenges we have no ability to conquer. When my mother told our family she had contracted Hepatitis “C” through a blood transfusion, we all knew this was not a problem we could fix. It was a slow, steady decline to an inevitable death. The best medical minds in the world were not able to help her.

In the lesson “Defining Christianity”, we came in contact with the Word of God that explained our common spiritual disease: the systemic blood poisoning of sin! It is the worst disease known to man, fatal in all untreated cases.

This realization causes some to be consumed by hopelessness, guilt and shame and live lives of utter despair. Some try to drown out the reality and consequences of their sin diagnosis with substance abuse and all the pleasures the world has to offer. Some try the most prevalent man-made solution to eliminating guilt: doing good works.

But here’s what we really need to do: cry out to Jesus for His help and forgiveness! We must believe His word that He truly loves us, died to bear our sin penalty, and rose again from the dead to guarantee that we too can have eternal life!

How do we make this work for us as individuals? Through **faith, confession, obedience and water baptism.**

Romans 10:5-13 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, *“The man who does those things shall live by them.”*⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, *“Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”* (that is, to bring Christ down from above)⁷ or, *“Who will descend into the abyss?”* (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).⁸ But what does it say? ***“The word is near you, in your mouth and in***

your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):
⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "*Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.*"
¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.
¹³ For "*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*"

Let us see how this played out in the events we read about in Acts 16.

Paul and Silas' jailer was a centurion who represented the power, might and domination of Rome. He was part of a cultic religious system that looked to their emperor (Caesar) as king, provider, and object of worship. The Romans burned incense to him and deemed him to be a god. However, when the centurion saw a demonstration of the power of the true and living God, his first question was: "**What must I do to be saved?**" Paul answered him with words similar to those we just read in Romans 10: "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,** you and your household!"

As we know from our most recent lesson on "Saving Faith", faith always manifests itself in action. Therefore, as soon as the centurion was instructed in what he needed to do, he and his household were immediately baptized!

Our Lord Jesus set a similar example:

Matthew 3:13-15 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

We need to receive this word with joyful hearts and obey it quickly (Acts 2:38-41). This is how we personally appropriate the salvation Jesus purchased for us 2,000 years ago!

Acts 2:38-41 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

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It is needful to make a couple of additional comments regarding NT baptism.

- Baptism was only ever administered in the name of Jesus Christ in NT writings (Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:13-15).
- The best estimates place the writing of Matthew's gospel between 50 and 60 AD: 25-30 years after the birth of the NT church and the events recorded in Acts. As such, Matt. 28:19 was not an attempt to introduce a new or

alternative baptismal formula into church practice. Rather, Matthew was highlighting to his Jewish audience that the name Jesus, (which they had exclusively used for baptisms up to that point), was in fact the name that represented God in all of His manifestations: (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Luke recorded the same commissioning speech of Jesus in this manner: “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name....” (Lu. 24:47a). Mark records: “He who has believed and is baptized shall be saved....” (Mk. 16:16).

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The children of Israel had the Red Sea parted before them – they now had a way of escape from Pharaoh and his army. If they chose not to walk across to the other side, they would have been killed. No crossing, no escape.

Noah and his family had to enter the ark to be saved from the flood’s destruction. The flood came and everyone outside the ark died. It works exactly the same way with baptism. No baptism, no salvation.

1 Pet. 3:18-21 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior stands before us today with open arms, willing and ready to receive us and give us His full and free salvation. He has made the offer. All we need to do to receive it is to believe, repent and be baptized in His name. No baptism, no salvation.

Make this a new anniversary date on your calendar – the day you willingly participated in the sacred covenant of baptism – the day you made a public statement to the world that you had become a part of God’s family – the day all your sins were forgiven forever and you started your new life in Christ!

BAPTISMAL SERVICE

In the Book of Psalms, King David prayed:

Psalm 51:1-2, 5, 7 (NASB) Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 7 Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Romans 3:21-26 (NASB) But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul writes:

Romans 6:20-23 (NASB) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having

been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5:6-11 (NASB) For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Romans 10:6a, 8-10, 13-14, 17 (NASB) But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows ... 8 "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 13 for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a

preacher? 17 So **faith comes from hearing**, and hearing by **the word of Christ**.

Here is the 'word' we need to hear - from the pen of the apostle Peter - the one to whom Jesus gave the initial message of salvation:

1 Peter 3:18, 21 (NASB) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Furthermore:

Acts 2:32, 36-39 (NASB) "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 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. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Calling the baptismal candidate by name, the Minister says:

“The Word of God states: “... by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8 NASB). Do you believe this?”
(Candidate’s response: “I do!”)

“Do you believe that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only way in which the penalty for human sin was paid (1 Cor. 15:3-4)?
(Candidate’s response: “I do!”)

“Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, and vow to live in obedience to His words for the rest of your life?” *(Candidate’s response: “I do!”)*

Minister then states: “Upon the confession of your faith, and in obedience to the Word of God, I now baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”!

Appendix:

WATER BAPTISM The Sign Of The Covenant

(answers to worksheet questions in different font)

To be saved, a person must **believe** and be **baptized**. Mark 16:16

Jesus said we must be born again of **water** and **Spirit**. John 3:5

Baptism identifies us with the **death, burial** and **resurrection** of Jesus.

Romans 6:3-4

Through baptism we are **washed, sanctified** and **justified**.
1 Corinthians 6:11

Why should we be baptized? For **the remission of sins**.
Acts 2:38

Baptism shows that we have been **buried with Him**, we have been **raised with Him**, and we are **dead** to sin! Baptism is the New Testament equivalent of **Circumcision** in the Old Testament. It indicates that we have entered into a new **life** with God. Colossians 2:11-14

Who should be baptized? **Every one of you!**
Acts 2:38 (Acts 8:36-37; Acts 18:8)

What is the biblical method of baptism? **Full immersion**.
("Baptizo": to dip, to immerse, to overwhelm, to cover wholly with a fluid)

Matthew 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38; 1 Cor. 10:1-2

What is the biblical 'formula' for baptism? (In other words, what words should be spoken over you as you are being baptized?)

"I now baptize you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the **gift** of the **Holy Ghost!**"

Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:13-15; Colossians 3:17