

The Discipline of Disciple-Making: When God Saves Us: What Does He Do Inside Us?

Acts 16-18

The Eternal, Infinite God of the Universe is a Savior, and offers to anyone who will call upon His Name some amazing, supernatural transformations within. That is what the Gospel has been doing from the start: changing humans from the inside out. That is what Paul watched happen across the pagan world of the Roman province of Asia.

As we open to Acts 16:14, we see again how:

SALVATION IS: GOD OPENING HEARTS TO HEED HIS WORD

Message Thirteen (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:14-15 where salvation is described as *the Lord opening a person's heart to heed His Word.*

Acts 16:14-15 (NKJV) Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who **worshipped God**. The **Lord opened her heart to heed** the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and **her household were baptized**, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be **faithful to the Lord**, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

We need to pause for a moment and see what Paul taught about this event that just took place in their lives. When Lydia believed, and others of her family also believed, the Scriptures say that they were baptized.

Have you ever wondered what Paul told them about baptism?
What did baptism mean to Paul as he administered it?
What did Paul tell them had happened to them when they got saved; and what did Paul say that baptism was for?

The answers to those questions may become some of the most powerful and impactful truths of the Book of Acts. If we can just allow God to fill in the pieces of what is going on here, we can see why the Gospel had such an impact upon every place it came.

WHAT BAPTISM: IS & ISN'T

To help with that, we actually have the private lessons that Paul taught to those who came to

Christ, they are recorded for us in the Book of Colossians.

So as we have already seen, in every baptism event recorded in the Book of Acts we can see it was preceded by belief in the Gospel, followed by the outward sign of that belief in believer's baptism. So, baptism is an outward declaration that salvation has already taken place.

Baptism is **not** salvation.

Baptism is **not part** of salvation.

Baptism is **not necessary** for salvation.

Baptism **only** portrays the wonders of what Christ did for us in salvation.

Baptism is **only** an act of obedience, a choice to follow and obey what the Lord asked us to do and teach in our commission from Him; as in an outward confession of what Christ has done inwardly.

But, **baptism is an amazing reminder** of how supernaturally God works inside of all who are born-again. Please turn over to Colossians 2, as we see exactly what God's Word says as:

PAUL TEACHES WHAT BAPTISM DECLARES IN COLOSSIANS

In Colossians 2:11-15, Paul wrote to the church at Colosse what he wanted them to know about our sufficiency in Christ. Everything starts with salvation, and salvation is all based on our trust in Christ's work. Paul taught these truths everywhere he went, and now as he writes to this church he had never visited, he add in this letter what he had also taught in other places where he had visited. Baptism portrays the wonders of what Christ did for us in salvation.

Here is what He said in Colossians 2:6-15. Please stand with me and listen to God speaking through Paul about what God does when He saves us.

Colossians 2:6-15 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For **in Him** dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 **In Him you were also circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were **raised with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven** you all trespasses, 14 **having wiped out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed** it to the cross. 15 **Having disarmed** principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

BAPTISM IS WHEN I DECLARE WHAT CHRIST DID

Here is what made those early believers so powerful: they knew the miracle of salvation. They experienced it, and were taught about it, and understood what God wanted to do and did to them.

Truth # 1: Baptism Is My Declaration That Christ Gave Me A Heart That Is New

Colossians 2:6-11 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 9 For **in Him** dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and **you are complete in Him**, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 **In Him you were also circumcised** with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Their new heart spoke of spiritual heart circumcision (Ezekiel 36:26-27), which was the work of salvation as Christ is putting off our old person. Do you know the personal reality of having a miraculous new heart, implanted within by God?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation: *Christ gave me a heart that is new.*

Truth # 2: Baptism Is My Declaration That Christ Buried My Past & Its Forever Gone

Colossians 2:12 (NKJV) **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with **Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised **Him** from the dead.

Do you know the personal reality of having the miraculous work by God of burying your entire past in the sea of His forgetfulness? Do you know the relief that He will remember your sins no more?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation: *Christ buried my past & it is forever gone.*

Truth # 3: Baptism Is My Declaration That Christ Gave Me A Fresh, New Beginning

Colossians 2:13 (NKJV) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the un-circumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, **having forgiven** you all trespasses,

Do you know the personal reality of having a fresh new beginning in life? Born again believers have only a future, their past is gone. We live a life of new beginnings in Christ alone.

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation: *Christ gave me a fresh new beginning.*

Truth # 4: Baptism Is My Declaration That Christ Ended All MY Guilt, Because All My Sins Are On Him

Colossians 2:14 (NKJV) **having wiped out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, **having nailed** it to the cross.

Do you know the personal reality of having all guilt taken away by Christ? Do you know the assurance that your sins are on Jesus?

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation: *Christ ended all my guilt, because my sins are on Him.*

Truth # 5: Baptism Is My Declaration That Christ Promises Me I Have Nothing Left to Fear

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) **Having disarmed** principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Do you know the personal reality of nothing left to fear? There is no condemnation, no separation, and nothing left to fear because of Christ's work in us and for us.

That is what these early believers were told; and they believed God. That is the miracle of salvation: *Christ promises me I have nothing left to fear.*

THIS IS HOW EARLY BELIEVERS UNDERSTOOD SALVATION

So as the Gospel was preached, and as these pagans heard, believed and were saved: they were taught to declare what God had done.

Baptism became the public reminder for everyone in the church of the miracle God was doing in their midst, as He saved people.

Today we have the same Gospel, the same miraculous work of Christ. Do you understand how great this salvation really is that God has done in you? Because God saved us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross, each of us His followers can declare:

Christ gave me a heart that is new.

Christ buried my past & it is forever gone.

Christ gave me a fresh new beginning.

*Christ ended all my guilt, because my sins are on Him.
Christ promises me I have nothing left to fear.*

When new believers experienced this, and then were taught what had happened to them, then declared those miraculous events by the waters of baptism: they were experiencing the power of the Gospel! Now do you see what a huge statement it was to be baptized? Move on now to the next salvation account, where we see:

SALVATION IS: BELIEVING & CONFESSING GOD'S WORK

That is what we see as we move on to the end of chapter 16, and study:

Message Fourteen (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 16:25-34 where salvation is described as *believing*.

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**.

So after the individuals of that family believed (v. 34), they declared through baptism that:

*Christ gave me a heart that is new.
Christ buried my past & it is forever gone.
Christ gave me a fresh new beginning.
Christ ended all my guilt, because my sins are on Him.
Christ promises me I have nothing left to fear.*

That is the essence of the Gospel, distilled into bite-sized pieces that those early believers could hold on to and meditate upon as God continued the work of their growth through sanctification.

We now come to the most amazing of the Gospel descriptions because it is the clearest

statement of what happens to those who get saved from the perspective of those who do not. Next, as we move into chapter 17 of Acts we see that:

SALVATION IS: GETTING A NEW KING OF YOUR LIFE

Message Fifteen (Pagan description): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 17:1-7, where salvation is described by pagans, who observed the process they saw happening as lost people believed and received Christ, as: *getting a new King of your life.*

Acts 17:1-7 (NKJV) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." 4 And **some of them were persuaded**; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. 5 But the Jews **who were not persuaded, becoming envious**, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have **turned the world upside down** have come here too. 7 Jason has harbored them, **and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.**"

Today, has the miracle of salvation turned your world upside down? Do you have a new King? That is the powerful Gospel.

When we hear it and believe, God becomes our King and everything changes. As the Thessalonians said, our world turns upside down. But that is not all, as we get down to v. 22 we see that:

SALVATION IS: RESPONDING TO GOD'S COMMAND TO REPENT

Message Sixteen (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 17:22-34 where salvation is described as *God commanding all to repent.*

Acts 17:22-34 (NKJV) Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 **"God, who made the world and everything in it,** since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, **since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.** 26 And He has made from one blood every nation of

men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, **in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him**, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' 29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, **but now commands all men everywhere to repent**, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." 32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, **some men joined him and believed**, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Next, we see in Acts 18 that:

SALVATION IS: BELIEVING & WORSHIPPING GOD

Message Seventeen (Paul): The next Gospel Presentation is in Acts 18:8-13 where salvation is described as *believing*, and being *drawn by God to worship Him*.

Acts 18:8-13 (NKJV) Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed on the Lord with all his household**. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, **believed and were baptized**. 9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; **for I have many people in this city**." 11 And he continued there a year and six months, **teaching the word of God among them**. 12 When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 saying, "This fellow persuades men **to worship God** contrary to the law."

WHEN GOD SAVES US: WHAT DOES HE DO INSIDE US?

Salvation (13) is: God Opening Hearts To Heed His Word

Salvation (14) is: Believing & confessing god's work

Salvation (15) is: getting a new King of your life

Salvation (16) is: responding to god's command to repent

Salvation (17) is: Believing & Worshipping God

BAPTISM IS WHEN I DECLARE WHAT CHRIST DID

When these early believers were saved, they then agreed to declare through baptism that:

Christ gave me a heart that is new.

*Christ buried my past & it is forever gone.
Christ gave me a fresh new beginning.
Christ ended all my guilt, because my sins are on Him.
Christ promises me I have nothing left to fear.*