



## DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE HOW I'M SAVED?

Kevin Presley

Are you saved? If so, how were you saved? Were you saved in a way that is different than how other people were saved? Does it make any difference so long as we believe we have been saved? We began a series of lessons last week posing the question: "Does it make any difference?". In our last study together we asked, "Does it make any difference what I believe?" Today, we want to turn our attention to that same question, but regarding receiving salvation. The word of God not only defines salvation it tells us how it is received and gives us examples of how people did receive it during the time the apostles were alive and fulfilling Christ's great commission to go and preach the good news of salvation through Him.

In Acts the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter, we have one such account, and it involved a sinful jailer and two preachers who were being held in that jail. Paul and Silas were confined in this Philippian jail and were singing and praying at the midnight hour when an extraordinary series of events occurred leading to the salvation of that jailer. There was a midnight earthquake that was so powerful, it jarred open the doors of the prison and caused the chains holding the prisoners to come loose. The jailer awakened out of his slumber and thinking the prisoners were freed, he almost killed himself until Paul cried out that they were all still there. The jailer was so overcome by the turn of events that verses 29-30 say: ***"Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"***

Here we have a man who wanted to be saved from his sins. He inquired of Paul and Silas what he had to do to receive Christ's salvation. They told him what he needed to do and within the hour, the jailer and even his family had submitted to God's plan of salvation. We read of other such encounters throughout the book of Acts. The circumstances were varied, but the message was the same and the obedience rendered by those being saved was the same as well. If that is the case, doesn't that tell us that it makes

a difference how we are saved? That will be the proposition for our study today: Does It Make A Difference How I'm Saved?

Some time ago, I was talking with a man about salvation. We were discussing baptism and whether baptism is necessary to be saved. Very soon into the conversation, he simply asked, "Does it really make any difference?". He was asking what difference it makes whether a person was baptized, or said a prayer, or had some other kind of experience, as long as they are saved, implying that one can be saved in any number of different ways. That is the way many people think today. While we may agree that faith in Christ is the only means of salvation, many believe that there are many ways to express that faith and therefore how one person is saved may differ from how another person is saved. Some claim they were saved when they simply believed in their heart. Some say that they received salvation when they cried out to Christ and asked Him to come into their heart and save them. Some claim other types of experiences as the moment they received salvation, and others believe that salvation occurs when one, in faith, obeys the conditions of the gospel, including being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Does it make a difference as long as we claim to believe in Jesus? I propose that it does indeed matter for several reasons that we will present in our lesson today.

I want to begin by pointing out that there is a difference between the circumstances that lead us TO Christ and the way we get INTO Christ. There's a difference between the events that may lead one to learn the truth and want to be saved and the things that every person must do to be saved. Salvation does not just fall from heaven upon people. Salvation is not an experience that overwhelms and overcomes a person's will. Salvation happens when one responds to the hearing of the gospel of Christ, and that is the same for everyone who is saved. For example, a person may be raised in a Christian home and trained by Christian parents and he or she comes to faith in Christ at an early age that way. Another person may experience some great sorrow or tragedy later in life and start seeking God. And still another person may travel a different path in life that ultimately leads them to encounter the gospel. But in all three cases, regardless of the path that brought them to that point, they all three must hear, believe, and obey the gospel to be saved. And that plan is for everyone.

First, it makes a difference HOW I'm saved because **THE BIBLE PLAINLY SHOWS US WHAT PEOPLE IN THE FIRST CENTURY DID IN ORDER TO BE SAVED.** The apostles of our Lord were directly commissioned to take the gospel to the whole world, Jew and ultimately Gentile. Notice what Jesus says in giving that commission in Mark 16:15-16. He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Notice that Jesus not only specified what the apostles were to preach to every person on earth: the gospel, which is the good news of Jesus Christ, AND the response that every person should have to their preaching. He said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved". This agrees with Matthew's account of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 where Jesus told them to: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..." Now, most people today assume that baptism is nothing more than a church ordinance for new Christians, but that's not where Christ placed the act of baptism. Notice that He said to "make disciples...baptizing them..." and then "teaching them (those baptized) to observe the things" of the Christian life.

Now then, if we begin in Acts chapter 2 and progress through the book of Acts (which is Luke's record of the apostles carrying out that commission) we will find that very order of events taking place time and time again. Look at it, beginning in Acts 2. When Peter preached to the multitude on the Day of Pentecost, the beginning of the church of Christ, they asked him and the other apostles in verse 37

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Verse 38, “Then Peter said to them, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Verse 41: “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and THAT DAY about three thousand souls were added to them.” You see, there was no “baptism Sunday” scheduled weeks later. They were baptized at the very time they first heard and believed the gospel and they were not part of the church until they had been baptized. Other preachers can say what they will but that’s exactly what your bible says.

Then, turn to Acts 8 where Philip goes and preaches to the city of Samaria. Verse 12 says, “But when they believed Phillip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.” Then go down about 15 verses and you’ll find Phillip being dispatched to a desert road to intercept a traveler who was reading the scriptures and wanted to know what they meant. He was an official from Ethiopia. Phillip found him and according to verse 35 “...preached Jesus to him.” Well, what does that mean that he preached Jesus? Obviously, it meant the person and work of Christ, telling him who Jesus was and is and what Christ had done but it must have included something else as well because the very next verse, verse 36 says, “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the Eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” How would he have known to ask such a question had Phillip not told him that was what he must do as he preached Jesus to him? And the text goes on to describe how they stopped right there on the side of the road, and he was baptized.

In Acts 9, Saul of Tarsus meets Jesus on the road to Damascus. Now convinced that Jesus was the Christ of God, he wanted to know what the Lord wanted him to do. Christ told him to go into the city and wait for his servant Ananias to come to him and Ananias would tell him what he must do. Ananias goes and restores Saul’s sight and verse 18 tells us “Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.”

One more, in Acts chapter 16. Paul and Silas were held in a Philippian jail and through an extraordinary circumstance became convinced that what Paul and Silas were preaching was true. Verses 30-33 say: “And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.” That’s repentance! “And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” And we could continue. Time and time again, the apostles and those operating under their authority encountered sinners, preached Christ to them, and those who believed, turned away from their sins, and were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Now, does it make any difference whether we do the same?

Friend, you will never find a single example of people being told to simply invite Christ into their hearts or to whisper a prayer asking Christ to save them. You will never find a single example of salvation occurring in any other way, once Christ went back to heaven and the New Covenant went into effect, than people hearing and believing the gospel, and immediately being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins! The only “sinner’s prayer” you’ll read about after the death and resurrection of Jesus and His return to heaven is the appeal a sinner makes to God in baptism. “Why are you waiting (Ananias asked Saul in Acts 22:16)? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” That’s HOW you call on the name of the Lord and there is no other way under the New Covenant for one TO call on the name of the Lord besides doing what Saul and all the others who came into the church did, and that is by being baptized. It makes a difference HOW I’m saved because there is only one way of salvation described in the New Covenant and it is consistently shown again and again. And I know that

people try to point to the thief on the cross, but the New Covenant had not yet gone into effect and Christ had not yet given His apostles the great commission and Christ had not yet returned to heaven when He saved that thief, and if you would like to study more about that you can find sermons on our website or our YouTube channel that deal with the thief on the cross and his salvation.

Number two, it makes a difference how I'm saved because **EACH STEP OF OBEDIENCE CHRIST COMMANDED IS SIGNIFICANT IN RELATION TO ALL THE OTHERS**. When one is saved, there is not only a transaction that takes place in the mind of God, but there is a transition and a transformation that takes place in the heart of the sinner, and that process does not occur if the gospel is not obeyed in each respect. For example, before one is saved, he does not trust God nor Christ. He may not even know who Christ, much less believe in Him, and submit to Him. However, when that person HEARS the gospel, he becomes aware of his need for Christ. A person, therefore, cannot be saved therefore, unless at some point he or she HEARS the gospel. Hearing the gospel changes that person's understanding. The hearing of the word then leads to faith. If the word falls upon an open and receiving heart, that person believes what they hear. Their MIND is then changed. This change of understanding and mind then convicts them of their sinful life and the need to change direction. That decision is called repentance and that marks a change in the person's WILL. When they then decide to turn away from sin and turn to Christ, this means submitting to Christ as Lord and King and so they then confess Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. This indicates a change of ALLEGIANCE. But what does baptism mean? Well, Paul said in Galatians 3:27, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism, therefore, constitutes a change of STATE. We move from being outside of Christ to being INSIDE of Christ when we are "baptized INTO Christ."

Friend, all of that must take place to say a person has been converted. All of that must take place for a person to be saved. I didn't determine that, God determined that and revealed it in His word. And as we learned last week, it makes a difference what we believe about what God has said simply because God said it. If it makes a difference what we believe about salvation, it also makes a difference what we do concerning salvation.

And correspondingly, it makes a difference how I am saved because **CHRIST IS THE AUTHOR OF SALVATION**. Look at Hebrews 5:8-9, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him," The term "author" essentially means "provider". Salvation comes from God and through His plan, not ours, and is extended to us by the work of Christ upon the cross. That salvation is obtained by all who obey Him or all who submit themselves to Him. Friend, salvation is not something we initiate. God initiated salvation. He offers salvation to us on HIS terms and not ours. In fact, we need to understand that salvation or pardon from our sins, must first take place in the mind of God. God doesn't consider us saved because we consider ourselves saved. We can only consider ourselves forgiven of our sins and saved if God has said so in His word. God doesn't agree with us – we are to agree with Him. Salvation is on HIS terms and HIS terms alone. And my friend, the Lord could simply have NOT been any plainer in His word about what we must do to be saved.

You might say, "Well, if that's the case, why doesn't everybody see it that way?" For the same reasons everybody doesn't see anything else about the bible the same way. Human tradition, gradual departures from the truth down through time, the confusion the devil has purposefully caused in religion has obscured what the bible plainly and simply says about salvation and many other things. We can look at the divine record of how the Lord sent His apostles forth to fill the earth with the gospel message and how men and women all over the world responded to that preaching. It doesn't matter what Huldrych

Zwingli said 500 years ago. It doesn't matter what John Calvin and his many disciples say. And no, it doesn't matter what Alexander Campbell, or any other man said about it. It doesn't matter what any uninspired person has said. What matters is, what did Christ and His apostles say? And what they said matters. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

And we didn't have time to delve into this today but baptism by the very definition of the original word means an immersion. It refers to be immersed in water in the likeness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). It is an immersion in water FOR (in order to receive) the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Now then, friend, is that what you believe? It that what you did, how you did it, and WHY you did it? It matters. It makes a difference how I'm saved because Christ is the author of our salvation. And if I haven't been saved according to the will of Christ, then I haven't been saved. If you find that's the case with you today, I hope you'll serious study and consideration to these things and that you will decide today to submit to the will of Christ and truly enter a saved condition in Christ.

**©2023 BibleWay Media.** All rights reserved.

BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.