

Conversion and Baptism

Connecting with Your Church—part 1

February 16, 2020

We're all on a journey, the destination will be one of two places and each of us will determine where we finish.

DAY ONE: Disconnected from God

1. There is something wrong with man. You can see it on an international scale, you can see it on a national scale, you can see it at work, you can see it in neighborhoods, you can see it in family members, and you can see it in your own home.

Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

2. How does the prophet Isaiah diagnose what is wrong with man?

3. “Going astray from God,” turning “to his own way...” is the essence of sin that lies in the heart. The effect of going astray from God is to be disconnected from what is most important in life. As a result, we will inevitably demand that others come through for us. When demand goes undetected, we create, not only disconnection from God but disconnection from relationships!

4. The apostle Paul also gives us a glimpse into what is wrong with man.

Romans 3:23 ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

5. The word “sin” has different usages depending on the context in which the word is used. It can mean any of the following:

a. To miss the mark, like an archer, who no matter how close he may be to the target continues to miss the target.

b. To fall short, of what is expected, required, the goal, etc.

6. Paul also tells us what the “goal” is to be for all of us: “the glory of God.” Falling short of the glory of God means we fall short of living up to the standard of how God means us to live. Unfortunately, no one “naturally” cares if they live up to God’s standards.

7. You can be “religious” and still disconnected from God. You can “believe in God,” and “have faith in God” and still be disconnected from God!

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Broken, and willfully blind

1. The word “**broken**” is used in three different ways:

a. We use “broken” to mean something of being defeated: “I was ‘broken’ by: my divorce, getting laid off, having to take a menial job, my biopsy came back positive,” etc.

b. That we are “broken” means that there is something faulty in human nature that we cannot fix through greater effort, New Year’s resolutions, trying harder, greater will power, accountability partners, etc.

c. The bible uses “broken” to describe a positive trait: admitting my unchangeable condition and calling out to God in repentance. (It is similar to our how culture thinks of “hitting bottom”).

2. There is something wrong with man. You can see it on an international scale, you can see it on a national scale, you can see it at work, you can see it in neighborhoods, you can see it in family members, and you can see it in your own home. But there is one place where it inescapably escapes your view. You cannot see what’s most wrong in you.

3. The problem of human nature is compounded with a second problem which makes the first problem of even admitting there is something wrong virtually “impossible.” Man is not only blind to his own sin; he is willfully blind!

4. When the prophets scolded the people for their blindness, the people scolded the prophets for accusing them of this, and often made the prophets pay for their “audacity.”

5. God confronts the people, once again, through Isaiah:

Isaiah 6:9 He said, "Go and tell this people: "'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'"¹⁰ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

6. God is using sarcasm in chiding them for their willful blindness. The people claim to be open-minded and eager to learn wisdom, but the reality is just the opposite. The people simply hear what they want to hear and see what they want to see. They do not hear what they do not want to hear and do not see what they don’t want to see. This same reality is in the heart of every human being.

7. We must have the humility to face ourselves if we are going to change.

DAY 3: Salvation: God's rescue operation

1. After reading through the first two devotionals of the week you may wonder why God has anything to do with us at all.

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

2. This verse is a summary of the failure of human nature. After reading this simple verse, what would be God's response to us?

3. In the very next verse we are met with something absolutely stunning!

Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared ...

4. But the kindness and love of God is not just drippy sentimentalism. God's kindness and love is demonstrated in action, and in history. Paul continues:

Titus 3:5 He saved us ...

5. Note that Paul does not say we "saved ourselves," nor did we "get our act together." We were rescued!

Titus 3:5 ...not because of righteous things we had done ...

Titus 3:5 ... but because of his mercy.

6. God did not have to have mercy on us. We were guilty "as sin."

*Titus 3:5 ... He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,
6whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,*

7. Notice the saving acts of God for people who could not save themselves!

Titus 3:7 ...so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

8. We were made "right with God" (justified in the eyes of God) simply by God's undeserved favor (grace) AND given the gift of eternal life!

9. What strikes you about God's salvation for sinners?

DAY 4: Beloved and wanted!

1. We are not only saved from sin, from an eternity apart from God, but there is something intensely personal that is also true: We are His beloved! WE ARE WANTED!!
2. It's easy to walk around with a low-level sense of shame about ourselves. We know we don't measure up to our own standards let alone God's standards.
3. But the stunning news of the gospel, which means "good news," is that shame is a thing of our forgiven past.
4. Instead, we have been ushered into God's family. It's as if God went to family court to adopt us into His family, with Himself as our Father, and Jesus as our elder brother!
5. Let's look at a few verses that highlight this glorious reality. Underline the words or phrases that stand out to you:

Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

Hebrews 2:13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

6. What stands out to you the most from these verses?

DAY 5: Baptism and its meaning.

1. Conversion to Christ means you have turned your back to sin and turned your allegiance to Christ.

2. The bible describes this as regeneration. A new life is formed inside you, the life of Christ, Himself! The metaphor is one of death to life, from being “buried” to be “raised from the dead” to new life!

Colossians 2:12 ...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

*Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,
27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

3. Baptism is also the symbol of cleansing.

*Titus 3:4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,
5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,
6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,
7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

1 Peter 3:21 ... and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

4. Baptism also represents the new believer's first step of obedience!

Matthew 28:19 (RSV) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

5. Have you come to faith in Christ? Have you been baptized?

6. What strikes you about the meaning of baptism?