

Baptism - 2

The Bible teaches many wonderful things about the grace of God and how it works through baptism. We want to please God, because we love Him. We want to do His will and we have no other intention. God desires that we believe, love, and obey Him. And we're not interested in turning to the right or to the left. We simply want to be New Testament Christians who serve the Lord. I hope and pray that's what you want too.

This lesson continues our series on Christian baptism. We simply didn't have enough time any one lesson to touch on all the basics of Christian baptism. In the first lesson we focused on baptism in the four gospel accounts and the book of Acts. In our remaining studies our focus will be on the epistles.

Psalm 119:160 – “The entirety of your word is truth . . .” To have all that God says about baptism in the New Testament one must study the subject from Matthew through Revelation. According to the NKJV, the word “baptize” appears some 10 times . . . “baptized” some 59 times . . . And “baptism” some 22 times for a total of 91 times. Take all that the Bible says on a matter and you will have God's will in the matter!

The Bible says in **Ephesians 5:25:27** that “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify [set apart] her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” Here Christ cleanses the church through the washing of water by the word. Now earlier in **Ephesians 1:7** the Bible speaks of how we have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins.”

Well, how are we cleansed? Is it through the blood of Christ or through the washing of water by the word? Well, the answer is both! **In the physical sense, we are baptized in water; but in the spiritual**

sense, God washes and redeems us through the blood of Jesus Christ at the time of baptism. We're going to explore this farther in our study of baptism.

Our lesson text today comes from the book of **Romans 6:3-7**. “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have 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 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.”

When we are baptized into Christ Jesus, we enter into a relationship with the Lord that we didn't have before that time. **Baptism is the time of uniting with Christ. We're baptized into His death; that's when we come into contact with His blood. His blood is applied to our souls at the time of baptism.** And that is why Ananias told Saul in **Acts 22:16** to be baptized and wash away his sins. In baptism we **DIE** with Him; we're **BURIED** with Him; and we are **RAISED** with Him. In baptism we go down into the watery grave, and we're raised up with Him to walk in newness of life . . . the Christian life.

Perhaps you have heard people complain about baptism and its essentiality and importance . . . Haven't you? **John 3:5** says it is a new **birth**, and **Romans 6** says it's a **death**. Which is it? Well, it's both. You see, before you can be born again you have to die with Christ you have to die to sin. Before you're baptized, you are dead in your trespasses and sins. In baptism you die to sin. And when you're raised up with Christ in baptism, you have newness of life—free from sin. The old man of sin after baptism is dead, and you can now live a new life devoted to living righteously. And just as Jesus did not have newness of life until He was raised from the physical grave, so you do not have new life until you are raised with Him in baptism from a watery grave. When we are united with Him in baptism, our old man

of sin is crucified with Him so that our body of sin might be done away with and so that we would no longer be slaves of sin. This passage never describes baptism as some outward sign. You see, that concept came from men who deny the necessity of baptism to salvation. Instead, **baptism is the means by which God's grace unites us with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.** In **Titus 2:11** Paul tells us that "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all me." But not all will accept the full measure of grace that God has made available. And this is how God gets rid of the old man so that the new man can live freed from sin.

Now, the Bible here likens baptism to a burial. To bury a person, you must cover up or enclose that person in a grave. Baptism, as we've seen, means to dip or to immerse a person in water. The act of immersion in water is different from sprinkling water [**rhantizo**] or pouring [**cheo**] water that many have substituted for baptism. And one can readily see how immersion is like a burial, but sprinkling and pouring are something different. The Christians of the New Testament era, the ones you read about there, were immersed and they immersed those who wished to become Christians. Immersion in water fits Romans 6:4 and the times, while sprinkling and pouring which came many years later do not . . . Pouring in A.D. 251 and sprinkling in A.D. 1311.

When we speak of the necessity of baptism to salvation, some usually quote **1 Corinthians 1:17**. And in that passage Paul said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void." You may remember the name of bro. Eldon Rogers whom I mentioned and quoted in our introductory study as having said, "**In obeying the Gospel I may be required to do more than what a verse says, but I will never be required to do less than what any verse says.**" **Illustration:** Bro. Rogers in Ft. Payne, AL. Some people assume baptism is not necessary to salvation; but remember what the Lord Jesus said of baptism in **John 3:5** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, that unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot (he

cannot) enter the kingdom of God.” You see, without the new birth, (and that takes place in baptism) you can’t enter God’s kingdom.

According to John 4:2 Jesus didn’t baptize, but His disciples were baptizing. Paul saw his role as one who taught the gospel rather than one who does the baptizing. This doesn’t mean that he thought baptism is unnecessary to salvation; it simply means that he had a different function. This situation is like the apostles who felt the feeding of the Grecian widows was necessary in Acts 6, but they had people select seven other men to do it, while they devoted themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Paul merely devoted himself to preaching, while others did the baptizing of those who wanted to obey the truth.

The next passage for us to consider from the epistles is **Galatians 3:26-27** which says, “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” In baptism we not only enter Christ, we also clothe ourselves with Christ. We put Him on like a garment. When God looks at us as His children by faith, He sees Christ surrounding us. The only way you can put on Christ is to be baptized into Him. Faith and repentance are essential to our salvation, but baptism is when we put on Christ—and not before.

Next, let’s look at **Colossians 2:12-13**. There the Bible says, “Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” Baptism is a response to God’s powerful working. God is the active one in baptism as we noticed in a previous study, **and we are the passive ones. God acts and we receive.**

When I hear people say baptism is a work, I can agree with them to this point . . . **Baptism is a work that saves; but it is not our work but God’s work.** Baptism is God working on us. God is the active One, and we are passive one. **The command is a passive imperative**, “be baptized.” Now an **ACTIVE IMPERATIVE** means that you must do something. **A PASSIVE IMPERATIVE** means that you must let someone else act upon you, and in this case it is a passive imperative . . . **IT IS GOD WHO ACTS.** Having said this, I let’s look at **Colossians 2:12-13**. There the Bible says, “Having been buried with him in baptism, [**someone buried you**] in which you were also raised with him through faith [**someone raised you**] in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead [“The powerful working of God” did all this . . . Not you . . . Not me . . . Not us . . . Not the elders, but God]. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.” In baptism “God made us alive together with Him.” In baptism we respond to God’s love and submit to His will so that He works on our souls and in our lives.

- In baptism God **FORGIVES** our sins. Ephesians 1:7
- In baptism God **CAUSES** us to be born again. John 3:3-5
- In baptism God **ADDS** us to His church. Revelation 1:5
- In baptism God **WASHES** away our sins. Acts 2:47
- In baptism God **PUTS** us into the death of Christ. Romans 6:3-5 & Colossians 2:12-13
- In baptism God **APPLIES** Christ's cleaning blood. Revelation 1:5
- In baptism God **BURIES** us with Christ. Colossians 2:12-13 & Romans 6:3-5
- In baptism God **RAISES** us up with Christ. Colossians 2:12-13 & Romans 6:3-5
- In baptism God **SAVES** us. 1 Peter 3:21

When people say, "You don't have to be baptized to be saved," they're showing that they don't really understand baptism. You see, **when you exclude baptism from God's saving grace, you are interfering with what God is doing to us and for us.** We don't see baptism as some great work that we do to earn our salvation but as a great work that God does!

The Bible helps us to understand this. It says in **Titus 3:3**, "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." Oh, what a terrible condition it is to be lost in sin and filled with unrighteousness. We were all like that before we came to Christ and He helped us.

You see, **Titus 3:4-7** says, "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 have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration** and renewing by 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."

God acts on us by His mercy and grace in the washing of regeneration (that is the washing that causes us to be born again) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. The early church fathers unanimously understood the washing of regeneration to be baptism. And nobody doubted it until around 1500 AD, when men thought the grace of God excluded baptism because they concluded that baptism was a work. **GOD'S GRACE DOESN'T EXCLUDE BAPTISM; IT WORKS THROUGH BAPTISM.**

Revelation 1:5 - "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood.

- **Process:** WASHING
- **Cleansing Element:** HIS OWN BLOOD ADMINISTERED BY GOD IN BAPTISM.
- **End result – Cleansed from every sin**

Ephesians 1:6-7 – "He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace."

- We have **redemption**
- We have **forgiveness of our sins**
- What provides them? Answer: **The blood of Christ applied in the act of baptism.**

Going down under the water is a burial of your old life . . . Coming up out of the water is a resurrection to your new life.

A powerful hymn asks this question: "Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power, are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

Now let's consider **1 Peter 3:21** - "Baptism, which corresponds to this, (that is Noah and the ark) now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism corresponded to Noah's ark, when water cleansed the world by removing the sinful, ancient world. And baptism corresponds to that by putting to death or crucifying our old man of sin and allowing us to walk in newness of life. Baptism doesn't remove the dirt of the body. Instead, baptism, according to the Scripture, is "an appeal to God for a good conscience." This is what Ananias was talking about when he told Saul of Tarsus in **Acts 22:16** to "arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." You see in baptism we call on God to wash away our sins and to give us a good conscience . . . A clear conscience . . . A clean conscience . . . The kind of conscience God wants you to have. And when God washes away our sins in baptism, we can see ourselves as different people. We are clean and right in God's sight. God has put away from us all the sin of our past and has saved us with the blood of Jesus Christ. We are free from sin . . . Free from being lost . . . Free from guilt . . . And free from fear.

When we respond to God in love and faith by repenting of our sins and are baptized, God saves us and washes our soul clean. No longer are we separated from God. Before salvation we have no hope and no relationship with God. **But God saves us through the blood of Christ that's applied in baptism.** And this opens up a way for us to be justified and reconciled through Christ.

A defiled conscience is a terrible thing. It robs us of any confidence before God. God said through the prophet **Isaiah 59:1-2**, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." You see, while we are in sin, we can't have a clear or good conscience; but when God saves us at baptism, He grants to us the good conscience that we long for.

Now, at this point, someone says, “Brother, don’t you know about the household baptisms?” Well, the Bible mentions the four households in the Book of Acts, namely the households of (1) Cornelius, (2) Lydia, (3) the Philippian jailer, and (4) Crispus being baptized in the book of Acts. Paul also says he baptized the household of (5) Stephanas in **1 Corinthians 1:16**. Surely, there must have been some infants or small children among those households,” someone says. Well, it’s risky business to assume something that we don’t know. Were there children too small to act responsibly among those households? Let’s see!

In Acts 10:44-48, Cornelius and his family heard the word before they were baptized. They knew what they were doing. The same is true of Lydia in Acts 16:14. In Acts 16:34 it says of the household of the Philippian jailer that they believed and rejoiced at their obedience. In **Acts 18:8** it says that “Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.” In **1 Corinthians 16:15** the Bible says that the household of Stephanas “devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” **So when you look closely at these examples of conversion, they speak of people able to listen, to believe, and to obey the Lord—not infants.**

According to early church historian Everett Ferguson, Tertullian made the first explicit mention of infant baptism in his essay “On Baptism,” chapter 18. You see, he opposed it as an innovation, mentioning first the innocence of the infants, who did not need the forgiveness of their sins. Ferguson noted that Tertullian was expressing the common belief of the early church

Why become a Christian? Because you love the Lord, you want to serve and obey Him, you want to live the rest of your life as close to God as possible, and because you want eternal life. In Heaven with the Lord is the greatest thing you can think of. To become a Christian you must believe and obey the gospel. Believing Jesus as the Christ means confessing your faith before others. The Lord Jesus said in **Mark 16:15:16**, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the

whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

You can't be saved apart from faith in Christ Jesus. We must be willing to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and we must treat Him as Lord. It's hypocritical to say Jesus is Lord but treat His teaching as if it were optional. True trust in and love for the Lord Jesus means a change of heart. I will leave the way of sin to follow the Lord wherever He leads. I'll deny myself, take up my cross daily and follow Him. Love, faith, repentance, and confession are necessary prerequisites to baptism. We don't immerse uncommitted people. We seek a full transformation of their lives. We want them to come out of a corrupt and dark world and live in God's love and truth.

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When out of faith, love, and repentance we come to be baptized, our hearts are thankful for what Christ did on the cross. We come out of that water free from sin . . . united with Christ in his burial and resurrection . . . children of God . . . born again . . . Cleansed by the precious blood of Christ . . . and added to the Lord's church. We'll know we have eternal life, and nothing we'll ever do is as important as becoming a Christian. Will you become a Christian today . . . Right this very minute? Just obey from your heart what we have read together in these verses from the Bible. The Father is waiting for you to humbly respond to Him. Won't you do it now!