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# BAPTISM

Various Texts - Pastor Jason Brodehl

## INTRODUCTION

We make various decisions every day of our lives. Most are small and insignificant. For example, what will you wear, eat, or watch on TV? Others are more weighty. Such as whether to purchase this home or that one. Or whether to take this job or that one. But one of the most significant decisions you can make in your life is who to marry. That requires a commitment that has lasting consequences. In marriage, you commit your life to walk with an individual:

1. For better, for worse
2. For richer, for poorer
3. In sickness and in health
4. To love and cherish
5. Until death.

In our culture, weddings take on significant planning and financial commitment. In addition, the majority of churches will require a level of premarital counseling. We counsel young couples on how they handle conflict, manage their finances, handle various responsibilities, and how they will raise their children. To commit to another for the rest of your life requires a level of well-thought-through decision-making. So, when someone says, "I have decided to purchase a home," versus, "I got engaged," we view those two decisions much differently.

For this reason, for couples seeking a divorce, the process can be the most painful, gut-wrenching, and heart-tearing experience one can endure. So naturally, therefore, it is a big decision.

What about the decision to follow Christ? How does that compare? Jesus warned us in the gospel of Luke,

*<sup>26</sup> "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own Father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup> Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup> For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> So, therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

The decision to follow Christ carries even more weight. For Christ calls us to forsake all that we have.

This morning we get to witness one of the ordinances commanded in Scripture, Baptism. We celebrate this ordinance, listening to the work of the Spirit in the life of a confessing Jesus follower. But it only symbolizes what has already occurred in the individual's life. There will be nothing mystical happening here this morning. Instead, we will witness a public profession of faith, a decision made before this morning to repent, turn, change the course of their life, renounce all they have, and follow Jesus.

It is a privilege to see this together in a large group setting. After Pentecost, 3,000 believed and were baptized. I'm sure that was quite a celebration. But then there is the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. God's word says, <sup>36</sup>*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"* <sup>38</sup>*And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*" As far as I can tell, the only witnesses to his baptism were himself, Philip, and maybe his chariot driver. My point in sharing these two baptizing stories is to contrast the size of the crowd and the platform on which these baptisms occurred. Those who heard the good news and were born again followed their faith with obedience in baptism. It is nice to have a baptismal with warm water. Let's be thankful we can have a formal and celebratory experience here this morning.

Baptism symbolizes regeneration. What I mean by regeneration is being born again by the Holy Spirit, resulting in a conscious decision to believe and bow to Christ. When Nicodemus met with Jesus one evening, Jesus said, *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" <sup>4</sup>*Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* <sup>5</sup>*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* <sup>6</sup>*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.*

This is what baptism symbolizes. A man/woman born of the Spirit. Before we begin, let's pray.

## WHAT IS BAPTISM?

What is baptism? I've spoken of it symbolizing something else. But how do we define it? Baptism is the outward expression of an inward change.

### THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION

This morning we will witness Pastor Tim and Zeke enter the water in the baptismal. First, we listen to his testimony of faith. Next, pastor Tim will make a proclamation statement, "based upon your profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I now baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Then Zeke will be fully submerged in the water. We believe the act of submerging him completely underwater follows the biblical expression of baptism. We believe Scripture teaches total immersion in baptism. We hold to this view based on the original language, the description, and its imagery in Scripture.

First, based on the original language. Baptizing means being momentarily immersed in water as a cleansing, ceremonial, and initiatory rite. Over time, cultural and denominational beliefs impacted the interpretation and meaning of this word, baptize. I don't want to spend our time parsing Greek here.

Instead, I will say that based on our best understanding of the word "baptize," the term's meaning leans heavily toward full immersion.

Other verses describe the event occurring in a quantity of water. John 3:23 says, <sup>23</sup> *John also was baptizing at Aenon (an-on) near Salim (sa-leem), because **water was plentiful** there, and people were coming and being baptized.* ". If John were only sprinkling heads, he would not have been concerned over the availability of water. Bring a cup and you will be good. That was not the case here.

In Acts chapter 8, when Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch, makes a profession of faith, and desires to be baptized.

*And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"* <sup>38</sup> *And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went **down into the water**, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> And when they **came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.*

Again, if Philip were only sprinkling heads, then there would be no need to go down into and come up out of the water in the eunuch's baptism. But it would be necessary if the eunuch were baptized by immersion.

## INWARD REALITY

So, based on the original language and in descriptions of other New Testament baptisms, we can conclude, to a reasonable degree, that baptism means total immersion. But what I as compelling, if not more, in the decision to immerse the baptized fully is the imagery baptism portrays of our inward reality. It symbolizes our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Many groups and organizations will have initiations. But identification in baptism is no comparison to an initiation. The small act of submersion into the water symbolizes the great sacrifice of the very Son of God. Hear me on this, please. Comparing baptism to initiation is like comparing a cup of water to an ocean. There is no comparison. We cannot compare baptism to any other ritual or initiation. I don't think I can verbalize well enough the incomprehensible sacrifice and cost to God the Father, sending His Son to die for His enemies. We at the Chapel don't take this lightly either. Thus we have people complete an application and interview before baptizing people. We want to confirm their understanding of the gospel and answer questions they may have concerning salvation and church membership.

## WHY BE BAPTIZED?

Biblically speaking, baptism is not required for salvation. So why do it?

## JESUS EXEMPLIFIED IT.

First, Jesus exemplified it. In Matthew chapter 3, we read,

*<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; <sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

Jesus submitted himself to baptism, affirming John as the last prophet by obeying the prophetic call to repent and be baptized. Even though Jesus did not need to repent, he identified himself with the people he would save. By identifying himself with the sinners, he could complete the plan of salvation. He became like us. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." And lastly, to identify him as God's "beloved son." God the Father officially commissioned him to complete his salvation mission at his baptism.

#### JESUS COMMANDS IT.

Secondly, Jesus commands it. In Matthew 28. Jesus said *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."*

People transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit obey Christ. Therefore, said, "Baptism is not necessary for salvation, but a profess believer will be necessarily baptized." If you fear public speaking, water, or anything else, I suggest you speak to your elder. But, please, do not allow those fears to hinder you in this decision.

## WHO CAN BE BAPTIZED?

### WE BAPTIZE BELIEVERS

Here at the Chapel, we believe the Scriptures teach that those who can express a believable expression of faith are to be baptized. Therefore, by this definition alone, we do not hold to the view of infant baptism. Here are a few verses from the book of Acts to make the point.

Acts 8:12–13:

*But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip.*

Acts 8:35–38:

*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" Then Philip baptized him.*

Acts 10:47–48:

When Peter met with Cornelius in his home and witnessed the Gentiles comes to faith, he said, "*Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Again, none of these people were infants.

Acts 16:14–15:

*One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, Again, an adult.*

I will stop here. There are other verses as well. In all these verses, only those who can profess faith are baptized.

I want to revisit the phrase "believable expression of faith." Sharing an expression of faith can come in various forms. Just spend a week at Joni and friends, and you will experience the love of Christ like no other. Many individuals cannot communicate verbally, but they have an expression of faith that far exceeds our understanding. Speaking the name of Jesus to some of them, and they about knock themselves out of their wheelchairs with enthusiasm and excitement. That may be their expression of faith.

## WE BAPTIZE THOSE WHO WANT TO BE DISCIPLES

We also believe that those who express faith have the desire to be taught. Faith and repentance begin with baptism, but that is only the beginning. It is a lifelong journey of being conformed to the image of Christ. Learning and discipleship are part of the walk of faith.

## WE DO NOT BAPTIZE UNBELIEVERS

Finally, we do not baptize unbelievers. Instead, we take cautionary measures to hear those who have the desire to be baptized interview them. Listen to their understanding of the gospel, generally with great joy.

## WHAT DOES BAPTISM SYMBOLIZE?

### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES OUR REGENERATION

**Titus 3:5-7:** *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

When baptized, we act in obedient faith, which comes from being born again by the Holy Spirit. This is regeneration.

### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES OUR DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST

Rom. 6:3-4: <sup>3</sup>*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* <sup>4</sup>*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

Baptism by immersion represents three parts of the death of Christ. First is immersion. As the person goes down into the water, they identify with Christ's death. The second is submersion. At this moment, while completely submerged under the water, the person identifies with the burial of Christ. And thirdly, is emersion, coming out of the water, identifying with Christ's resurrection from the dead. We claim that what happened to Christ happened to us. And even though we will die one day, our death, as believers, will not be as Jesus' death was. He suffered physically and spiritually in ways we will never have to.

#### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES THE DEATH OF OUR OLD LIFE.

In identifying with Christ's death, we begin believing our old life, our old self, has died with Him or has been crucified with him. Galatians 2:20 says, <sup>20</sup>*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

#### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES WASHING FROM SIN

In Acts 22, Paul recounts his conversion with the people. In that story, Ananias, says, *'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; <sup>15</sup>for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'* (Ac 22:16)

But the washing of sin remains upon us all even after we exit the water. We will sin again, but we must remind ourselves of the following: <sup>9</sup>*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

#### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES OUR EXODUS

In and through the exodus experience, Israel was united with and obedient to Moses, as Jesus Christ's people are to him.

**1 Cor. 10:1-2:** *For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,*

Likewise, we leave behind a life of bondage to sin and the world, and begin our journey home. We are living our Exodus to the promised land.

#### BAPTISM SYMBOLIZES UNIFICATION WITH THE BODY OF CHRIST

**Ephesians 4:4-6:** <sup>4</sup> *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—* <sup>5</sup> *one Lord, one faith, one baptism,* <sup>6</sup> *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Some equate baptism to engagement. I equate it more to the marriage ceremony. Just as the marriage ceremony is a public proclamation to commit one's life to another, so baptism is a public proclamation to devote one's life to Christ.

**Galatians 3:25-27:** <sup>25</sup> *But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,* <sup>26</sup> *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.* <sup>27</sup> *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

Putting on and putting off, is the daily dying to self and living for Jesus Christ, "walking in newness of life", as Romans 6 says. As one author puts it, *baptism happens only once. But its significance goes on and on. For the rest of our lives, every baptized child of God goes on dying and rising every day. Dying to sin but rising to righteousness, the sin addict dies and is raised again and again to live no longer as a slave but as a son within the Father's house.*"

The writer goes on to call this baptismal therapy. He defines it as *"the ongoing application of the power of Baptism by which the sinner is given a new life to live—no longer fueled by his own measly and inept will power, but by the crucified and risen Savior who lives within him by faith."*

## REFLECT AND RESPOND

As Zeke walks into the water, imagine Noah entering the ark.

<sup>7</sup> *By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hb. 11:7)*

Noah believed and trusted God's words, obeying his command to build the ark. Zeke enters the "ark" of Christ, God's judgment falls on Christ. He is protected from that judgment on the unbelieving world. Just as God brought Noah through the judgment, so too will Christ bring us home to safety.

When he enters the water, he will not be alone. Baptism identifies the individual with a new people group, a new community, and a new family. So this morning, he will identify with Christ and us and become a church family member. It is like adoption.

While he stands in the water, we will hear his testimony, <sup>9</sup> "because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth, one confesses and is saved." (Romans 10:9-10)

We will witness his symbolic death with Christ when he is immersed in the water.

While completely submerged in the water, albeit for a moment, we see his symbolic burial with Christ.

When he emerges brought out of the water, we will witness his symbolic washing away of his sin and resurrection to a new life in Christ.

And he exits the water and puts on Christ, walking in the newness of life.

Thus begins his Exodus from his bondage to sin and death to freedom in life everlasting.