



**Baptism**  
**Acts 16:16-34**

**16** Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

**17** This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

**18** And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

**19** But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

**20** And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;

**21** "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

**22** Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.

**23** And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

**24** Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

**25** 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.**

As you probably know by now, we've been going through a series where we've examining why we worship the way we do. Looking at the things we believe Christ has told us to do in worship during His earthly ministry The Lord Jesus Christ, instituted two Sacraments to be perpetually observed in the worship of the church until his return. These sacraments are Baptism, and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23). Each of these sacraments plays a vital role in the life and worship of the church. Previously we talked about the Lord's Supper, and today I want to talk about baptism.

Now, as we talk about Baptism, and what we believe about it, I'd like to make the grave error of having you open two books at the same time, because while I want to refer to the Bible passage we just read, I would also like to make reference to our Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession as I talk about what we believe. You'll find it in the back of your Trinity hymnals on P. 865

Now, while you are turning there, let me be honest with you and say, that today I want to primarily address two common misunderstandings about the Presbyterian practice of baptism. There are many evangelicals who see that we practice baptism by pouring and that we baptize the infant children of believers, and they say *"well you see Presbyterians do that because they didn't have a complete enough Reformation. Those practice are just holdovers from Roman Catholicism. You see "to Baptize" comes from the Greek word Baptizo which always means "to immerse", and they only baptized adult believers in the bible."* Or words to that effect. Well what I'm going to try to do today is to show you from scripture and biblical theology, that baptism is rightly administered by pouring, and that the children of believers were and should be baptized. I may not succeed in convincing of that, but at least I hope to prove that we aren't doing it because we are crypto-Romanists. This week I'm going to be talking about the mode: **that is pouring**, and next week, I'll talk about the subjects, **believers and their children**.

We'll be making reference to the section of scripture we just read and to the Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 28.

First look at section 2 on page 865 of your hymnals it states, *"The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called thereunto."*

Now there isn't too much controversial in that, we all I take it agree that water is to be used, it's a fitting outward sign of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, what Paul calls "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Also, please note that we believe baptism is only to be administered by a minister of the gospel. In the example we read we have two

ministers, lawful called and ordained, Paul and Silas administering baptism. Throughout the New Testament you will always find baptism being administered by men who were called to the ministry either ordinarily or directly by Christ.

This is one of the reasons, incidentally that we do not believe that a baptism was rightly administered if was done in the name of Jesus only, and not the Father Son and Holy Spirit, or by someone who was not a minister of the gospel, and that would the baptism done by several cults and apostate groups.

It's actually when you get to section 3 on page 865 that we begin to get into contentious territory: ***“Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.”***

Now where, someone might ask, do we see baptism done by pouring or sprinkling in the bible? Well in several places, including in the section of Acts 16 we read that spoke of the Baptism of the jailer and his family. But wait it doesn't say anything about the mode, how do we know they didn't go down to a river and immerse them. Well, I think that will become clear. When did the baptism take place? The answer is late at night, sometime after midnight.

In the text they stayed in one locale, they did not go down to a river or a pool or even one of the public baths that many ancient cities had, they wouldn't have been able to go down to one after midnight in any event. They were baptized *at that time and in that location*. **It was around midnight and they were in the outer court of a jail.** While water would have been available in vessels (pots or jugs) for drinking and washing - as in the washing of wounds, ancient jails did not have facilities where you could immerse someone, in fact only the houses of the very rich had baths, and that is one of the reasons why they built public bath houses in Roman and Greek cities.

Also, while we read that the Jailer washed their wounds and gave them food, we do not read that he gave them new sets of clothing because theirs were soaked having conducted an immersion baptism. The only conclusion that makes any sense is that their Baptism was done by the pouring or sprinkling of water.

Now we'll discuss this more next week, but as to who was baptized, please note that it does not say, just the jailer on his profession of faith, or the Jailer and his wife, it states the Jailer and his Household or Family, when we use the language of family we never use it to refer simply to our spouse, but to our children. **The jailer's children were also baptized.** It is well-nigh impossible that all of them were somehow immersed, in the middle of the night, in the outer court of a jail, time and circumstances do not allow for it.

The same can be said incidentally of the baptism of the three thousand in Acts 2:40-41 ***“And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls***

*were added to them.*” They were in the middle of Jerusalem, during a major holiday during which the city was incredibly crowded and the Jewish leaders would have blocked their access to the few pools they might have been able to get to, even if they could 12 men attempting to immerse 3000 in the remaining hours would have been physically impossible. Pouring or even better in this case, sprinkling (which the Jews already used as a right of cleansing) would have been the only way it could have been done.

Additionally, the circumstances of Paul’s own baptism, also militate against the idea of immersion. It took place within a house inside the narrow streets of Damascus after Paul had neither eaten nor drunk anything for three days, Acts 9:17 *“And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened.’”* It happened right there, at that moment in the house, he was not taken outside the city and immersed in a river.

*But wait, how can that be?* Doesn’t the Greek word from which we get Baptism, *Baptizo*, always mean to immerse? That is not the case, Baptism can and often does mean to apply water by pouring or sprinkling. Turn to Mark 7:3:

***Mark 7:3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.***

***4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.***

The first time you see the use of the word “wash” in Mark 7:3 it is *nipto*, to wash oneself, but then in verse 4 *baptizo* is used twice as a synonym for *nipto*. In both cases it refers to a ceremonial washing they did to cleanse from impurity. Before eating the Pharisees, following the tradition of the elders, poured water over their hands. They did the same coming from the marketplace. So too, they ceremonially cleansed (*baptizoed*) all the things involved in eating. Someone might be tempted to think they immersed themselves before eating, which isn’t the case, but certainly no one can think they immersed their couches before eating! Anyway, let me give you another example of this practice, please turn to Luke 11:37:

***Luke 11:37 And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat.***

***38 When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.***

The word for WASH in verse 38 is *baptizo*, and I love the Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible version of Luke 11:38 which always renders *baptizo* simply as baptize, so it translates verse 38 as ***“and***

*the Pharisee having seen, did wonder that he did not first baptize himself before the dinner”* Now as humorous as that translation is, the Pharisee is obviously not amazed that Jesus didn't fully immerse himself before the meal or even pour water on his head, but that he did not go through the ritual of the ceremonial “washing” of his hands.

So Baptizo can and does refer to *washing, cleansing* and indeed, just as circumcision hearkened to removal of that which was unclean, so to Baptism symbolically refers to the washing away of our sins: *Acts 22:16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*

The symbolism of washing via pouring is also very important, we are not immersed into the Holy Spirit, rather the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers:

*Acts 2:33 "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*

*Acts 10:45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

But perhaps the strongest verses that connect both the washing and pouring of the Holy Spirit are found in Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

And then again in Heb. 10:22 we have the work of the holy spirit symbolized by pouring and sprinkling: *“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

I cannot think of one place in the bible where the work of the Holy Spirit is symbolized by immersion in water, the Holy Spirit is always being poured out or falling upon believers. So, if we are going to outwardly represent the work of the Holy Spirit, water must be applied to the individual, NOT the individual applied to water. Hence, while I do not doubt the validity of an immersion baptism, I actually think pouring is better portrayal of the inward regenerating and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit that Baptism symbolizes.

**But one final application:** Please note this, we confess that while all Christians should be baptized, not all those who are baptized are really regenerate Christians: note 28.5 - *“Although it is a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it,*

*as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it: or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”*

Simon Magus was baptized as a professing adult by Peter, and yet after he tried to buy the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Peter said to him ***“You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.”*** Regardless of what you believe, know this, the critical issue is not your outward baptism, but the inward condition of your heart, Simon was baptized but on his way to hell. The thief on the cross, on the other hand, may not have been baptized, but because of his faith in Jesus Christ, he was on the way to paradise. I am not asking you therefore to consider, are you baptized, but have you gone through the heart change that baptism symbolizes? Have you closed with Christ, and are you living by faith in him? As Presbyterian preacher, Thomas Watson exhorted:

**"Get a real work of grace in your heart. 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.' Heb 13: 9. Nothing will hold out but grace; it is only this anointing abides; paint will fall off. Get a heartchanging work. 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.' I Cor 6: 2: Be not content with baptism of water, without baptism of the Spirit. The reason men persevere not in religion, is for want of a vital principle; a branch must needs wither that has no root to grow upon."**