

## Our Profession of Faith Through Baptism, p. 3

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**Bible Text:** Mark 8:38, 16:15-16  
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We come to our final installment looking at the ordinance of believers' baptism and I reminded you that we must not de-emphasize what Christ has so emphasized. We run into trouble sometimes when we think, "Well, baptism, it's important but, you know, it doesn't save you. It's something we should do," and we sort of minimize it and de-emphasize it and then in our world today it's become trivialized with silly carnival amusements and an atmosphere some churches are putting around the partaking of this very solemn, sobering and important and beautiful ordinance the Lord has given us and it has really energized me to study this again and has blessed me as I have grasped anew the great wisdom and power and beauty and glory of God in giving us this ordinance we call believers' baptism.

Now we'll begin in Mark 8 again, verse 38 is our foundation, and then go to Mark 16.  
Mark 8:38, Jesus said,

38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

And one of the ways we show that we are not ashamed of him is the ordinance of believers' baptism. That is our proclamation of our honor of him and our submission to him.

Now Mark 16, the final commission given to the disciples before Jesus ascends, Mark 16:15,

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

Now a quick review of where we've been. We've talked about the fact that baptism is by immersion in water. You cannot make the original koine Greek word, that's the Greek of our New Testament, for baptism mean anything other than immersion. Now we spent a lot of time on this. All reputable Greek scholars, the Anglicans, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians included say if you take the word "baptizo" and translate it, it's immersion.

But King James didn't want to mess up his Anglican tradition of sprinkling babies so he required the King James translators to not translate the word but transliterate it, just create a new word, and that's why we have the English word "baptism" instead of just the word "immersion." It should every time you see baptism, it should say immersion if they really translated it. But here's a place where religious tradition got in the way of the truth. We just talked about that a while ago, didn't we, where you just get used to doing things a certain way and the truth gets washed away to keep this system alive and keep the system going.

Alright then, II, we talked about the fact that the ordinance of baptism is immersion of disciples only. That means you must be saved already. I'm not talking about a mature disciple, just a genuine disciple. I'm not talking about a mature believer, just a genuine believer and then you are to be baptized. An infant cannot be biblically baptized because an infant can't be a disciple. An infant can't believe. They're not capable of such as yet.

Then III, I messed this up in the outline last week or last time we reviewed but in III, I added a part in that said the weak arguments for sprinkling and we touched on some of the things that these folks try to use and they run around this way and run around that way and tie some dots together to try to say that at least the Bible allows sprinkling of babies. I'm sorry, it's not in there. It's just not in an honest, grammatical, historical exegesis in context of any biblical text. It's just not there. All this was when some of our evangelical brethren who believe the Bible and believe in conversion like we do but yet hang onto sprinkling babies, that was an accommodation to the old state religion of Europe where you sprinkled a child and it made him a part of the nation and a part of the nation's church and they knew if they threw out sprinkling, that that would get them in a lot of trouble with the national authorities so they compromised and held onto it.

Now we're in IV, the purpose of baptism. We talked about the fact that it proclaims the Gospel that saves us. As you are baptized, you are saying Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, that's going down in the water, and he rose again. You're stating also, make sure I don't get out of order here, it proclaims the believer's death to sin, self, Satan, and the world and his resurrection to a new life. This is all review. You're not going to be able to have time to get it all down so just listen. Thirdly, it proclaims our purification from sins. There's a sense in which when you're saved, you've become a believer in Jesus Christ, God purifies and washes your defilement away. In other words, God doesn't look at you as a defiled and polluted one any longer and you're stating that in baptism. "I'm one of those who by faith in Christ have been cleansed by the power of God when I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ." You're also stating that it proclaims our future resurrection from the dead, that one day our bodies may go to the grave but Jesus one day will raise these bodies and reunite our glorified spirit with a new glorified body.

Now we come to new material, E in the outline: it proclaims our formal membership into Christ's local church and our commitment to all the duties of membership. So it proclaims our formal membership into Christ's local church and all the duties involved or inherent in that membership. Now you know, we live in a world today where if you tell a congregation there are duties or responsibilities that you rightfully should be held to to be

a member of a church, there are people who will try to stone you. They, I mean, they will get mad and, "What do you mean? Church is supposed to be absolutely, totally, completely meaningless. You're supposed to give me the Gospel. When I'm 6 or 8 I'm to pray that prayer, get my free ticket into heaven and then live like I want to and you ought to be glad if I show up." I'm serious. That is not an exaggeration in many many churches today. But friends, when you're baptized, you're proclaiming that, "I want to be a part of the belonging of this called-out assembly of people called Grace Life Church of the Shoals, or whatever the local congregation's name may be, and I want to commit to the duties and responsibilities of biblical church membership." If you don't mean that, do not be baptized. And you pastors out there listening and I know some are listening around the world, listen, you don't baptize people who do not understand that truth. This is not a meaningless going through the motions. This is an ordinance with great, solemn, sobering importance. The church of Jesus Christ is worth our very best.

Now look, a person is not to put off baptism until they grasp and understand everything I'm sharing with you in these three messages. Absolutely not, but they should understand the basics of what this is about. As we pilgrimage together through the word, God deepens and enriches our understanding of all the things we're about here as a biblical Christian church, but we should not baptize somebody as if it's just a fun thing that blesses your life and important because God says it's important. It's literally blasphemy what's going on in some congregations and they're calling it the ordinance of baptism.

I remember talking to one of our senior adult ladies and she was talking about her mom and she said, "You know, I don't remember my mom missing Sunday school or singing in the choir my entire life." I was just reading this week about Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A. Do you know Truett Cathy grew up in the housing projects? I think when he died his worth was about 7 billion dollars. Truett Cathy grew up in the housing projects and Truett Cathy learned something, he could buy seven or eight colas for like a nickel apiece and he'd bring them to the housing project and sell them for seven cents apiece and that's how he started his business with Coca-colas or soft drinks and reselling them to his fellows in the neighborhood. But Truett Cathy was converted at age 12 and he says, "At age 12, my daddy was not a spiritual man and didn't encourage me that way but at age 12, I started going to Sunday school and the men in that church in those Sunday schools taught me how to be a man of God, taught me about loving Jesus, taught me about responsibility and taught me that as a businessman, you have to be responsible for your reputation every day." And Truett Cathy started a little restaurant when he got to be an adult and they were selling more hamburgers than they were selling chicken sandwiches and he said, "Man, there oughta be a way to make chicken more popular," and he started deboning the chicken and had a special recipe. He said, "Our special recipe was just whatever spices we had in the restaurant that day." Isn't that cool? And he started a chicken restaurant and then he started another one and have you ever seen a Chick-fil-A on the side of the road anywhere? But for over 50 years, every Sunday Truett Cathy taught a junior boys Sunday school class in the First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia. Truett Cathy would not open his business on Sunday because he said, "Do you know what? We work 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, I need to meet with the Lord on

Sunday and I need to pull away from this stuff and I wanted my employees to be able to meet with the Lord."

I want to challenge you businessmen in this church, be a man of God. Have some convictions. Say there are some things we won't do. There are some lines we won't cross. There are some convictions we're not going to compromise on. What am I saying? I'm just using those illustrations to say we need to look back in our past sometimes and get some role models because the church is on the downgrade and one of the ways we're on the downgrade is seen that we take the ordinances and they become minimized and trivialized and de-emphasized and the weightiness and the glory and the beauty of the ordinance is somehow pushed away. But when you are baptized, you're proclaiming formal membership into Christ's local church and your commitment to all the duties of membership.

A couple of quick verses. Acts 2:41 and then Acts 2:47. "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." So notice the baptism and the adding are together. They did not become a formal identified member of a local church until baptism. Then Acts 2:47, "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." So when a person comes to faith in Christ and they commit to put first what God puts first and submit themselves to believers' baptism, it is actually the Lord that is adding them to the number. God is behind all of this.

So we remind ourselves that the first duty of all believers is baptism and church membership. Now I have to be balanced, I have to say this about every time I mention the local church: I do understand that these things lose their meaning and they lose the spirit vitality they need when a church is weak and when a church is compromising, when a church membership is filled with unregenerate peoples. I mentioned to you earlier about Sunday school teachers who stayed out gambling and drinking long neck Budweisers and then show up at church next Sunday. Do you know why I mentioned that? Because one of the largest churches in our city, one of their members told me that just the other day. He said, "I go to Sunday school and I know what my teacher's been doing last night." You listen to me: you do that here, you're not teaching Sunday school. As a matter of fact, if you don't stop, you won't be on the membership role long. Either that or I'm gone. Now I can deal with anybody struggling with sin because I'm one of those, amen? But to openly in the public eye shamelessly live a life of compromise and sinfulness like that and then think you're going to come into God's church and hold a position of authority and we're supposed to represent a holy God to this world? Not going to happen. And you can walk into my office and say, "Pastor, this has happened, this has happened and I'm struggling." Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to put my arms around you and say, "Brother, I'm struggling too. Let's help each other." Amen? We're compassionate to sinners but not open, brazen, unrepented of wickedness, and even if you repent of that, we'll open our arms to you but that means you don't drink Budweisers next Saturday night and you don't go playing cards and gambling next Saturday night.

Profession is the substance of baptism but baptism makes the profession firm. That's the way God has ordained it. Baptism is the appointed ceremony of profession. Now let me say something here and I'm aware of my time. Doggone it, I'm gonna have to go to four parts. I know that we have good guys mostly with good intentions began to do things the Bible does not prescribe and they began to call those things professions of faith. Come down to the front. "Well, So-and-so has come this morning to make their profession of faith in Jesus." No, they're not. Now I don't mean to split words here but technically they're not. You're not making your profession of faith until you get to baptism. You may be sharing with a church family you've come to faith in Christ, that's wonderful and good, but that's not your profession of faith. In the Bible, you have weighty weighty weighty teaching, thoroughness, on preaching the Gospel, calling men to repentance and faith, and you have weighty and thorough instructions on baptism, but in between those two, you have nothing. So in between those two, you've got to be careful making something law or making something the right way to do it. Are you listening to me? And so we've made a lot of other things, "Well, they're making a profession of faith." You make a profession of faith when you get in the baptistery waters. That's your formal profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Now we testify of him and we share him and we certainly profess, in a sense, with others our faith in Jesus Christ but the formal true profession of faith God has ordained is not walking to the front and standing with the preacher. That's okay but do not in any way make that a substitute for or in anything in any way as valid or credible as the God-ordained ordinance of believers' baptism.

Well, F in our outline, continuing under the Roman numeral of the purposes of baptism: it proclaims our pledge of allegiance to the Triune God. It proclaims our pledge of allegiance to the Triune God. The Bible requires in the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them," now listen, "in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son and the Holy Spirit." God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. When a person is baptized, they are saying, "I pledge allegiance and honor to God the Father whose wisdom devised the plan of salvation. I pledge allegiance and honor to God the Son whose power procured my salvation. And I pledge allegiance and honor to God the Holy Spirit whose effectual work sealed and applied that salvation to my life." God the Father, he designed it. God the Son, he paid for it, he provided it by his power. And God the Holy Spirit takes the preaching of the Gospel and applied it to my life.

Well, there are mysteries in there. I can't explain to you how the Spirit does it but I know he does it. Jesus told Nicodemus, "You don't know how the Spirit moves. The Spirit's like the wind, it comes this way and it goes that way, you don't know where it's going or where it came from, and so is everyone who is born again." But you know, you've come to see your sin and placed faith in Jesus Christ. If this is not one's pledge, then their allegiance is suspect. That's why we baptize in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Spirit.

V. Baptism is necessary for salvation. Boy, I got in trouble the last time I said this because some of you do not listen well and you're not biblically wise. Baptism is

necessary for salvation, salvation from the power of sin or what the Bible calls sanctification. God did not save you to just justify you. That is settled and sealed the moment you believed. Did you hear that? Your justification is settled and sealed among the Godhead, etched in the permanence of heaven the moment you believe, but never never never never has God justified a soul that he does not also sanctify, and never never never has God ever justified a soul that he does not also sanctify and ultimately one day glorify. They are one whole but the Bible lets us describe them in three separate pieces but you can never ever have one without the other.

So my point is God saved you from the penalty of sin the moment you believed, that's justification. God is saving you from the power of sin as you mature in Christ, that is sanctification. And God is ultimately going to save you from the presence of sin and that is glorification. But you don't get one without the other. If you think you got in on justification and you've been terribly terribly terribly weak at sanctification, I'm not saying you're not justified but I'm highly suspect and so is the word of God.

Philippians 2:12 reminds us, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence," here it is, "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Wait a minute, hold on, time out, work out my salvation? What's that? It's talking about sanctification, not justification. The moment you believed, justification, you stand just and forgiven and will not suffer the penalty of your sin in hell. That's settled the moment you believe but you are now that you are justified, one who is now pursuing a course of gradual and increasing sanctification, to strive against and work to live out from under the power of sin.

Now, you never get there completely but you'd better be on track. It should be a part of your heart and being to say, "I want to grow. I want to be more like Jesus. I want to repent when I blow it. I want to repent when I fail my Lord. I miss church and I start liking the world and I'm liking doing stuff on Sunday," like a couple that rejoined our church some years ago. I told you this and I'm not on a long neck Budweiser kick this morning but that's what they told me they were doing. They said, "We were out on motorcycles with a bunch of people one Sunday drinking beer and we looked at each other and said, 'What are we doing?'" And they had to get back to church. Do you know why? Because if you're a sheep, you can't be comfortable long running with the goats. God changed your nature and you want to be back around the sheep and you get drawn back in. Aren't you thankful for that, folks? Aren't you thankful that you taste of sin and it tastes good, then you start getting sick of it again and you've got to get back with the sheep.

Look, boy, I want to be careful but I think I just have to be truthful. I'm not so sure that the majority of so-called Christian congregations today are not sheepfolds, they're goat pens and the successful pastor is the kind of guy who can keep goats happy and yet put a veneer on the outside that looks like Christianity. Some of you have been in some places like that. We used to resemble that to some degree around here.

Baptism is a public vow of obedience. A public and solemn consecration to the service of God is necessary for growth in sanctification. Here's what I mean: God has ordained that the humility and the devotion to that ordinance is key and foundational to your ongoing sanctification. It is a part of your sanctification but it's a key component to your ongoing sanctification which means you're one who not only was saved, justification, you're one who is being saved and they're always the same. As Dr. Rodgers used to say, the faith that falters at the finish was faulty at the first, and that is so true.

You see, when you're converted, one of the first things you need is to feel the force of the obligation that is acknowledged in baptism. Did you hear that? You and I need to feel the force of the obligation that is pictured and expressed in believers' baptism. It's good for us. It puts us on the course of sanctification. The act of baptism is God's instrument to press on the heart and minds both the subject's heart and mind and the local church's, that we all are to walk in newness of life and we all are to walk separate from the world. This is a sanctifying work that happens in our hearts when we yield to baptism. 2 Corinthians 6:17 reminds us, "'Therefore, Come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.'" There's a sense of separation. When you're baptized you're saying the identity, those whom I most chiefly identify with are now the called-out ones, the local church, and that's why I'm being baptized before you.

I haven't said quite so much about it, but for baptism to be biblical and proper, it needs to be before a local church and into the fellowship of a local church. It has to have the proper audience and the proper subject. The subject needs to be a true believer and the audience needs to be a true local church.

This separation God has called us to is formally proclaimed and officially and initially obeyed when we publicly devote ourselves to the service of Christ and his church through baptism. In Acts 2:40-41, Peter is preaching that powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost and he says this, "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" Okay, how are we going to be saved from the perversity of this world we live in? Verse 41, "So then, those who had received his word," they believed, "were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." Believing on Jesus Christ, believers' baptism is next, and that adds you to the body of believers. If you're going to be separate, if you're going to be saved, sanctification, saved from this perverse world having its rule and its way with you, you must be formally identified with and active in the body of a true and healthy local church. There is no Plan B. That's the way God's ordained it to work.

So the public ceremony of baptism is an essential first step to "saving yourself" from this perverse generation. I'm not talking about justification but saving yourself in the sense of sanctification.

So in brief review, our baptism proclaims the Gospel; our baptism proclaims our death to sin, self, Satan and the world and our resurrection to new life; it proclaims our purification; it proclaims our future resurrection from the dead; it establishes our formal

membership into the local visible body of believers and a commitment to all the duties of membership; and it declares our pledge of allegiance to the Triune God. And just quickly to show you the importance of baptism even further in the Scriptures, the importance of baptism is seen in that Christ sent John the Baptist, his forerunner, to baptize. Matthew 3:5-6, "Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him," that's by John the Baptist, "in the Jordan River." Once again, they went down to the Jordan River because they were immersing them. If you want to sprinkle somebody, you can take one pitcher of water and sprinkle 1,000, but if you're going to immerse people, you had to find deep enough water and that's why the Jordan River. The importance of baptism is seen in that Christ himself submitted to baptism to be an example to us. Matthew 3:13, "Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him." Thirdly, the importance of baptism is seen in that Christ and his disciples baptized during their earthly ministries, John 4:1. The importance of baptism is seen in that Christ commanded his disciples just before his ascension to go and preach the Gospel, "make disciples and baptize them and teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Then also chronologically progressing, the early church baptized all believers. Again, Acts 2:41, "those who had received his word were baptized."

Now once again, infants can't do that. Infants can't receive his word. We reject the pagan superstition that there is some sort of mystical aura that if children are in the midst of the singing and the preaching of the word, somehow the Spirit does something to them. It doesn't do a thing. Christianity requires understanding with the mind and then believing with the mind and the heart as the Spirit of God gives illumination.

Now again, churches under the silence of Scripture may use many different methods to identify those who are ready for baptism but the one, true, God-ordained, initial public act of professing Christ is baptism.

Listen to what John Dagg said. John Dagg was a founding theologian among Baptists in America. He's actually an Alabama boy and he said this in his "Design of Baptism." I don't know, two centuries ago, that's a guess. A long time ago. He said, "This ceremony was manifestly designed to be the initiation into the prescribed service and every disciple of Christ who wishes to walk in the ways of the Lord meets this duty at the entrance of his course." Now you may say, "Now pastor, I'm serious about Jesus and I love Christ and I study the word, I just don't know about baptism." You don't have to know about it, God's already told you what you need to know about it.

You see, God has no designer disciples. You don't get to be your unique approach. "Well, I just have a different way of approaching Christianity. I just do my own..." No, I'll tell you what you are, you are a rebel and you may not be saved. God doesn't have any rogue disciples. He said, "Make disciples. Baptize them. Add them to the local church." You don't get to do your own creative thing on that. You don't get to have your own slant on it or your own niche. God's made it very very clear.



You see, your case is not special or unique. You're to do what the Lord says and honor him in believers' baptism by a sound, biblical, local, New Testament church. If you begin your discipleship in believers' baptism, then you're beginning correctly. If you've begun your discipleship by neglecting or saying no to believers' baptism, then you're not involved in discipleship at all. Now, there are people who are in churches that practice sprinkling and they'll say, "Well, you know, what I do is I now make my profession of faith at the Lord's table, at the Lord's supper." You don't get to do that. You don't get to restructure and redesign how God's ordained his church to function and work.

I know it doesn't save you but we cannot start having these kind of freedoms with the biblical text. Your conscience is not clear before God when you make up your own way to profess Christ. Your conscience is burdened under the command of God to do what the Lord said and that is believers' baptism. Now there's an occasional soul who has maybe a struggle with aspects of this and I understand that and we have compassion for that, but those are rare and unique situations. I mean, I think we've had a person or two in these 37 years who had an abhorrent fear of water and so you work with people like that. Certainly we're compassionate on those things but that's the rare and unique situation.

Believers' baptism, all the glory God's put in it, the beauty that is in it, the wisdom that is in it, the power that is in it, and so let's never ever de-emphasize what the word of God and our Lord Jesus Christ has so highly emphasized.