

Believer's Baptism

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Bible Text: Acts 2:38-41; Matthew 28:19-20

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I'd like you to listen to these wise words from what I would call a good old friend and pastor, J. C. Ryle. "We live in an age of great spiritual privileges. The gospel has been preached almost throughout the whole world. The Bible is available in more languages than ever before. In many parts of the world the church has grown with great speed. But we must ask ourselves, 'Are we any better because of it?' We live in an age of great spiritual danger. Never before have so many people throughout the world professed to be Christians. But are they all converted? Many like to attend large meetings, where exciting things are happening. But looking for excitement is a different thing from growing as a Christian, and it is of great importance that we sometimes stop and ask ourselves where we really are spiritually." Listen to those words, we live in an age of great spiritual privileges and we live in an age of great spiritual danger. Never before have so many people professed to be Christians but are they all converted?

It is of great importance that we stop and ask ourselves these things. Where are we spiritually really? These words sound like they could have been written in 2022 but they were written in the late 1800s. J. C. Ryle has a really good knack for always being relevant because he sticks to the word of God, so read almost anything you can of his and it will help you spiritually. But he raises a very important question: where are you spiritually today? To change the question: are you a Christian? If not, if you know you're not, know that the Maker of heaven and earth knows who you are. Yes, there are from our standpoint like untold numbers of people, we don't know them all but he does, he created each one, he knows you and he knows that you're a son, a descendant of Adam and Eve, and that as Adam and Eve sinned against God and brought sin and death into the world, so you descend from them as a sinner. You inherited that and you will pass that along to your children as well. What that means is that no one had to teach us to do what is wrong, and people had to instruct us to do what is right. And the bad news is that once we've done even one thing wrong, that puts us in a category of a lawbreaker of God. You see, even if you just did one sin, that's enough to put you in the category of a lawbreaker.

So we've got these two strikes against us, we're born in sin and we commit sin, and if you are not a Christian, the bad news is that you can do nothing to change your status as a lawbreaker before God. Nothing. Going to church, reading your Bible, doing good works, donating a lot of money, none of that is going to change your status as a lawbreaker. But there's more bad news. You can do nothing but if you do nothing, you just keep living

your life the way you are living either in rebellion to God, in open rebellion, or trying to live in ignorance of God, just doing your own thing and letting God go his own way and you going your own way, if you do nothing at all, then one day soon you're going to die and we all think that we're going to live nice long lives, that's our dreams, but as you have seen in our country, people die young every day. They go to the grocery store just picking up a few things, never come home. They're going to school, going to be back in the afternoon, never come home. Car accidents, illnesses, these things happen and you do not know the hour or day of your death.

You need to be ready but what are you going to do? At the moment you die, if you die without Christ, what are you going to do when you face God? Are you going to plead for his mercy? What will you say? Will you beg him for mercy? Well, that God will ask you, "Why did you ignore the most merciful gift I ever gave, My Son?" Well, then you might try to say, "Well, God, I've heard that You're a God of love. Won't You just love me?" And he will say something like, "Why did you ignore the greatest act of love I could ever give anyone, the gift of My Son?" Well, then you might just try, "Well, Lord, can't You just overlook? Can't You just overlook? You're God, You can do anything You want, can't You just overlook what I have done?" And he's going to ask you, "Why did you overlook what I've done through My Son in providing salvation?"

These are serious questions. The world is rushing headlong into eternity. To borrow an analogy from Jonathan Edwards, if you're living without Christ, you're living like on a spider's web dangled over hell, and the only thing that keeps you from that is the mercy of God keeping that strand together in order to keep you and preserve your life and give you more time to repent. But in the end if you do not repent and believe in Christ, you will face God as Judge, not as your Savior, and your mouth will be shut. You'll know that you will be guilty. Your sentence will be an eternity in hell and hell is not a party place with your friends. Don't listen to Elon Musk talk about hell as a party place. Hell is a place of torment but it's solitary torment. You will not have the comfort of your buddy, your drinking buddies or whoever else that you are looking forward to seeing there. They will not, you will not have the comfort of their friendship.

That's bad news but there is good news. If you're hearing my voice live or recorded later, then there's time for you, you're still breathing, your judgment day is not at this moment or your time of judgment isn't right now. Your future doesn't have to go that way. God the Father sent his Son to become Incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit to rescue you. He lived a perfect life. No one ever had to tell him what to do, the right things to do, and no one ever had to correct him to tell him what not to do. That Jesus, though he had done nothing wrong, was labeled a liar and a deceiver. He was beaten and scourged and then crucified. Jesus died and was buried but all that wasn't a mistake, that was his mission. This was God's plan. Jesus died so that he could atone for your sins. Atone means pay the price for your sins. He took the punishment of God's wrath for you. He paid the penalty in full and he has the power, he conquered the power of death and he rose from the dead three days later, not only showing that he has life and can give it to those that seek him, but his resurrection also shows that that payment has been paid in full completely for all those who call upon his name.

He offers you full forgiveness of sins, everlasting life, an eternity in heaven with him. If you'll just repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved because that is his promise. In the end, let me just say this, you will either be crushed by the weight of your sin and run to Jesus for safety or you will be crushed by the judgment of God for eternity. Now we read in Revelation 16, I don't know if you caught it, these plagues that are coming in the future, this judgment of God, no matter how devastating those plagues are, men refuse to repent and they are blaspheming the name of God. Even when there's supernatural judgment from heaven, people's hearts are so hard they will not turn to God.

So if you are not sure if you're a Christian, if you know you're not a Christian, I beg of you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, really trust him for your salvation and when that day comes, the last day of your life, then God will greet you as a child into eternity of endless light with him. But suppose that you could answer, yes, if I ask you, "Are you a Christian?" You would say, "Yes," then I want to follow up with another question: are you converted? Do you know something of the relief of your sins? Do you know that your sins are forgiven not as some fact in your head but as an experience of your life?" As Bunyan wrote about, that that load of sins that is on your back, do you know something of the power of the Almighty in opening your spiritual eyes to behold the beauty of God in his word? And do you know something of the mysterious life, that mysterious life change that happens as God gives his Holy Spirit to you in new spiritual birth? Ask yourself these questions.

The Apostle Paul encourages us to do that. 2 Corinthians 13:5, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?" You see, there are people today who are in a very dangerous position spiritually. They call themselves Christians, they think they're Christians but Christ is not resident within them. You see, being a Christian isn't a matter of believing some theological facts or saying the right words. You must believe in Christ to be saved, that's true, and if you are genuinely saved, if you genuinely believe, you will publicly proclaim your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is just as the Scriptures tell us in Romans 10, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes upon Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

You see, it's not just words, it's faith, it's trust. You call upon him recognizing shame, the shame of your sins and if you call upon Christ, he takes away those sins, he takes away the shame of those sins so that when we see him, when he appears on the day of your death, we will be made like him. That will be a glorious day, not a sad day. And whom the Lord saves, the Lord regenerates. He renews. He transforms them by the miracle of spiritual rebirth. Again, I ask you have you been converted? If not, confess your sins to

Jesus and ask him to save you and redeem you and keep asking, keep persisting until you know you have been converted. The spiritual birth is so important. There are too many people today who think they've been saved who are Christians who know nothing of the power of God in their lives. And if you have been converted, praise God. Thank the Lord.

Now I ask you a follow question: have you been baptized? Notice the order. We don't start with baptism, we start with recognizing that we're sinners who need a Savior. We need to be saved from our sins, and once God has saved you from your sins and brought about that new birth, then we talk about baptism. And yes, I'm just now getting to baptism but understand that what we're going to talk about and what we're going to do later is water baptism. What I've spoken about up to now is Spirit baptism. Spirit baptism must happen first, right, baptism of the Holy Spirit otherwise water baptism is just a meaningless act that does nothing for you. If you believe in Jesus Christ and have been converted, you need to be baptized.

Now I've used the word "baptism" but some may be confused as to what it is or may not even know what it is, so what is baptism? Well, the word "baptized" is actually a transliteration of the Greek, it's not a translation. It's a transliteration, that's where you take the Greek letters and put it with an English letter. So that's where we get the word "baptism," from the Greek word "baptizo," which you look it up in a dictionary it means "to dip, immerse, cleanse or purify by washing." Sprinkling is not in there at all. To dip, immerse, cleanse or to purify by washing.

The Bible uses baptism in both a literal and metaphorical sense, metaphorical is a figurative sense. In the metaphorical sense, it means to be overwhelmed by some difficult experience such as Jesus was experiencing as he approached his crucifixion. In Luke 12:50 he says, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is finished."

The literal use refers to dipping, immersing or cleansing something or someone, and at times it is used to talk about in a way to dip a cloth like within ink. An example of this is found in Luke 11:37 and 38 in talking about Jesus and he says, "Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have a meal with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal." That word, that phrase "ceremonially washed" is that word "baptizo," right? So he's talking about washing in that context, that's why the translators translated it that way.

Now in the context of a local Christian church, baptism is the ordinance commanded by the Lord to conduct on new converts to Christianity. The command is part of the Great Commission found in Matthew 28. Look at verses, well, I'll just read from verse 18 through the end. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Jesus very clearly here commands to his disciples that they make disciples, these

are the apostles and other disciples that he's talking to, he's commanding them to make disciples of all the nations and as they do that, to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It's not something optional.

So baptism, what we're talking about, is that you could call it an act, an ordinance that new converts go through as they declare their faith in Christ, and we'll get more into that. But why is baptism important? Why is baptism necessary? Baptism is important because it was instituted by Jesus. Just as we read, Jesus commanded it. He commanded that baptism be practiced, that is, the apostles lead that practice and it's passed on to churches to continue to practice that baptism, and he also commands each individual believer to be baptized. That's implicit. The command in Matthew 28 explicitly is to the apostles for them to carry out that baptism, but implicitly there's a command for each and every believer to be baptized.

Baptism is important because Jesus instituted it and commanded it but it's also important because the apostles commanded it. I'll just read Acts 2:38, "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" The Apostle Peter commands baptism and as Pastor MacArthur comments on that verse, he said, "Peter was obeying Christ's command from Matthew 28:19 and urging people who repented and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation through the waters of baptism with his death, burial and resurrection."

So he's calling people, commanding people. Peter was commanding people to identify with Jesus Christ in the waters of baptism, and we'll come back to that verse later and try to explain a few more details with it, but I want you to see that baptism is commanded by Christ, it's commanded by the apostles, and baptism is important because it was practiced by the early church. We see this time and time again in the local church, in the early church from the book of Acts. Acts 2:41, and I'm going to read several verses from Acts and you can follow along with me if you want. I'll start with Acts 2:41, you can follow along, or just listen as I read. Acts 2:41, beginning at verse 40, "And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!' So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." We see the importance of baptism in the local church as it's commanded all throughout Acts. Acts 8:12, "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women." Acts 8:38, speaking of the eunuch's salvation here, he says, "he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him." Speaking of Paul's salvation, the Apostle Paul's salvation in Acts 9:18, "And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized." Acts 10:47, Cornelius' salvation, "Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone refuse water for those to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?' And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days." Notice the order there: the Holy Spirit

comes, then water baptism is administered. In Acts 16:14 and 15 speaking of Lydia, "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening whose heart the Lord opened to pay attention to the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us." And then in Acts 16:31, you have the Philippian jailers salvation. He says, "'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your house.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household." In Acts 18:8, this is Crispus' salvation, "Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." And then in Acts 19, the disciples of John, "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." So when they heard about the baptism of Jesus, they were baptized in his name. They had previously been baptized by John.

So I read all those verses to help you see the emphasis of a local church is a consistent pattern, this wasn't something that they ignored, and thus baptism is not something you can write off as unimportant or ignore as a believer. There are even some churches today who are so bold to say that they don't even practice baptism. They defy the very one that they name as Lord which makes no sense at all. Jesus and his apostles commanded it but the early church practiced it. It's important and that's why it's necessary.

Who should be baptized? As you can see from the passages of Acts, people are converted and then baptized. That pattern is throughout, right? You believe and be baptized. It's throughout the New Testament, throughout the New Testament and every instance of Christian baptism, not talking about the ceremonial cleansing like washing your hands but I'm talking about the use of it where it's in a sense of baptism, in every instance of Christian baptism people who get baptized are first saved, they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are converted and then baptized. In other words, Christian baptism is only for disciples of Jesus Christ, those who believe, those who have been converted.

Paul says in his systematic theology, he says, "Only those who hear the gospel understood it and responded to it through faith and repentance should be baptized." So if you can't respond to it through faith, and you haven't repented of your sins, you should not be baptized. There are plenty of biblical examples of this, of who should be baptized. Take, for instance, Matthew 28, that the disciples were called to go make disciples, baptizing them. So the making disciples is proclaiming, that's evangelizing, proclaiming the gospel and then it's also the discipleship that comes later, teaching them to obey everything that Jesus has commanded them, but there's that word between, baptizing. That's an important part of making a disciple of Jesus Christ, right? And we'll get to more of the reason why but it's that profession of faith, that public profession of faith that is so important.

Acts 8:12 as we read gives us this same thing, that all throughout Acts the same pattern is given. People believe and then they're baptized. The order of belief and repentance

throughout the New Testament is very consistent whether you're talking about the Ethiopian eunuch, Paul, the Caesarean Gentiles, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Crispus and many other Corinthians, that's the pattern that we see.

So again, who should be baptized? It's those who have been saved, those who have been converted, those who have believed in Christ. If someone genuinely has faith in Jesus Christ and he or she is born again from above, converted, they must be baptized and if that's not the case, then you should not be baptized. And for this morning, I'm just really limiting my comments to believer's baptism. There's a whole other message we could give on why people perform infant baptism and we won't go into all those details, but notice the pattern of Scripture of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation, to be saved and then they are baptized. That'll tell us a lot about whether we should be baptized as infants or not.

Who should be baptized? Believers in Jesus Christ, converts, those who have been born again from above. When should believers in Jesus Christ be baptized? After salvation. After our salvation. The normal pattern that we glean from the Scriptures is that people were baptized, they were baptized very soon after believing the gospel and repenting of their sins and trusting in Jesus for their salvation. There's no significant time-gap between the moment of salvation and baptism and that's the normal pattern of Scripture, and the Scriptures know nothing of an unbaptized believer like we have today, so many people who would claim to be saved and maybe are genuinely saved but are unbaptized.

There are good reasons for delay but there are bad reasons. You can delay for the wrong reasons. Some people delay baptism because perhaps they were baptized as an infant, but the challenge is look at the text of Scripture. You don't take my word for it, don't do something because I said to do it, look at the text of Scripture, what is the pattern. The baptism is something for believers. But most people just delay because of ignorance, confusion, sometimes pride or just an unwillingness to publicly confess Jesus Christ as their Lord. But there are good reasons at times to delay in baptism. In the United States, thankfully they haven't started rounding up Christians, right? You're not fired from your job because you're a Christian. You aren't kicked out of school because you're a Christian. There are countries in this world that still do that, right? That if you name the name of Christ, there is a high price to pay, and in those countries it's relatively easy to see whether somebody has come to faith genuinely or not. In our culture because there is not that persecution going on, sometimes it's difficult to see whether a person has been born again or not, especially if they're young, as a child. So it is appropriate at times to delay baptism in someone who thinks they're saved as they experience that, and really this pertains more towards younger children than anybody else. As an adult, if you have been living a life of sin and God saves you, you're going to notice a change and so you're going to know that you're converted and there's no reason to delay. But sometimes children, especially who have been raised by a mother and father who want to honor Jesus Christ, there is not that radical change, you know, externally in their lives. They're going to have to take more time to think through internally their attitudes, why they do what they do.

So when should believers be baptized? And that is soon after salvation. After salvation. There is no reason for adults especially to wait. Well, then the next question concerns salvation and baptism. We've established that the pattern of Scripture is that one is saved and then baptized, but there are those who say that you must be baptized in order to be saved, and so I want to deal with that. Must someone be baptized in order to be saved? Because there are churches out there that believe baptism does play a part in salvation, some very large ones, perhaps you've heard of it, Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church among them. They would teach that baptism, the very act of baptism would convey grace and some would teach that baptism regenerates the soul. Are they correct? No. There's no evidence for that in Scripture at all. In fact, there's a lot of evidence against it but I think we would do good to look at just some of the Scriptures.

I read to you earlier Acts 2:38 where Peter said to them, "Repent and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So people take that verse and they say, "Well, see, Peter says..." What they claim to say the first pope says repent. We all agree on that. "And let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." See, baptism is required for forgiveness of your sins. That's what it says. But when they do that, they take it completely out of context. Peter is calling people to faith, to a faith in Jesus Christ in a culture that was very hostile to Christianity. The Jews persecuted the early church. We know that from the book of Acts, and in that setting he's calling them to make a public profession of faith in Christ through the waters of baptism, right, proving the genuineness of their belief in him. That's all he's doing. That's why he adds baptism to that, right? Baptism doesn't save, doesn't contribute to salvation.

Another passage of Scripture that sometimes people will take out of context to support baptismal regeneration is in 1 Peter 3:21 which says "baptism now saves you," right? Again, just yank it out of its context, plaster it on the wall, build a theology around it. Baptism now saves you. Well, if we take a look at the context, we would realize that Peter is not talking about water baptism, he is talking about Spirit baptism, what we talked about earlier, that transformation that happens through the Holy Spirit. Scripture is extremely clear that salvation cannot be earned. There is nothing you can do to contribute to God's work in your life.

Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." And then in a passage we studied recently, Titus 3 beginning at verse 4, "But when the kindness and affection of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not by works which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by His grace we would become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And there are many other verses that we could stack up and show that if you contribute even one minuscule part to your salvation, it's not by grace anymore. You just mess it all up.

So you can only be saved by God's grace and there are examples of salvation throughout Scripture that happen prior to baptism or even without baptism. In Acts 16:31, Paul doesn't even mention anything about baptism to the Philippian jailer. The baptism just happens. He says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Baptism happens later. And then there's the thief on the cross who professes faith in Christ and Jesus guarantees him that he'll be in his kingdom with him, and yet obviously baptism would be totally impossible in that situation.

Baptism is not required for salvation, baptism is simply an act of obedience and it does not contribute to one's salvation. We've talked a lot about baptism but what does it signify, what is its meaning? Well, baptism is a symbol. It's a symbol like a crossroad sign, a railroad sign as you're driving along the tracks, it's showing you that something exists there, that the tracks exist and the sign just tells you that it's there. Baptism is a symbol or a sign like that. Baptism does not confer any grace in the act itself, it doesn't bring about regeneration, it doesn't initiate one into God's covenantal family. Baptism is a symbol for believers and that's why we call this believer's baptism.

Baptism is a symbol of the reality of the Spirit baptism which I referenced before, but you can see it for yourself in Romans 6, if you would just turn there and we'll just read it. Romans 6 beginning with verse 1. "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 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. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." So that life in Christ Jesus only happens through the power of the Holy Spirit as Jesus baptizes all those who believe in him with the Holy Spirit come upon them. So water baptism can't do, can't bring about that transformation that we talked about or Paul talks about in Romans 6, so that's why we believe that baptism is a sign or symbol. As Millard Erickson writes in his systematic theology, "Baptism is an act of faith and a testimony that one has been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, even that one has experienced spiritual circumcision of the heart."

So baptism is a symbol but that's not all, baptism is a public declaration of faith and a declaration of allegiance to Jesus Christ. Understand that baptism is the God-ordained means of someone publicly declaring his faith to Jesus Christ and publicly declaring his allegiance to Jesus Christ. Baptism in water is associated, as we've seen, with the making of disciples. It's very clear, right? So someone is saved, they're baptized, and in that baptism they are giving public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. In Acts 2:38 and 40 we

see Peter commanded the people to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. The reason that Peter connected baptism with forgiveness was not because he was teaching that baptism was necessary for salvation, but asking them to declare their faith in a hostile society.

There's an interesting passage on baptism in 1 Corinthians 1, if you want to turn there and look at it with me in 1 Corinthians 1, and I won't look at this too much, won't go in depth with this, but look at verse 13 I'll begin reading, and this is in the context of the Corinthian church having lots of divisions, and I mean these groups, and you see it in verse 12, you know, where one says, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," another name for Peter, "and I of Christ." So you have all these little factions within the same local church and they're all rallying around their favorite teacher. And he says, "Has Christ been divided?" Because all these are servants of Christ, all those men I just named are servants of Christ. "Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name." Now what's the significance of that phrase, "you were baptized in my name"? Paul's very thankful they were not baptized in his name. He's saying, "You were not baptized. Even if I did your baptism," he did the baptism of Crispus, it was never in the name of Paul. What is he indicating to us right there? Well, that phrase and he's telling us is that to be baptized in the name of someone is to declare allegiance to them and that's the whole point that he's making in 1 Corinthians 1. He's saying, "You weren't baptized with loyalty to me. Stop claiming me. You weren't baptized in the name of Cephas. Stop claiming him. You weren't baptized in the name of Apollos. Stop naming him. You were baptized in whose name? Jesus Christ, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit." Often sometimes just say they are baptized in the name of Jesus as a summary fashion.

So when you baptized in someone's name, it is declaring personal allegiance to that person. Matt Waymeyer explains this well. He says, "The implication is that one became a disciple of a person with whom his baptism was associated. In this way, baptism served as an outward expression of allegiance to either John the Baptist or Jesus when an individual became the disciple of another, which is why the disciples of John needed to be baptized in the name of Jesus. They needed to make a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ.

So baptism serves as the means by which a repentant sinner declares his allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ and in being baptized and professing faith in Christ, believers declare their faith. Larry Dyer explains this in a little bit fuller sense. He says that when people give professions of faith in the waters of baptism, they are professing their personal repentance of the sins that have characterized their lives. They are also confessing that Christ, Jesus Christ is the only Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and they are declaring their commitment to being loyal followers of Jesus Christ.

I have one more question about baptism. Is there a biblical mode of baptism? Well, let's just say that we recognize a difference between Spirit baptism and water baptism, so

we're talking about water baptism when we talk about the mode of that, how is that to be done. We need to understand the word baptism. As I mentioned earlier, the word is a transliteration of the Greek word "baptizo" which means "to dip, immerse, cleanse or purify by washing." And it's a word whose definition is known so it's interesting that translators choose to transliterate it instead of translate it even by one of those words. They didn't probably because it was a hot political issue within the church then as it is today.

Larry Dyer in his book on baptism notes that, "One can argue that the word 'baptism' is not needed for another word fits it quite well. If the word here were translated by an appropriate word that matches the meaning of the original Greek, translators would replace it with 'immersion' or at least with 'dip,'" right, in the water. John Calvin even famously said that the word "baptize" signifies immerse and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church, and John Calvin was no immersionist so it's significant that he would even admit that. He argues for another position but he does admit what the word means.

So others would argue that baptism is connected with ceremonial washings and should be translated that way, for example, J. Adams. But while there is a connection, there is a connection with the symbolism of being washed by God in the waters of baptism, that's not its main significance. The verses about baptism show it is a public confession of faith in Christ, a declaration of allegiance to our Lord and to our God and as such, we're to be immersed. So in the New Testament, the verbs used to baptize are used in a passive sense, so it's you don't baptize yourself, someone else does that, usually that's done by the pastors or elders of a church. But understand this, that when water is used, water is never said to be baptized on someone like in a sense of sprinkling or even poured, always someone is baptized into water. Never is water baptized on someone such as sprinkling, pouring, or putting water on your finger and dabbing it on someone's head. Never is water baptized on someone, always someone is baptized into water and we can see that from the contextual uses of the word "baptism" if we were going to look all those up. For example, in Mark 10:38 and 39, or John 3:23, or Matthew 3:16. There's lots of verses that talk about these things.

But based on this, one can legitimately understand baptism as directly tied to immersion or dipping in water, and thus understand Jesus' command to baptize as a command to immerse. So our church will practice immersion baptism and immersion baptism does symbolize the beautiful unity that we have in Jesus Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I read to you a while ago Romans 6, so it pictures the death and burial, the old man gone and raised in newness of life and it is a beautiful picture of that.

In conclusion, ask yourself where you're at spiritually. I read a story recently and I say a story, an historical account would be better put so that you know that this is real. In 1562, a Dutch schoolmaster named Galen Mueller was apprehended by an Inquisitor, like an investigator, named Peter Tittleman for being addicted to reading the Bible, and this was in an age when you weren't allowed to have Bibles. The Inquisitor proceeded accordingly to question him and was soon satisfied of the schoolmaster's heresy. He commanded him

to make an immediate recantation. The schoolmaster refused. Tittleman asked, "Do you love your wife and your children?" The schoolmaster answered, "God knows that if the whole world were of gold and were my own, I would give it all only to have them with me even if I had to live on bread and water and in bondage." The Inquisitor replied, "You have, then, only to renounce the error of your opinions." The schoolmaster responded, "Neither for wife, children, nor all the world can I renounce my God and religious truth." He was then sentenced to the stake, strangled and then thrown into the flames.

What would you have done? If you want to be loyal to Jesus Christ unto death, then you're ready to be baptized. If you would deny Christ, maybe you need to reexamine your life and stop calling yourself a Christian until you figure out whether you are a Christian or not. It's a dangerous thing to call yourself a Christian and not be one.

Let's pray.

Our Lord and our God, You are so wonderful in all that You do. We thank You that You are a saving God, a redeeming God. You could have left us in our sins and just judged us, but You chose to pour out Your love upon us through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to draw us to Yourself. Lord, and we know that from Your word that even the faith You give us, our faith is a gift from You, from beginning to end salvation is Your gift. We thank You, Lord, that You are saving and redeeming and that even today we can celebrate the ordinance of baptism with two men who want to declare their faith and allegiance to You, who are declaring Your work in their lives, who are confessing their sins to You. O God, I just ask that You would do Your work in our lives, helping us to rejoice with these two young men, with Caleb and Clay, to rejoice with them. And also, Lord, we just ask You to do Your work in those that might be here this morning who don't know You, that You bring conviction of sin and that You would help them, Lord, draw them to Yourself in saving faith that they too might know the power of God in conversion and give testimony to You in the waters of baptism. In the name of Jesus we ask these things and for His glory. Amen.

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