

Baptism Obligation or Option

by Charles Stanley

Baptism is a divine obligation, not an option, and is a public declaration of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 20:14

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Baptism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of baptism as an act of obedience to God. He reminds the audience that being baptized is a public declaration of their faith and a way to show gratitude for their salvation. The preacher also highlights that baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and by participating in baptism, believers are proclaiming their belief in their own bodily resurrection. Lastly, the preacher emphasizes that God rewards every act of obedience, including baptism, and that it serves as a reminder of the hope believers have in the resurrection.

Transcript

Do you find yourself treating the Bible like a smorgasbord? More than likely, you've been to one and there's this large array of food, every kind of food possible, and what you do is just walk down the line and you pick and choose what you want and ignore the rest of it. Well, some people treat the Bible the same way. They pick and choose whatever commands they want to obey and ignore the rest.

One of those areas is an area that people pick and choose, and they have all kinds of excuses for doing so. And that's what I want to talk about in this message, and I want to talk about an issue that is vital in the life of the believer, oftentimes overlooked, sometimes by procrastination people put it off all of their life, and that is baptism. Now, what I would like to do is to answer several questions about baptism because of two or three reasons.

Number one, I know that many of you come from different denominations and many of you belong to different denominations, and you hear people talking about sprinkling and pouring and baptizing by immersion, and you hear all kinds of things about baptism. Well, what I'd like to do is to say, in spite of all the things that we hear, the question is, what does the Word of God specifically, clearly, unquestionably teach about this act, which is an outward sign of an inward change in our life, because baptism is a public declaration that the person being baptized has received the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through faith in Him and His death at Calvary as atonement for their sins. It is an outward sign of an inward spiritual change that has taken place in their life.

So, baptism is not an option, it is a divine obligation. And so, what I'd like to do is to explain some of the things about baptism and then talk about why a person should be baptized. It's very evident in the Scripture, first of all, that baptism is limited to believers only.

What do I mean by believers? I do not mean by that that somebody believes in God or somebody believes that Jesus Christ was a good man, He was a great prophet, a great teacher, but rather that Jesus Christ is the virgin-born Son of God who came into this world for the primary purpose of laying down His life at Calvary, taking upon Himself the sin of all mankind past, present, and future, paying the penalty of that sin in order that every single person who receives Him as their Savior will be liberated from the penalty of sin and have the gift of eternal life. Somebody says, well, now, wait a minute now, but when I was born, I was christened, or I was sprinkled, I was poured on, and I became a Christian then. No, you didn't.

There is not a single solitary verse in the Bible, nowhere, that implies in any way that a person is saved simply because they got poured on, sprinkled, or even immersed before they trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Now, I do believe in the dedication of babies. I think that's a wonderful idea, but I want you to think about what's happening.

Here is a child who is maybe two or three weeks old or maybe a couple of months old and so the parents bring them to church and they have a ceremony and the pastor prays over the child or whatever, and in some churches, the pastor would pour a sprinkle of water on that baby. Let me ask you, how much do you think that baby understands? Not one thing except something bad's happening. He's getting poured on the top of his head.

And so the poor child doesn't know, have any idea what's happening. Not belittling baby dedication, I'm simply saying this, it has absolutely nothing to do with salvation. You see, baptism is for believers.

Baptism is a commitment. Listen, it is a commitment that a person makes on the basis of the fact that they have been transformed by the grace of God. And now having been saved by the grace of God, they follow the Lord Jesus Christ in baptism.

Now, you could baptize hundreds and thousands of people and make them church members. It'll get them into church membership. It will not get them into the kingdom of God.

And so I want to say to you, if you're one of those persons, and I meet people like this all the time, who will say, well, you know, I became a Christian when I was real small. How small? Well, my parents took me to church, and I was baptized, and I became a Christian. No, you didn't.

Now, people don't like to hear that, but you know what? I'm not responsible for a person's reaction. I'm only responsible for telling you, and love as best I know how, that according to this book before which you and I will stand in the judgment, you have not been saved, you are not ready to go to heaven, if all you have in your relationship to God is the fact that you were baptized as a baby. It won't work.

It never has worked. And there's not a scripture in the Bible to prove it. Now, the second thing I want to say about baptism is this, that there are three forms that people use of baptism.

Number one, there is pouring. Number two, there is sprinkling. And number three, there is immersion.

Now, in the New Testament, what did they do? They immersed. There's not a single verse in the scripture that you can take to prove that they sprinkled or poured. Now, let's look at those terms for just a moment.

First of all, there was no doubt back in those New Testament days when a person was sick unto death, and they wanted to be baptized, and they could not take him out and immerse him. More than likely, they probably did pour water on them, on their head. And that's what they call clinical baptism, because a person was at the point of death and could not be baptized.

Sprinkling came along later as a matter of convenience. Nowhere in the Bible, for example, the two Greek words for sprinkling and pouring are never, listen, are never used to indicate baptism in the scripture. Not a single time.

Pouring and sprinkling are never used to indicate baptism. Therefore, what is the word? The word is baptizo. It's the word we use when people say, well, why do you Baptists have to put them under the water? Because, listen, it has nothing to do with being a Baptist.

It has to do with being obedient to the Word of God. It has to do with the meaning of baptism. It has to do with the fact that it's very important that the method, listen, the method and the purpose go hand in hand.

What is the purpose for baptism? Well, we'll come to that in a few moments. But what I want you to see is that immersion is to, listen, the very word baptizo means to dip, to dip, to submerge. Now, for example, one of the ways you learn what words meant and how they were used is you read other areas rather than just the scripture and you go back in the Greek and see how was this word used in their modern day and in their common use of the language.

For example, the word baptizo is used of a sinking ship. You don't sink a ship by sprinkling water. A ship's going under.

For example, a person sinking in the mud, the word baptizo was used. A person drowning, the word baptizo was used. So that word means immersion.

It means take them under. You say, well, that's not very convenient. That has nothing to do with it.

Convenience has nothing to do with it. The issue is, do I want to be obedient to God? Do I want to go with scripture? Do I want to do exactly what God says? Do I want to make the declaration, the statement that God intended me to make by the very idea of being baptized? Listen, baptism is not an option. It is an obligation.

And it is my personal conviction that if I'm going to do it God's way, it does make a difference. What makes a difference is what it means. Now, if I don't understand what baptism means and I don't understand how essential it is and I don't understand the message of it, then it wouldn't make any difference.

But the truth is, here's what God said. He gave us baptism by immersion for a very specific reason. And as you search the scripture, you're not going to find any sprinkling and pouring going on when it comes to baptizing in the New Testament.

Now, the question is, why be baptized in the first place? So let me give you some specific reasons here. Number one, listen, I should be able to give you number one. That should be it.

Settle the issue. Sermon stopped. But I'm not going to stop there.

The first reason is this. Because Jesus commanded it, period. That's enough.

When you not trust that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior, listen, we acknowledge the fact that He's the Lord of our life. That's what we're doing. We acknowledge the fact that this Jesus is God.

He has the right to call the plays. Every command in the scripture, He has the right to bring before me. So therefore, if I refuse baptism, whatever excuse I have, and I say this as lovingly and as gently as I know how, whatever my excuse may be, it is unacceptable.

It is an act of disobedience. It is an act of rebellion. You mean to tell me that if I'm not baptized, that I'm rebelling against God? I mean to tell you, if you've trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior and you refuse to be baptized, you are living in rebellion toward God.

Now, you may look at yourself and say, well, I do this, I do all these wonderful things. That has nothing to do with it. The issue is in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, the emphasis on baptism was what? That they were to be baptized. Why? Because in those days, just as today, for example, it was very important that people not only trusted Jesus Christ, but that they made a public declaration that I have chosen to follow Jesus Christ. Remember, in the Apostle Paul's mind, the message that kept coming through over and over and over again in his message was the resurrection, believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For example, would he have said this if he believed that baptism was essential? If thou shalt confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. He does not say, and be baptized. Does that mean baptism is unimportant? No.

It is just the fact that baptismal regeneration is not scriptural. And so, what's the first reason to be baptized? Because Jesus commanded it. That should be efficient and sufficient, and that should be enough.

The fact that he said it, what more do I need? But there are some other reasons, for example, to be baptized. And as we have been sort of hinting along here all along, that there is a very important reason. That's this.

That what happens when you and I are baptized is that we are making a public confession of our faith in Jesus Christ. And that's important because God... Listen, He does not want us being ashamed of Him. For example, look in 2 Timothy chapter 2 for a moment.

2 Timothy chapter 2, and Paul writing to young Timothy. He had his difficult times. And here's what he said to him.

In this 2nd epistle, in the 1st chapter, I believe, he said... In verse 8, he said, Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Now, let me ask you a question. Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.

Let's be honest now. How many of us at some point have been in a group of people who were not Christians? Or maybe they were telling things that were slightly shady. Or they were knocking the church.

Or talked about the hypocrites in the church, and we were dead silent. Was it because we were ashamed of our faith? Or did we rationalize and say, Well, you know, I don't want to say anything, but why not? If Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He saved you and me, and He's the Lord of our life, we have a

responsibility for taking a public stand. Listen, that's what baptism says.

Baptism is a public declaration that you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. It is a public declaration of your intention to follow Him as the Lord and Master of your life. And I tell you, baptism is extremely important.

It is an act of obedience. Not an option, but an obligation. You have an obligation to make a public declaration of your faith.

Therefore, when a person is saved, one of the first acts that should follow that thereafter quickly is that person should be baptized, giving witness, listen, public witness, public declaration of what has happened in their life. Well, I think a third reason it's so important is this, and that is it portrays what has happened to you and me in salvation. What happened to us when we were saved? Here's what happened.

Well, let's look at what happened to Jesus. What did He do? He died, He was crucified, He was buried, and He rose again. Now, this is why I want you to see it's so important to be immersed.

Death, burial, resurrection. Death, burial, resurrection. Baptizing, what happens? We walk into the water.

We are buried in Christ Jesus that is underwater. We come back up to walk in newness of life. Now, why do we baptize by immersion? Because it is the most accurate picture of what's going on.

Why did He want us to be baptized? Because it was a public, listen, it was a public picture. It is a portrayal of what happened to you and me when we were saved. What happened when we were saved? Here's what happened.

Being convicted of our sins, we accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, which said, I die to my old lifestyle. I place my life in Christ, I'm buried in Him, and I arise to walk in newness of life. You have a reason and a right to expect a different lifestyle of me because I'm not the person I used to be.

I've been born again by the grace of God. I died to my old way, and I've been buried in Christ, and now I'm walking in newness of life. Immersion is the only form of baptism that pictures death, burial, and resurrection.

That's why He gave it. So, what happens when you and I are baptized? We are portraying to the world. We are portraying to the world what's happened to us.

I'm not what I used to be. I've died to my old way. I may sometimes act like it, but I have a new spirit.

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away, and behold, all things have become new. So, He says, I'm going to give you a new heart and a new spirit.

We are not the same person we were before we were saved. Now, baptism has shouted and declared, I'm new. Here's what's happened to me on the inside.

Very important that you and I are baptized, and baptized by immersion. Well, I think when I think about all the different reasons to be baptized, I think of one of the others, this, that baptism is a definite, deliberate point in time. Listen, which signifies there's been a change in my life.

It's like driving an eternal stake in our life. We know, I can remember the moment I was baptized outside in the pool. You remember you were in a church or in a river or whatever it might be.

You remember your baptism. Why did God say? Because He wants us to be able to look back and say, at that moment, that, listen, at that moment, I followed the Lord Jesus Christ in obedient baptism because what? Because I had been saved by His grace. Very important, we can drive the stake down.

Baptism is driving it down. It's God driving it down. Never met a person who's forgotten it.

Never, never met a person who's forgotten they were baptized. Very important that you and I are baptized. Another reason is this, and that is, it's certainly a declaration of, listen, of our faith in our own bodily resurrection.

Now, think about this for a moment. What's the picture all about? The picture is all about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Every time, for example, I see a baptism, or every time I participate in a baptism, what does it say to me every single time? Resurrection, resurrection, resurrection.

How many of you want to die, be put in the most expensive coffin possible, and just stay there forever? Anybody? Right. Nobody. How many of you believe that when you die, you're going to be resurrected and say amen? Every single time there is a baptism, what does that say? That's God shouting the message one more time.

Jesus is Lord. He is God. This God who saved you is going to raise you up.

This life is temporary. This life is short. Your salvation is absolutely secure.

God had specific reasons for giving baptism. Not salvation, but to remind us, to drive the stake down, to assure us, and to keep on reassuring us of the hope we have of the resurrection. And it keeps reminding us of that.

And so there are lots of scriptures we could come to with that one. Then I think there's one last reason. There are many of them, but one last reason I want to give you, and that's this.

And that is, with baptism, there is always a blessing. That is, God is going to bless you when you're baptized. How do I know that? Because I know this, that God rewards every single act of obedience.

God rewards every single act of obedience. He says He's not so unjust as to forget our obedience and to forget our labor of love for Him. God, He recognizes that.

You say, well, what kind of blessing? Well, I'll tell you one of the blessings. When you and I walk through baptismal waters, and sometimes I can see this on the face of somebody I'm baptizing, when you walk through baptismal waters and you're baptized, you know in that moment you are being obedient to the living Word of God. And what happens? There's this awesome sense of assurance.

There's this awesome sense of confidence. God is pleased with what's happening at that moment. He is.

God is pleased when one of His children is baptized. There's the blessing of confidence and assurance. I'm being obedient to Almighty God.

I'm doing what He's called me to do. There is a joy that comes from the heart of a person who is baptized. Listen, there's a joy that God puts there.

Why? An act of obedience. Reminder that He saved you. Reminder, listen, that you died to your old way of life, and now you've got the Holy Spirit living on the inside of you to enable you to become now and to live out what Jesus Christ has done in your life.

But there's also a blessing to the people who are watching. Your family, your friends who come or who come to watch others. There's something glorious about watching people who have been saved by the grace of God.

You see, some of us have been saved so long, we have forgotten the joy that was ours when we were baptized. We've forgotten the assurance. We've forgotten the blessing.

We have forgotten what happened on the inside of us. We knew at that moment our Heavenly Father was looking down and blessing and listening and proving and being joyous over the fact that you and I were being obedient to Him. Well, that's enough reasons.

There's some others, but that's enough. Now, here's the big question. Have you ever at any time in your life placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? You say, well, I'm not sure about that.

Well, my friend, you can be sure. Here's what you do. You tell the Lord Jesus, so however you want to pray, you say, Father, I know that I've sinned against you.

I know the Word of God says that I have, and I already know it whether the Word of God says it or not. I know I've sinned against you. I do believe what you say in the Scripture about Jesus dying for my sins.

And so Lord Jesus, I'm asking you to forgive me on the basis of what you did at Calvary. I know it's not my works, my conduct. It's what you did for me.

I'm going to accept you as my Savior. You can do that anywhere. It has nothing to do with where you are.

It has to do with what happens on the inside. Some of you have never been baptized. You've had all kinds of reasons.

I want to say to you, my friend, in all the love I know how, it is not an option. It is a divine obligation. With it comes awesome blessing.

With it comes witness and testimony to others. Oftentimes with it, listen, comes such a testimony that somebody watching, somebody hears, somebody knows, somebody sees a difference in your life. It brings them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But thirdly, if you don't, you're going to suffer a lack in your spiritual life as long as you refuse to follow Him in baptism. If He's the Lord of your life, you just do what He says. And one simple thing He says that you can do, and that is to be baptized.

Father, we love you and praise you. What a wonderful God you are. You're so patient, so kind to put up with us.

When we know the truth and don't live by it, we know exactly what you say in the Scripture, and yet we put it off. I just ask in Jesus' name right now, give all of us, Father, the Spirit. Say, yes, Lord.

Yes, to be saved. Yes, to be baptized. Oh, we ask it in Christ's name.

Amen.

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