

Salvation & Water Baptism 2003

by Danny Bond

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding water baptism and its role in the life of a believer, highlighting the need for clarity in the gospel.

Duration: 54:38

Scripture: Mark 7:13, Mark 16:15-16

Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story of a man on roller blades who witnessed a baptism event at the beach. The man was initially just observing, but after hearing the gospel, he decided to get baptized and came to the Lord. Another person at the event had a sign that said '10 years of disobedience ends today,' and he too got baptized, symbolizing the death of the old self and the birth of a new life in Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of baptism as an outward sign of an inward reality and encourages individuals to follow their heart's desire to be baptized, regardless of their previous experiences or age.

Transcript

This message is called Salvation and Water Baptism. We baptize because it's instructed in the New Testament. There are so many issues that are attendant to this, and I will touch on some of them today, and I just want you to know right up front that sometime in the near future, I'm going to do one entire message on infant baptism.

We'll spend one whole service on infant baptism because it's, there's so many different views on it. And there are good men of God on both sides of the issue, but we will touch on that today. I do want to encourage you before we begin, just open your heart to the Lord and to look at the scriptures as we go through them and be good Bereans.

Search the scriptures yourselves to see if these things be so. Don't ever take one man's word for anything that you're taught. I have a great saying that I stole from another individual.

Listen to no man who fails to listen to God. I stole it from Tozer. But it's a great quote, isn't it? Listen to no man who fails to listen to God.

You listen to the message, you look in your Bible as we go, and then search it out, pray it through on your own and see if these things be so. Do not take my word for it, take the Bible's word for it. A preacher of the

word is in the final sense, often one reporter's opinion.

I try to back what I say with scripture or just say it with scripture so that there's the least amount of my opinion involved in what I preach because my opinions can't change your life. Only the word of God can. So I want you to know that up front.

And when I mentioned different denominations, different beliefs, if you're from that background, don't think I'm bashing on you. I'm not. I'm just bringing up what they believe and then showing you what the Bible believes.

So please understand that. And this all came about because someone asked if they could be baptized. So you ask the preacher, you get the preacher's message.

It's basically what it amounts to. In Mark 16, 15. Can you turn there in your Bible? We could begin there.

We have the Great Commission. He said to them, Jesus said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

He who does not believe will be condemned. So for starters, that's the Great Commission and it involves baptism, as you see. We'll say more on this as we go along.

Here our Lord gives his followers the Great Commission and in it is baptism. And it's not something that we want to overlook or pass by lightly. Yet it seems that today in the time period in which we live, baptism is not a very popular subject.

It's sort of fallen into the zone of apathy or indifference or ambivalence so that it's not a very great interest in the evangelical community. You don't see much new written about it. You rarely hear think about it.

You rarely hear anyone preaching about it on Christian radio. There's very little said about it. It seems that the interest in baptism has just sort of gone away.

And I would attribute a lot of that to the fact that the word of God is not really being preached verse by verse much these days. And biblical illiteracy always leads to indifference to things in the Bible that are very important. So if you are indifferent about the issue, perhaps it's because you haven't been instructed or whatever.

But I would like in any case to put an end to indifference. However else we finish this message. Indifference should not be in your heart about water baptism.

I'm going to talk about three things as it relates to water baptism. The first thing is the confusion about it. Then we'll talk about the concept itself.

What is the act all about? And then the command to do it and where we lie with that command. Let's start with the confusion then about water baptism, because there is a lot. There is a great deal of confusion about the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, baptismal regeneration.

And that doctrine is that taught that somehow to be saved, you must be baptized because somehow in the physical act of baptism, you're born again, you're regenerated. And there are many groups that teach that and believe it. The question is, does the Bible teach that? Now, it's interesting that one of the proof texts that groups that teach baptismal regeneration, one of the proof texts they use is, in fact, Mark chapter 16,

verse 16.

And we read it to begin with, and I did that on purpose. Here we have the Great Commission, verse 16. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

So a group that teaches baptismal regeneration will say so there you have it right there. It's right there from the lips of Jesus. And as is often the case, my response to those individuals is, did you read the rest of the verse? We always would do well to read the rest of a verse or read the next verse often, not to stop midway, especially to build a major doctrine.

The rest of the verse, Jesus says after he says he who believes and is baptized will be saved. Then he says, but he who does not believe will be condemned. So mark the words with solemn care.

Jesus leaves out the word baptized, the issue of baptism when it comes to being condemned, when it comes to being lost, not being saved. So the ultimate issue when it comes to being lost, not going to heaven, is whether you believe or not. He drops the baptism issue.

So if you just take the whole thing, you'll see that it's very clear. And the encouraging part there is that this is a side thought. The encouraging thing is that in the Great Commission, he tells them right up front what's going to happen.

Some will believe and some will not. So that's important to know right up front. So you're not discouraged when people don't respond.

But the pivotal issue is whether you believe or not. Charles Spurgeon was confronting the whole idea of baptismal regeneration being saved through baptism itself. And this is what he said.

We will confront this dogma with the assertion that baptism without faith saves no one. The text says he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But whether a man be baptized or not, it asserts that he who believes not shall be condemned.

So the baptism does not save the unbeliever, nor does it in any degree exempt him from the common doom of all the ungodly out there. He may have baptism or he may not have baptism, but if he does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he shall be in any case most surely condemned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling in his infancy or in his adult age.

If he be not led to first put his trust in Jesus Christ, he remains an unbeliever. And the terrible doom that is here in the text is pronounced upon him. He will be condemned in quote.

Those are good words. You're saved by your belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet throughout the decades, as they roll by, people still teach that you are saved by being baptized.

One group that does this is the Church of Christ. Church of Christ movement teaches that you must believe that baptism is essential to salvation. And that's the way they are.

And that's the way they've always been. The Roman Catholic Church. I know some of you have a Catholic background.

The Roman Catholic Church has a teaching that baptism is basically essential to salvation. But it does allow some exceptions. In fact, they will give you credit for baptism from another church if you come into

the Catholic Church.

So if you have a baptism somewhere else, you can get credit. And that is not uncommon for the Roman Catholic Church to allow exception. The Anglican Church.

I've spent a lot of time in England and I have friends in the Anglican Church, friends who were in and came out. The Anglican Church of England has included in their teaching that it is necessary in one form or another to be saved. In fact, I'll read to you from the Church of England catechism for the youth.

This is not my words, it's their words. It's right out of their text. It's the catechism of instructing the youth so they learn and they just can recite things right from memory.

The child is asked its name and then question who gave you this name? My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. That's definite and that's plain. It is at least good for its candor.

It's clear. So you can at least prize the words for their clarity. But three times over, the thing is put that you are made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom.

That's pretty big. Really, if you think about it, join heirs with Christ by being baptized in this case as an infant. So the child is led to recite these things.

Then the priest shall say, we yield the hearty thanks most merciful father that it has pleased you to regenerate this infant. This is an infant baptism to regenerate this infant with the Holy Spirit to receive him for thine own child by adoption and to incorporate him into the holy church. That's right out of their writings.

So right there it has pleased you to regenerate this infant in the waters of baptism right there. That's right out of their own writings. So that spills over obviously into the issue of infant baptism.

But there you have baptismal regeneration. Now you could be baptized 50 times. If you're not a true believer in Jesus Christ, you will be forever lost.

John Trapp said many years ago, a man may go to hell with baptismal water on his face. That's a good statement. A man may go to hell with baptismal water on his face.

I would add to that more than one has more than one has. And I would encourage you as we move through this issue of baptism, if you think, well, I'm all squared away with it. So I can kind of daydream today.

It's really part of the gospel. And to be clear on the issues will determine the clarity of the gospel that you preach. I mean, you should be able to see that already, because part of the gospel some people preach is that you have to be baptized to be saved.

So now we're tampering with the gospel. So this is important for all of us to know in our clarity. Now, one of the problems with baptismal regeneration and there are many, is that when you come to incidences in the Bible, for example, our Lord is hanging on the cross.

Next to him are two thieves. These are not just thieves who steal things. These are the type of thieves who steal and kill at the same time, like a carjacking where they just open the door, blow your head off and steal your car.

The original language indicates the thieves next to Jesus were murderous thieves. That's why they're being crucified rather than just put in prison or something like that. So two murderous thieves.

So all of that is to say that the thief who comes to believe on the Lord is a true, genuine sinner. He's a murderer. So Jesus when he believes on him, he says, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

He calls him Lord. He acknowledges who he is. Lord, remember me.

Jesus says to him, I tell you this day you will be with me where and paradise. Notice he did not say this day you will be with me after you find a way to get off that cross. Get yourself down into the river, Jordan.

Make sure you are immersed. Get back here and you better be quick because I'm on a schedule. I'll be departing about the ninth hour.

I love the fact that he says this day you will be with me in paradise and he's not able to be baptized. But the Lord's word to him is that he's going to paradise. Then he gathered all those in Abraham's bosom and took them into heaven.

They'd been waiting for him to go to the cross and then take them all to heaven. And now when you die, you go to heaven. So you look at those who are saved on their deathbeds.

Thank God there is such a thing as a deathbed repentance. It is not the norm. It doesn't happen every time you can't bank on it.

But thank God there is such a thing. And you look at those who are saved on their deathbed and it is so glorious, especially if they've lived a really horrible life and they've been really obnoxious and pretty much nobody liked them. You know, because there you're sitting there now they're dying and you're thinking Oh, they're for sure doomed.

And you know, you don't want to have a really unhappy funeral. And plus you love them. So you share the gospel with them.

They respond and it's a glorious work of the grace of God. They respond. They pray with you.

They come to know the Lord and the Lord gives them comfort and peace. And then they go into the arms of Jesus. There was no way to get them baptized.

And yet those people go straight into heaven. Baptism for salvation is not biblical. You are saved by believing.

Let me sidestep this way out and then bring it back in and you'll see how it fits. What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? It's rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit to your heart that Jesus Christ is God, the Lord, our Savior. That is the one unforgivable sin in the Bible, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

And it's simply rejecting Christ. So that's just another angle of looking at it. Baptism for salvation is a big area of confusion and it's not biblical.

How about baptism for infants? Now some of you are going to get kind of stiff on me right here and you better not touch this area of my life, man. I'll try not to. I'll try to stick to the Bible.

Let the Bible do the touching. There are a number of denominations that do this and just for your information, I grew up going to many different denominations. Started in the Mormon church.

Thank God by the grace of God, he busted my mom out of there and she took us all out. Then she didn't know where to go. So we went everywhere.

We went to the local Lutheran church. We went to the Presbyterian church. We went to the Baptist church.

I mean, we made the rounds. So it's not like I haven't been there. So back to the denominations that baptize infants.

The Roman Catholic Church obviously baptizes infants. Greek Orthodox Church, as well as most of the churches which are denominations that withdrew from Rome during the Protestant Reformation. Lutherans being one of them.

And that is because a lot of issues. I'll get into them again when I teach on infant baptism. Martin Luther actually changed his stance on infant baptism later in his ministry.

That's how it got incorporated into the whole Lutheran stream. When Protestant religion became the state religion. That is when he changed his view on infant baptism which he had left behind in the Church of Rome when he came out.

And then he sort of redefined some issues to back it up. And we'll get into that in another message. But that's sort of how it got in there.

Constantine behind all of that and Rome and all. Now, why do they do this? The denominations that do it, why do they do it? Well, infant baptism usually is sprinkling because immersion is not really safe for infants. It's usually some sort of sprinkling or dabbing and it's for the purpose of imparting to them at the minimum spiritual blessing.

The exact purpose of it differs from group to group, but it always implies that the child thereby receives some spiritual blessing, if not full salvation. Now, some teach the full salvation. Some teach a spiritual blessing.

Some teach the reformed groups teach that you're put into the covenant. You have believing parents. So you have the infant baptism.

It's not really bringing salvation, but it's bringing the child into the covenant in which the parents are part of believers. And thus it brings them into the covenant, kind of gives them a jump start on the Christian life to put it in the vernacular. So some of you were baptized in that way for that reason.

And again, there's good men of God on both sides of the issue. So I challenge you to be good Bereans on this. One great saint of old said concerning this, I am amazed that a spiritually unconscious infant should be made the partaker of an ordinance which, according to the plain teaching of scriptures, requires the conscious and complete heart trust of a born-again Christian.

Very few, if any, would argue that infants should receive the Lord's Supper, but there is no more scriptural warrant for bringing them to the one ordinance, the Lord's Supper, than there is to bringing them to the other, which is water baptism, end quote. That's Charles Spurgeon again. So that was not my words.

Take it up with Chuck when you get to heaven. In Mark chapter 7, can you turn there in your Bible? Mark chapter 7, verse 13. Jesus pointed out something that we all need to look at and weigh well, and that is the influence of tradition.

Do not underestimate the influence of tradition. In Mark 7, 13, Jesus said to the religious leaders, you do nullify the word of God by your what? Your tradition that you have handed down. Then he added, and you do many things like that.

And that's the way of tradition tends to be built tradition upon tradition. Now, there is nothing in the New Testament about babies being baptized so that in that sense, it's an unbiblical practice. It's not in the Bible.

So to practice it is to practice something that's not in the Bible. It is, in that sense, an unbiblical practice. There's nothing in the New Testament about it.

Now, the counter argument is that, OK, but on the other hand, nowhere does the Bible forbid infant baptism. You know, that is why we do it, because we look at history, we look at our tradition, and we find it there in our tradition or we find it in our history. And so that's why we incorporate it into what we do in our church.

That's how the argument goes. So nowhere does the Bible forbid infant baptism. What I would say to that is that we are to build our lives on what is revealed in the Scripture.

We are not to build our lives on what is not revealed in the Scripture. The best policy is this. Where the Scripture is silent, it's best that we be silent.

Where the Scripture is silent, it is best that we be silent. So to build something as important as a sacrament on that which is not found in Scripture is not really a good practice. Are you familiar with the term hermeneutic? Proper hermeneutics involves comparing Scripture with Scripture.

God interprets the Bible by shedding light on Scripture with other Scripture, with other things that he has said. He has set the Bible up so the Bible interprets itself. That's why the Bible broadens and deepens with the ears.

A good hermeneutic involves comparing Scripture with Scripture. The way we as biblical Christians interpret the Bible is with the Bible. And even the reformers and reformed theologians would agree to that immediately.

The Scriptures, the Scriptures alone. So that is not even an issue when you will dialogue with reformers on that. But when you come to the issue of infant baptism, they will depart from their own view on a true hermeneutic.

Scriptures, Scriptures, Scriptures, Scriptures, as Luther said, and they will go outside to tradition. They'll go outside to history and they'll cite incidents in history. History is not a hermeneutic.

History does not interpret the Bible for us. The Bible interprets the Bible for us. And that is worth weighing well.

Someone says, wait, you're forgetting Mark 10, 14. Let's turn there. Jesus Mark 10, 14.

Are you there? Jesus said to them, let the little children come to me and do not forbid them, for such is the kingdom of God. Let's read on down in verse 16. He took them up in his arms and he put his hands on them and he baptized them.

No, it doesn't say that, does it? He put his hands on them and he blessed them. How interesting. He did not baptize them.

I know for a fact he did not baptize them. In fact, I'm positive he didn't baptize any infants. You say, well, how do you know? You weren't there.

I know, but John was. Turn in your Bible to John chapter 4 verse 2. John chapter 4 verse 2. And part of the verse will reveal to us whether Jesus did or did not baptize any infants. John 4 2 says Jesus himself did not baptize.

Have you ever read that before? Jesus himself did not baptize. What was Jesus doing with those children? He was blessing them. He was effectively saying to the disciples and those around, there is a love for children from God, the father that is wonderful and you should understand it and be thankful for it.

And he blessed the children. And that's the extent of it. So let's be clear that baptism does not save you.

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ does. Baptism is not for infants because we don't find one incident of it in the New Testament. Not one.

And if you say, well, no, the Bible says that, for example, the Philippian jailer they preached the gospel to him and he believed in all of his household and they were baptized. So surely there were infants in there and surely the infants then were baptized as well. That's pure conjecture.

It doesn't say that. And if you follow all the way through the New Testament, you find the gospel is preached to those who can reason it through and make a conscious decision to turn to embrace the Lord Christ in faith. So that when you read of these households and you'll find them in about five different places, you'll find that they believe, but it's addressing the adults as it is.

And that would be anyone from around 12 years old on up. We find Jesus reasoning in the temple with the leaders of the religious leaders when he was 12. So somewhere around there is the age of what we call accountability.

I sometimes wonder if it isn't later for some people. Seriously, some 12 year olds are so not with it yet. But right around that age.

So there you have that issue. And it's in that sense that we see it in the Bible. We don't see it.

So I don't want to beg the issue. But if it's not in the Bible, really, I don't want to put it into practice. I don't want to have my hermeneutic be from history or tradition.

I want it to be from inside the scriptures. Now, some churches do baby dedications. And you may be one who's come from a church background like that.

You might say, well, then what's the difference in infant baptism or baby dedication? Well, I suppose it would have to do with who does the dedication. But when I do baby dedications, people come and they say, could you dedicate my baby to the Lord? What I do is I get the parents up and we get the parents and

that precious little bundle of love and bring I bring the parents to the Lord. I pray first for the parents that they will understand the responsibility of living out a godly atmosphere in their home in which the children can grow in a greenhouse of agape love.

Then I pray for the and have the congregation silently agree with me pray for the child. And the prayer is that they may come to know the Lord at the earliest possible age, because some come earlier than others and it's glorious. The earlier, the better.

You're just taking the child before the Lord to pray for them, that God would bring them to know him and mold their thoughts. And I would say probably that's what's on the mind of the reformers when they baptize infants. But the problem with it then becomes this.

If you get the baptism part involved, the problem with it is that they grow up. Infants tend to grow up and research indicates infants grow up. So they grow up and then they will look back on on the fact they were baptized as an infant and maybe catechized through the process of what that means for them.

Then they depart from the church roaming around in the world. They don't walk with the Lord. They don't know the Lord.

Then somebody comes to them to preach to them and they say, do you know Christ? And they say, well, yeah, I'm all squared away. I was baptized as an infant. I'm done with that.

We planted a church a while back in England. I spent a lot of time there, many trips there. And then I sent my missions pastor at the time to England to start a church.

He'd been there for a while. Then he came back to visit. And I said, what's the hardest thing you encounter in your preaching in England? He said, hands down, hands down.

It is the whole influence of the Church of England because they baptize them as infants and they are taught they have salvation in that baptism. So everywhere you go, you run into people. You say, do you have Christ? Of course I have Christ.

I've always had Christ. And they don't want to hear anymore. They're not walking with the Lord.

They don't know the Lord. And you try to lead them to the Lord. And the biggest barrier is they say I was baptized as an infant.

So that's where you get into trouble. There may be good intentions up front, but later on you find these people sealed off to come into a personal faith in Christ. So there's a lot of confusion.

Let's go to the concept about baptism according to Scripture. Let's look at the New Testament language that deals with it. If you look at the New Testament, the word that comes across to us baptism or baptize, you're dealing with three Greek words.

Basically, you have the word bapto. Bapto is used four times in the New Testament. Then you have the word, these are verbs, bapto, and then you have the word baptizo.

It is used many, many, many times. Bapto means literally in classical Greek usage it means to dip, to dip into, to dip into as to dye something, to immerse in then out. That is the classical Greek meaning of the word bapto.

Then you come to the word baptizo, which is another form of it, another verb form, and you find that everywhere in the New Testament. It means literally to dip completely. It was the word used in classical Greek for drowning, to drown.

That's how deep the immersion. I mean, we didn't want to do that. I wanted baptism, but and I always shudder when somebody says, hold me down really long, I was a really big sinner.

I don't know, we're going to put you on the clock at any rate. So, in the language of the New Testament, you have bapto, baptizo, those are the verbs. Then the noun form is baptizmos, and you find that in the book of Acts.

And that comes across to us as baptism. And it always has to do with a Christian believer immersed in water. So when you see the word baptize in your Bible, the word means to submerge or to immerse.

Let me back that up a little further. You know what the Latin equivalent is of the Greek for baptism? Baptizo, the Latin equivalent, immersio, or submersio. That's pretty straightforward, isn't it? From which we get, guess what? Immersion and submersion.

So, the thing is, is that when they translated the King James, for example, what they did rather than taking the classical Greek usage of the word and just bringing that over, which was immersion or submersion, they transliterated the word over. So we just get it over in English as a transliteration. If the transliterators would have simply just translated it with the meaning of the word in classical usage, it would have saved everybody a lot of confusion.

Everybody. So, the definition of baptism then in the New Testament would be a ceremony by which a person believes the gospel and then is immersed into water. The terminology always refers to an immersion down into the water.

Now, you might say, well, you weren't there. You know, maybe sometimes they sprinkled. Well, I wasn't there, but I do know this.

You may not be aware of this. There is another Greek word entirely altogether different to describe sprinkling or dabbing with water. It is the Greek word rontosante.

Rontosante. And that is the Greek word for sprinkling. You don't find it in the New Testament.

It's not there. New Testament baptism is all about immersion in water. Nor do you find the verbs I've talked to you about, bapto or baptizo.

You never find them in the passive sense, in the sense that someone is said to have water baptized onto them. You never find that either. So, from a language point of view, baptism always has a meaning of immersion or submersing into water.

Let me give you a few quick examples then in the New Testament. John, when he was baptizing in John 3.23, John the Baptist was baptizing in Anon near to Salem. And here's the reason why.

Because there was much water there. Much water there. And that is put in there on purpose because of the way they were baptized.

So, it says there was much water there and they came and they were baptized. Why much water? Because multitude of people needed to be submerged into the water. Matthew 3.6 says they were confessing their sins and they were baptized by him.

NIV reads in the Jordan River. In it. Turn your Bible to Matthew 3.16. And we have the baptism of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 3.16. We read he was there with John the Baptist and he asked John to baptize him. And we read in Matthew 3.16, as soon as Jesus was baptized, he, what does it say, went up out of the water. He went up out of the water.

So, Jesus was in the river and Jesus came back out. Turn in your Bible to Acts 8.39. Then we go to Romans. I'm not going to worry you out with turning to every different scripture in the world.

Go to Acts 8.39. Remember we studied Acts 8. And Philip preached to the Ethiopian eunuch. And then the eunuch said, here's water. I want to be baptized.

So, in Acts 8.39 we read, and when they were, what does it say, come up out of the water, when they came out. Same thing. They were in the water, they came up out.

And so, there it is. That's New Testament baptism. It's immersion, down into the water and up, back out.

So, I've given you the language. I've given you some examples. That's the New Testament language, what it has to say about water baptism.

The New Testament act, what does it mean? Let's talk about that. What does it mean? It isn't in the most general sense a burial service. Signifies much.

For one thing, it signifies death. Turn to Romans chapter 6, then we'll work our way through some issues here. Then we'll tie it up pretty quick after that.

Romans chapter 6 verse 3. Baptism in water by immersion signifies death. In the sense of, as a Christian, for one thing, an acceptance of the death of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior on the cross. So that in Romans 6.3, do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his, what does it say? Death.

So we accept his death on our behalf. It at least signifies that. But it also signifies an acknowledgement of your own death in Christ.

Know you not, he goes on to teach in Romans 6, that the old you, NIV I think says your old self. The King James says your old man. Know you not that your old man, past tense, was crucified, put to death with Christ.

So Romans 6.3, do you not know that as many of us as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. So we accept the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf and that we have an acknowledgement that a death took place within us as there was the birth of the new I in Christ. I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, Paul said, yet not I. But Christ lives in me and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God. Who's in there, Paul? The old I is dead and there's a new I in here. It's me, the born

again Christian.

So you acknowledge your own death in Christ. Signifies death. What else does New Testament baptism signify? Burial.

Burial. I think that's obvious. And especially when you see the picture of immersion going down and coming back out.

Now, what is a burial all about? A burial service implies at least a few things. And one is, is that it confirms a real death has occurred. Right? I would hope so.

If you say, what happened to so and so? Oh, he was buried a year ago. Didn't you know that? I would hope that he really was dead. So commonly you bury people and so a burial service signifies that the person has died.

There have been rare cases of people being buried alive. And it's sad and tragic when it occurs. I think what is more sad and tragic is when you have a baptism and there's been no true conversion.

There has been no death of the old life, no birth of the new. And a person gets baptized with a bunch of other born again Christians. They're right in there with them.

But they have had no death of the old man. There's no conversion there. That's tragic.

So it signifies a real death. For us, it signifies the real death of the old man in Christ. And it publicly, a burial service publicly declares a death, publicly declares a death.

So that the word goes out that the individual is dead. In a way, it is a beautiful testimony of the gospel. So that in Matthew 10, 32, I'll just read it to you.

Jesus said, therefore, whoever confesses me before men, him I will also confess before the Father who is in heaven. The most wonderful expression of that is in fact public water baptism. You're making a statement to anybody and everybody.

The old man is being buried. The new life is rising up out of the water. It's symbolic of what has happened on the inside.

Public declaration. It's a beautiful thing. In fact, we were doing a water baptism in the ocean where I did all of them for the last many years.

And we're out there just baptizing people in the ocean. We had a couple hundred people there and this guy comes by in his rollerblades and he's got his Walkman on. He's all tan.

He's just doing all his tricks so you know he's out there all the time. And he came up and he stopped and he looked. And he went over to somebody and he said, hey, what's going on here? So the brother told him witness to him.

And I'm out in the water baptizing people, dunking them, trying to pay attention, you know, I'm not leaving down too long. But I see them witnessing to this guy. And the next thing you know, he gets in line.

And he came out and we baptized him. He came to the Lord on the beach. He got in line and came out and we baptized him right there.

The guy was loaded. He was tripping. He had the gospel given to him.

He responded. The Lord cut through all of that. And by the time he got in the water, he was just sane, sober, and saved.

So we baptized him. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful way of witnessing the gospel.

Signifies death. Signifies burial. And also signifies resurrection.

Look again at Romans chapter 6 verse 4. Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. The old man dies. The new man is raised into Christ.

Verse 5. For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, we shall certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection. So you have the death of the old man, the birth of the new, and baptism then becomes an outward sign of the inward reality. If you want to be really tidy with Romans chapter 6 verses 3, 4, and 5, they are dry verses.

They are dry verses. We are told when Paul writes to the Corinthians that you are baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ. Right? That happens when you're born again.

You are immersed by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, into Christ at conversion. That is what this is talking about. It's talking about the death of the old man, the birth of the new, and so it's the process of dying and being raised again in Christ.

Then we go out into the waters of baptism and it becomes an outward sign of that inward reality. So that's why I say these are dry verses. They become wet when we go out into the water and get baptized in obedience.

But to be tidy and rightly divide them, they are initially talking about the mystery that is so glorious of salvation, being born again. Death of the old life, raising of the new. So when you go down to the waters of baptism, to sum up, it points back to the work of God in your life.

Death of that old life. When you come up out of the waters of baptism, it points forward to the life of faith you're going to live now. The risen life in Him.

It's beautiful. So the confusion, we're trying to clear that up with what we've seen in the Bible. The concept, we understand that.

Let's go to the command. There is a command to be baptized. And this is why I opened up saying the things I did.

There seems to be little concern for water baptism today. It just seems to have gone away. But there's a command.

It's very real. It's part of the Great Commission. Matthew 28, 19.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Acts 2, 38.

Peter, when he was preaching, said, repent and be baptized every one of you. The question arises, does anybody ever disobey this command? It's pretty clear to be baptized. Does anybody ever disobey? Well, the answer is yes.

I think it's often just because of ignorance. And I said that up front. Lack of teaching.

Because of ignorance. But if that is your case, then you're not ignorant anymore today, are you? So you're open and ready for that glorious time of being baptized. Sometimes people don't get baptized for pride.

And this can actually be a wonderful thing. It can be turned into a wonderful thing if it's addressed right. The last time I taught this message before a baptismal service, I got to this point in the message and I say, you know, you may have been here.

You may have been an usher for years. Maybe everybody in the whole church knows you. And what happened was you missed a few of the first baptisms.

You weren't able to make it. But then by that time, so much time had gone by that when the next one came around, you were embarrassed to let everybody know that you had not been baptized and all this time had gone by. So because of pride, to this day you're not baptized.

Because now so much time has gone by that if you were to stand in line and walk out there, everybody might stop and go, oh, my gosh, you mean you've never been baptized and you've been here in the church and we all all this time you've been disobedient to the Lord. You must be the chief sinner in our midst. So that actually happens.

It's because we're human. If you address it in a setting like this and you say, you know what? If you go ahead and get baptized, it is a glorious thing. And if it was just because you missed it, you got a little proud and you got embarrassed.

Nobody's going to condemn you. Nobody's going to point you out as the chief of sinners. They're going to be clapping and cheering for you.

Go for it. You're a little slow, but when you do it, you really do it. This is really funny.

This really happened. So I gave a little speech like this and a message. We went down.

We had all these people in line to be baptized and I'm just baptizing along. We had other pastors baptizing. And then this one guy is in my line and I see him back there and he's got a sign on the front of him, a big card.

And I couldn't read it that well until he got a little closer. And it said something on it like ten years of disobedience ends today. That was so funny.

And he comes out. He takes his sign up. I said, come on, let's get a picture with everybody.

He holds it up, you know, and he's all excited and he kind of tosses it aside and he said hold me down really long because it's hold me down because it's been a long time of disobedience. I said, oh no, we're going to do this quick and it's going to be glorious. And he came up just shouting and praising God.

Everybody was clapping and cheering. So there you see. Now you just get your sign ready.

Get your crayons out the night before. So if pride holds you back, don't let it hold you back from a blessing. Don't let it hold you back from a blessing.

Sometimes it's just indifference. It's like, eh, ah, eh, ah, eh, ah. And yet it's a clear cut command.

So there has to come some time in our life with the Lord where we take obeying him seriously. And it has to be somewhere along the line where the indifference ends and the obedience begins. That's really, I think, one of the biggest issues of water baptism.

That right up front, there is obedience on an important issue the Lord has asked of you. Then you go and you live the rest of your Christian life in obedience. See, it begins a life of obedience.

So don't let indifference hold you back. Then there is the unconverted issue. You may have gone to church for years and years and years, but you're not really converted.

Thus there's no compulsion on the inside to be baptized because you don't really know the Lord. So why would you want to be baptized? You don't know him, and therefore you don't get baptized year after year because you're not converted. We were in Israel on a trip one time.

And this guy that I had known for years. He was in the church. A wonderful guy.

We were good friends. And he was on the trip, he and his wife. And it came time to go to the River Jordan.

We generally on an Israel trip would do a baptismal service at the River Jordan. There's a facility built there. It's just the greatest place in the world to be baptized.

So here's his wife, and she wanted to get baptized. She was so excited. She's telling everybody on the bus, I'm getting baptized! And he's all quiet.

And then they hand you a little robe and you get a certificate. So it makes it really cool. I was baptized in the Jordan.

Where were you baptized? He goes with his wife to get the robe and then we got the certificates. We're getting them ready. And he's kind of lurking around acting a little dodgy, shifty.

All of a sudden he just sort of goes over by himself and he gets a robe, inconspicuous, you know, and goes into the changing room and he comes back out in his robe. And he comes walking over and he stands next to his wife. And they both came up to me.

And his wife's all excited and she was talking. And then I generally will say to somebody, you know, when did you come to know the Lord? So they'll tell him and baptize him. So we get to him.

I said, so and how about you? He goes, I've never known him. And he goes, you know, right now I want to give my life to Jesus Christ. I said, oh, praise the Lord.

Let's do it. And we dunked him down into the water and brought him back out. And he came out just shining and beaming with the love of Jesus.

He was never the same. It just took going with the rest of the people to finally confront the issue and be honest with himself that he wasn't really born again. So that raises an issue.

There may be a concern about doing it again. If you were unconverted, let's say you got baptized and were submersed in water and everything, but you never walked with the Lord one day. You just were in with the group.

Then you became born again. And now, you know, looking back, you know what? I wasn't a Christian. Then you may be thinking maybe I should get re-baptized.

I would say definitely, because that was not a biblical baptism. That was not a biblical baptism. So it's just a wonderful thing, water baptism.

Now, what if you were sprinkled in your youth? This is the last issue. What if you're sprinkled in your youth? And now you've gone through the message and you're feeling like you're not comfortable being sprinkled in your youth. Well, let me tell you a little story.

A little boy decided to make a good Baptist out of the family cat by immersing it in the bathtub. Everything went fine until he sprinkled a few drops of water on the cat's head, at which time the animal started howling and scratching all over the place until finally the little boy threw him and let him go. He was overheard shouting in a frustrated tone.

All right, be a Methodist then! Let me just say, God is really gracious. God knows your heart. God knows your heart.

Maybe you were sprinkled as an adult and you want to be immersed. God knows your heart. You pray.

You let the Lord speak to your heart. He knows your heart. If you feel the need to come out and get baptized, you just come out and join us and it'll be a blessing for you and everybody else.

What about the age? I recommend 12 years or older. Jesus was reasoning in the temple at the age of 12. And very often someone will come and say, my little Bobby's 5 and he just really loves the Lord and he wants to be baptized.

Well, I would encourage you to let Bobby grow up a little bit and find out if he's even going to walk with the Lord. Father, thank you so much for the Word. You're such a good God.

We thank you, Lord. There even is such a thing as salvation in Jesus Christ. If any don't know you here today, Lord, don't know your love, maybe this be the day they open their heart to you.

If you don't know Christ, just receive him now as your Lord and Savior. Just take him as your Lord and let him be your God. Father, we ask you work your saving work in every heart.

Bless everyone here. Guide each and every heart and mind. Those that have questions, answer them, Lord, and lead them.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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