

# Baptism and the Gospel

by Paul Washer

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*Baptism is a spiritual act that points to the gospel and serves as a reminder of God's work in our lives, demonstrating our union with Christ and our identification with Him.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:15, Jonah 1:4, Micah 5:2, Micah 7:18, Matthew 7:21, Acts 10:42, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Baptism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by emphasizing the importance of remembering what God has done for us. He then introduces the topic of the gospel and its significance. The speaker uses the story of Jonah to illustrate the power of God and the need for a savior. He highlights the transformation that occurs when someone experiences true conversion, using the example of Augustine, a wicked man who became a changed person after encountering God. The sermon concludes with the announcement of baptizing four women who have professed their faith.

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## Transcript

Well, with the baptism service today, in one sense, we are breaking away from our journey with our forefathers through the wilderness, and in another way, we are backing up to take part in what God had commanded the Israelites just before that remarkable event was about to unfold. If you remember back in Exodus chapter 12, God emphasized to his people the importance of remembering what was about to happen. He made clear to them that they should establish memorials, that year after year they would celebrate the Passover meal in order to remind them of how God had rescued them.

And upon entrance into Canaan, then the consecration of the firstborn would serve yet again as another reminder of what God had accomplished for them. And then at the end of Jesus's life, we're able to witness there that he himself is still several centuries later, they are practicing this Passover meal, remembering the great rescue that God had accomplished on behalf of his people when he parted the Red Sea and brought them through on dry land while destroying every single enemy that they had, Pharaoh and all of his army. And we see Jesus sitting there in what has been become known as the Last Supper, instituting what we now call the Lord's Supper for the benefit of the church, for us to remember what he's done when he said, this is my body, which is broken for you.

This is my blood, which was shed for you. That was at the end of Jesus's life. But if we back up a few years earlier, we see Jesus beginning his earthly ministry, establishing what would become the other ordinance of the New Testament church when he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.

So the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry, being baptized, nearing the end of his earthly ministry, sitting, reclining at the table at the Last Supper, instituting what would become the Lord's Supper for us as his church today, functioning as bookends to the work and ministry of Christ on our behalf in his life. Jesus giving us guidance on how to structure our efforts at remembering the work, the great work that he has wrought in us and for us. The Lord's Supper is detailed by Jesus, recorded for us in the gospel, then reiterated by the apostle in such a way that it is unmistakably clear that the bread represents his broken body and the wine represents his shed blood for his people.

Baptism, however, isn't as blatantly explicit in the text. We still nonetheless see how the early church, primarily in the book of Acts, practiced the ordinance of baptism, using it in a way that was in keeping with what God himself had intended. After all, he himself breathed those scriptures in the book of Acts, so we must believe that that's the way God had intended baptism to happen within the context of the local church.

Now, it's important with us talking about these remembrance and things set up as a memorial like the Lord's Supper and like baptism that we point out and actually believe that there is no spiritual merit whatsoever in these ordinances. There's no gain in merely doing them, but they are spiritual acts, spiritual because of the substance behind them. They're pointing to something greater.

The reality they are demonstrating is a spiritual truth. There's no saving grace that results from baptism when we baptize here in a little bit. There's no saving grace that these ladies are earning as a result of being baptized.

Now, there are reasons why we baptize. There's a reason why we baptize believers. There's a reason why we baptize believers by immersion, and we are convinced that all of these reasons are found within the scriptures.

We baptize because Jesus himself said to go and baptize. We baptize believers because we see that example displayed throughout the book of Acts, and we baptize by immersion because of the wonderful picture that is displayed in the gospel and the uniting to Christ that is happening as the reality behind water baptism. Now, let's think about baptism in light of Christ's earthly ministry.

I mentioned already that Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan. He came to John to be baptized. John tried to He said, I have no need to be baptized by you.

Pardon, I need to be baptized by you, and yet you've come to me. Jesus answered him and said, permit it at this time. In this way, it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.

Then he permitted him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on him. And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

The very beginning of Christ's earthly ministry is marked by this water baptism by John, who was the last Old Testament prophet, pointing to there's a Messiah coming. There's one coming that's greater than me. The Messiah is on his way.

And at that baptism and the dove descending like God had told him that it would, the establishment of Christ's kingdom here on earth began in full force. And then at the very end of Christ's life, after living a life that we couldn't live and keeping every law that we've already broken, after dying a death that would do no

good if we died as finite beings and being raised again and spending a number of days among his people, just before he ascends on high, he says this, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. So you who have been affected already by the work that I've done, you go and you make disciples of all the nations and you baptize them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy spirit.

In the early days of his ministry, fulfilling righteousness by being baptized, inaugurating his ministry. And then at the end of his ministry in his life, commanding that we baptize those who have received his righteousness as their own before he goes and sits at his father's right hand and continues commanding all things from the throne at the right hand of his father. The reality of what is being pictured in baptism is detailed most clearly for us in the gospel.

It is a picture of the gospel. That's why we do it to remember what God has done for us. So today Paul is going to come and talk to us about the gospel and explain the gospel.

And then following that, we will baptize the four ladies who've come with professions of faith today. So Paul, if you'll come, let's let's go ahead and open up our Bibles to the book of Micah. Where Mark was reading from this passage, we're going to see that the gospel is not something that just began in the New Testament with the advent of the Messiah.

But as Peter tells us in first Peter, the spirit of Christ was in. The prophets and through them constantly speaking forth that one day the good news of the coming Savior would appear to all men. We find this in Genesis chapter three, verse 15.

Right after the fall of man, we have the promise that one would come to save man. If you're very discerning and if you listen and take your clues from our Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles, you can then go back into the Old Testament and see that throughout every page of Scripture, there was the promise of a Savior. In reality, if we expand upon that, there was not only the promise of the Savior, but there were two truths held in attention.

One, you are lost, you are fallen. And the other is there's a Savior, there's a Savior. Let me give you an example.

You know that after man fell, that a curse fell upon mankind and upon this very planet. I want you to understand some things that the curse was not only a curse, but intermingled in that curse was the mercies, the beauties and the love of God. For example, it says that a man will labor by the sweat of his brow and that everything he gains will turn to nothing.

You say, well, that's a curse. No, that's mercy. Because every time a man expends himself, labors and labors and gains what he hoped to achieve, and then it turns out to be nothing, that is God telling him, do not be deceived.

Please do not be deceived. You're fallen, you're fallen and your world is fallen and you'll find no satisfaction here. Even in childbirth, the woman was given great pain.

You say there can be no mercy in that. Yes, there's mercy. Every pain that strikes a woman at childbirth is God calling out, fallen, you're fallen, you're fallen.

You need a Savior. You need a Savior. You need a Savior.

We are born when we're about 12, 13, 14 years old, we start coming into our own physically. And what's absolutely amazing is between that age and maybe somewhere around the early 30s, there is only a small window where you could actually say that a human being is physically beautiful. And then what happens? Old age, we become decrepit, we become wrinkled, we become broken, we become tired.

And you say that's a curse. No, that is God calling out to you, fallen, fallen, fallen. You need a Savior.

Do not put your eyes upon the temporal because it is all fading like the flower that falls. I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but just pure statistics would tell me that there are some here, at least today, who either know they do not believe or they think they believe and they do not. And one of the ways that they can discern that they do not believe is they do not really understand the truth I just shared.

They live their whole life for this life, for relationships in this world, for their own reflection in a mirror. And they may bring Jesus in just a little bit. He may be some small part of their life, but He is not their life.

He's not their life. He's just something added on. So how do you know that you're a believer? As you begin to realize and you grow in the truth that every thing of man in this life is a fading flower, you really see it and it really begins to get a hold on you.

And not only that, you begin to realize nothing satisfies me here. Absolutely nothing. Not strength, not wealth, not a wife, not a husband, not even children, not parents, nothing.

If you can be satisfied with something on this planet, holy and completely complete and satisfied, you are not a Christian. You are not Christian. Because see, when you are born again, your desires are raised to a whole new level so that nothing here can truly complete you.

Only Christ. Only Christ. So how do you know you're a Christian? You begin to see this and not only see it, you begin to live it.

You begin to live it. How else do you know that you are Christian? The Savior increasingly completes you, increasingly owns your appreciation. As each day goes by, He increases in your esteem for Him so that every beauty that you see on this planet is nothing more than a twisted and black flower compared to Him.

The sun is a dull orb paler than the moon compared to Him. You begin to grow in your appreciation so that if you do find that you have lost your first love, it makes you want to rip your heart out. If you do find in your daily life that something is replacing your love for Christ, you hate yourself.

What is sad is when you can have all these other loves and then let Jesus tag along. That demonstrates you do not know Him. Let me ask you a question.

When you do realize that Jesus has lost first place in your heart, does it cause you self-hatred? Does it make you angry with yourself? Are you like the way Paul described true repentance in the church in Corinth? You want to vindicate with zeal. You want to turn everything around and cast all your love back on Christ. Or are you content to just have Christ hobble along behind you, a little part of something of your life? You include Him every once in a while.

Let's talk about why we should appreciate Christ. Just look in Micah. Micah provides for us an absolutely astounding picture of God, of us, and of what God did for us in Christ.

If you look in Micah chapter 7 and verse 18, who is a God like you who pardons iniquity? Let me ask you a question. Are you astounded that God would even think about you other than with thoughts of wrath? Are you literally amazed that He would even mention the possibility that He might love you? Or you just take it as a matter of fact, of course He should love me. No, the true believer is absolutely astounded that God would even mention or think of their name apart from wrath.

I can't believe it. He pardoned me. He let me in.

He let me have a part. He let me be. Is that you? Do you see the greatness, the beauty, the splendor of God? And at the same time, in that light, see your own wretchedness so that when God says, I will pardon you, you literally are overcome.

You almost want to do as Peter did to Jesus. Depart from me. I'm a sinful man.

No, Lord, you can't pardon me. It's wrong. You obviously don't understand who I am.

Do you ever have that sense that when you hear a blessing from God or God may do something for you that you almost want to fall down and say, no, Lord, depart from me. Do you? But here, Micah, who is a God like you? I mean, what God is there like you that pardons iniquity? You know, one of the reasons why mentally or intellectually or logically Christianity has such a hold on me, because I can go to any other religion on the face of the earth and I can tell you they have to do one of two things. They either make God lower than God really is and not as clean or holy as God really is, or they take man and make him better than he really is.

No other religion deals with sin. You lay any religion before me and I'll tell you they don't deal with sin. Because all of them are based on what you do, and if God is truly holy and a man truly has a conscience, he realizes I can't do anything to save me and therefore all hope is void.

All other religions are void. They offer no hope. If I somehow gain favor with God through being what I am, then I'm greater than I suppose myself to be.

Or God is lesser than he claims to be. Less. But you see, the Christian marvels.

Who is a God like you who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious acts of the remnant of his possession? He passes over the rebellious acts. And then it goes on and he says he does not retain his anger forever because he delights in unchanging love. He delights in his own unchanging love.

So the true Christian realizes what they are apart from the grace of God. And they realize something of who God is and they marvel in that. Look, if your Christianity is just coming to church on Sunday or you're kind of moral, you don't have a clue what I'm talking about.

Or Jesus is just something you got on your Facebook. You don't understand what I'm saying. You don't understand.

But now, as we've read verse 18 and we have gloried in it, we rejoice that God is the type of God who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious acts of his possession and does not retain his anger. Now we've come up with another problem, a gigantic problem. Hold it.

I thought you said God was just. I thought you said God was just. If God is just, how does he just pass over rebellious acts? You said he was holy.

You said one day he would judge the world in righteousness. So how does he just pass over the rebellious acts of his people? Look in verse 19. He will again have compassion on us and he will tread our iniquities underfoot.

Yes, you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You say, well, this is how he does it. He takes our iniquity and he throws it on the ground and he stomps it.

He takes our sin and he casts it into the sea. He takes our sin and he hurls it from himself so far away that it is farther away from him than the east is from the west. Herein lies the great problem with all that you've said.

All that's beautiful, but you're not really telling the truth yet. You see, you've got to look at this in light of Christology, in light of the person of Jesus Christ. See, it sounds so poetic and beautiful to say that God takes your sin off you and throws it on the ground and stomps it.

Or God takes your sin off you and throws it into the bottom of the sea. Or to take it and say God takes it and hurls it away from him so it is farther from him than the east is from the west. Oh, that's so wonderful.

You don't understand the passage. Because only there he's dealing with the removal of sin. He is not dealing with the punishment of the culprit of you.

You see, that sin must not just be thrown into the sea or hurled far away. It must be punished and it must be punished on you or a substitute that takes your place. And you see, what you need to see here in Micah 19 is he takes your sin off of you.

He throws it on his son and then he crushes his son under his foot. Have you never read Isaiah? And it pleased the Lord Yahweh to crush him, to crush the sin bearer, to crush the Messiah. And you say, he takes my sin away and he casts it into the sea.

No, he takes your sin, piles it upon his son and grabs him and casts him into the sea of God's wrath. Let me give you an example for just a moment. Let's turn with me to the book of Jonah.

Jonah tries to run from the Lord, the disobedient prophet. And he jumps on a ship and they take off across a large sea and God raises up a mighty, horrendous storm. Now, these are expert sailors.

They've lived their entire life on this sea. They know how to handle a storm. But this is a tremendous, verse four, the Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and it was a great storm so that the sea, so that the ship was about to break up.

This is not just a storm that's going to capsize boat. It's a storm that's going to literally tear the boat in pieces. There's what's called sister waves and in the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, it's believed that that's probably what happened.

A great, mighty sailing vessel sailed out near Michigan and it was broken too. And now it's cast at the bottom of the sea. You have to use deep sea submersibles to go down there and find it in that lake.

And what they believe happened was that boat was built so that if it's this long and a wave hits it, it will ride that way. But every once in a while, there's a wave that comes with a twin sister wave so that it lifts up the boat on both ends and there's nothing in the middle to sustain it. And it breaks it in two.

Very rare does a storm like that occur. This is something that's what's going on here in the book of Jonah. Since then, the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his God and they threw the cargo, which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them.

But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, laid down and fallen asleep. So the captain approached him and said, how is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your God. Perhaps your God will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.

Each man said to his mate, come, let us cast lots so that we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck. So they cast lots and the lot fell for Jonah. People say, look at this.

These men are more pious than God's prophet. I don't see it that way, I see them as absolutely blind in their false religion. You see, let's cast lots to see who has sinned.

Do you really have to cast lots to see who has sinned? They were blind. You see, the question is not why do bad things happen to good people? The question is, why do good things happen to bad people? Why does anything good happen at all? They were just as blind as Jonah. Let's cast lots to see who has sinned.

That's the rest of the religions in the world. They do not see their sin and therefore they claim that they can somehow evolve into a greater creature. They somehow can become acceptable to their God through their tiny little, terrible, good works.

And they're blind to all the lying, all the blasphemies, all the selfishness, all the self-centeredness, all the making themselves God in this world. They're blind to it. Now, look at what they do.

Verse 8, And they said to him, tell us now on whose account has this calamity struck? If Jonah had been preaching properly, he said, all of us, all of us deserve to die because God is holy and we are not. We are sinners by birth and carry it out in word and deed. What is your occupation and where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you? And he said, I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.

Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, how could you do this? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord because he had told them. So they said to him, what should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us? For the sea has become increasingly stormy. He said to them, pick me up and throw me into the sea.

Then the sea will become calm for you. I know that on account of me, this great storm has come upon you. Now, using that as a backdrop, go to Mark chapter four, verse thirty five.

On that day when evening had come, he, Jesus, said to them, let us go over to the other side, leaving the crowd. They took him along with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him.

And there arose a fierce gale of wind and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus himself was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. Now, where was Jonah? Asleep in the boat.

And they woke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Now, these men knew of Jonah. They knew the entire story. Do you think that their faith was wavering, not just because of the

storm, but thinking maybe what the Pharisees and the Sadducees and everyone else is saying is true, that we climbed in a boat with a disobedient prophet? Maybe he's not the Messiah.

Maybe he's not. Maybe this is just like what happened with Jonah and God is angry. But this one greater than Jonah arises from where he was sleeping and stands on the bow of the boat.

And what does he do? And he got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, hush, be still. And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. Now, this Jonah, this one greater than Jonah, is proving that that storm had nothing to do with any sin or any ungodliness or any error in him.

But it was to demonstrate that he was God in the flesh, to demonstrate that he was perfectly holy and that the Father was not against him, for he was the one who always did exactly what the Father requested and therefore the Father always testified by word and powerful demonstration. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. But this same one greater than Jonah, not much long after, throws his own body in the raging storm and sea of God's wrath.

Go back to Micah. He throws our sins into the very depths of the sea and we say, oh, that's so wonderful. No, you're missing the point.

For your sins to be cast into that sea, they first had to be cast upon someone else, someone of our stock, someone of our flesh and blood, yet without sin. And so the sin was taken off of you and it was thrown upon Christ. And then God hurled his own son into the sea of his wrath.

He will also, it says, remove our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. He will make them go away, Micah says. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from the words of my groaning? You see, what just turns in to kind of a romantic point, what starts off as just something of a romantic poem, priceless.

You see, oh, that's so wonderful. I mean, no one would disagree with this. This is beautiful.

He's such a forgiving God that he just takes our sin and tramples it. He just casts it into the sea. He just throws it away.

But now let's get Christian. Now, let's look at this in light of reality. All that happened, that's true.

But upon the man, Jesus, upon the Son of God, Jesus, it was done. It was carried out. Now, let's go back to this main point.

People are to be baptized today as a demonstration, as a public profession of what God has done in their lives. This water, the removing of dirt from the flesh, has no power to save. They are saved before they climb into this water because this water has no power.

This water does not affect a change. Baptism is a demonstration of a change. And when we go to Romans 5, we see that this change is ontological.

That means the very core of their being is changed. This is not adopting a few little different rules of a Christian lifestyle. This is not just we need to go to church to be moral and good.

This is not just, yeah, that works for me. No, this person supernaturally in his interior, in the deepest part of his heart, is testifying a change has occurred to me. I am not the same person I was.

Augustine, the great theologian of the fourth century, was a terribly wicked man. And then when he was converted, the story goes, he's walking down the street and a prostitute that he knew comes to the balcony of a window and says, Augustine, Augustine, it is I. He pays no attention. She says it again, Augustine, it is I. And Augustine said, yes, but it is not I. I'm no longer the man you knew.

I'm not the same person. What he's testifying to is the same thing the waters of baptism testifies to. Look, I just didn't take on a new religion.

I didn't just learn a new philosophy. As a matter of fact, I will submit this to you. If after the person is regenerate, if they never study the Christian religion their entire life, they will still live differently.

Now, they need and must and should study the scriptures, but their interior has been changed, their core has been changed. Now, let me ask you a question. Is this you? Don't play with me.

Don't play with God. This is too serious. Don't come here with some little idea that your religion, because you have a fish on the back of your car or a cross on some on some website that you own.

No, or that you're trying. Don't talk to me about trying. Does any species of animal try to be that animal? No, their actions come forth from what they are.

Are you Christian? Have you been changed? Can you say that I no longer live, but Christ lives within me? Are you one who no longer puts any confidence in the flesh, but you worship God in the spirit, you glory in Christ Jesus? Can you say I am a new creature? All things pass away, behold, new again. You say, well, Brother Paul, you're talking about perfectionism. Absolutely not.

I'm talking about a real change that occurs within still a human body of fallen flesh. And sometimes there is failure, but there is always war. That when I love him, I know I am being what I am.

And when some other love takes that place, the place of him, I'm sick. I can't bear it. Why? Because I'm no longer being what I am.

I love it when I love him. I hate it when I do not. I love it when he is everything to me.

I hate it when he is not. And sooner or later, either through God's discipline or the hearing of the word, I turn around and I want to vindicate. I want to demonstrate to him I do love thee.

Are you Christian? One of the tasks of being an elder, one of the tasks of being a preacher that is so painful is not preaching. But bearing the responsibility of the souls under your care, a preacher one time was out praying in his backyard and his garden. It was in the early mornings after midnight, two or three in the morning.

It was cold. It was damp. He was old.

His wife comes out there and says, you are going to die. You're going to catch the death. Come in here.

And he said, woman, do you not understand? I have 200 souls for which I am responsible. Are you Christian? Don't play with yourself. You youngsters who maybe have already been baptized, I fear for you.

I fear for you. Has there been a true discerning? You see, it's not enough you say you believe in Jesus. It's not enough that you're nice.

It's not enough that you're following your parents at this moment. So many children do that. But when they are finally set free, they run astray.

Some of you who are college and around that age and your whole life before you discern. It would be a terrible thing to be in this congregation and yet not be in the congregation of the redeemed on the day when the God of all the earth judges the living and the dead. Discern.

Read the word of God, because only it, according to Hebrews chapter four, has the ability to cut even between bone and marrow and joint. But some of you who claim to know Christ, you're almost never in the word. And so you live your life in a kind of a pop Christianity that is so deadly.

Just enough to cauterize the conscience. Oh, please, I came to Anthony this morning and I said, Anthony, I said, I just am so burdened for those who may think they're saved and they're not. Could I just have two minutes to share? And he said, just go share the gospel.

Take the time, share. Oh, please, please discern. Please examine yourself.

Please examine yourself to see if you are in the faith. Let this baptism, when you see people go under and come up, ask, did you leave behind an old life? Did you when you came out having believed in Christ, are you now walking in a newness of life? And when you do sin and we all sin and struggle with sin, after 30 years, I am finding the battle more powerful now than when I began, just different. But when we sin, we hate that.

We hate it because we're not what we are. We're not being what we should be for him. Do you appreciate him? In my Bible studies with my boys, with my little daughter, I'm always saying, look, I'm not in this because I want to be nice.

I'm not in this because I want to be good. I'm not in this because I like religion. I am in this for only one reason.

He shed his own blood for my soul. That is the thing that has conquered my heart. Care less about morality.

Honestly, I want to be moral for his glory according to his word. But that's not what drives me. What drives me? He shed his own blood for my soul.

Is that what drives you? Please examine yourself. Be cautious with yourself and make sure that you are in faith.

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