

The Essential Requirement To Be Baptized

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of baptism, addressing two extremes of error - one that dismisses baptism as unimportant and the other that sets unrealistic standards before being baptized. It highlights that baptism is not about having complete understanding but a testimony of faith and a desire to turn away from sin. The message stresses that baptism signifies the death of the old sinful nature and the emergence of a new life in Christ, even though struggles with sin may still occur.

Scripture: Romans 6:4, Acts 8:36, Acts 16:30, Luke 15:7, Matthew 28:19, Colossians 2:12, Galatians 3:27, Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21

Topics: "Importance of Baptism", "New Life in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

In these past years, as we have planted churches in different places, I've seen two extremes of error in the matter of baptism. One is people who say, well, baptism is not important. The dying thief was not baptized, but we are not dying thieves.

We are living thieves. We need to be baptized. So, we can't make that excuse.

One is that extreme, it's not important. It's not necessary for salvation, I agree. But it is necessary for obedience.

So that's one. The other extreme of error is when people come to a church like ours, where we preach a very high standard, and like some of the things you heard earlier today, you can begin to think, boy, I'm not living at that standard, so I'm not ready for baptism. That's the other extreme of error.

That's like thinking that I've got to get a PhD before I can be baptized. No. Baptism is not saying I've got a college degree spiritually.

Baptism is saying, I'm born, a child that's born, that's all. Or to use the illustration of education, I joined school. I haven't learned even to read A, B, C, but I joined the kindergarten.

So there are people who've been in school for 10, 20 years and have got postgraduate degrees. That's different. That's OK.

But baptism is a testimony that I have joined the school of Christ, even though I don't know A, B, C yet. I've joined the school. So as soon as you're born again, you can get baptized if you've sincerely turned to the Lord.

It's no indication of understanding. For example, in Romans chapter 6, let me explain to you the meaning of baptism. In Romans chapter 6, it says, we are buried with him by baptism.

Our old man. We are testifying in baptism that my old man was crucified with Christ. Not only my sins were taken by him on the cross, but Romans 6, 4 says, my old man.

My old man is that old nature that wanted to sin, which has been the servant inside my heart. Whenever the robbers came, the robbers are the lusts in the flesh. They come to me and say, be bitter, hate that person, lust, tell lies, cheat, so many things.

The old man would tell the robbers, come right in, steal my purity, steal my love. That old man has been put to death on the cross. Now there's a new man.

The robbers still come and tell you to hate and be bitter and tell lies and all that. But the new man says, no, I'm not going to do it. Then how is it that a believer falls into sin? Because the new man doesn't eat properly.

Then he's not strong enough to keep the door shut. So the thieves break in. So that doesn't mean he wanted to sin.

He didn't want, he did not want the thieves to come in, but the robbers still came in because he was not strong enough to keep the door shut. So supposing you sin, doesn't mean you got to get baptized again tomorrow. No.

In baptism, I'm only testifying that the old man, the old servant who opened the door to the robbers is dead. I didn't kill it. God killed it.

That's how I was born again. And now there's a new servant living inside the house who tries his best to keep the door shut. Sometimes it doesn't succeed, but it doesn't alter the fact that he does not want the robbers to come in.

So the only question I ask people is, do you believe in Jesus Christ that he took the punishment for all your sins on the cross? That's not all. Very important question. Do you want to sin again? If you say yes.

I'm not asking, are you tempted? Jesus was tempted. We will all be tempted. I'm not asking whether you're tempted.

I'm not asking you whether you fall sometimes. I'm asking you, do you want to sin? And if you can say no, I don't want to sin. I ask another question.

Do you want to sin even once? It's like saying, would you like to jump into the sewer? The filthy sewer from which your toilets are flushed every day. Do you want to jump into that? Do you want to jump into that even once? If you say no, you're ready to be baptized. Do you fall in sometimes? Oh, yes.

You may fall in, but we jump out immediately. So baptism is not a testimony that I will never sin. It's a testimony I don't want to sin.

Even though I'm tempted every day. And I may fall tomorrow. I may fall many times before I become like Christ.

But I never want to sin. There's always this. The old servant has been sent out.

He's dead. So that's very important. And I'll show it to you how, even though Romans chapter 6 explains clearly, the old man is crucified with Christ and we are symbolizing it, putting this person in the underwater, saying the old man is buried and a new man has come up to live.

But that was explained about 30 years after the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost, 3000 people accepted Christ. And they only heard a 15-minute sermon from Peter.

And Peter never explained the meaning of baptism or anything. He just said, if you've accepted Christ, you've repented. Repented means I've turned around from sin.

I believe Christ died for me. I don't want to sin again. Be baptized.

And if you went to those 3000 people that day and asked any of them, even the cleverest of them, can you tell me the meaning of baptism? They'd say, I don't know. I only know this, that Jesus said, you believe and you must be baptized. That's all they could say.

So don't think you have to explain the meaning of baptism before you get baptized. You're testifying, Christ is my Lord and I don't want to sin again. I may sin, but I don't want to.

It's that want to, want to, that has been put to death. Or take another example. There was a man, you read in Acts chapter 8, an Ethiopian Jew, who had come to the festival and was traveling back in a chariot.

And the Holy Spirit told Philip, go and join that chariot. And that chap was reading Isaiah 53, where he read, you know, about Jesus being crucified. He didn't understand it.

And he's asking the, asking when Philip joined the chariot, he said, who is this person speaking about? Is he speaking about himself or about somebody else? And he said, and it says he was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And like a lamb, he didn't open his mouth. Who is he speaking about? And it says here, Philip opened his mouth and explained to him, that's Jesus.

He never knew. Jesus, who died for your sins. I think he was with that eunuch in the chariot for maybe five minutes.

It doesn't take more than five minutes to explain the gospel to someone who's reading the Bible. And immediately, the eunuch said at the end of this five-minute message, say, here's some water here. Here's a small little pond.

Can you baptize me? Philip didn't put any pressure on him. So I learned something from that. That in Philip's preaching in the gospel, in that five minutes, he included baptism.

Otherwise, he would not have, the eunuch would not have asked, can I get baptized? So in a five-minute presentation of the gospel, baptism was included. He didn't give an explanation. Philip himself did not know all the meaning of it like Romans chapter 6, verse 4 says.

But he knew that Jesus said you must be baptized. And he baptized him. How much did that eunuch understand? If you went to the eunuch afterwards, say, can you please explain something about the old man being crucified? Say, don't ask me all that.

I just know that Jesus said we must be baptized. I got baptized. That's all you need to know.

One more example. Acts chapter 16. We read of a jailer who was in a jail and he heard, the only gospel he heard was Paul singing songs of praise to Jesus Christ.

And this guy was a heathen. He was not even a Jew. A Philippian heathen.

But somehow he heard the gospel in these songs that Paul and Silas were singing when they were locked up in jail. And suddenly there was an earthquake and he thought the soldiers, sorry, the prisoners had all escaped. And Paul said, no, no, no, don't worry.

We're all here. Don't harm yourself. And then he asked Paul and Silas in Acts 16.30, what must I do to be saved? And Paul said, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved and your house.

I'm sure he said a little more than that. This is in a nutshell. But it included baptism in a very short time.

It is the middle of the night. It was midnight when it happened. Midnight, somebody comes and says, what must I do to be saved? And Paul tells him how to be saved and includes baptism.

Because it says here, at night he went, verse 33, and got baptized. They didn't even wait till the morning. How much did that Philippian jailer, who was from a heathen background, understand about baptism? Did he know anything about Romans 6? No.

He just knew that I have trusted in Jesus and I don't want to sin again. And I'm testifying to that in this baptism, whatever it means. So I say that to say that baptism is not an indication that I've understood so much.

I'm just testifying. I trust in Jesus Christ as my savior. And I don't want to sin again.

So because sometimes, you know, people come to this church and say, boy, we hear so many great truths about baptism. And I didn't understand all that when I got baptized. So I must be baptized again.

No, you don't have to be baptized again. Were you sincere when you turned to Christ? God accepts you. So we pray as our sister gets baptized.

We rejoice with her. Because here's one more person who has turned from sin and wants to follow the Lord like the sheep that has come to the fold. The Lord said, rejoice with me for I found my sheep that was lost.

And it says everybody rejoice. And we all must rejoice whenever one sinner. It says the angels rejoice.

When one sinner in the world somewhere repents, the angels rejoice. Let us fellowship with the angels today and rejoice.

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