

## INTRODUCTION

Although the believer's salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; that does not mean that coming to Christ is simply an end in itself. Salvation is much more than fire insurance or a safety net. That's rather selfish and self-centered, don't you think? Paul was shocked as to the carnality of some of the Corinthians when he wrote:

... Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Don't you know that you are not your own? Don't you know that the supreme price was paid for your redemption through Christ's death at Calvary? Don't you know that all you are and all you have now belongs to God: lock, stock, and barrel? In light of all He has done for you; in light of His grace and goodness toward you:

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

If as believers, His sole purpose in saving us was just so we could go to heaven, then why didn't He just take us on to glory then? As believers, we were created and redeemed for His purpose and pleasure, and all for His glory; and that includes right here and right now.

Yes, Paul did write:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But he went further to say,

For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for [unto] good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

To the Romans Paul wrote a very familiar verse:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).

But what is that purpose?

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

His objective in saving us is “for [unto] good works.” James is very explicit when he writes: “...that faith without works is dead [useless, vain, empty]” (Jas. 2:20, 26). His objective in saving us is so that the Christ-life on the inside will become more and more visible on the outside. This not only is for our sake, but for the sake of the gospel, and ultimately for God’s glory. As a believer, there will be fruit (good works) that give evidence of our new life in Christ.

So what’s the point? As believers, Christ died to give His life for us; but He now lives to give His life to us. Although this Christ-life has many facets (which we will not address now), there is one most definite facet, and perhaps the one we should always start with: *a life of obedience*. The apostle John wrote:

Now by this we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected [i.e., it has been completed] in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He [Christ] walked [i.e., a life of obedience] (1 Jhn. 2:3-6).

So what in the world does this have to do with the ordinances of the gospel? Everything! Not only were Baptism, Communion, and the Washing of the Saints’ Feet exemplified by the Lord Himself; they were also commanded of the Church.

---

In our study, we have already looked at the differences between a sacrament and an ordinance. And in regards to baptism, we began to consider:

## **WRONG VIEWS OF BAPTISM**

### **THINKING IT CAN SAVE**

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:17a, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” So Paul never equated baptism with the gospel (i.e., as a means of salvation). Granted, Paul didn’t want anyone to think he was starting some cult or merely drawing people to himself (vv. 14-16); but when did Paul ever back down when it came to the gospel of Jesus Christ? If baptism were essential for salvation, then why didn’t Paul go ahead and baptize every believer?

### **THINKING IT IS OPTIONAL**

Once again, one of the initial acts of obedience for the new believer is to identify with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection through water baptism. Baptism is one of the very first public and outward expressions to the world as to what God has already done in the heart. There is absolutely no such thing as a “secret disciple.” Hank Hanegraaff alludes to the fact that many professed Christians are like secret agents; they’re afraid to blow their cover!

But nothing could be further from the truth than when it comes to the early church and true Christianity. As a Jew, when you identified with Christ in baptism, it meant a break from Judaism. It meant you were excommunicated from the temple; ostracized and shunned by family and friends; and your business boycotted. The Romans viewed Christians (Jews & Gentiles) as followers of a cult, and not loyal to the king or empire (believers would not worship Caesar as god). But Jesus made it perfectly clear that whoever comes to Him, no matter the culture or the century, we must first count the cost and consider the consequences (Lke. 14:25-33).

#### THINKING IT WILL MAKE US “MORE SAVED”

Once we come to personally trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we stand before God totally accepted, thoroughly forgiven, fully justified, and altogether loved; not through what we have done, but through the finished and completed work of Jesus Christ. We actually stand complete in Him (Col. 2:10). It is most definitely, “...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” (Tit. 3:5a).

#### THINKING WE ARE BAPTIZED FOR THE SAME REASON JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

In Matthew 3:1-12, we find that John had been baptizing sinners who had repented of their sin, preparing their hearts to receive the Messiah. Then in verse 13, Jesus comes on the scene and asks John to baptize Him. John’s response was, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” (Matt. 3:14).

This was, of course, a very natural and normal response. John had been baptizing sinners who had repented. But was Jesus a sinner? Of course not! Then He obviously did not need to repent. *In His baptism, Jesus identified with us.* Through His entire ministry He identified and associated with fallen humanity. He was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He ate with sinners and was greatly criticized by the Pharisees; but Jesus said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matt. 9:12). He concluded by saying, “For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13). The ultimate identification was His death on the cross. But His death was much more than identification; He actually became our substitute: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21; KJV). Although He identified with sinners, bore our sins, and died our death, He still remained the pure and impeccable Son of God.

*In His baptism Jesus identified with us; in our baptism we are identified with Him.*

#### THE PROPER VIEW OF BAPTISM

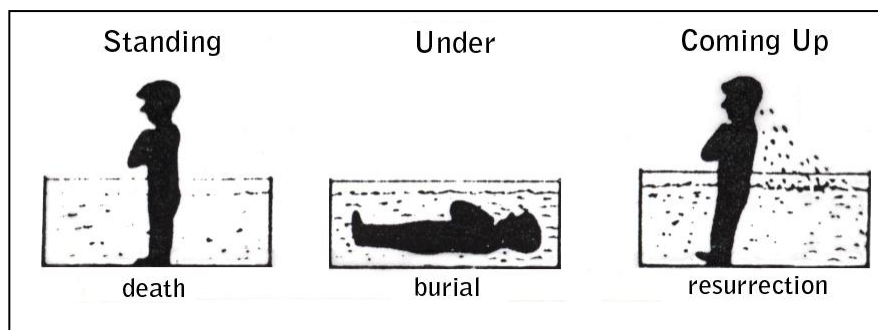
##### THE MEANING OF “BAPTIZE”

The Greek word itself (*baptizō*) means literally to dip or immerse an object into water or some other liquid. Water is never said to be baptized on someone, i.e., sprinkled, dabbed, or poured onto someone’s head. The meaning of the word can be found in the phrase “You *sank* (immersed; submerged; baptized) my battleship!” Its meaning is also found in the phrase, “*overhead and ears* (immersed; submerged; baptized) in debt.”

And as we shall see, complete immersion is the only accurate and biblical mode of baptism, especially when we consider what baptism pictures.

## THE PICTURES OF BAPTISM

Just as any picture captures a past even, so baptism pictures what has already happened in the heart and life of the believer. Note the three positions in baptism:



Baptism pictures three things about Christ:

1. His death
2. His burial
3. His resurrection

This is the Gospel or Good News of Jesus Christ!

(See 1 Cor. 15:1-4)

- Baptism is a picture of the Christian's identification with Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection.

The only possible way to get a vivid picture of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is through baptism by immersion. Sprinkling or pouring does not suffice. John 3:23 says, "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there." Why would he need "much water" if he were just simply sprinkling or pouring?

In Acts 8:36-38 we read:

Now as they [Philip and the eunuch] went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Why did they both need to go down into the water, if Philip needed only enough water to sprinkle or pour on the Ethiopian's head? John MacArthur states, "The Christian church knew no form of baptism but immersion until the Middle Ages, when the practice of sprinkling or pouring was introduced by the Roman Catholic church—which itself had previously always baptized by immersion" (MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Matthew 1-7*. Moody Bible Institute, 1985, 79).

- Baptism is a picture of the Christian's union with Christ, in His death, burial, and resurrection.

According to Romans 6:3-5, our old life has been crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and we have now been raised to walk in newness of life.

- Baptism is a picture of the believer's resurrection at the last day.

## CONCLUSION

In his book, *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, John MacArthur gives several reasons which may lie behind the failure of some professing Christians to be baptized.

*Ignorance*-Such a person has been ill-taught about baptism or has not been taught at all.

*Pride*-Some people choose not to be baptized as a matter of spiritual pride. For them to go a long time without a proper New Testament baptism and then be baptized would be a public confession of a long period of disobedience or ignorance.

*Indifference*-Other people just can't be bothered. They understand the New Testament teaching about baptism and are not against it. They may even believe in it, but never get around applying it, because they obviously don't think it is very important.

*Defiance*-These people flatly refuse to be baptized. Most often it is because they are courting sin in their lives, and they are not about to get up front of a congregation of people and publicly acknowledge their submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ and their joy in knowing Him.

*Lack of regeneration*-This last category describes people who are not really Christians, so they have no inner prompting by the Spirit of God compelling them toward obedience. They enjoy the blessings of being around the church but have no desire to make a public confession.

(MacArthur, John. *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*, Word Publ., 1995, 360)

The question remains the same. Have you have personally trusted Christ, and Christ alone as Savior and Lord of *your* life? Have you agreed with God concerning your sin? Have you turned from your sin (your old way of life), forsaken your sin, and by faith turned in total commitment to Christ?

If so, have you publicly and outwardly identified with Christ and obeyed Christ through water baptism by immersion?

Church, are we effectively responding to Christ's Lordship by going, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching? I'm not asking if we agree with it or accept it. Sure we do. The question is, are we faithfully acting upon it?