

Why is baptism so Important? Romans 6:3-7

Today we are going to complete our series on how we respond to the gospel of Christ and what we must do. We have talked about the necessity of hearing the gospel and obeying what God says. We have shown the necessity of faith in Christ and how faith is the foundation of Christianity. We have seen the necessity of repentance, turning away from sin and to the ways of the Lord. Today we will focus on the need to be baptized to be saved.

And as always, we will be using the New Testament and seeking to find out what the Bible says about baptism.

First off, the Greek language does have a word for sprinkling, “rhantidzo.” This is not the word used by the Bible to describe Baptism. The New Testament uses the word “*baptidzo*” for Baptism.

Thomas J. Conant in his book “*The Meaning and Use of Baptizein*,” made an exhaustive survey of more than 200 examples in Greek literature and ancient translations. Here is what he concluded: “*That the word baptizein, during the whole existence of the Greek as a spoken language, had a perfectly defined and unvarying import. In its literal use it meant, as has been shown, to put entirely into or under a liquid, or other penetrable substance, generally water, so that the object was wholly covered by the inclosing element.*”

Now when the N.T. speaks of baptism, that event described points to an immersion in water. In **Mt. 3:16** after Jesus was baptized, He “*went up out of the water.*” In **John 3:23** John baptized in the Jordan River “*at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.*” Now baptism or immersion would, of course, require enough water to immerse an adult. In **Acts 8:38-39**, Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water, Philip baptized the Eunuch, and they both came up out of the water. Now whatever happened in this baptism, it took place while they were both down in the water.

And now for our text for this morning, **Romans 6:4**, “*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*” Paul use of the likeness of being buried and raised in water is striking here! It is not an accident that baptism is a burial and a resurrection that leads to newness of life. **Romans 6:5-7** says, “*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.*”

Baptism is that time when our old body of sin is crucified with Christ and done away with. It is buried. At that point we are no longer slaves to sin. And when we are raised up with Him, we have new life just as the Lord Jesus had new life when He was resurrected. The resurrection caused the new life for Jesus, and our resurrection with Christ in baptism cause our newness of life. Before baptism we are dead in sin, but after baptism we are freed from sin and walk in newness of life!

Commenting on this passage **Willian Barclay said**, *“Commonly baptism was by total immersion and that practice lent itself to a symbolism to which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself. When a man descended into the water and the water closed over his head, it was like being buried. And when he emerged from the water, it was like rising from the grave. You see baptism was symbolically like dying and rising again. And the man died to one kind of life and rose to another; he died to the old life of sin and rose to the new life of grace.”*

There is a second passage that links baptism to the burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. **Colossians 2:12-13** says, *“having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses...”* Baptism is an act of faith in the powerful working of God. We are united with Him in His burial and resurrection by baptism. Before we were baptized, we were dead to our sins; but in baptism God makes us alive, just as God made Christ alive. Now in making us alive, God forgives us of all our trespasses.

Did you notice in this passage how God is active forgiving us and in making us alive? Baptism is an act of faith on our part. The command in **Acts 2:38** and **22:16** is to *“be baptized.”* Now think with me – Grammatically, *“be baptized”* is a command, but it is a passive command. God commands us to demonstrate our faith by letting someone baptize us in the name of Jesus Christ. *“Be baptized”* means someone else is immersing us in water. Someone else is acting on us. We receive the action. That is what *“passive”* means.

Just as we receive the physical act of baptism in water, we receive God’s gracious actions on us in the forgiveness of sins and making us alive. In baptism we are born again or born from above with newness of life. And it is God who is working powerfully on us. Baptism is not some work of merit on our part to earn salvation. No, baptism – biblically seen – is an act of faith on our part whereby we receive from God’s powerful working in our lives, just as He powerfully raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God buries our old man of sin, God raises us up, God makes us alive, God washes away our sins, and God makes us new.

When people say, “*you don’t have to be baptized to be saved,*” they are showing that they have missed the point God was making. If baptism is the point in time where God acts upon us – and this is what Paul said in both Romans 6 and Colossians 2 – then baptism would be necessary for us to be saved.

So, we see, there is great importance to immersing in water as baptism. We should respect what God is doing to us by saving us in baptism or immersion. We have no right or authority to substitute sprinkling for immersing in fulfilling God’s commandments. If God is providing salvation to us through our baptism, then shouldn’t we carefully abide by the Lord’s command. Shouldn’t we cooperate with what He has told us to do. Sprinkling and immersing are different things, with different Greek words, they are not the same. While it is true that some have sprinkled people for centuries, calling it baptism, that does not mean this act is baptism, as a matter of fact, it has no Scriptural basis, you cannot find anywhere in the N.T. where it literally says they sprinkled people for baptism. Baptism by sprinkling is an old, human tradition which began centuries after the N.T. was written.

Obedying the Lord doesn’t mean doing what is conventional or doing what is popular. Obeying the Lord means honoring the Lord to the point where you will do what He says. Honoring and respecting God means you won’t add to God commands, or take away from God’s commands, or edit God’s commands to suit yourself. You simply, lovingly, and humbly obey the Lord.

So, why should a person who is penitent and believes in Christ be baptized? There are numerous reasons. Peter told the guilty people at Pentecost in **Acts 2:38**, “***Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***” According to the apostle Peter, *who was being moved by the Holy Spirit of God*, commanded man to be baptized in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and so that you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. People repent and are baptized so that their sins will be forgiven. Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in **Acts 22:16**, “***And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.***” According to Paul, as he recounted his on salvation, baptism is the time when God washes away our sins.

Baptism is also the time we clothe ourselves with Christ and become united with Him. **Galatians 3:26-27** teaches, “***for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.***” According to the apostle Paul, also being moved by the Holy Spirit of God, baptism is a necessary act of faith. Placing your faith in Christ necessarily includes baptism. The faithful sons of God today are baptized into Christ and thus clothed with Christ.

We have already seen in **Romans 6:4-7** and in **Colossians 2:12-13** that baptism is the time when God unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Now in baptism we are also crucified with Him, buried with Him, and raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Since the old man of sin is crucified with Him in baptism, God at that times frees us from sin and its guilt. Baptism is also that time when we begin sharing our new life in Christ and with Christ. From that day forward we are new people who belong to Him. His blood has cleansed and purchased us; we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**).

Also, when we are baptized, the Lord adds us as God's children to the church. The Bible tells us in **1 Cor. 12:13**, *"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."* Baptism unites us with Christ and with those who are in His body, the church.

To be in the church is to be in God's kingdom. Paul wrote the church at Colossae, when he wrote to them, he said in **Colossians 1:13-14**, *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* Forgiveness and membership in the church or His kingdom are benefits of being baptized into Christ. This agrees with what the Lord told Nicodemus in **John 3:5**. This was when He said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* How are we born of water and the Spirit? The only way the Bible speaks of this is through baptism. The Lord says that without baptism we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

In Christ, we also have the grace and blessing of God. **Ephesians 1:3** says, *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."* In Christ, we have the promise of eternal life. **1 Jn. 5:11-12** says, *"And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."* The way to have the Son is to respond to the Son by baptism when you confess Christ and repent of your sins. **Baptism is certainly not the only thing necessary to faith.** We have seen this in the past month that hearing God, believing in Jesus, repenting of sin, and confessing Christ as the Son of God are also necessary to obey the gospel.

Why is baptism so important? It is important because baptism is that culminating act in our obedience. Our faith, repentance, and confession lead us to baptism. But baptism is that point when God acts upon us, transforming us from dead people in sin, to people alive in Christ. That is when we are born again and become members of the Lord's church. To talk about baptism means revealing how God unites us with Christ, saves us, makes us His children. What a blessing! Nothing could be more important for our

salvation **than obeying all that God has said** to do for preparing us to spend eternity with Him.

The N.T. give us many examples of people being baptized the very same day they were taught the gospel. The 3000 who obeyed that first gospel sermon on that first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection, in **Acts 2:41** – notice also that they were baptized that very same day as the sermon. In **Acts 8:12**, when the Samaritans believed the teaching of Philip about Jesus and His kingdom, they were baptized right there. They didn't wait. The Eunuch in **Acts 8:36** asked to be baptized – it was urgent! He wasn't content to wait until another day. He came up out of that water rejoicing. In **Acts 22:16** Ananias asked Saul of Tarsus, ***“why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”*** In **Acts 16** the jailer and his household considered baptism so important that they were baptized in the middle of the night. Why the urgency? Why the emphasis on acting quickly?

I'll tell you why! **Being baptized is necessary for you to be saved.** It is necessary for you to receive the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is necessary for you to be united with Christ and to become a Christian. The Bible never contemplates the idea of a Christian who has not been baptized. Baptism is not something that you do after you have been saved; baptism is the time when God saves you. That's when God takes the blood of Jesus and washes you free from sin and makes you His child. That is why the apostle Peter, still moved by the Holy Spirit of God, said (**1 Peter 3:21**), ***“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”*** According to Peter, and the Holy Spirit, Baptism is how we appeal to God to be saved and to have a clear conscience.

The question that you need to answer today is this: Have I believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God, have I repented of my sins and turned to God, and have I been, as commanded by God, baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit? If not, the bible calls ***“today”*** the day of salvation – won't you be obedient? Wont' you stop be stubborn – the call is to obey; won't you be obedient ***“today”***?