

WORLD VIDEO BIBLE SCHOOL

Fundamentals of the Faith

Charlie DiPalma

LESSON #23 — IS BAPTISM ESSENTIAL?

One of the things that we want to continue in and look at in our study is, what does the rest of the New Testament say on the subject of baptism? Now, we don't want to do that to stress baptism as more important than faith, repentance, confession of the Lord. Baptism is just as important as the others and the others are just as important as baptism. But the religious world has shown that they have trouble accepting the fact that baptism is essential to salvation. Most of the religious world teaches that we're saved before baptism, and that baptism is not necessary. Well, let's compare what the religious world says, with what God says in His Word. Let's look at several passages of Scripture.

The first one is found in the book of Romans. In Romans, the sixth chapter, verses 3-5, first and then we'll look at several other verses in that chapter. Romans 6 beginning with verse 3. "Or do you not know that as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly, we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." What a wonderful passage of Scripture.

Notice the points that God made through the apostle Paul, in this context. First of all, we're baptized into Jesus Christ. Why is that important? It's crucially important, because God says in passages like Ephesians 1, verse 7, that all spiritual blessings are in Christ, including salvation. But there's only one way to be placed in Christ, that is, to be baptized into Christ. So right here, in the very first phrase, of Romans 6, verse 3, we learn, baptism is essential. Because that's the only way that we can be placed in Christ, where all spiritual blessings are located.

But also in verse 3, God tells us that we're baptized into Christ's death. Now, why would that be important? Well, we've seen that the only thing that can wash away our sins is the blood of Jesus, and that blood was shed in his death. So if you and I want to contact the blood of Christ, receive the benefits of that blood, we must be baptized into Christ and into his death. That's why baptism is important, because God says that's where we're baptized into the death of Christ.

And notice in verse 4, that we're buried with Him through baptism. That tells us that baptism is a burial. It's not a pouring or sprinkling. It's an immersion into water, a dipping beneath, a plunging beneath the water. If we bury someone in the ground, do we just take a little dirt and sprinkle it on them? Or pour it on them? No, we place them in the ground and we cover them over with the dirt. And that's what God is symbolizing here. Baptism is a burial. It's an immersion in water. And we're united with Christ, in His death. We're baptized into his death. Just as He was buried in the ground, we're buried in the water.

And notice what he says: "that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we also should walk in newness of life." In the waters of baptism, we go down into the waters of baptism, a person

who is dead, spiritually. Ephesians 2:1 — we're dead in our trespasses and sins. So, Christ was dead as He was buried in the ground. We're spiritually dead as we're buried in the waters of baptism. But Christ arose, He arose from the dead to newness of life, eternal life. And just so, when we rise up out of the waters of baptism, because the Father has cleansed our sins with the blood of His Son, then we have new life. We're a new creature. We've been born anew (2 Corinthians 5, verse 17; John 3, verses 3-5). And we should walk in a different way, we should live in a new way, live a different life than we live before.

Then in verse 5, God tells us, "If we have been united together with Christ, in the likeness of His death..." What's he talking about? We've been united together with Christ in the waters of baptism, when we were buried in the water, like Christ was buried in the ground. So if we do that, if we're willing to be joined together with Christ, in those waters of baptism, and we'll remain faithful, then we'll be united in the likeness of His resurrection. We'll have eternal life in Heaven, at the end of our life upon this earth, if we've been found faithful until death. What a beautiful passage, teaching the importance and the beauty of baptism, where the person who, before their conversion, was dead in their trespasses and sins, is joined together with Jesus. And is united with Him in His death, in His burial, and His resurrection. And all of that occurs in the waters of baptism. What a wonderful passage. But that's not the only one.

Let's look at another passage, this time in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 13. "For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." Now, here, God tells us that by one Spirit, or through one spirit, talking about the Holy Spirit, we have all been baptized into one body. Now what is the one body that he talks about? Well, according to Ephesians 1, verse 22 and 23, the body, the spiritual body of Christ, is the church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Where the saved are added (Acts chapter 2, verse 47). So if you and I want to be among the saved, we need to be baptized into that one body. That body, that church, was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts chapter 20, verse 28). So there's where we contact the blood. And you see how these passages blend together to give the unity of God's teaching on this wonderful subject.

Now, the question is: how is it that it was by one Spirit, that we were all baptized into one body? Some teach, that the Holy Spirit comes and takes hold of your heart and makes you have faith. But that clearly violates the teaching of the Scripture, that each one of us has control of our own mind. We have freedom of will. We must choose whether we're going to follow God (Joshua 24, verse 15; Revelation, chapter 22, verse 17). We've got to make a choice. So that's not how it is that the Holy Spirit baptizes us into one body. Then what is it? The Holy Spirit uses the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6, verse 17). That's the instrument, if you will, that the Spirit uses to pierce our hearts. Because that Word, that Word of God, that Sword of the Spirit is sharper than any two edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). And it's able to pierce our hearts to help us to recognize our sins, and our need for salvation, as happened in the book of Acts, in chapter 2. And Peter preached the Word, used the sword of the Spirit, and in verse 37, it says, that some in that audience were pierced in their heart. By what? By the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. And what did those people do? They repented, and were baptized. That's how it's by one Spirit that we're baptized into one body.

We hear the Word of God revealed by the Holy Spirit in the first century. And we choose to obey God, and be baptized into the one church of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Then in the book of Galatians, Galatians, chapter 3, verse 26 and 27. Galatians 3, verse 26 and 27. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you, as were baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Now, verse 26, God talks to us about being children, or sons of God. And he said, it was through faith that they had become children of God. We've seen that it's not the faith alone that justifies or saves a person, but it's faith which works through love (Galatians, chapter 5, verse 6). So what kind of faith is it that makes us children of God? Well, look at verse 27. It begins with a key word "for." That tells us there's a connection between what God says in verse 26, and what he says in verse 27. In verse 27, God tells us how we become children of God. It's when our faith motivates us to be baptized. Baptized what? "Baptized into Christ." There's that phrase again. The only way to be placed in Jesus is to be baptized into Christ, and thus put on Christ, be clothed with Christ, be united, joined together with Christ, as we saw in Romans chapter 6. These passages go together beautifully, to teach the same thing. Our faith must express itself in our loving obedience to God, including baptism into Christ, where all spiritual blessings are.

Then in the book of Ephesians, Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 5. Ephesians 4, verse 5. Here, God said through His inspired spokesman, Paul, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Now we want to focus on the last part of that verse for the purpose of our study here. There is one baptism that is acceptable to God. Now, there are plenty of baptisms that are being practiced in the religious world. There's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There's baptism by sprinkling. Baptism by pouring. Baptism, not for salvation, but to be added to a denomination. All kinds of baptisms. But God says, by the time that Ephesians 4, verse 5 was revealed, there was one, and only one baptism that was acceptable to Him. It wasn't baptism in the Holy Spirit, because miraculous gifts went out of existence in the first century. So, that baptism is not the one baptism.

What is it that we have seen in our study, from the Gospel accounts, from the book of Acts, from the epistles, the one baptism is the baptism in water, by immersion, for the forgiveness of sins. And by those who can hear the gospel in such a way that they believe, repent, confess the Lord, and then be baptized, and then they are added to the Lord's church. That's the one baptism that is acceptable to God. Do not let anyone convince you any other way. That is the one baptism, and we have seen it clearly in all the passages that we have seen in our study.

Then in the book of Colossians. Colossians, chapter 2, verse 12 and verse 13. Colossians 2, verse 12 and 13. "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Notice again, here we have the same thought, buried with Christ in baptism. Baptism is an immersion, a burial in water. And notice what else he says: also, "you were raised with Him." There's that resurrection, that coming out of the waters a new person, a new creature, with spiritual life, where spiritual death was before. And notice the union of the believer with Christ, in the waters of baptism, seen in these verses, just as we saw in Romans, chapter 6.

Someone says, “Baptism is a work, and we can’t be saved by works.” God says in this verse, that it's our faith in the working of God. Notice that. God says that in verse 12, I didn't make those words up. It's our faith in God's working in the waters of baptism that makes it possible for us to be saved. It's not our working. We're submitting passively. We're not doing anything to earn salvation. We're submitting lovingly and faithfully to God's command, believing that He will work what He said He would work, and that is, to apply the blood of Christ to our sins, to wash them away in the waters of baptism.

And notice in verse 13, he talks about our state, before our conversion, before our obedience of the gospel. Dead in our trespasses and sins. That's consistent with what God said in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, that we're dead. But we're made alive. We're made alive together with Christ, in the waters of baptism, because our sins are washed away in those waters of baptism. And at the end of verse 13, he says, as a result of your faithful and loving obedience to the gospel, including baptism, He has forgiven you all your trespasses, your sins. Those sins in the past, have been washed away, cleansed, they're gone, no longer to be remembered by God. And we can thank Him for that. All seen in the waters of baptism, as this passage so clearly reveals to us.

And then, in 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 20 and 21. 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 20 and 21. “Who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” God, here, makes reference to the Old Testament times when He was working through Noah, who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2, verse 5). And God told Noah, “You build an ark, because I'm going to send a flood to destroy mankind.” And God says that that was an example. That was a type of something that was going to come later. That washing of the flood that destroyed mankind, but saved Noah and his family. Why was Noah and his family saved? Because they faithfully and lovingly obeyed God. They built an ark to the saving of his household, the Hebrew writer talks about. So Noah was saved by water, that is, that water was used to destroy mankind, but that water also held up the ark in which Noah and his family lived, until the waters receded from the earth. And in verse 21, God says, “Here's the antitype.” The type was the water of the Old Testament, the antitype, the fulfillment of that is, what? What does God say? Baptism.

Now, man says, “Baptism doesn't save.” God says, in verse 21, “Baptism saves us.” You have to have help to misunderstand that passage. We plead with people to listen to God. God says baptism saves. And what does God say? It's not taking a bath. It's not washing away the filth of the flesh. That's not what saves us. What is it? It's the answer of a good conscience toward God. How can you and I have a good conscience toward God? We have to have our sins washed away, in order to do that. So God is clearly telling us there's something about baptism that saves us, that gives us a good conscience before God. And that is, that we contact the blood of Jesus, and thus our sins are cleansed, washed away, in His blood. What a wonderful passage that is. And it's very consistent with everything else that we've seen in God's Word on this subject.

That's the last passage that we want to review, in our study of this subject of baptism. But we'd like to go back and summarize now the major points that we've seen, as we've studied these verses. Things about baptism.

First of all, baptism is something that saves us. Mark 16, verse 16 — “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

Then in Acts two, verse 38, it's something by which we have remission of sins, have our sins removed as a result of the blood of Christ.

Chapter 8, verse 39 — We can go on our way rejoicing, knowing that our sins are forgiven.

Chapter 10, verse 47, and chapter 11, verse 14 of Acts — It's the words by which we can be saved, in obedience to those words.

Chapter 16, verse 34 of Acts — The Philippian jailer rejoiced with all of his household because they believed the Lord and obeyed, including his baptism.

Then in the 18th, chapter of Acts, verse 8, and 1 Corinthians 15, verse 1-4 — Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized. And as a result, were saved.

Then in chapter 19, verse 5 of the book of Acts, and Ephesians 1, verse 7 — Those Ephesians were redeemed, bought back, through the blood of Christ, from their slavery to sin, and received forgiveness of sins.

In chapter 22, verse 16 — Saul of Tarsus, responded obediently by being baptized, God says as a result, his sins were washed away.

Then in Romans, chapter 6, verse 3 and 4 — We're baptized into Christ, where all spiritual blessings are, into his death, and we walk in newness of life, being new creatures.

Romans chapter 6, verse 17, and 18 — We are freed from sin when we obey that form of doctrine which is taught to us, and that form of doctrine certainly includes hearing the gospel, believing, repenting, confessing our belief in Jesus, and being baptized into Christ.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 13 — We're baptized into the one body, the church to which God adds the saved.

Galatians, 3:26-27 — We become children of God, and we're baptized into Christ, through this baptism and our willingness to believe and obey God.

Then in Colossians, chapter 2, verse 12, and 13 — We're buried with Christ, we're raised with Him. And it's through faith in the working of God. Not our working, but the working of God, that we're made alive with Him, and our trespasses are forgiven.

And then in 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 21 — Baptism saves us, and it's the answer of a good conscience that we have through faithfully and lovingly obeying God.

Now with all of those Scriptures in mind, is baptism essential, or optional, for the forgiveness of our sins? We believe the answer is clear, and beyond any doubt. We must be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. And we plead with all, if you have not rendered obedience to the gospel, including being baptized into Christ, our prayer is that you will allow these words from God, to work on your heart, to convince you that you must render obedience to the Lord in order to receive the blessings that He promises.