

‘Oh no! Not baptism’ (18)

There is a story about a monastery in Europe perched high on a cliff several hundred feet in the air. The only way to reach the monastery was to be suspended in a basket, which was pulled to the top by several monks who had to pull and tug with all their strength. Obviously the ride up the steep cliff in that basket was terrifying. On his way up, one tourist noticed that the rope by which he was suspended was old and frayed. With a trembling voice he asked the monk who was riding with him in the basket how often they changed the rope. The monk thought for a moment, shrugged, and answered, "Whenever it breaks."

We are continuing our sermon series of **1+2 Peter** and in the midst of where Peter has been reminding us of Christ's suffering and why we need to prepare ourselves for when suffering comes, he mentions some interesting things about baptism. And what were going to see this morning is that God's plan of salvation has been saving souls for thousands of years.

And who are we to come along and try and amend it because we think it may not hold up to the job it was designed to do? After talking about how the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah to those who were disobedient, Peter is going to make a statement which is as plain as the nose on your face concerning salvation. Now when Peter uses the word baptism, he is using it in a way which we call an antitype. Which basically means "a thing formed after some pattern; that which corresponds to a type." You have two things that somehow relate or correspond to each other; one is a type, the other is the antitype.

1 Peter 3:21+22 "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."

In other words Peter says the waters of the flood are the **type**, and the waters of baptism are the **antitype**. Barnes in his commemorative says this, "The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation."

Now all you need to understand about what he says is this, baptism is an important part in our salvation. Let me give you a little history on the subject of baptism. For **1300 years** after the church was established on the day of Pentecost baptism was uniformly practiced by the immersion of a person under water. In other words for **1300 years** after the establishment of the church baptism was practiced as we still practice it today.

Every single person who became a Christian in New Testament times were immersed into water. And notice what I said, every single person was immersed, not a single one of them was sprinkled or poured upon. **John Calvin** says that 'in the early days, baptism was administered by immersion but the church did grant unto herself the liberty to change the rite somewhat'.

Do you understand what's he's saying? He's saying that the Roman Catholic Church changed the rite, changed the practice of baptism, from full immersion to sprinkling or pouring. And in the year **1311** the catholic council met in France and decided that sprinkling or pouring may be used as an alternative mode for baptism.

Now people often say, 'oh you church of Christ people you're always going on about baptism'. Well loved ones if it's important for Jesus to preach it, if it's important for the writers of the New Testament to practice it, then it should be important for us to preach and practice it too. **Because did you know that the Bible speaks about baptism 126 times?**

And in every instance in the Bible it means to dip or immerse or plunge and not once does it mean to sprinkle or to pour. And let me tell you something which may come as a shock to some of you. I don't believe in infant baptism and I don't even believe in adult baptism, but what I do believe in is believer's baptism. The gospel is designed for people who have the ability to believe or not to believe.

That's why Jesus says in **Mark 16:15+16** "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned." It's a believer's baptism, someone who believes and is baptised will be saved, and someone who doesn't believe will be condemned.

You're not saved simply by believing, if you were taught that you were saved simply by believing you've taught a lie. If you believe that you were saved **before** baptism and it doesn't matter when you're baptised then your belief is wrong. **Acts 2:38 "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

Think about it, if your sins were already forgiven **before** your baptism then **what was the purpose of you being baptised?** Because Peter says you're baptised in order to be forgiven and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Listen loved ones; a scriptural baptism is the immersion of a believer in water with a view to receiving the forgiveness of their sins, acceptance by Christ and addition to the body of Christ, the church. And if your baptism doesn't match up to that biblical standard you need to re-examine what you went through, because this really is a salvation issue.

Now what I find amazing these days is that many people don't preach about the importance of baptism in some religious circles **but did you know some of their best teachers used to? The Church of England** for example, in their prayer book, it says, that **'baptism is the ordinance where by a person becomes child of God, a member of Christ and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven'**. And if that doesn't tell us that baptism is important I don't know what does. A child of God, a member of Christ and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven is what you become by means of baptism.

What about John Wesley? We know what the **Methodist** today practice and preach but **John Wesley** on his notes on the **New Testament** says this, **'all who believed in New Testament Times were baptised'**. Wow that's certainly not true today **is it?**

Campbell Morgan who was a **Congregationalist** says **'in the rite of baptism there are two movements, an immersion and an emergence. Immersion is the symbol of death and burial and emergence is the symbol of the resurrection and life of that work of the Holy Spirit there is no symbol so perfect as that of water baptism'**.

Harry A. Ironside who was an active member of the **Plymouth Brethren** says, **"To the lover of the Lord Jesus Christ there can be nothing legal about baptism. It is simply the glad expression of a grateful heart recognizing its identity with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection. Many of us look back to the moment when we were thus baptized as one of the most precious experiences we have ever known."**

Martin Luther says in answer to the question, **'What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow?'** Luther replied, **'It affects forgiveness of sins.'** He also wrote concerning the sinner, **'Through baptism he is bathed in the blood of Christ and is cleansed from sins.'** And finally he said, **'To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism is to save.'** And for those who argue by saying that baptism is working for your salvation, he says, **'Yes, it is true that our works are of no use for salvation. Baptism, however, is not our work but God's.'**

Now the point I'm trying to make is that sprinkling and pouring to replace full immersion is a relatively new thing. And because its practice has only been around for **300 years** or so should warn us that this is a manmade ordinance. And loved ones the religious world around us can practice and teach whatever they want, but the Bible clearly tells us that baptism is important for salvation. Peter makes it very clear in **1 Peter 3:21** that **"Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you."**

But in what way does baptism save you? Well loved ones it's all to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You see there is nothing special about the water you get plunged under, salvation in baptism is not found in the **water**. That's why Peter says in **1 Peter 3:21+22** **"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."**

No loved ones, salvation in baptism is only possible because of the blood of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Because if He had not shed His blood on the cross, if He had not been raised back to life, we would still be in our sins. **1 Corinthians 15:17** **"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."**

But thanks be to God Jesus did rise from the dead loved ones. And because Jesus was raised from the dead, we who are united together in the likeness of His death in our baptism can share in the power of His resurrection as we also rise to walk in newness of life.

Baptism in the Bible is used to mean identification. The relationship between water baptism and spiritual baptism is similar to the relationship of a wedding to a wedding ring. The ring doesn't marry you, but it clearly identifies the wearer as one who is married. The ring identifies one who has made a total, lifelong commitment to another person.

Romans 6:3-5 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 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.”

What Paul is telling us loved ones is that baptism, identifies us with Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection into new life. This identification is not only with Christ but also in the name of the Father and Holy Spirit. And this is significant because it shows that our lives are to be totally encompassed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Paul also more or less says the same thing over in Colossians 2:12+13 “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.” In other words, it is the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead which saves us in baptism so we can be made alive.

Listen to what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 1:19+20 “What is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.”

Now flick over to Ephesians 2:4-6 and read with me, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Do you understand what he's telling us loved ones? He's telling us that by God's saving grace and resurrecting power, baptism can indeed save us. Not because of any cleansing power in the water, but because of what God is doing at that moment.

And did you also know that baptism is an appeal to God? 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.”

What Peter is telling us loved ones is that our baptism is an appeal to God for a clear conscience. And if anyone should know the significance of baptism, it's Peter, after all he was the one who preached the very first gospel message and said to those listening in Acts 2:38 “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Why would he tell them to repent and be baptised if repentance and baptism wasn't important for salvation? Why would Ananias say to the apostle Paul “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” as Paul records it in Acts 22:16? Why would he tell him to hurry up and be baptised if baptism wasn't important for his salvation?

You see baptism was and still is for the remission of sins, to have one's sins washed away by the blood of Christ. And to have a good conscience before God is to have our conscience cleared by the blood of Christ. Hebrews 9:14 “How much more will the blood of Christ, who, being without sin, made an offering of himself to God through the Holy Spirit, make your hearts clean from dead works to be servants of the living God?”

A person is baptized so their sins can be washed away and they can rise to a new life through the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. And like I mentioned earlier the Holy Spirit is given as a gift in order to help you live your Christian life in a way which pleases God. But loved ones I cannot for the life of me understand why some people today disagree with the Bible on this topic.

When I read my Bible I don't see anyone arguing against baptism. I don't read anywhere in Acts 2 people saying must I be baptised? What I see in Acts 2:41 “Those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls.”

I don't read anywhere in Acts 4 people saying I'm not sure if I should be baptised? What I see in Acts 4:4 “Many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

I don't read anywhere in Acts 5 people saying are you sure about this baptism thing? What I see in Acts 5:14 "More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women."

I don't read anywhere in Acts 6 people saying I believe in Jesus and that's all that I need to do? What I see in Acts 6:7 "The word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly."

I remember a few years ago Derren Brown who is a famous illusionist played Russian Roulette, with a real gun, using real bullets, live on TV. And everyone who was watching was just amazed that he was doing it and even more amazed that he lived to tell the story. Now how he did it is a bit of a mystery but the clue is in the title, Derren Brown illusionist.

But let me ask you why are some people playing Russian Roulette with their souls? Your soul is just too precious to God for you to play around with. You know we've all heard people say 'well, I will come to the Lord eventually, I will get baptised next year'. You see loved ones, in the Bible there was none of this, I don't need to be baptised or I will get baptised later this year but what we do see is the opposite.

In the Bible we see a bunch of people who realised they were sinners and they were anxious to be baptised. Look at the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, he didn't waste any time. Acts 8:35-38 "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached to him Jesus. As they went on the way, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Behold, here is water. What is keeping me from being baptized?" And Philip said to him, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may'. And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'. He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him".

What we see in the Bible loved ones are people who believed that Jesus was who He claimed to be and they understood that baptism was important enough for salvation. Baptism was important enough for them to get it done straight away. But let me tell you what's hindering some people, for some it's the fear of the commitment, where they say, 'I'm not sure if I can live up to the Christian lifestyle'.

Well God says you step out in faith today and He will help you in your Christian walk. For others it's pride, where they say, 'I'm not going to be baptised just because you said I need to'. Well maybe they should get baptised because God commanded them to. But for most it's because they don't understand the importance of baptism and they don't see sin like God sees sin.

Some people see themselves as good people but they are still sinners with a sin problem. Some people see themselves as devoted to God but they are still sinners with a sin problem. Some people see themselves as God fearing people but they are still sinners with a sin problem. Some people see themselves as a religious person because they work in charity shops and do a lot of good deeds but they are still sinners with a sin problem. Some people see themselves as people who pray regularly to God but they are still sinners with a sin problem.

I know a man who was just like that and if you would turn your Bibles to Acts 10 we'll read about him. Acts 10:1+2 "Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, who gave gifts for the needy generously to the people, and always prayed to God."

Now if we met Cornelius today, he would remind of us of so many good people in the world wouldn't he? People who devote their lives to God, people who fear God, people who give generously to those in need, people who always pray to God. And we in our minds would say, 'Cornelius yep, he's a good Christian man'.

But loved ones, he maybe well be all of these things but he still has a problem, his sin. And there's only one to deal with sin, which is the way I've been talking about all morning, through baptism. Now you might be thinking but where in the text does it imply that he had a sin problem? Well if you read on you will read that Peter "Commanded not only Cornelius but also his household to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" in Acts 10:48.

In other words why would Peter command them to be baptised if Cornelius and his household were already right with God? Why would he command them to be baptised if they were already in a saved state? They were commanded to be baptised in order to be saved just like every other Christian back then did and every single Christian in the Lord's church today done. And notice again, Cornelius and his household didn't say, 'oh no not baptism, I will do anything but be baptised'

Now like I said earlier if I were preaching this sermon over **300 years ago** there would be no arguing concerning baptism. It's just a real tragedy that so many people today totally ignore the importance of baptism. I mentioned earlier that baptism is like a wedding ceremony and I don't know about you but all of the weddings I've ever been to are beautiful events, especially as those vows are made to each other.

Well loved ones, if you have ever witnessed a true Biblical baptism surely you have to agree that this too is a beautiful event. It's beautiful because it is as sacred and God ordained it as a marriage ceremony. And as both people say, **'for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, I promise to love you and stay with you as long as I live'**.

You see Peter tells us in **1 Peter 3:21+22** "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." Peter says that Jesus the Christ has now gone into heaven and that all things have been made subject to Him.

And Jesus Himself says in **Matthew 28:18-20** "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus says when you step out in faith in the waters of baptism that's your way of saying, **'I promise to love you and stay with you forever'**. And Jesus says, when you're baptised into the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, **'I promise to stay with you forever too, and to help you along my Holy Spirit will live in you to help you keep to your promise'**. Yes baptism is you acting out the gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus but it's also a spiritual marriage ceremony between you and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Loved ones I don't know what kind of baggage you've brought with you today concerning baptism, but I hope and pray you can look at this subject with fresh eyes and allow the Bible to guide you. Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wouldn't tell us that baptism saves, if it really didn't.

Let me encourage you to think about your baptism and ask yourself honestly, if it matches up to Biblical baptism because if it doesn't your still have a sin problem which needs dealt with.