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## Something in the Water

### Part 2 – Does Baptism Save You?

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We're in this series and last week was unbelievable; it was a great morning. This week, we're answering the question "*Does Baptism Save You?*" It's interesting that this week, we had no questions on any of our social media or emails into the office or to me. Not one question about baptism as we invited you to send those in. We didn't get any questions, but we got a lot of comments, a lot of feedback. I was excited by that, thinking maybe we're answering the questions enough. I know for some of you from long ago faith traditions, things you were taught even by your parents we're address in this series. We want everyone to walk out, believer and non-believer, crystal clear about the purpose of baptism.

Last week, we looked at this out of one commentary: "Over the centuries, Christians have debated what baptism accomplishes, to whom it shall be applied, and how much water should be used." And you can tell by the size of our tank up here we've already answered the question of how much water should be used.

Today, we're going to talk about what baptism accomplishes. We already talked about it last week, but we really want to address it and hit this subject head on. We're not afraid of these topics here at Woodland Hills, but I want to talk to the individual and how the individual processes this obedience, this step of baptism *after* salvation, not as part of it.

I also want to talk to us corporately. How do we celebrate baptism? Whatever you have been taught over the years, I just want to ask that you allow the Holy Spirit to call you by name with truth. We don't want to walk away from this number. Last week at Woodland Hills Family Church, 49 people stepped into that water and professed faith. I think we were close to another 20 that were baptized in our first service this morning. So, we are grateful for what the Lord's doing here at our church.

I want you to stay focused on that number as we talk about this. The one thing I loved about last week was that many went online, and friends and family of the 49 who were baptized went on social media and posted pictures. We were celebrating as a church family. The theology of the individual came out in the posts as well as in the comments.

I shared with the staff on Tuesday. I said, "Even when you read some of the comments on the posts, there is still a lot of confusion about what baptism accomplishes and to whom it shall be applied."

I couldn't escape this verse this week. This passage kept coming to my mind and it's found in 2 Timothy 3. We're going to cover a lot of scripture today.

***16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking... I feel we did a lot of teaching last week and today, I feel we are going to be doing a lot of correcting. ...correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

I have been praying a lot this week that the Lord would keep me from a combative spirit. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? I just found myself getting fired up and charged up and I kept praying, "Lord, post a guard at my mouth. Would you please do that?" Some of you are like, "I don't want that, Ted. That's why we come here. Do not put that filter on for the second service. For the old people at 9:00, that's fine, but for this service at 11:00, you go unfiltered."

But, please hear me. I don't want this message today to spawn debate. I don't want us to be arguing and fighting over it. But, some of you grew up in a tradition. I received the comments this week. Without getting into too many details, one person shared with me that there are five steps to salvation. I want you to please hear this from me and this comes from the heart of a pastor who loves you. I couldn't disagree with you more. There are not five steps to salvation. It is faith alone in Christ alone. ***For by grace you are saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*** We're going to talk about works. It's not of works; it's not of man, so that no one can boast about it. That's Ephesians 2: 8-9. Verse 10 says, ***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which he has prepared in advance for us to do.***

I just want to make it as clear as possible today. We believe good works are an overflow of your salvation, not the source of it. I don't want you to leave going, "I really don't know where he stood on that." I want you to know. We believe salvation comes to us by faith alone in Christ alone. It is in the work that Christ did on our behalf. I just think that somewhere along the line, humans get this idea that we've got to bring more to the table, that with our salvation there is some more that we need to do and accomplish and make happen, and that is just not true. Whatever it is you do for the Lord is an overflow of your salvation, not the source of it. This is important to grasp, important to understand.

I was talking to some of my friends who grew up learning the five steps of salvation. I just asked them, "I don't say this to debate you or to argue, but why not seven? Why not eight? Why not ten?" The Lord Jesus didn't hand us five steps to following him. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life and he who believes in me will be saved, will have eternal life."

And now I feel my combative spirit coming out just a little bit. I don't want that, but I feel... If you've ever read the Book of Galatians, it's a tad combative! Why? Because these believers in Galatia are brand new believers and Paul leaves and he sends back a letter. We call it Galatians. He sends back a letter and says, "I'm astonished that you have removed yourself from what you believe. You believed when you heard. When you heard the gospel preached to you, you received it. You received it, you believed it, and you were saved. Now, the Judaizers have come back in and said, 'No, no, no, it's about the law.'"

I don't know how to clear it up any more than what he says in Galatians 3. "Did you receive the Spirit of God by observing the law or by believing what you heard? You received God's spirit. The Holy Spirit

took up residence in you when you believed what you heard, when you placed faith alone in Christ alone.”

I want you to know that every person that steps in this water today... Why we're asking all those questions is because the Spirit of God already lives in them. The Spirit of God doesn't come upon them as they go into the water and out of the water. It's why our shirts say *forgiven*. They are not forgiven after the act, they are forgiven going in because they have placed faith in Jesus.

We know this when we read the scripture: baptism and salvation are so closely associated. This is why we call baptism the first step of obedience. Last week, we looked at it. It's about following the example set by Jesus as he was baptized in the Jordan. It's about obeying the command of Jesus that he gave in the Great Commission. And it's about pointing people to Jesus. This is the purpose of your salvation. We ended with this big idea.

**Salvation, not spiritual maturity, is the only condition for baptism.** We get this question a lot and hopefully we answered it last week. “Am I ready to be baptized?” You only have to ask yourself one question: “Have I placed faith alone in Christ alone?” Belief is the only condition unto salvation, not spiritual maturity.

Some of you are like, “I think I need to see if it stuck. I think I need to wait and process and see if I'm going to live this out” or “I still have some things I'm wrestling with and I'm dealing with and as soon as I get those taken care of, I will follow the Lord in believer's baptism.” We say it's not about reaching a certain level of spiritual maturity or being disciplined. Your discipleship journey after salvation begins with this first step of obedience: following the Lord in believer's baptism.

Here's where it may get confusing for a new believer. Salvation, not spiritual maturity, is the only condition for baptism, but it's very important to understand and it's where we land today. **Baptism is not a condition for salvation.** It's something after salvation. Just to kind of clear this up... I don't want any ambiguity. **Baptism does not save you.** In the comments that I saw by many people celebrating their baptism, I heard people say, “Best decision you ever made. With your baptism, you are now with the Lord.” The theology is coming out. Others clearly proclaimed in their posts and in their remarks, “I am so glad you took this step of obedience.” “I'm so glad you are now professing with this symbol of your salvation.” “You're making an outward profession of an inward decision that you have made.”

**Baptism does not make you right with God.** Jesus makes you right with God. It's called being **justified**. When you were justified... We believe that this would be the scope of salvation. Justification, sanctification, and glorification. With salvation, you are justified, you are declared righteous because of Jesus. Faith alone in Christ alone. And removed from you is the penalty of sin. **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.** (Not you)

Then **sanctification** is where you are being freed from the power of sin over your life. After you place faith in Jesus and upon this earth until the Lord returns, or until you die, you are going to be in the process of being sanctified, becoming more like Jesus, taking on his life, behaviors, beliefs, his words.

Then **glorification** is being removed from the power of sin. When you are glorified, removed completely from you is the very presence of sin. So, getting right with God is justification; you are declared righteous because of Jesus.

**Baptism does not determine where you will spend eternity.** Your salvation determines where you will spend eternity.

I want to look at two texts this morning and these are the text we're not going to shy away from. It would be so easy to just go with all the easy text to teach this, but I want to start with the two most complicated texts to understand.

It's very important, as we talk about this, to understand you are doing theology whenever you take one verse from scripture and another verse from scripture and you correlate those together. You are now in the process of theology. We cannot take... This is the hard work of teaching in small groups and preaching and all that. You have to make sure what you are about to proclaim in this passage fits with all the other scriptures or, in terms I grew up with, jives with all the other scripture. You can't say, "Well, it says it right here..." Yeah, it says it right here, but in light of everything else we have in the scripture... This is taking what we call the whole counsel of God's Word.

The first passage someone will take you to if they want to tell you that baptism is required for salvation is Acts 2: 38. ***Peter replied, "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."*** It's important to understand what this word *for* means here. Here the word *for* means "in view of." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ in view of the forgiveness of your sins." This is now the picture that we have. It's important to take "repent and be baptized" with what we read in Acts 3. What we are going to read in just a second, in Acts 10, is he is proclaiming the gospel. You will see that the believers were those who had received the message. They received the message and then he ordered them to be baptized.

Which is what I'm going to start doing more of around here. I read stuff in the scripture and I'm like, "Why am I not ordering people to do things?" We always ask you to do things and invited you; I'm going to start telling you what to do.

It says the uncircumcised were now accepting Christ. The circumcised believers among them were like, "What is going on?" because they saw the Lord working in the lives of these peoples and it was before their baptism. We'll get to that in just a second so hold onto this text.

The next one is one of four instances we have of the Great Commission, the Great Commission Jesus shares in all four gospels. Mark 16 - ***15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."*** But, now watch this. In his own statement, he clarifies this for those who might think baptism is required for salvation. It's a negative statement, but he's making clear what the condition for salvation is. ***"...but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** He doesn't say, "But whoever does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned."

I'm going to give you three examples of this from scripture before we head into another time of baptism.

**1. Peter and John both heard Jesus say these words, and both of them clearly taught one condition leading to salvation: Faith alone in Christ alone.**

I want to share that with you again and this is in Acts 10. **36 "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37 You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached — 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him."**

**39 "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen."** Again, in Romans, the scripture says that if you will believe in your heart that Jesus has been raised from the dead... It doesn't say "and be baptized, you will be saved." It says that if you believe that Jesus has been raised from the dead, you will be saved.

He's proclaiming the gospel here and then after he proclaims the gospel, we are going to get into how the gospel is received. **41 "He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses..."** Talking here about Jesus. **"...whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."** Now this is proof of his resurrection. **42 "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one..."** Now speaking about the Great Commission to testify that he is the one **"...whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him..."** Again, not belief in baptism. **"...receives forgiveness of sins through his name."**

**44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.** They were saved. We believe that the moment you were justified, declared righteous, the moment you placed faith alone in Christ alone, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in you. It's why it's one of the questions I ask as people step into the water. I asked the 20 this morning that stepped in, "Have you placed faith alone in Christ alone?" Do you know that Jesus is your Lord and Savior?" I love the people last week who were emphatic with it. "Absolutely!" "Do you know that the Spirit of God lives in you right now?" You should see the passion that comes out of some people. But, I want you to see this. **45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.**

There's proof to this too as you get into Verse 47. **Then Peter said, 47 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."** So now they have received the Holy Spirit, they are believers. Now watch this: **48 So he ordered that they be baptized...** I love that! I have that highlighted in my Bible in all different colors. **...in the name of Jesus**

**Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.** The one who heard the Great Commission, who heard Jesus speak the words.

Mark 16: 15-16 is a summary statement of the Great Commission. And Peter, here, clearly testifies to where and how salvation comes to a man or to a woman and it is by faith alone in Christ alone.

**2. The thief on the cross was not baptized, yet Jesus told him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”** Luke 23: 43

People will argue that was before Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost ushered in the Church Age. Please hear this theologically. The Day of Pentecost did not, in no way, shape, or form, change the mode of salvation. In no way, shape, or form did it change it. Salvation has always been about faith alone in Christ alone. Abraham and David were saved the exact same way that you and I are saved. Pentecost did not change that.

One of our assignments in seminary was to lead someone to Christ, teach them about faith alone in Christ alone, and we weren't allowed to use the New Testament. We were just using the Old Testament. Why? Because if it's the Old Testament or New Testament, it's faith alone in Christ alone. The thief on the cross said, “Will you remember me?” and Jesus said, “Yes, today, you will be with me in paradise.”

**3. Martha believed in Jesus and there was no mention of baptism.**

If baptism was a requirement for salvation, then it would be there with belief every time. Let's look at Jesus presenting himself in John 11: **25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”** It doesn't get any clearer than this.

Martha's response: **27 “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”**

So, just to be clear about what we talked about last week, and this is kind of a summary from last week. The purpose of your baptism... If you have placed faith alone in Christ alone, you are **following the example of set by Jesus**. He went into the Jordan, he came up out of the water. That's why we do baptism by emersion. We believe it's going into the water and out of the water. We believe, according to Romans 6, it best represents being buried with him in the likeness of his death, being raised to walk in newness of life.

**You're obeying the command of Jesus.** Go into all the world, preach the gospel, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**You're pointing people to Jesus.**

One last question that we get asked often. I was going to share it last week, but it fits today before we enter into a time of baptism. "Should someone be baptized more than once?" Another way to ask this is "Can I be baptized more than once?"

Let's talk about this for a second. There is some clarity that needs to come out of last week. I referred to a child baptism. I probably need to separate infant and child. If you were baptized as an infant, yes, you need to be baptized after you have placed faith in Jesus. To whom it applies, to whom should be baptized, it's the one who has confessed with their mouth and believed in their heart that Jesus has been raised from the dead. At six months old, you could not do that. So, yes, you would need to be baptized.

"Ted, I was a child. I was eight and it was a very emotional service. The preacher scared the hell out of me..." That was in context, so don't write me your letters. We've been recommended other churches all week; you have no idea. "Ted, I was eight and we watched the left behind movie and I went down and made the decision and I was baptized. I even wrote the dates in my Bible."

Here's what I heard a preacher say last week and I love it. We believe here at Woodland Hills once saved always saved, but we don't believe once prayed always saved. Think about that for just a second. Sometimes parents can lead a child and move a child into giving the right answers.

We were asking our kids yesterday, at 12 and 13. We asked them, "Do you remember? We do. We know where we were and what we were doing. Do you remember placing faith in Jesus?"

My daughter was very honest. She goes, "Yes, I do. I know exactly the place. But, I really feel I started taking my faith seriously about a year and a half ago."

For some of you, that's your story. You've walked an aisle, you were baptized, but now you're saying, "Ted, none of it... I just can't remember it. It isn't just remembering it. I don't know if that was the moment I truly placed faith in Jesus, but I know now. I am a follower of Jesus." Here's simply what we say. If you were baptized after placing faith in Jesus, then you followed the example set by Jesus and obeyed the command of Jesus. I don't even know if that's a complete sentence; I should have worked that out a little bit more. But, with your baptism you followed the example set by Jesus and obeyed the command of Jesus. And we leave this to you to work through.

Many who stepped into the water last week were baptized as infants and they became Christians as adults and that was their story that they shared with me as they stepped in. They go, "I know. I am here today and I am stepping into this water, not to become a Christian. I'm stepping into this water today to tell people I'm a Christian and follow the example Jesus set and to obey the command he gave me. I'm going to be an obedient follower of Christ."

If you are here today and you've made the decision to follow Christ, but you've never been baptized... We did this last week and we're opening it up again. There were so many great stories this week. A lady caught me and she said, "I'm bringing some people who don't know the Lord. I'm going to sit up front on the aisle so they don't have to walk over people. Give it to them!" Don't you love that?

If you are here today and you're ready to follow the example set by Jesus and you are ready to obey the command given by Jesus, and you are ready to point people to Jesus and tell people, "I am a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit lives within me," we have shorts for you, we have a shirt for you, and we have a towel for you.

I told people in the first service that I'm so glad... First service gets off a little bit better because we just take their wet stuff and throw it over the fence and it dries during this service. Just kidding! It's all brand new. That would be so redneck for us to do in the Ozarks, wouldn't it? Some of you are like, "I wouldn't have a problem with that."

We want to celebrate with you. This is a great time in our church. Think about it. Sixty-nine people have been baptized so far in the last seven or eight days. I know the Lord is doing something at this church and I'm excited. Usually churches in the summer... Honestly, churches in the summer start to take a different pace and tone and pastors kind of resign themselves to low attendance and no participation because people are hanging at the lake and their doing the fun stuff. I'm excited that this kind of feels like a back to school time at our church – in September and getting fired up again. But, we are starting summer off with baptism.

On that, I invite you. If you're at the chapel, hop up and run on over. Walk right down this aisle. Walk right up on this stage. Walk back there. We have elders back there to meet you and staff there to meet you and we will welcome you. I loved hearing Kari Brawner; "Welcome! We're glad you're here!" Then you get dressed in brand new shorts and a t-shirt.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that we are so grateful for what you're doing here at our church. So many professing faith in Jesus. We don't want to get away from that. We all just want to rest in that for now and forever. It's the most important decision in the life of a person.

There are many here today and some have been coming forward on vacation and this was not at all in their vacation planning. But, they stepped up and they stepped out and they walked up and into this water to tell people, "I am a follower of Jesus."

I pray for many who are making that decision now. For those that the Holy Spirit is calling by name, I pray that they would simply, where they are sitting, confess their sins before you and declare you Lord of their life. "The cross before me, the world behind me. I am now following Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.