

“...and be baptized...”

Acts 2

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Big Idea: The biblical pattern was established on the day of Pentecost:
“repent and be baptized.”

Introduction & Caution Concerning a Coming Series

Today, you're in for a treat. Not my sermon, though I hope you hear God speaking in it, and find it to be encouraging. The treat I'm referring to, though, is the baptism you're going to witness. Today, two young girls are presenting themselves for baptism – one in each service – and I am tremendously impressed with each one. You'll hear more about that later. But I want to do two things before the baptism.

First, I want to look into the immediate future, with you, and give you a caution concerning a sermon series I'm beginning next week. You know that my preference is to be preaching through complete books. God gave us His message in book form, and I think it's important that we study His message in book form. So over my years here we've studied Colossians and Galatians and 1 Peter and 1 and 2nd and 3rd John and Nehemiah and Genesis and the Gospel of Mark and 1st Thessalonians and Philemon and Habakkuk. I've also started a series on the Psalms that I hope to complete sometime. We have only 143 messages left in that series!

At the same time, I also like to dig into one subject and trace what the Bible has to say about that one subject. I've preached series on biblical leadership, on giving, on hospitality, on peacemaking, on forgiveness, on the soul, on doctrinal issues like the Trinity, and on and on. I've done a lot of topical series in my years here.

What I do not like doing – and what I do not believe to be very helpful over the long haul – is to pick a topic for this week and another topic for next week and a third topic for the week following. It lets you hit a lot of topics and address a lot of issues, but it doesn't let you get very deep into any subject, and it doesn't allow momentum to build in a series so that people begin honestly wrestling with their need to be transformed with regard to the topic of the sermon. So all of my topics are given in the form of a series – usually 5-8 weeks on one topic. And that's what I'm planning to do starting next week.

But there is a temptation that will strike some of you as soon as I announce the subject of my series. Some of you will be tempted to think, “*Well, that topic doesn't have anything to do with me!*” But I want to push back against that temptation, and I want to challenge you to push back as well. Don't let that negative thought take root in your mind when I announce the topic of my next series. Make a decision now that you are going to listen for the voice of God in my next series, even if the topic doesn't appear to be applicable to you. I want you to

fight back. Expect to hear the voice of God in this coming series – even if the devil is speaking in your other ear and is telling you that you don't need to listen. Resist the devil! Can you make a decision to do that before I tell you my subject? Will you trust God enough to make that decision before I tell you what I'm going to be preaching on next?

Now, I'd better announce the subject before some of you start thinking that it must be highly controversial. It isn't. I just know – from my own pastoral experience – that some people mentally check out on this subject. One person – 15 years ago – was quite angry at me for preaching on this subject. But those kind of responses don't negate the necessity of teaching on this subject again.

The subject is 'marriage,' and the temptation I'm asking you to fight is the one that says, *"But I'm not married, so there won't be anything for me."* Or the more painful temptation that says, *"My life partner is gone. I don't really want to hear about marriage."* Let me gently push back against this temptation and ask you to do the same for these reasons.

- 1) Your Bible – whether you are married or not – contains a great deal of teaching about marriage. God knew that not every reader of His word would be married, but He put this teaching in there anyway.
- 2) Some of you will be married some day. You need to hear this series. I'm going to present some things that will good for you to know before you get married.
- 3) Some of you have lost a mate and this is a tender area for you – and will be for a long time. But you have children (or grandchildren) who are married now, and they need you now to help them keep God's perspective as they live with their spouse now. Your own experience will be valuable, but we all need to be reminded often of what God values with regard to marriage.
- 4) And some of you will choose to never marry – an option which the apostle Paul praises. But even so – even if you never marry, you are still a part of a community that if full of people who are married, and you will be a better brother – a better sister – if you understand some of what God is asking of those who are married.

So... be on notice. Next week we begin what I think will be a five-part series on marriage. We'll cover God's **purpose** for marriage, His **plan** for marriage, and His **provision** for your needs within marriage. And then we'll cover two **pledges** that a husband is called to make to his wife and one **pledge** (maybe two) that a wife is called to make to her husband. And at the end of this series, I'm going to invite you to take a step forward toward creating the kind of marriage God describes in the Bible. The health of the body of Christ on earth depends in part on husbands and wives submitting to God and following Him. So if you are a part of the body of Christ on earth, this series – and our obedience to what God says in this series – will have an impact on you. Don't let the devil convince you differently. "Resist him and he will flee," James said (4:7) That's good counsel with regard to the series I start next week.

Introduction & Caution Concerning Today's Baptism

Now let me set up our baptism. A service of baptism also has its temptations, and the temptation we have to resist regarding baptism is the temptation to believe this is simply a fun little ritual. It is that! But it's also an act of obedience which is very dear to the heart of God. Did you know that baptism is mentioned 74 times in the New Testament

- 8 times in Matthew
- 8 times in Mark
- 10 times in Luke
- 11 times in John
- 23 times in the book of Acts
- 13 times in the epistles of Paul
- And 1 time in the letters written by other men

Seventy-four times God's word refers to baptism. We could make it 87 times if we include the references to John the Baptist. John wasn't a Baptist the way we think of that word. He was a baptizer. That's why they called him John the Baptist or we could translate that title as John the baptizer. This 'baptizer' is mentioned 13 times in the New Testament. So whether it's 74 references or 87, it's safe to say that baptism was more than a cute little ritual in the early church. It was an emphasis! There's something in the act of baptism that matters to God – enough so that the Spirit of God inspired the writers of the New Testament to write about it at least 74 times. And it's no accident that baptism is mentioned most frequently in the book of Acts. The book of Acts is the story of how the Spirit established and led the early church. And prominent in that great church planting, church organizing story is this ritual of baptism.

It's interesting to read the first sermon preached to those who would become the original organized church. The sermon was preached by Peter, and it's recorded – in part anyway – in Acts chapter 2. Turn with me, in your Bibles, to Acts chapter 2. Luke describes the scene in verse 1. It's the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and what a day it is going to be – a day that is still affecting your life today. It was that great day we call "Pentecost." It means "the fiftieth day," and it was the day when Jesus fulfilled His promise to send us a Helper. It was the day that the Holy Spirit came to earth to stay. The Holy Spirit had periodically come to earth in Old Testament days, but on the day of Pentecost, He came to stay. Look at verse 2.

² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

One of the immediate effects of the coming of the Holy Spirit was that the apostles began to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. They started preaching. Not preaching focused on the felt needs of the hearers, but preaching focused on the plans and purposes of God as demonstrated in Jesus Christ who had been crucified and was now resurrected. One of those

preachers was Peter, and in Acts 2:14-36, part of Peter's sermon is recorded, and we hear him call men and women to give heed to the story of Jesus Christ. In that first sermon...

- Peter urged his listeners to consider the miracles Jesus performed by the power of God.
- He urged them to recall the death Jesus suffered at the hands of sinful people – people like you.
- He urged them to ponder the resurrection of Jesus from the grave – an event which showed that even death has no power over Jesus.
- He urged them to think about the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God.
- He urged them to contemplate Jesus' authority to send this Spirit who had just arrived in that rushing wind and in those tongues of fire and in this powerful preaching Peter and the other apostles were now engaging in. Preaching which – by the way – was being supernaturally heard in at least a dozen different languages – all at one time. That's what the original gift of 'speaking in tongues' was. It was the ability to speak so that every person there would hear in his mother tongue.

In this supernaturally charged preaching event, Peter was calling men and women to give heed to the story of this man Jesus – who "you nailed to a cross" he adds in verse 23. And as Peter preached, God was at work. Look what verse 37 says about those who were listening.

³⁷...they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

- *"We see now who Jesus is – He's the Son of God who we crucified by our sins. What shall we do?"*
- *"We see now that – even though Christ died, He now lives by the power of God and holds authority over all creation – authority even to send the Spirit of God into our midst. What shall we do?"*
- *"We see now that we're hopelessly overmatched by the very God who we crucified. What shall we do?"*

And Peter gave them two commands. The first two commands given to the people who would make up the early church of Jesus Christ. Verse 38.

³⁸ "Repent..."

Admit that you've been living your life under the false belief that you are the one in charge. Admit this, and then turn toward Jesus – the one who has authority over your life. Repent. This was the 1st call ever given by a man whom God had ordained to preach. Repent. Turn away from your old way of living and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ. That's a message that ought still be preached! Turn away from sin and turn toward Christ! That was the first command. Now look at the 2nd. Verse 38 again.

³⁸ "... and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..."

The 1st call ever given to those who had turned away from sin was the call to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. “Repent and... be baptized.” Your repentance is seen primarily by God (though it will show up in your outward behavior as well), but your baptism is seen by God and the world! It’s a public event! Every once in awhile I get a request for a private baptism, and my inner response is always, “No, no, no, no, no! It’s a public event! It’s designed to be seen and heard by the whole world! And God command is that it be done by “each of you” who follow a crucified and resurrected Jesus. “Repent and... be baptized.” That’s the cadence we hear repeated throughout the New Testament. “Repent and... be baptized.” It’s stated in different ways within different New Testament books, but the pattern is consistent. “Repent and... be baptized.” “Repent and... be baptized.” “Repent and... be baptized.” And that’s what the people did in Acts 2. Look at verse 41.

⁴¹ So then, those who had received [Peter’s] word were baptized...

They heard. They believed. They repented. They were baptized. The same thing happened in Acts 8:12 as Philip preached.

¹² ...when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

The same thing happened when Paul preached. Acts 18:8.

⁸ Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

The pattern is consistent. People heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, they believed, they repented, and they were baptized. That’s how it happened in the ancient Near East, and today you’re going to see the same thing being done in Cedar Falls, Iowa. It’s almost 2000 years since Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to come down to earth and to bring power for the proclamation of the Gospel, but He’s still doing the same thing. He’s **helping** people to hear the Gospel, He’s **awakening** people’s spirit to believe, He’s **generating** new spirits which want to return to Jesus, He’s **calling** those new believers to be baptized, and they’re coming. This is the book of Acts we’re watching here today. We can wish to see it on a grander scale, but let’s not miss what we are seeing! Each of the girls presenting themselves today for baptism (Julia Richards in the 1st service & Olivia Mutchler in the 2nd) has heard the gospel – from faithful parents and grandparents, from faithful Sunday School teachers, from faithful pastors and friends – they’ve heard the Gospel, and they believe.

- They believe that Jesus is the Son of God sent to earth to live as a man.
- They believe that their own sins sent Jesus to the cross to die.
- They believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that Jesus lives today at the right hand of the Father.
- They believe that through faith in Jesus they can receive forgiveness for their sins.
- They believe that their future is best if it is put in the hands of Jesus.

- They believe in Jesus! So now it's appropriate for each of them to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. This is the book of Acts come alive before our eyes!

Baptism is the formal proclamation that a person has believed in Jesus and intends to enter into the life of His church. This proclamation matters to God, and it mattered to the early church, and it matters to us as well. This baptism is one more in a long string of baptisms that have taken place since Acts chapter 2. We rejoice in it! We praise God for it! And we pray that our next baptism will be soon – one after another – as they were in the book of Acts.

The Baptisms

- **Each one** of the young women being baptized today has taken the initiative to seek me out and to request of me that they be baptized. It wasn't their parents seeking me out. It was these girls – each one acting on her own.
- **Each one** has persevered in her desire to be baptized. This desire has remained with them over a period of time. I think that's important with children. I don't want children presenting themselves for baptism for any other reason than as a response to the abiding call of God.
- **Each set** of parents has agreed that their daughter's desire to be baptized is genuine and lasting.
- And finally, **each girl** has spoken one-on-one with me.

And let me tell you, these are two tremendously bright, articulate, spiritually discerning young women. I've been so impressed with each one. I like being the pastor to young women like these. I want more young men and women like these. I want more new believers of all ages who will come to me and say, "*I want to be baptized as a believer in Jesus Christ.*" What will it take to see more? Let's pray!