

The Purpose of Baptism (3rd)

(The purpose of baptism is aligned with an understanding of the finished work of Christ. Too often in the worship of God today, baptism is centered on an emotional experience of the candidate or the increasing of a membership role. Hopefully, our study today will give deeper insight to the purpose of baptism.)

Today we will conclude our study of the purpose of baptism.

While the person who is baptized does receive the answer of a good conscious toward God (I Pet. 3:21), the foundation of baptism is Jesus Christ and His Person and work. We have shown previously that baptism is a sign of repentance towards God, a sign of obedience to the gospel, a giving up of one's self to God, and a sign that one is devoted to walking in obedience to God in newness of life. Now let us consider that baptism is a sign of remission of sins.

We find in Mark 1:4 and in Luke 3:3 that those who John baptized were baptized “for the remission of sins.” Mark 1:4 says, “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” And Luke 3:3, states, “And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” On the day of Pentecost, to those that asked what they should do, Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . .,” Acts. 2:38. There have been much discussion concerning the phrase “for the remission of sins” particularly around the Greek word *εἰς* which is translated “for.” Some maintain that a person is to be baptized “in order to” having his sins remitted. This Greek word translated “for” is the same word that is translated “at” in Matthew 12:41, “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented **at** the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” Obviously, the men of Nineveh did not repent “in order to” get Jonah to preach. The parallel passage in Luke 11:32 teaches the same as this passage. Romans 4:20 also bears this out: “He staggered not **at** the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” It was not Abraham’s faithfulness that caused the promises of God to be. Just as the promises of God were prior to Abraham’s faith, so was the remission of sins through the finished work of Christ a reality prior to baptism in Acts 2:38. Therefore, when one is baptized he is testifying that he believes his sins have been remitted through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Too often today baptism is seen as a sign that someone is added to the congregation and the number of members has increased rather than a genuine sign that a person has confessed their sinfulness and that their sins are remitted by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

This is one of the reasons that the Lord called Paul to preached the gospel of God. The Lord said to him, “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me,” Acts 26:16-18. Note that one of the reasons for preaching the gospel is so that the believer “may receive forgiveness of sins.” The gospel is not what causes the forgiveness of sins, nor does believing the gospel produce the forgiveness of sins. However, when one believes the gospel, the truth of the forgiveness of sins (remission of sins) is received by the believer in his heart and soul. One cannot receive what is not. Therefore, the forgiveness or remission of sins must be a reality or in existence to be received. Too often the preaching of today is centered around family living, victory over social sins, receiving counseling so that one will have a better quality of life, or entertainments so that the audience will “feel better” about themselves or life. How often do we hear of the depravity and sinfulness of man and the need of his sins

being removed by the work of Christ? Not that Jesus has removed all the sins of the human race and now it is left up to you to give some acknowledgement to that and then everything else is okay. But that Christ actually accomplish salvation for His people and that those for whom He died are regenerated, see their sinfully wicked state, and flee to Christ for the remission of their sins. Afterwards, upon such a faith, the repentant sinner testified of this truth by baptism.

Another purpose or reason for baptism is the testimony of the believer that he was in fellowship with Christ in His (i.e., Christ's) death. In other words, the believer is testifying that when Christ died he (i.e., the believer) legally and judicially died with Christ and was equally resurrected with Him. And since baptism is a picture or figure of the death and resurrection of Christ (I Pet. 3:21), the one baptized is testifying that he, too, is walking in fellowship with Christ, Rm. 6:1-7.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

In conjunction with this passage, let us look at Ephesians 2:1-10: “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Obviously, we do not have time to discuss the entire passage, but I wanted to quote all of it to familiarize us with the context. As you see, it tells us of our depravity of being “dead in trespasses and sins.” This speaks of our fallen condition due to our legal status in Adam when he fell in sin, Rm. 5:12. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” We sinned in Adam and were judicially and legally constituted sinners as stated in Ephesians 2:1-3. In verse four we see the antitheses in with “But God.” In verses five through seven, we find that God “when we were dead in sins ... quickened us together with Christ ... raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” The phrase “hath quickened us together with” is one Greek word (συζωοποιέω [syzōpoiēō]) and it means that when Christ was quickened we (the believer/sheep) were likewise quickened. (The only other time this Greek word is used is in the parallel passage in Colossians 2:13.) Likewise, the phrases “hath raised us up together” (συνεγείρω [synegeirō]) and “made us sit together” (συνκαθίζω [synkathizō]) are each from a single Greek word and indicate that what happened to the one (Christ) equally happened to the believer. (The Greek word to raise up together is only in two other verses, Colossians 2:12 and 3:1 which are also parallel to the passages here in Ephesians. The word for sit together is only use in one other place, Luke 22:55.) Pulling all of this together, we see that when we are baptized we are not merely testifying that we are a believer in Jesus. We are also testifying that we were legally and judicially represented in Him in His sacrifice for us and

that we are now fellowshiping Him in a living way by walking in fellowship with Him. Our fellowship (lifestyle) is no longer with the world, but it is with Christ. This is what is meant by the sign of the believer being engrafted into Christ, Gal. 3:27. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

From the statements given from the confessions regarding the purpose of baptism, both Protestants and Baptists would agree with much of what has been said in the last two podcasts regarding the purpose of baptism. As previously discussed, naturally we would not agree that it is a sacrament or that it is a “seal of the covenant of grace.” Since we have discussed these differences before, there is no reason to do so again. Also, our time is up for today and, the Lord willing, we will begin to consider the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper in our next podcast.