

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life:  
(6) Following Jesus Christ Rightly -- #2: the Believer’s Baptism by Immersion**

**Introduction:**

In this important series of sermons on the basics of Christian living, we first addressed matters that are essential to salvation. We considered what it is initially *to come* in faith to Jesus Christ for salvation. We then spoke of the essential importance *to follow* Jesus Christ, after having come to Him, so that you may receive “the end of your faith-- the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:9). It is absolutely necessary to come to Jesus Christ and then to follow Him as one of His disciples in order to receive salvation from sin. But then last week we began to address matters that are not essential to salvation, but that are, nevertheless, very important to know and do if we are to experience the fullness of God’s blessing in the Christian life. And so, we are now considering how *we may follow Jesus Christ rightly*.

The first subject that we addressed last week under this heading was the great importance for *the new believer to join himself to a local church*. Today we will consider, secondly, the manner of entrance into the church of Jesus Christ, which is *the believer’s baptism by immersion*. But before we consider this topic, I would like to say a few more words about last week’s subject regarding the importance of joining a local New Testament church.

First, we affirm that *it is the will of God that every true Christian is to commit to be a member of a local church*. Every Christian in the New Testament, who was able to do so, joined himself to a local church comprised of disciples of Jesus Christ. “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The idea of a Christian existing apart from a local church is foreign to the New Testament Scriptures. All Christians are to join local churches.

Secondly, we affirm that *the local church is the only institution identified in the Word of God through which the work of the Lord is conducted*. In emphasizing the role of the local church, we are not denying the value and usefulness of parachurch ministries. But we would assert based upon Scripture that the local church of Jesus Christ is the primary institution through which the Lord conducts His work of evangelizing the lost and discipling converts. The local church is where the Christian will be best instructed and most assisted in living for Jesus Christ in this world.

Thirdly, the Lord has ordained that *the local church is the primary defender and promoter of the truth of God’s Word in the world*. The local church is “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The local church is to teach the truth, proclaim the truth, publish the truth, and defend the truth. The local church is to assure that the truth is delivered to the next generation of churches that will do the same.

Fourthly--and this is the matter to which I wanted to give emphasis before moving onward-- *the Lord has purposed the local church to provide a haven of spiritual protection for His people within this fallen world*.<sup>1</sup> We live and move in a fallen world. And although the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of this world-- He is King of kings and Lord of lords-- the fallen world is still the haven of the wicked one. The devil is “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). But thankfully he has been deposed from the lofty position he once held so that he no longer has power to defeat the people of God. When our Lord rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, He was exalted above all spiritual authority, both good and evil authorities, including the devil. Paul prayed that new Christians would perceive

<sup>19</sup>what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power <sup>20</sup>which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>*far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every*

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<sup>1</sup> I have spoken of this many times to many individuals, but until today I have not set it forth in our notes.

*name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.* <sup>22</sup>And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:19-23)

The Lord Jesus spoke of the impending deposing of the devil from his seat of authority. He said,

“Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup>And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” (John 12:31f)

The devil is no longer the ruler of this world as he was before the crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Yes, he continues to be the great force of evil in this fallen world. But he no longer has the authority that he once possessed. **Martin Luther** set forth the truth rightly:

And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.<sup>2</sup>

The devil's rage is great, but our Lord's authority over him is greater. The devil knows his time is finite and he is filled with animus toward the Lord and His people. We read of this in the Revelation 12. The apostle John wrote these words:

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

<sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. <sup>4</sup>His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. <sup>5</sup>She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. <sup>6</sup>Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

<sup>7</sup>And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, <sup>8</sup>but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. <sup>9</sup>So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

<sup>10</sup>Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. <sup>11</sup>And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. <sup>12</sup>Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time. (Rev. 12:1-12)

Contrary to the popular view that this is an event that will take place in a future seven-year tribulation period just prior to the Second Coming of Christ, this passage describes the spiritual realm of this entire church age. Israel gave birth to the promised male Child, who, upon His resurrection and ascension from the dead, “was caught up to God and His throne.” Upon the enthronement of Jesus as Lord, the devil was “cast out of

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<sup>2</sup> The third stanza of “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

heaven”, that is, he was deposed of his uncontested authority over the nations that he had formerly possessed. But upon losing his “seat” in the heavens, he “has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows he has a short time.” But thankfully the Lord protects His own from the devil. And what we are asserting is that ***it is within the local church that the Lord protects His people best from the rage and wiles of the devil.***

We may see this clearly set forth in our Lord’s dealings with the sinning member of the church at Corinth. We read in 1 Corinthians 5:1ff of the incident. Paul wrote:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles-- that a man has his father's wife! <sup>2</sup>And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. <sup>3</sup>For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. <sup>4</sup>In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>5</sup>deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5:1-5)

This professing Christian, who was a member of the church at Corinth, had been committing egregious sin. Paul was concerned about the adverse effect upon the church if this man remained a member of the church. Paul was also concerned about the salvation of this man. He had not been suffering the consequences of his sin, which might have led to his repentance. His membership in the church protected him from the devil, who apparently had been unable to afflict him, even to take his life. Because this man was a member of this church, the man was kept from the devil’s maliciousness toward him. Therefore Paul instructed the church to excommunicate this man. The very act of dismissing him would be to “deliver such a one to satan for the destruction of the flesh.” Those outside of the local church are vulnerable and susceptible to the devil’s power and wrath. Those in the church are preserved by the Lord from the devil’s rage.

Now before we pass on from this very important reason to be a member of a local church of Jesus Christ, let us consider one more dimension to this matter. Different local churches are able to afford different levels of spiritual protection for their members. We may see this to be true based upon our Lord’s addressing the seven churches of Asia Minor, which is recorded in Revelation 2 and 3. The Revelation opens with John’s vision of our Lord Jesus serving as High Priest in the heavenly temple, trimming seven lampstands, each representing one of seven local churches (Rev. 1:12-20). The Lord dictated to John seven letters to the seven churches. In each letter the Lord either commended the church for its faithfulness or He criticized, even condemned the church for its defections and deficiencies. The Lord promised to either bless or curse the church, depending on its faithfulness. He even warned one church sharply that He Himself would fight against those in the church who failed to repent of their sins. We read His words in revelation 2:16 to the church at Pergamos, “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.”

Now when we consider what it was that our Lord was examining regarding these churches, two areas of concern immerge. The Lord would either bless or curse a church depending on how faithful a church was to each of these two matters. **First**, the Lord either pronounced His approval or His disapproval based upon ***the purity of the doctrine*** each church held and proclaimed. And **second**, the Lord either pronounced His approval or His disapproval based upon ***the holiness of the members*** of each church. A local church that was sound in its doctrine and whose members were striving to live holy lives, were churches that the Lord Jesus promised to bless and preserve. A local church who holds and promotes false doctrine and whose members are sinning egregiously will encounter the judgment of the Lord Jesus. This underscores the importance of a church to be confessional in nature--confessing and proclaiming sound biblical doctrine, and a church that attempts to maintain a regenerate church membership, members who are committed to live holy lives before the Lord.<sup>3</sup> It is very important to find a church to join that we are assured has the Lord’s protection and blessing. The doctrine and discipline of the church is critically important.

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<sup>3</sup> The keys to assuring this will be true of a church is if it extends membership only to those who give evidence of regeneration and for that church to practice biblical discipline of its members when necessary.

Let us now turn our attention to the second important truth that we must do if we are to follow Jesus Christ rightly.

## #2: the Believer's Baptism by Immersion

### I. The Biblical teaching respecting the mode of baptism-- immersion only

The Bible teaches that baptism is the immersion of a believer in water. Although many churches practice baptism by the mode of sprinkling water upon the one being baptized, and some practice baptism by pouring water on the head of those baptized, the Bible neither commands nor illustrates baptism except by immersion only. Many paedobaptists, that is, those who baptize infant children, have acknowledged this. **John Calvin**, one of the greatest men of God in history, himself a paedobaptist, who wrote some very hard things against those who practiced baptism by immersion, wrote these words:

Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term baptize means to immerse, *and that this was the form used by the primitive Church*. (Calvin's Institutes, Book III, Chapter 15, Part 2, Section 19.)

Calvin was wrong in saying the mode of baptism does not matter. We are bound to conform our belief and practice to the Holy Scriptures. But even Calvin acknowledged that the practice of the apostolic churches was baptism by immersion. This is a common acknowledgement among numbers of paedobaptists.

Let us consider the arguments for baptism by immersion. **First**, the Greek word, βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), means to dip or immerse. This could be substantiated fully from citing ancient writings, both in and outside of Scripture, in which the word was used. As one has written,

The clear and simple meaning of *baptizo* in the New Testament, when describing the physical baptism of disciples, is to dip or immerse. This understanding is based on consistent etymology<sup>4</sup>, historical usage in Josephus<sup>5</sup>, and the internal grammar of both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>6</sup>

Many paedobaptists resist this argument, saying that the Greek word does not mean to dip or immerse, but their efforts are quite futile and are commonly shown to be weak and flawed.<sup>7</sup> The fact is that most Greek lexicons provide as their definition of *baptizo* is "to dip" or "to immerse."<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, when the Greek Testament was translated into English, rather than translating the word βαπτίζω as "immerse" or "immersion", as they should have done, because the translators practiced baptism by sprinkling, they transliterated the Greek word into English rather than translated the word into English. And so, the word "**baptize**" was invented for the English language rather than the Greek word being translated into English, as say, "immerse." The Bible teaches baptism by immersion. This way they could perpetuate their practice of sprinkling as a mode of baptism with English readers not knowing the meaning of the Greek word.

**Second**, the record of those who were baptized as recorded in the New Testament is consistent with immersion as a mode, rather than sprinkling. For example, consider **John the Baptist** baptizing in the Jordan River. We read in **John 3:22** and **23**,

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<sup>4</sup> **Etymology** is the study of the history of words, how their form and meaning have changed over time.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived and wrote in the first century.

<sup>6</sup> Fred A. Malone, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone* (Founders Press, Cape Coral, FL, 2007), p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> For example, consider Malone's response to John Murray and Duane Spencer in the above book, pp. 211ff.

<sup>8</sup> Why was the word transliterated from Greek into English as "baptize" rather than "immerse"? The translators of the English Bibles believed in the practice of sprinkling and to translate the word would conflict with their convictions, so they transliterated the word rather than translated it into English.

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, *because there was much water there*. And they came and were baptized.

Why did John baptize in Aenon? “Because there was much water there.” This setting for baptism is consistent with the need to immerse his subjects. If John were baptizing by sprinkling, much water would not be necessary; he would not have needed to baptize in the Jordan River.

Now it is important for us to recognize that John’s baptism was not Christian baptism, but it was a precursor to Christian baptism. Later after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, baptism was infused with new meaning. Baptism was thereafter performed in the name of the blessed Holy Trinity. After the resurrection of Christ believers were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in obedience to the command of the risen Lord Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18f). John did not baptize with this Trinitarian formula. Furthermore, Christian baptism was administered to believers in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord over the Kingdom of God. John did not baptize people with view toward Jesus specifically; his baptism was with regard to the soon coming of the kingdom of God. Both John’s baptism and Christian baptism were performed upon people who repented of sin. But Christian baptism was only performed upon people who believed on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, subsequent to his death on the cross and His resurrection, and as a consequence they had repented of their sins.

After the Lord was crucified, buried, and resurrected, John’s baptism was no longer to be practiced and was no longer regarded as valid. We see this suggested to us in an event recorded in Acts 19.

<sup>1</sup>And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples <sup>2</sup>he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

And they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup>And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?”

So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

<sup>4</sup>Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” <sup>5</sup>When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues (i.e. foreign languages) and prophesied.

Now it seems to me that these ones who had been baptized according to John’s baptism had been so baptized after our Lord had been resurrected. Someone who had known only John’s baptism had left Palestine shortly after and before the ministry and passion of the Lord Jesus had transpired. He had travelled to Asia Minor (the western region of modern day Turkey) and there preached the message that John the Baptist had proclaimed to him, and then he baptized those who believed in his message. But apparently the idea of baptism had undergone development without his knowledge. Only Christian baptism was now legitimate baptism. And so what he had done was not legitimate; he had not administered Christian baptism. And so, Paul did not re-baptize these people; rather, he administered legitimate baptism for the first time upon these believers. God then legitimized Paul’s actions by causing these believers to experience the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them that Christians had experienced at Pentecost.

And yet, we need to realize that the apostles who had each been baptized by John the Baptist did not need to have their baptism repeated. Rather, they simply viewed their baptism as infused with new meaning and significance after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We may glean this from an event that is recorded in Acts 1. The apostles were waiting and praying for the Day of Pentecost to arrive, when the risen Lord Jesus would baptize them in the Holy Spirit. But there were only eleven of them now, not twelve, for Judas Iscariot was gone, after having hung himself after having betrayed our Lord. The apostles felt the need to replace Judas, for they saw the need for twelve apostles, not eleven, since there were twelve tribes of Israel over which they were to rule (cf. Luke 22:28ff). And so we read in Acts 1:15ff.

<sup>15</sup>And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, <sup>16</sup>“Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; <sup>17</sup>for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” <sup>18</sup>(Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. <sup>19</sup>And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup>For it is written in the book of Psalms:

‘Let his habitation be desolate,  
And let no one live in it’;

and,

‘Let another take his office.’

<sup>21</sup>Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup>*beginning from the baptism of John* to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” <sup>23</sup>And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup>And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen <sup>25</sup>to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup>And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

An apostle had been baptized by John, but there is no suggestion or example that they submitted to a second baptism, Christian baptism, after our Lord had been raised from the dead. Their own baptism had been infused with new meaning and significance upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, no doubt through His teaching them after His resurrection.

Regarding the mode of baptism by immersion we may also consider the occasion when **Philip** baptized the **Ethiopian Eunuch**. We read in **Acts 8** of Philip preaching the gospel to the Ethiopian Eunuch. The Ethiopian had come to Christ in faith. We then read beginning with verse 36:

<sup>36</sup>Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

<sup>37</sup>Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

<sup>38</sup>So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And *both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water*, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup>Now *when they came up out of the water*, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:36-39)

Now which mode of baptism is consistent with the evidence? They both *went down into the water* and Philip baptized him. Is this consistent with the mode of sprinkling, or even pouring? No, but rather immersion fits the setting of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch.

**Third**, baptism by immersion is consistent with the believer’s union and identification with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection life. The apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 6:1ff**,

<sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that *as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death*? <sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been *united together in the likeness of His death*, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup>For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Paul associates the mode of baptism with the believer's union with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection life. Which mode of baptism portrays burial and resurrection? Does sprinkling or immersion? Of course the answer is immersion. Sprinkling as a mode of baptism may convey the idea of cleansing, but not burial and resurrection. Only immersion depicts this important aspect of the faith and life of the believer. The Bible teaches baptism by immersion and immersion only.

**Fourth**, Paul makes the same association between the mode of baptism and Christ's death and burial in **Colossians 2:11 and 12**. There we read,

<sup>11</sup>In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, <sup>12</sup>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.

First of all, take note that Paul speaks of circumcision and baptism in the same context. This is the only place in the Bible where the two ideas are found in relation with one another in the same passage. Based on these verses paedobaptists say that New Testament baptism is the replacement of, and substitute for, Old Testament circumcision. Because Israelites circumcised their sons when they were eight days old, Christians should baptize their children in infancy. But consider what Paul argues respecting circumcision and baptism. He does not identify or associate circumcision with baptism, but rather physical circumcision is compared with an inward work of grace that Christ performs in the hearts of His people, a spiritual circumcision "made without hands." Furthermore, baptism is associated with Christ's burial (v. 12), and so once again we see that the mode of immersion alone fits the association with Christ's burial; sprinkling as a mode fails to do so.

**Fifth**, Paul associates the idea of baptism by immersion with the Red Sea crossing under Moses. We read in **1 Corinthians 10:1-4**,

<sup>1</sup>Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup>*all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea*, <sup>3</sup>all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Here Paul associates baptism with the Israelites passing through the Red Sea in the days of the Exodus. The people had the sea as walls on either side of them as the cloud was above them (cf. Exod. 14:22). This depicts the Israelites as being immersed with water along with Moses, being identified with him in this "baptism." In the same way believers are baptized into Jesus Christ through their own immersion in baptism.

All of the New Testament evidence points to the mode of immersion as that practiced by the churches of the first century.

## **II. The Biblical teaching respecting the subjects of baptism--disciples only**

Many paedobaptists have acknowledged that the Bible never directly commands or illustrates the baptism of infants by sprinkling. **B. B. Warfield**, a well-known and respected reformed, but paedobaptist theologian, wrote these words,

It is true that there is no express command to baptize infants in the New Testament, no express record of the baptism of infants and no passage so stringently implying it that we must infer from them

that infants were baptized. If such warrant as this were necessary to justify the usage, we would have to leave it completely unjustified...<sup>9</sup>

We Baptists are often accused of not being genuinely reformed because we reject infant baptism, and that by sprinkling. But we would argue that we are being true to one of the major principles of the reformation, *Sola Scriptura*. If a belief or practice is not taught, described, or illustrated in Scripture, it is not to be believed or practiced. But those who are reformed but are paedobaptist will acknowledge that the intentional baptizing of non-disciples is never directly commanded or clearly illustrated in the Scriptures, yet they say that churches are under obligation to do so. They believe and teach that it is a sin to withhold baptism from your infant child since you are a believer.<sup>10</sup> We would argue, “Who is it that is violating a principle of the Reformation, we, who demand Biblical evidence for the practice, or those who say it is required of us but can give no Scripture to command us to do so?” As Baptists we are bound to the truth of the Scriptures alone as our rule for faith and practice.

There was a book written in the 1800’s entitled, *Baptists, Thorough Reformers*. Its author was named after our president, **John Quincy Adams**. It was required reading in Spurgeon’s Pastors’ College. In this book the author makes his point by citing a little tract written during that time. It was called, “Mick Healy, the Bible Reader”, published by the American Tract Society. Here is the thrust of the tract:

Mick had been a strict Roman Catholic for 50 years. One day he accidentally found a Bible, and commenced reading it. The more he read, the more he neglected the Romish services. The priest at length heard of it, and visited Mick, and sought to get the Bible from him. (Catholics were forbidden to read the Bible before 1963.) Failing in this, he began to expostulate with him. He told him he must not read it anymore; and reminding him that he had not been to confession for a long time, he told him he must come and confess, for it is his duty. Mick held out the Bible to the priest, and said, “Will your reverence please show it to me in the Book.” Now this is just what we say to all the arguments of the paedobaptists. They tell us that all Christian parents should have their infant children sprinkled. We say, “Will you please show it to us in the Book.” They tell us that sprinkling will do us as well as to go “down into the water,” and be “buried with Him in baptism,” and “come up out of the water.” We say, “Will you please show it to us in the book.”

After some time, Mick united with a Protestant church, and regularly attended Sunday school. The children used frequently to gather around him, and put questions to him, to hear his answers:--“Well, Mick, why don’t you now pray to the Virgin Mary?” “Because it is not in the Book.” “Why don’t you confess your sins to Peter and Paul, Mick?” “Because it is not in the Book.” “Why do you believe the Bible to be sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, without tradition?” “Oh, sure, it is all in the Book.” “Must everything in religion be proved by the Bible, Mick?” “Yes; whatever is not so, is only moonshine.” Now our paedobaptist friends ask us why we do not sprinkle infants; we reply, “It is not in the Book.” They wish to know why we “go down into the water,” and immerse those who believe, and “come up out of the water.” We reply, with Mick, “Oh, sure, it is all in the Book.” They ask why we do not admit to the Lord’s Table with us those who are unbaptized.” We reply, “Because it is not in the Book; and whatever is not in the Book is moonshine.” We aim to be Bible Christians, and to make our churches Bible churches. In upholding Baptist sentiments, we simply aim to perpetuate primitive Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Warfield went on to justify the practice, nevertheless. The quote continued reads, “But the lack of this express warrant is something far short of forbidding the rite; and if the continuity of the church through all ages can be made good, the warrant for infant baptism is not to be sought in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament where the church was instituted and nothing short of an actual forbidding of it in the New Testament would warrant our omitting it now.” This argument assumes that New Testament baptism is the same as Old Testament circumcision, which is an unbiblical assertion.

<sup>10</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* says of those Christian parents who fail to have their children baptized, “Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance...” Article 28, paragraph 5.

<sup>11</sup> John Quincy Adams (named after the president), *Baptists, Thorough Reformers* (Backus Books, 1980, orig. 1876), pp. 162-165.

As one once wrote, so we say,

Show us an instance of the baptism of an infant in the primitive churches, and we will then baptize infants. But until you do, we will oppose infant sprinkling as an innovation of man, having no divine authority, and therefore sinful, when performed in the name of Jehovah.<sup>12</sup>

Let us consider the Baptist arguments for the baptism of believers only. First, the Bible contains clear commands to baptize believers but no command to baptize infants. Consider these passages: **Matthew 28:18f** reads,

<sup>18</sup>Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and *make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them* in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

Here we see a direct and positive command of our Lord to baptize disciples, and them only. If it were the will of God for churches to baptize disciples and their children, would not our Lord have commanded it here? But there is no hint or suggestion of such a practice.

We see this also in **Mark 16:15f**.

<sup>15</sup>And He (Jesus) said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. <sup>16</sup>*He who believes and is baptized* will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

In this command of our Lord what is implied is that faith preceded baptism. Before we baptize, we look for faith, for evidence of faith in Jesus Christ.

Consider also that **John the Baptist** refused to baptize anyone until evidence of *repentance* was demonstrated. Repentance, of course, is an act and evidence of faith. We read in **Matthew 3:1-12**:

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup>and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” <sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
Make His paths straight.”

<sup>4</sup>And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup>Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him. <sup>6</sup>and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup>Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, <sup>9</sup>and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. <sup>10</sup>And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>11</sup>I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>12</sup>His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

John refused to baptize those until they manifested repentance from sin. Now we would acknowledge that John's baptism preceded Christian baptism, but the same principle abides. As John refused to baptize

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 162.

unrepentant people, so we refuse to baptize any but those who have repented of their sins. Infants being unable to repent are not to be baptized.

### III. Further arguments of the Biblical teaching of baptism of disciples by immersion only

1. In the New Testament there is a clear command to baptize believers but there is no command to baptize infants.

2. The Scriptural order is always believe and then be baptized. Every baptism recorded in the New Testament is of this nature.

#### (1) Acts 8:36-38.

<sup>36</sup>“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’

<sup>37</sup>Then Philip said, ‘*If you believe with all your heart, you may.*’

And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’

<sup>38</sup>So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

#### (2) Acts 10:44-48.

<sup>44</sup>“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup>And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup>For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup>“*Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*” <sup>48</sup>And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

#### (3) Acts 16:14-15.

<sup>14</sup>“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘*If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.*’ And she constrained us.”

#### (4) Acts 16:29-34.

“Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’

<sup>31</sup>So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’

<sup>32</sup>Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

<sup>34</sup>Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

#### (5) Acts 18:8.

“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. *And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and they were baptized.*”

3. Baptism is the initiatory rite into a believing community; the church; therefore, it should only be done to believers.

4. When all the passages that speak of household baptism are taken into view, two significant conclusions can be reached. One, the descriptions given of households never mention an infant and they show that a household does not necessarily include infants. Two, every description of baptized households gives compelling evidence that all the baptized people exhibited personal faith before they were baptized. They were instructed, they feared God, they rejoiced, they served.

#### IV. Infant baptism is not taught in the Scriptures

Many denominations believe in and practice the baptism of infants. Those who baptize babies are called paedobaptists, “paedo” being from “*paedon*” being the Greek word for an infant or a young child. The reasons for baptizing babies vary between denominations. Some believe that baptism of infants contributes to, or brings about the baby’s salvation. For example, **Roman Catholicism** teaches that infant baptism removes the guilt and punishment of the original sin of Adam. Baptism is viewed as resulting in the baby being born again. *The Roman Catholic Catechism* says,

Born with a fallen nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.<sup>13</sup>

The Bible does not teach that baptism should be administered to infants, nor do the Holy Scriptures teach that baptism removes sin and causes one to be born again.

But many *Protestant denominations* teach the same thing, even though that teaching stands in conflict with basic Protestant understandings about the way of salvation through faith alone. For example, the teaching of *the Church of England*—the Anglican—and the *Episcopal Churches* teach that infant baptism results in the infant receiving forgiveness of sin and the new birth. *The Book of Common Prayer*, the book that guides their faith and worship states the following about the ceremony of infant baptism. When performing baptism the following words are recited:

ALMIGHTY, everliving God, whose most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, did shed out of his most precious side both water and blood; and gave commandment to his disciples, that they should go teach all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy congregation; sanctify this Water to the mystical washing away of sin; and grant that this child, now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And then, the child being named by some one that is present, the Minister shall pour water upon it, saying these words, I baptize thee In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Then, the people kneeling down, the Minister and people shall say the Lord’s Prayer; after which the Minister shall give thanks unto God, and say,

WE yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that *it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy Holy Church.* And we humbly beseech thee to grant, that *as he is now made partaker of the death of thy Son,*

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<sup>13</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), pp. 283f.

so he may be also of his resurrection; and that finally, with the residue of thy Saints, he may inherit thine everlasting kingdom; through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen...

I CERTIFY you, that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptizing of this child, who [being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God,] is now, ***by the layer of regeneration in Baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life:*** for our Lord Jesus Christ doth not deny his grace and mercy unto such infants, but most lovingly doth call them unto him, as the holy Gospel doth witness to our comfort on this wise.<sup>14</sup>

You might be surprised to learn that ***Lutherans*** also teach baptismal regeneration through infant baptism. This is so contradictory to Luther's teaching regarding justification through faith, we can hardly imagine them espousing openly the contradiction. Yet in ***Luther's Shorter Catechism*** we read:

#249. Who is to be baptized? Answer: All nations, that is, all human beings, young and old, are to be baptized.'

#250. What distinction is to be made in baptizing? Answer A. Those who can receive instruction are to be baptized after they have been instructed in the principle doctrines of the Christian religion. B. Little children should be baptized when they are brought to baptism by those who have authority over them.

#251. How do you prove that infants, too, are to be baptized? Answer: Infants, too, are to be baptized— A. Because they are included in the words "all nations." B. ***Because Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants, who, too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith.***<sup>15</sup>

***Presbyterian*** and ***Congregational*** churches also baptize infants, but they do so with a different motivation and belief than those denominations cited above. Presbyterians and Congregationalists repudiate the idea that infant baptism results in the new birth and the forgiveness of sins for the infant. Rather, they argue that children of believing parents should be baptized because ***baptism is a sign and seal that the child is in covenant relationship with God because of the faith of the parents.*** They are not saying the infant is saved, but rather the infant is privileged and is blessed of God because he has been born into a covenant family, the parents being believers. Our covenantal response to them is this: Is not every person in this world either under the covenant of works before God or under the covenant of grace? A person cannot be in both these covenants, but he is either in one or the other. We ask, which covenant is your baptized infant under? If he is not yet a believer, you cannot presume his regeneration, that he is under the covenant of grace. In birth he is born under the covenant of works and he will continue to be so until Christ saves him through faith. You have no biblical warrant to assume otherwise until there is evidence in the child's life that God has saved him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Presbyterians and Congregationalists teach that infant baptism by sprinkling is a statement of faith on the part if the church and the parents that the child of a believing parent is in a privileged, covenantal relationship with God. This belief is reflected in ***The Westminster Larger Catechism***:

#165. What is baptism? Answer: Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, ***to be a sign and a seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life;*** and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's.

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<sup>14</sup> Excerpt from ***The Book of Common Prayer***. I have made bold and italicized the words for emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> ***A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism*** (Concordia Publishing House, 1943), pp. 172f. I have made bold and italicized the words for emphasis.

#166. Unto whom is baptism to be administered? Answer: Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and in obedience to him, ***but infants of descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized.***<sup>16</sup>

This position toward infant baptism assumes that New Testament baptism is the replacement of Old Testament circumcision. They would argue that an infant is entitled to baptism if one or both of his parents are believers in the same way that infants born to Abraham were to be circumcised. Under the system of faith prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, male infants by their connection with Abraham through the natural birth and physical decedance from Abraham qualified them to become circumcised. But notice again the point that John the Baptist made. To those who wanted to be baptized of John but of whom he refused them, he said to them:

<sup>8</sup>Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup>And ***do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,'*** for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup>Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matt. 3:8ff).

It mattered not who your parents were. John would not baptize these grown men although they were physical descendants of Abraham, and I would assert that he would not have baptized their babies either, though they were descendants of Abraham. John required evidence in one's life that he had repented of sin and was now resolved to live righteously with view to the coming Kingdom of God. Only that one would be admitted to baptism. John pressed upon these people gathered to hear him of their individual responsibility to repent and believe his message. He used the analogy of a lumberjack who was cutting down trees. In the same way God would cut them down in judgment if they failed or refused to repent of sin. John declared to them, "Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (3:10). John proclaimed individual responsibility. It matters not who your parents were, or what your dad or mother believed. What do you believe and what are you going to do about it?

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Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, <sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20f)

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<sup>16</sup> *The Confession of Faith; the Larger and Shorter Catechisms* (The Publications Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1970), pp. 255f.