

Baptism Celebration – 2/12/12

Giving Testimonies

This is a different service for us, a baptism celebration, where a total of 24 people are getting baptized this weekend, to proclaim their *new life* in Christ
Hence the shirts that you'll see

And each person has spent a good deal of time and effort working through a Bible study to understand what baptism is, what they're doing, and why
In fact, the 5-8th graders have gone through a class to make sure this is as meaningful and memorable as possible

- But before we get to the baptisms, I want you to understand a few things
The first of which, is that baptism doesn't save you
If it did, or in some way contributed to it – that would be a work
And **2 Timothy 1:9** says that – [God] *saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace*
God saved us and called us – not b/c of our works
It's God's work of *grace* in your life that saves you, *not* your works of obedience
We obey *b/c* we're saved, not to *get* saved

Or another way to look at it, is that salvation is a *gift* – a free gift of God*****
And baptism is an act of allegiance/obedience, that shows you've *embraced* that gift
That you're a genuine follower of Jesus Christ; That you've been given new life
That you have a personal relationship with Jesus

That's what each person is saying by being baptized
They're already believers, who are now being baptized to show it
Which is the *only* kind of baptism the Bible teaches – believers baptism

- And it does *so* strongly, that when you get right down to it, an *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction of terms; At least for those who have the opportunity
Which is why I think Peter linked it so closely with repentance in **Acts 2:38**
Saying – *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.*

Repent – as in, confess your sin, and stop doing it
Acknowledge your wrong beliefs, wrong thoughts, wrong words, and wrong actions . . .
Ask God to forgive you; And start doing what's right; That's repentance
Repentance that leads to salvation – salvation from the consequences of your sins, and new life in Christ

- But notice he says – repent and be *baptized* for the forgiveness of sins
Linking them so closely together that some people think you have to be baptized in order to be saved
But we know from 2 Tim 1:9, that can't be true; B/c that would make baptism a work – something tangible you *do*, in order to be saved

When in fact it's by *grace* we are saved – an unmerited act and gift of God . . .
That's received through *faith* – not something we *do*, but something we *believe* . . .
Not a result of works; That's what Paul says *explicitly* in Eph 2:8-9

So Peter's not saying in Acts 2:38 that you have to be *baptized* in order to be saved, but that baptism goes *hand in hand* with salvation

So closely it seems, that an *unbaptized* believer is a contradiction of terms*****

Which makes total sense when you consider that baptism is one of the main ways in the Bible, to distinguish yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ

IOW **an unbaptized believer is a contradiction of terms, b/c . . .**

1. Baptism identifies you with Jesus

And genuine believers want to do everything they can to identify with him
No baptism, little to no identification

2. Baptism is an act of obedience and allegiance

Just like any other act of obedience or allegiance you find in the Bible, baptism is a part of working *out your own salvation with fear and trembling* – Ph 2:12
Part of your *walk* with Christ
Therefore, to *not* be baptized when you have the opportunity, is an act of *disobedience*

3. Baptism is the example Jesus set

Jesus himself was baptized as our example to follow
Therefore, to not be baptized as a *believer* in Jesus, is like saying you don't want to be a total *follower* of Jesus; It just doesn't make any sense
Do you believe in him, or not? If you do, do what he did

4. Baptism is commanded as part of our discipleship

The Bible says we are to *be* baptized and baptize others, just like we are to learn, and teach others; Jesus commanded it, the apostles taught it . . .
And the early church practiced it as one of the first steps in following Christ
Repent and be baptized – *every one of you* Peter said

5. Baptism is a symbol of so much

A symbol of our cleansing from sin; A symbol of our release from its grip
A symbol of our unity with Christ; And a symbol of our *new life* in Christ
So to remain unbaptized, is to fail to reflect what God has done in your life

That's why each and every person is being baptized this weekend (**Summary**)

They've realized their sin and separation from God
They've recognized their need for a Savior
They believe that Jesus died in their place, and rose again for their life
They've repented of their sin and received God's forgiveness
They follow Jesus as Lord
And now they're getting baptized to show it; to proclaim it

- And if you've never done that – if you've never repented of your sins to God . . .
And you don't trust him to save you and keep you for all eternity – you can do so right now; right where you are
As they're getting baptized – just call out to God in the quietness of your heart, tell him you believe, tell him your sorry, and tell him you're his
You can do that right now; And as you do, I guarantee, you'll rejoice even more with those who already have

Post-baptisms

I can't help but think that many of *you* need to be baptized

You're saved, but you're living a contradiction – you've never been baptized as a believer

If that's you, make a commitment now, to get baptized next time

Pick up a packet online or at the Welcome Center in the lobby, and start working on it

B/c an unbaptized believer is a contradiction of terms

I also can't help but think that that some of you have been sitting there, and it's all of a sudden clicked – you get it

You understand for the first time, that you're a sinner in need of a Savior

And believe that Jesus is the one – that when he died on the cross, he did so for *you*, for *your* sin and sinfulness

And being convicted of your sin, you're ready to repent – so you can be forgiven and spared of its consequences, and receive a new life, both now and forever

If that's you, if that's clicked in *your* heart and mind, like it did for a couple at our last baptism service that I just recently heard about . . .

I want to lead you in a prayer of salvation

- (Pray) God, I realize that I'm a sinner, separated from you
And I recognize my need for a Savior – I can't do it on my own
And I believe that Jesus is the one; I believe that he died in my place, for my sins, and rose again so I could too
So I repent of my sin, Lord – please forgive me, and help me to turn from it
I receive you as Lord of my life, from now on

God would you encourage those who just embraced your free gift of salvation?

Would you bolster them and protect them, lead them and connect them to other believers here at Harvest?

Would you strengthen them, by your Spirit, to walk in your way?

And for those who don't believe, or won't repent . . .

Would you convict them of their sin, and convince them of your holiness?

Would you challenge their thinking and soften their heart?

Would you rescue them from their death and bondage before it's too late?

I praise you Lord, for all you've done, and all you're doing

I praise you for those who just got baptized

And as we give of our tithes and offerings – we do so with the same heart

A heart of praise to honor and glorify you with our entire lives – money included

It all comes from you, and we want you to use it and use us – more and more