

TODAY’S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Bobby Rader / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward  
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#538 My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less  
#543 Wonderful Words of Life

Scripture Reading by: Matthew Girard  
Communion Devotional by: Don Taylor

#509 I Will Sing the Wondrous Story  
*Lord’s Supper and Contribution*

#539 Higher Ground  
*Sermon “Living iPrayerfully”*  
*Philippians 1:9-11*

#907 Hark, the Gentle Voice  
#609 I’m Not Ashamed to Own My Lord  
Closing Prayer by: David Smith

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.  
Robert Ward’s group will meet at the  
building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship  
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Jan. 28, 2024

“Stand Firm in...Liberty”

Galatians 5:1

Are You Ready to be Baptized?

Baptism is a tremendously significant event. In baptism, God promises to extend his grace to the penitent believer, and we appropriate all the blessings associated with the saving work of Jesus Christ. We had several baptisms last year. It is a wonderful thing that these people made the commitment to follow Jesus, had their sins washed away, and were added to his church.

Now, baptism is more than just experiencing any sort of rite involving water. For one thing, the word itself means “immersion.” We see an indication of the significance of the method **Romans 6:1-14:** *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (v. 4).* Immersion perfectly symbolizes that burial and resurrection that is reenacted in our baptism.

For another, baptism is always presented in the NT as a response made by those who believe in Jesus. Read through the conversion accounts in the book of Acts, for example, and you will find that baptism results from the preaching of the good news and the decision of hearers to accept it. As **Acts 2:41** sums up, *those who received his word were baptized.* That rules out the baptism of infants.

Considering its significance, the question is: how do we make sure someone is ready to be baptized? That’s a very practical question. You may have a child or grandchild considering it and want to make sure they’re ready. You may be studying with a friend and want to be sure what you tell him is right. Or you may even be reading this and thinking about baptism yourself but aren’t sure you’re ready.

This is vitally important because sometimes people question the validity of their own baptism later in life, wondering if they knew enough. And sometimes, I worry that we have placed requirements on candidates for baptism that go beyond Scripture. We said already that baptism is in response to the good news that is preached. Maybe the clearest example comes from **Acts 2**, where 3,000 were baptized after a single sermon. That must have included the necessary prerequisites for baptism. What are they?

# Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

## Our Sick

**Ricky Lucas** will be having surgery in February.

**Gayle Coleman** had a procedure on Thursday.

**Geraldine Frazier** is in San Jacinto Methodist Hospital .

**Jennifer Stelly**, Patti Davis' daughter in law will be having surgery this month.

## Continued Prayers

### (Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stiflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Kelly McCain, Wayne Noonkester

## Shut Ins

### (Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

## Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

## Upcoming Activities

**Elders, Minister** meeting Monday night at 5:30 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Feb. 6th at 8:00 a.m.

## Valentine's Day Dinner

We will be having a Valentine's Day Dinner on Saturday, Feb. 10th from 6-8 p.m. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board or call the office to RSVP.

Youth are needed to help serve the meal. Youth who would like to help should contact Brooks McKelroy. His number is 936-391-1270.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, Feb. 7th.

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>	<u>Minister</u>
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

**1. You must believe in Jesus.** Most of Peter's sermon is about him: he performed great signs and wonders; those in the crowd put him on the cross, but God raised him from the dead and exalted him to his right hand; he poured out the Holy Spirit. This led to the inescapable conclusion *that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2:36)*. Peter's message is that Jesus is Lord; that is the fundamental thing people must know and believe before baptism.

**2. You must be ready to commit.** Peter's audience was convinced – *they were cut to the heart* - and so they cried out, *Brothers, what shall we do?* **(Acts 2:37)** Peter's first word was for them to *Repent*. Repentance involves sorrow over sin, it results in a reformation of life, but in between is its heart: to change the mind, the heart, the will, and turn to God, committing to follow him. Crucially, this does NOT mean they had to stop sinning and begin living perfect lives before baptism. If we had to wait for that, no one would ever be baptized! Rather, it is a commitment to turn to God and begin living by his ways as best we can. We must count the cost of discipleship before baptism, realizing how serious a commitment it is (cf. **Luke 14:25-33**).

**3. You must understand what baptism means.** After telling them to repent, Peter told them to be baptized, specifically *in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The crowd understood that their baptism would be in the name of Jesus – that is, by his authority, with a view to him – so they would become his followers and be united with him, his teachings, and his blessings. Similarly, Paul was told his baptism was calling on the name of the Lord **(Acts 22:16)**. He writes at different points that baptism is *into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3)*. People knew before baptism took place that was a means of uniting with Jesus.

But that does not mean you must understand every blessing associated with baptism for it to be valid. We all learn more as we progress in our Christian walk. Peter said nothing about how baptism adds you to the church, but it does that **(Acts 2:41)**. He did not mention that it makes us children of God in a special way, but it does that **(Galatians 3:26-27)**. Here, we must note that the forgiveness of sins is one blessing associated with baptism—but it is not the only one. Scripture does not attach ultimate significance to it compared to the other blessings of baptism; in fact, it is not even the only one mentioned in **Acts 2:38**! Forgiveness is a promise, not a command; you cannot obey a promise. The command is to be baptized in the name of Jesus; the promise is that God will grant forgiveness of sins to those who do.

In the words of James Harding, when evaluating whether someone had been baptized properly, he would simply ask them “Did you believe with your whole heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and did you confess him as Lord?” That sums up well these 3 things we must know before baptism. If you have those set, you are ready to give your life to Christ. If you knew those things when you were immersed, your baptism is in accordance with Scripture.

But remember: baptism is the beginning, not the end. A relationship with Jesus Christ is a lifelong journey. We must continue to grow from there.

*Bryant Perkins*

## ***“Stand Firm in...Liberty”***

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Office Phone Number (936) 336-2213; Fax (936) 334-8280;

Minister's (Bryant Perkins) Cell Phone Number (903)407-5737

Website: libertycofc.org Facebook page: Liberty Church of Christ