

The Design of Baptism

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By the Lord's order, the church has been given two ordinances, the ordinance of the Lord's supper and the ordinance of believer's baptism. So by the Lord's order, it's required that we pastors emphasize these and teach on these regularly and I want to do that this morning again and look at the ordinance of believer's baptism. We have a lot of folks in our church who are inquiring about making that profession of faith through baptism and so I want to remind us all of what that means and what is and what I've entitled it, what is the design of baptism. Now there's a lot of things I can't cover. Uh, last time I preached on this thoroughly, I think it took three messages but I've condensed some things to give us maybe a one message understanding, if you will, of the ordinance of believer's baptism.

Matthew 3, um, if you will, 16. Would you turn there, Matthew 3:16. We have Jesus coming to John the Baptist and requesting baptism. Let me just go ahead and read the context beginning in verse 13,

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

This is Matthew 3:16, now we're in 3:14,

14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. 16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

So our Lord began his earthly ministry with the ordinance of baptism. Not like us, he was not being baptized to confess his sins and repentance and need of a Savior, he was the Savior but he said he did it to fulfill all righteousness.

Then turn over to Matthew 28. Would you turn there? Matthew 28 and here our Lord is ending his earthly ministry and in Matthew 28:18 through 20,

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples [that means converts, believers] of all the nations, [then he says] baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

So Jesus began his ministry submitting to believer's baptism, Jesus ends his earthly ministry commanding us to reach disciples, reach people rather and make them disciples and baptize them, and Jesus begins his ministry at baptism, he ends his ministry with baptism and that shows us the great importance of baptism. But there are many many things we could say. Let me give you several things this morning about the design of baptism.

I. Baptism is intended to proclaim the gospel that saves us. It's afresh and new, someone saying by their going through the symbolic ordinance of baptism that Jesus saved us. He died on the cross, he was buried, we go down into the water, and he arose again. In Colossians 2:12 the Bible says, "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Well, there's a parallel there. We are symbolizing it doesn't save you, it's not the work that confirms your salvation, it's not a sacrament whereby you're giving grace that helps get you to heaven but you are picturing afresh Jesus died on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. You see, the Lord's supper is that ordinance which chiefly characterizes Christ's death. Baptism is that ordinance with chiefly commemorates the last two thirds of the gospel, his burial and resurrection. So baptism is therefore a symbolic proclamation of these essential facts of the gospel. Jesus did not come as just a, a, a figure or some sort of allegory. He was an actual literal human being who was at the same time literally God in human form, and he actually literally died on the cross and was buried as dead and then rose again. That's absolutely essential to our Christian faith and to our doctrine.

So it proclaims the gospel that saves us. Going on with the design of baptism. II. It proclaims the believer's resurrection to new life. It proclaims the believer's resurrection to new life. Romans 6:3 through 5, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too," here it is, "might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." Now this may be pointing to the ultimate resurrection at the end of the age and we'll deal with that in a moment, but it also means that you're rising up in those baptismal waters to say, "I now have this new purpose and new pattern to my life." And I think one of the things that tends to make people, um, postpone baptism when they should not is that they are afraid that they can't live up to the type of a moral and ethical conduct that being a Christian requires. You're not saying you're going to reach any certain height but you're, you're saying, "I have a new heart. I

have a new life and now the new purpose and pattern of my life is to follow Christ and live according to His truths." Romans 6:11 reminds us, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin," that's what you're saying, "I'm dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Now one of the things we're saying there just my way of a simple illustration, if you were, went into a funeral home and Mr. Sin walked into the funeral home, now Mr. Sin walks over to all of those corpses in the funeral home and he does everything he can to trip them up, to tempt them, to cause them to do something sinful or to transgress God's law but do you know what? He has no effect because Mr. Sin has no power over those who are already dead. That's what baptism pictures. We are already dead to sin going down in the water, and we've been raised for a new life. Now I'm dead to sin's penalty or punishment the moment I believe, justification. I am now progressing to dying to sin and the power of sin in my daily life, and one day I'll be dead to the presence of sin forever. And so you're saying that in baptism, "Praise God, I'm unworthy but I've, I've died to having to bear the penalty of sin. I've died to sin's power to punish me for eternity. I have died to sin's power to control me in this present pilgrimage. It may win some victories but I don't belong to it. It may win a victory or two but I do not call myself one of his. I don't belong to Mr. Sin anymore. I have a new purpose and pattern of my life and then one day I'll completely be banished from the presence of sin once and for all." In other words, we're gonna get rid of us. You know, you're your problem, you understand that, don't you? You are your own problem. Not my brothers, not my sister, it's me, O Lord, standing in need of prayer. One day we'll get a glorified body and that's an exciting thing for every child of God that one day like the Apostle Paul said, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" Well, Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord, he will one day rid us of the old sin package, the old sin house and we will please him perfectly forever.

So it proclaims our burial to the old life and death to sin and raised to be about the purpose and pattern of following Jesus Christ. That's why when Brother Jake or anyone else as a Christian is at a, is in a setting where you're challenged about your Christian convictions, it's settled for you. There's no debate. Now how we handle situations will change depending on the situations but as far as us negotiating away God's truth, that was settled. I've died to that viewpoint. I've now embraced Christ and his truth. This is something that controls us. We don't control it. It's been dictated to us by him and we walk in this new way of living, we walk in this new life.

Well, number 3, talking about the design of baptism. It proclaims our purification from sin. This is maybe an addition or an amplification of what we're already saying but it's a different way the Bible expresses this truth of our salvation, or a truth of our salvation, and it's certainly worth pointing out. For example, 1 John 1:7, "but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." And that word "cleanses" is a present tense verb. It means a continual thing. As we are united with the one who is light, we know the light of God, Jesus Christ, he has cleansed us of our sin and then as we walk in this

world, sometimes our feet gets dirty and that present tense verb there at the end of 1 John 1:7, so he is continually cleansing us from all sin.

So one of the many things we're saying in baptism is we have now been buried to this old life and the water has washed over us, not literal baptismal water but the water of God's cleansing has washed over us through the provision of Jesus Christ and now I walk in this status, if you will, or in this relationship with God whereby by his power he's deemed me the object of his continual cleansing until I get to glorification. Folks, that's good news. That's good news.

Now Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on the basis," you could say not springing from, "the deeds," or works, "which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." These folks that would teach you have to do this sacrament or this ordinance or this formula or this ritual in the church, and, and that's where your sin gets washed away, let me tell you something, how are you going to do, put the washing of regeneration in any human act or performance or ordinance or ritual? Regeneration is the work of God. Only God can regenerate the soul. He came and he washed away the, the, the offense that stood between you and God.

Now notice something in this verse, just studying it again that just jumped out to me. Titus 3:5, he saved is not on the deeds, not springing from deeds or works which we've done in righteousness. The point is we do not possess righteousness and we do not possess the capacity to do righteous deeds. You see, we get all mixed up here and we think that if we do good deeds for our fellow man in the community, if we're kind, if we're giving and we help the poor, those are wonderful things, we should do those things but those are not right. Righteous deeds are those deeds that come from the heart which are fully pleasing to God. You can do a lot of good stuff and not be a righteous person. Only those regenerated by the Spirit of God now walk in a way that God accepts their deeds because they're now walking in the righteousness of Christ. We had no inherent righteousness and no capacity to perform any righteous deeds until he cleansed us by the washing of regeneration. So there is this washing, this, this, this rolling away, if you will, of our offensiveness, our dirtiness, our pollution, our corruption in the eyes of God, and we picture that, we show that forth through believer's baptism.

Uh, Acts 22:16, and "Now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and washing away your sins, calling on His name." In other words, calling on his name is the factor here that is, that, that changes you from one who is now standing as offensive and impure to a nonoffensive and pure one in the eyes of God. The powerful truth. I'm being baptized today, one might say, and in this baptism among other things I'm saying by God's grace and mercy alone, I now am one who is purified and stand as pure and in my progressive sanctification in this life will continually be cleansed and purified until I get home to heaven one day. All of this is given to us by grace through the person and the provision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Well, number 4, continuing with the design of baptism. It proclaims, of course, our future resurrection from the dead. Romans 6:5, "For if we have become united with Him in the

likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." We have this confidence that Christ – now listen to me – began this good work, Bible phrase, who began this good work in you, will perfect it or perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. Christ who began this good work, we have confidence coming up out of this water that we one day will have a resurrected, perfected, glorified body.

Now brothers and sisters, listen to me this morning. This world is not God's world yet. Now it is in the sense that he owns it and he's sovereign over it but for this temporary time in the providence of God, Satan is God of this world and this world ignores God, denies God, rejects God, spits in the face of God, denies God's authority and God's truth, and we might mention God's morals and absolutes. But this isn't our home. There's going to be a new heaven and a new earth and we know by the, by the working of God in the merits of Christ and the provision of Christ, we will one day be resurrected with a glorified body and we will dwell with him in that glorious perfection forever and ever and ever. Remind yourself, speak truth to yourself, "This life is not the end." Stuff goes on down here that grieves us and troubles us and causes us to lose sleep, then you say to yourself, "Aha, but this isn't my final home. I will be raised by the person and power of Jesus Christ with a resurrected body." And that's part of what you're saying when you come up out of that water in baptism.

And by the way, we don't have time to talk about the means and the mode and the proper candidate for baptism, at least not at any length in my message, but only immersion can properly picture this. Notice what it said about Jesus in Matthew 3:16, he went down into the water and when he came up out of the water. If sprinkling were an acceptable mode of baptism, you could take one cup of water and sprinkle 2,000 people. But he came up out which means, pictures immersion. It's the only proper and true picture and way to perform the ordinance of believer's baptism.

Well, number 5 talking about the design of baptism. It proclaims our formal membership into Christ's local church. Proclaims our formal membership into Christ's local church. Now I wanted to make this a longer statement. I want to say it proclaims our formal membership into Christ's local church and to all the blessings and joys along with all the duties and responsibilities of church membership because that's what it's doing. This is not just a symbolic, uh, exercise going through those baptismal waters whereby you can say, "Well, I checked that off." No, when you're baptized, you're saying to that church, "I am now one with you" listen to me, you're saying, "I belong to you, you belong to me. We are family and it starts now and it will never end and last for all eternity." Let me remind you again, you cannot attend a church. A church is an organized baptized group of people in a local geographic setting. You cannot attend a church. You can attend a church meeting. You can attend a church worship service but you can't attend a church. You can belong to a church and then attend the church meetings but this, it will be, "Where do you go to church?" Well, it doesn't matter. What do you mean, where do I go to church? I'm a part of the church and I became a part officially and formally by God's plan when I came forward in believer's baptism. And brothers and sisters, this is a primary foundational and essential part of our evangelism. You can find no New Testament evangelism that does not include biblical baptism. They always went together.

I mean, think about it. Jesus died so that he could have his children together with him and with one another forever. You're missing a glaring foundation stone of what salvation is about if you leave out the family, the local church family.

So it is that time of formal acceptance and commitment to a local church. Acts 2:41 reminds us, Peter is preaching, thousands are getting saved, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized first; and that day there were added about three thousand souls." You see, profession is the substance of baptism. Baptism makes the profession firm. There, there is no profession of faith other than baptism. Now I know we use that phrase. I'm trying not to use it in any way other than the ordinance of baptism because really there's no biblical validation for it other than baptism. The profession of faith, the, the point where you testify that Christ has saved you and you show it through believer's baptism is the point of the true profession of faith. Uh, now other times, I don't know maybe a good phrase would be that he's given indication, he's committed his life to Christ, he's given or she's given indication they've received Christ as their Savior but the public profession is believer's baptism and that's when they're united into the church.

Through baptism we are identified and we confirm that this is God's working to add folks to his church. The first duty of all believers is baptism and church membership. Now I know there's a lot of, a lot of things here that people discuss and I have deep sympathies and, and agreement with the spirit that, well, you don't know how weak the church is, you don't know how watered down our churches are, you don't know how unfaithful they are. I understand that but God has no Plan B. Then you help that church to become what it is and if you can't do anything there, then you find one that is striving to be solid. God has no Plan B.

Well, VI concerning the design for baptism. It proclaims our glad allegiance to the Triune God. It is important that we baptize in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit. Remind you again, Matthew 28:18 through 20, "Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'" We on that day when we're baptized, we are baptized to say, "I want all of these folks in this local church I'm united with to know this, I gladly pledge allegiance to God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I pledge allegiance to God the Father whose great wisdom designed the plan of salvation. I pledge allegiance to God the Son whose power and beauty and wisdom and performance purchased and sealed my redemption. And I pledge allegiance to the Holy Spirit which took the merits and the work of Christ and have applied them to my life and caused me to come to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. So in my baptism, I pledge glad allegiance to God the Father whose wisdom developed salvation, God the Son whose performance procured my salvation, and God the Holy Spirit whose work applies that salvation to my life." Now look, I'm not saying you didn't have true believer's baptism if you don't grasp all these things. Why do you think we preach, have to preach on this over and over? So we grasp afresh. Matter of fact, you may have been baptized and not understood hardly any of this. That's okay but what you did understand was true. Christ had forgiven you

and you were trusting in him alone and his death on your behalf as your only hope of cleansing and salvation.

Number 6, no, number 7. I'm talking about the design of baptism, it provides an essential foundation for sanctification. This is something that's so vitally important and so often missed in Christianity. That, I entitled a message where I preached on this truth one time and a couple of older gentlemen got upset about it where I said baptism now saves you. There's a sense in which it does. You're being saved from the power of sin, is dependent upon your faithfully yielding to the ordinance of baptism. It's a foundation stone for your sanctification, your growth in Christ.

Philippians 2:12 reminds us, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What is he saying? He's not saying work to gain justification. In the balance of biblical truth and in the context what he's saying is work out the salvation you've been given over the power of sin in daily life. That takes some work and there's a key component, a key foundation stone of working out that salvation, striving to overcome the power of sin in daily life that is inherent in believer's baptism. I don't know how to say this. I don't know how to verbalize it correctly but there's something essential to your growth in Christ that you gain through believer's baptism. You've missed, you've left something essential out. That, that public vow of now I want to walk in obedience to Christ. First of all, it's public. There's a sense in which I've made my statement, I've made my case before the world now, my local church and all who hear about it. As Paul wrote, um, I'm sorry, let me go on to something different here.

I some time ago, uh, had my cutter, in the South we still call them bush hogs, I have some people overseas that say, "We get tickled when you talk about a bush hog. We have no idea what you're talking about." They thought it about some kind of pig in the bushes or something. But the thing you pull behind a, a tractor to cut stuff down that sometimes in my case you have no business running over to start with but if I can get over it, I feel like I can cut it. So you're pulling that thing and the, the, the, the cutter, the bush hog was vibrating a lot. Well, I did buy it used and I couldn't figure out what was going on. So I called Philip McAfee. Philip McAfee can, can fix it. Anything you've got that's broken, called Philip, he'll fix it for you. Now don't do that. He can't help me if you all you call him. And he said, "Let me look at that thing." And he hung it up and he began to take it apart from the blade in and he got all the way into where the shaft comes out of the gearbox and there were a couple of spacers in there that were backwards and he said, "It's never going to run smooth until this is corrected." So he put them around the right way, put it all back together and guess what? It's a lot smoother now.

Well, getting baptism right at the beginning is like getting the spacers right. If that first, if those first things right next to the engine, that's God's Holy Spirit, if those things aren't right, everything is going to wobble. You gonna get off to a wobbly start if you don't come for baptism and do what God says to do first. It's a foundation stone that will help you in your progressive sanctification as you go on for the Lord. Listen to me, you need baptism because you need to feel the force of the obligation acknowledged in baptism. If

you're gonna be saved from the power of sin or be sanctified, you need this foundation stone to be walking in. The act is God's instrument to press on the heart and mind of the subject and at the same time on the church that we must all walk in newness of life and separate from this world. There is a sanctifying work in the heart through the ordinance of baptism and that's why as your pastor we worked especially many years ago to remove the silliness, to remove the commonplace element that had come on baptism and restore to baptism a, a healthy testimony and a, a joyous weightiness to the importance of the ordinance.

Look at Corinthians 6:17, "'Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.'" This separation is formally proclaimed and this command officially and initially obeyed when we publicly devote ourselves to believer's baptism in the local church. When you're up in that water, you're saying, "I've come out to be separate, to be one of you, not one of them any longer." You know, through the years as people have criticized us for striving to be faithful in practicing loving, corrective, church discipline to those in the membership who get in a lifestyle of sin and rebellion, and, but when you step back and think about what baptism means, why wouldn't you expect that? You can't be baptized and then ask the church to say, act like it don't matter. Of course it matters.

Well, we've talked about the fact that baptism proclaims the gospel, it proclaims our resurrection to a new life, it proclaims our purification from sin, it proclaims our future resurrection. It, it, it establishes our formal membership into a local body of believers, declares our allegiance to a, to the one true God. It provides that essential foundation for sanctification and then, lastly, number 8, it proclaims our love and duty of obedience. Now wording it this way on purpose. In Deuteronomy 6:5 under the law, we have the exact same thing we have in Matthew 22:37 under grace, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." The only difference is the word "mind" is "might" in Deuteronomy. That's interesting, isn't it? It's a command from God. Under the law and under grace, love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

Well, it's in the law and it's under grace but notice that in both of those, under the law and under grace, what's the first thing there? Love with all your heart because if you were to grasp a command over your physical life and keep the law as best you could but your heart of love for God wasn't there, it doesn't matter anyway. It's a love for God – now listen to me – that produces God-pleasing obedience. Did you hear that? You could say, well, this person right here, they are so good, they are so giving, they live so uprightly, they are so pure. Yes, but does it, does it come from a heart that loves God or a heart of the Pharisee that loves themselves? You know what? There's gonna be a lot of people on the day of judgment punished for the good they've done because they didn't do it out of a heart of love for God.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and then mind. There's one problem with that, I was born with a sinful heart. I was born with a fallen, corrupt, depraved heart. The Bible teaches very clearly there's nothing in me naturally that loves God. Now I

work out a contract with God, "God, I'll jump through these hoops and I'll not do these sins if You might let me into heaven." But there's only one problem, God doesn't work on contracts.

Well, the prophet told us God was gonna fix this problem of the heart being impossible to get right. Jeremiah 31:31 through 34. Here's what the prophet said under the old covenant. "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.'" What was that? That was when the law was given. "'My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make," that's future, that's talking about the New Testament era, "'which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it.'" God said, "I'm gonna, I'm, I'm gonna give them, in effect, a heart transplant. I'm gonna change their heart." Last part of verse 33, "'and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me.'" You know God initially by the work of God, not by somebody's teaching. Now God uses preaching and teaching but it's the activity of God by the Spirit on your heart where you can say, "I know Him and I'm beginning to love Him from my heart." "I will forgive their iniquity," the last part of verse 34, "and their sin I will remember no more."

This is why Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." It's not about keeping a bunch of laws and keeping a bunch of works, it's about the new heart. And then, which our main point here, it's about this new love that leads to a duty of obedience. That's what God's looking for. Do you have the new birth? Do you have a new heart? Not just can you perform certain works, not perform certain bad things. Take the Apostle Paul. As Paul is reiterating his salvation experience, he says in Acts 22:10, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" I mean, God's knocked Paul off of his horse. Christ speaks to him from heaven and Paul's initial response is, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" You see, Paul's heart was changed in that moment and when the first throbbing of love for God broke in Paul's heart, he says, "What's my duty? What would I do?" That's what we're looking for. That's what God's looking for.

Acts 9:18 as Ananias goes to talk to Paul, one of the very first things he did was what God wanted him to do. He got up and he was baptized after his heart changed and the love for God was there.

I can say with a clear conscience, I love God more today than I ever have. I'm not saying I, I behave as well as I ought to all the time. I'm saying I love him more because I know him better. But when you're first saved, you have the germ, as the Puritans would say it, the seed of a new love for God and there's something in there that says, "I want to read His word." There's something in that that says, "I want to be around His church." There's something in there that says, "I, I want to please the Lord now." And there's a battle, there's an ongoing warfare until we get our new glorified bodies but the reality of a new

heart that loves and is beginning to love God exists and that's why we have the ordinance. Believer's baptism is the first duty of the changed heart that now loves God. By the way, you know what God loves most of all? Don't challenge me on this. We'll open our Bibles. He loves his church most of all. Certainly you as individual members, I include us individually in that. He loves his church but when you're baptized, you're baptized out of love for God and a blossoming new love for God's church.

So the ordinances including baptism are not as important as the new heart but we must not miss, dismiss them rather as unimportant. Never. Never. Remember when Christ sent John the Baptist as his forerunner? He sent John the Baptist baptizing. That was not Christian baptism, that was preparing them for the repentance and the Christ they were soon to meet. Christ and his disciples during their earthly ministry were baptizing those who came to be believers. Acts 2:41, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls."

The earliest writing theologian among Baptists in America was J. L. Dagg, and this forefather of ours on this continent said, "This ceremony, baptism, was manifestly designed to be the initiation into the prescribed service, and every disciple of Christ who wishes to walk in the ways of the Lord meets this duty at the entrance of his course." You may say, "Now wait a minute, I'm serious about Christ and I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, I'm just not sure about baptism." Here's the problem, you don't get to be a designer disciple. You don't get to be unique and independent about this. He's your Lord. You should believe and be baptized. Your case is not special. Your case is not unique. You begin your discipleship in believer's baptism or you have not begun at all. How in heaven's name can you say to the world, "I love Christ. I honor Christ. I serve Christ." But the first duty He asks of me, I reject it." How in heaven's name? How in heaven's name could you look to your Lord who expired on the cross to pay for your sins, cleansed you and purified you, justified you, will sanctify you, is going to glorify you, will keep you as the special object of his love and devotion for time and eternity, how can you look at him and say the first order of duty, I reject it? Now there are those dear folks who haven't been taught and I understand that but once you've been taught, you cannot be his and say no to believer's baptism because if you do and understand the truth, that's the same as saying no to him personally.

Jesus began his earthly ministry of being baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus ends his public personal ministry by commanding his disciples, "Go everywhere and make disciples and baptize them." He begins his ministry with baptism. He ends his ministry with baptism and we must not deemphasize what Christ so emphasized. I want to charge and challenge many of you and some of you are young people and some of you are not. You've been through a lot of counseling, you've prayed, you've sought the Lord and there is a new seed of love for God and wanting to please God and serve God, then you ought to begin the process of baptismal counseling and say, "God, if this isn't right, stop me. God, if this isn't right, then You can stop it but I'm going to do my duty. You've saved me by grace and I can serve You and obey You and do my duty out of love." That's all that matters, you have a new heart.

I'm glad I'm a Baptist. I didn't say a Southern Baptist. You do understand Baptist is just as long before Southern Baptist organized, you do understand that, don't you? I had a young man ask me this week at vacation Bible school, one of our teenagers said, "Brother Jeff, now that we're not officially part of the Southern Baptist Convention, are we still Baptist?" Absolutely because Jesus was a Baptist and John the Baptist was a Baptist, and all of those forefathers of ours. Conrad Grable and some of his brethren who rose up in the state churches of Europe and said, "We've been listening to the gospel, we've been sharing the gospel and we're changed. We've got a new heart. Now we're candidates for baptism." The state church said, "You'd better not. We sprinkled you as a baby under the state church of Switzerland or England or whatever it was. You'd better not." But we have to obey God rather than men, and at the cost of their lives they submitted to believer's baptism, rejecting the sprinkling of the state church. You know, up until really this country, Baptists haven't been prominent people. They're always the poor folks on the edge of the culture. They're sort of out-scourings. One of the worst things that ever happened to us was we got wealthy and we got popular and we've been trying to be popular ever since. That's why our big Baptist denominations are going [whistling sound]. Because they're more concerned about being popular than being true and that don't make them real Baptists, to be honest. Our heritage are folks who said we'll be biblical if it costs our lives. Would you be biblical and just honor Christ? It may cost her life, I don't know. It doesn't today necessarily but it may sometime in the future.

The design of baptism.