

Why Were You Baptized? (Reason #4)

The reason for baptism that I wish to address today might be generalized:

Reason #4: External pressure.

A young lady sat across my desk from me and broke into tears when I asked the simple question, "Why were you baptized?"

She regained her composure enough to answer, "All my friends were getting baptized, so I did too. I didn't know what I was doing."

I spoke with a wife who wondered about her husband's motive when he was baptized. One thing was certain, her father would not allow the two to marry unless the young man was baptized. Questions lingered.

I have heard it taught that we just need to be obedient, *be baptized*. People feel pressured into going through a baptism ritual as an act of obedience. Yet the Bible says so much more about baptism than simply blurting out an arbitrary command: *Be baptized!*

Related to that, "If you aren't baptized you'll go to hell." Or, at church camp, "If you haven't been baptized yet, you won't be saved."

All of these examples have one thing in common: Some degree of *external pressure*.

Let me quickly add; I am sure that the crowd that heard the first gospel sermon on the Day of Pentecost felt pressure. (Read Acts 2.) Having been *cut to the heart*, they interrupted Peter's sermon: "What shall we do?" However, the pressure they felt was related to an inner conviction brought about by the gospel message. That is the right kind of pressure.

I am more concerned about external pressure that is not rooted in the gospel message. The problem is an insufficient understanding of the reason for baptism. Sometimes it is the fault of

the preacher/teacher, and sometimes the fault of the listener.

Some preachers have pressured people into baptism by using high-pressure sales techniques or by using guilt to manipulate. Paul was on fire for the gospel, but he did not coerce people; no belt-notching, baptism boasting for Paul.

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. —1 Corinthians 1:17

In the New Testament baptism was always a faith response, not the mere observance of a ritual act. Anyone can participate in a ritual without understanding (e.g. Latin Mass). However, a faith response is, by nature, a conviction of the heart based on understanding.

If you were baptized just to follow the crowd or to please someone, your baptism lacks meaning and substance. You should rethink your reason for being baptized in light of biblical teaching.

If you were pressured into baptized as an act of obedience to a legal command, you really missed the point of baptism. You desperately need to turn to the scriptures and reevaluate.

Baptism is not a *magic shield* against God's wrath. So, if you were pressured into baptism through fear or through guilt, yet did not understand the biblical teaching on baptism, you also need to turn to the scriptures and reevaluate.

I never want to create doubt in the hearts of people. However, there is but 'one baptism.' As believers, we must make sure that we have made a proper faith response to God in baptism. If there is any pressure, it ought to come from God through the gospel message.

Reason #5, next week.

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