

The Sure Word Bible Studies
Lesson 17

Commitment

Mahatma Ghandi once said – *“I like your Christ. I don’t like your Christians. They are so unlike Christ.”*

Commitment is a topic that is taken too lightly by many Christians. Too many people are Christians in name only. There is no real change in the life, no surrender of self, no commitment to God.

I Peter 2:21 - 23 *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously”*

Christ committed himself to God. He, being our example, means that we are to be committed to God as Christ was. A sign of that commitment is baptism. Baptism is usually thought of as a ceremony signifying a person’s joining a church, and it is that, but much more.

I Corinthians 12:13 *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”*

Baptize is translated from the Greek word *“baptizo”* which means to dip under or to submerge. Due to the lack of understanding on this issue, some churches have endorsed "sprinkling" in place of immersion. This is not biblical, but rather a tradition.

In the early centuries most came to understand baptism only as a symbol of the washing away of sins, so many waited until they had committed all their sins and were on their death bed and then called the priest to baptize them. Since they were bed-ridden, the water had to be poured on them which made a big mess.

So the decision was made to sprinkle them with holy water. Later they reasoned if it's good enough for the dying, it's good enough for everyone. The Roman Catholic Church officially adopted this method of baptism at the Council of Ravenna in 1311 A.D. for reasons of convenience.

However, the Bible teaches only one method of baptism. We find that John the baptist baptized by immersion. Phillip the evangelist baptized by immersion. Jesus was baptized by immersion.

Matthew 3:13-16 *"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer (allow)it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered (allowed)him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up strightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Why was Jesus baptized at all? He had committed no sin; He didn't need His "sins washed away"! Jesus was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" that is "right doing," or doing what is right. He was baptized to set an example in "right doing" for His followers and also to identify with the message of John the Baptist. Note that when Jesus was baptized, He "went up out of the water," which implies He first went under the water as He was baptized.

Baptism by immersion is the biblical symbol of a person's acceptance of Christ death, burial, and resurrection on their behalf and their willingness to follow His example in life.

The evidence for this is in Romans chapter six.

Romans 6:3-5 *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is*

crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”

When a person is baptized, the eyes are closed and the breath suspended as they are lowered, or "buried" beneath the water. Then they are brought up out of the water – “resurrected” as new creature in Christ, committed to a new life, a new way of living.

Note verses 10 through 13 of the same chapter - *“For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”*

Baptism is a perfect illustration of death and burial of the old way of life and resurrection to new life in Christ. The main purpose of baptism then is to identify with Christ and to confirm a person’s commitment to live for and serve God just as Jesus gave us His example.

Acts 10:38 - *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”*

To live a life of service to God one needs the power of the Holy Spirit. And just as the Holy Spirit came down upon Jesus at His baptism, we too can be anointed with the Spirit when we are baptized.

Acts 2:38 *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

When a person is baptized they can “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” to be a helper to them just as He was to Christ. They are given special power to be His witnesses.

Acts 1:8 *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

The Spirit and the gifts that accompany the Holy Spirit's presence are given to believers that are needed to do God's work. That work is to witness His love and grace to others.

I Corinthians 12:7-11 *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”*

This is only a partial list of the gifts of the Spirit. But the point here is that every person is given gifts from the Holy Spirit for the purpose of doing the work of witnessing for God in their lives.

The “*baptism of the Holy Spirit*” is not necessarily a separate baptism as some teach. The Bible says there is only one baptism and that is by water and the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:4,5 *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”*

John 3:5 *“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

There is only “*one Spirit*,” and only “*one baptism*,” and that one baptism is with the water and the Holy Spirit! Being “*baptized with the Spirit*” is being given the power to live a righteous life and witness for Jesus.

All committed believers who are baptized have that Holy Spirit power available to them. Some *“receive it,”* that is, they are aware of it and take advantage of it immediately after baptism but others aren't. Others, because they do not understand, or do not feel they are ready, may not take advantage of it until later in their Christian walk. But when they do, then big changes are seen in their witness for God. They are not *“baptized in the spirit”* later by means of some kind of sudden miracle, but they have just come to the place that they are ready to take advantage of the power that has been theirs all along!

Often the question is asked, is water baptism necessary? The words of Jesus give us a clear answer.

Mark 16:16 *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”.*

Baptism is necessary only for those who *“believeth,”* that is, those who are converted or born again. Without conversion baptism is worthless. Why? Because there is no real commitment.

First comes God's call and then our acceptance and commitment to that call. Next comes the ceremony that confirms that commitment. Baptism is that ceremony - a public declaration of one's acceptance of Christ and their commitment to live a new life for God. Baptism is as necessary to the Christian believer as the wedding ceremony is to the married couple. Just as the married couple makes vows to one another publicly, the believer is making a public vow as well. He is saying for all to hear: *“I love the Lord, and I am committing my life to Him”*

If a person is not willing to make this public commitment it is evidence that the relationship is weak and there is no real commitment to live for Him! That is why baptism is necessary. It is not the ceremony; it's the commitment! Without total surrender and commitment to the Lord we cannot be saved.

There are exceptions to the necessity of baptism. There may be circumstances that will not allow the ceremony to take place, but the heart must be willing just the same. An example would be the thief on the cross. If he could have come down from the cross and been baptized he would have gladly done it.

Re-baptism

Acts 19:1-5 *“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”*

These were not disciples of Jesus, but of John the Baptist. The baptism of repentance was a type of baptism that was done before Jesus’ death and resurrection. When these men understood about Jesus from the teaching of Paul they were re-baptized with a new commitment to follow Christ and be identified with Him.

There are two reasons for re-baptism:

1. After learning significant, life-changing truth as these men had.
2. After a person has drifted away from the Lord and for years lives apart from Him and by all appearances are counted with the worldly. But one day the Lord touches the heart and they return to Him - they then want to re-commit their lives to God.

There are three steps a person should take before being baptized:

1. Be taught - Matthew 28:19-20 *“Go ye therefore, **and teach** all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **teaching them** to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”*

2. Believe - Acts 8:35-38 *“Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, **If thou believeth with all thine heart,***

thou mayest. *And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him”*

3. Repentance - Acts 2:36-38 - *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, **repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

Question: How many of them did Peter say should be baptized?
“Every One.”

When you have been taught the truth and you believe it and you are committed with God’s help to put away sin and live for Him - you are ready for baptism. This is why babies need not be baptized; they are not capable of making this decision.

A person should not wait until they feel they have victory over all their sin to be baptized – baptism is not a graduation – it is a new beginning. Jesus says “*come as you are*” - “*come as a little child*” - willing to listen and anxious to grow up to be like Him.

Jesus is calling –

Revelation 3:20 *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne”*

Jesus will not come in uninvited – Will you open your heart and invite Him in today?

Do not put it off – make that commitment today - today is the day of salvation!

Response questions:

1. I understand that the biblical method of baptism is immersion and that it is necessary for the Christian believer who is committed to living for Christ. Yes ___ No ___

2. It is my desire to be baptized (or re-baptized). Yes ___ No ___

3. I have already been baptized but I would like to re-affirm my baptismal commitment, and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church by profession of faith. Yes ___ No ___

4. I am already a member of the church and do not sense a need to be baptized, but I would like to commit my life to God anew. Yes ___ No ___