

**What Would Keep Me from Being Baptized?
Acts 8:36-39**

February 5, 2017

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Baptism is one of the issues that clearly define us as Baptists. You should not be surprised that baptism is an important part of the doctrine of a group named “Baptists.” Others teach infant baptism, sprinkling, and the necessity of baptism for salvation. We do not believe or teach any of those things. So, what do we believe about baptism and what place does it have in the life of a believer in Jesus?

For those of you who have been baptized, this message will be affirming to your faith. For those who have not been baptized, or at least not baptized by immersion and after your conversion, I trust that you will be moved to decide to make that decision today.

Text: As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water! What would keep me from being baptized?” [37 And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”]38 Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer. But he went on his way rejoicing.

For the last several years, I have preached a specific message on baptism. I say that this morning to say, that for the vast majority of you, this is nothing new. However, I feel a deep conviction to preach on baptism. Whereas baptism is not necessary for salvation, when a person chooses not to be baptized, that should raise serious questions about their salvation. Jesus, Himself, set the example of being baptized. Jesus commanded the disciples to baptize those who became His disciples. The early church both preached and practiced baptism as a symbolic, yet tangible act of one’s profession of faith in Jesus. To say that baptism is not necessary for salvation does not for a moment indicate its unimportance.

Before us today in the Acts 8 text is a beautiful story of evangelism. Philip, led of the Holy Spirit, comes upon a high ranking Ethiopian. Philip preached Jesus to him. Evidently, the man believed in Jesus. Immediately a conversation about baptism ensues thus also making this story a beautiful story about baptism. In fact, part of what I want you to hear today is that every story of evangelism should become also a story of baptism.

Notice these principles in this brief account of baptism.

Baptism serves as a specific starting point.

We don’t get every part of the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian, but we do know that Philip preached Jesus to this man. We probably ought to assume that the Ethiopian either knew something about the Christians being baptized or that Philip had brought this up in conversation. The Ethiopian asked, “Look, there’s water! What would keep me from being baptized?”

The theology of Christian baptism follows. The matter of belief about Jesus matters in the theology of baptism.

- Belief and Baptism are inseparably linked in the Book of Acts.

In the Book of Acts, the story of the beginning of the church, we see an obvious connection between belief and baptism.

- Acts 2:41
- Acts 8:12
- Acts 8:38
- Acts 9:18—The conversion of Paul
- Acts 10:48—Gentiles are baptized
- Acts 16:15—Lydia and her family
- Acts 16:33—The jailer and his family
- Acts 18:8—Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, along with this whole household; and many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.

Why is baptism important? It is a starting point in your discipleship. If you find it easy to say “no” here, it is very likely that you will find it easy to say “no” in lots of other places.

Who should be baptized? Any person who has come to that place of understanding that eternal life is found in faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism, we identify with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we have believed that, we need to declare that.

Baptism serves as a symbolic look-back point.

Our baptism is our vow. Here is how we look back on our baptism.

- A. Baptism should reflect that you have died to sin.
 - B. Baptism should reflect that you have come to life.
 - C. Baptism should reflect that you have made a “once-and-for-all” commitment to Christ.
- Baptism and Behavior ought to be inseparably linked.

Baptism serves as a celebratory invitational point.

The text tells us that the man rejoices. I have feeling that Philip rejoiced also.

This is part of the reason that we insist on public baptism. Baptism ought to be a celebration. Let’s be honest about something. As Christians, we don’t get a lot of opportunities to celebrate success. Though ultimately we win, and we rejoice in that, we don’t usually feel like we are winning. Baptism gives the church the opportunity to celebrate the victory.

So What?

- What is keeping you from being baptized?
- Are you being true to your baptismal vows?