The Sacrament of Baptism

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[0:00] This is the Word of the Lord in the book of Acts, chapter 10, verse 44-48.

That will take you to the end of that chapter. And some of this Mike covered. While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word.
And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.
For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?
And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And then they ask him to remain for some days.
[1:13] Let's open in prayer. Gracious Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you, Lord, that we can assemble here. And Lord, we thank you for this church that has been strategically placed here for all these decades, coming up on a century.

Lord, we thank you for the Holy Spirit of God who has written the Word of God and preserved it these millennia for us. May we do justice to these words as we study this evening.
We ask all this in the blessed name of Jesus. Amen. As I said, Pastor Mike covered some of this last time. Technically, I'm going to finish up chapter 10 this evening.
Mike will listen to the recording to see if he needs to back up and cover a little bit more. We note in this passage it says, the circumcised that came with Peter to the home of the Gentile Cornelius. And then it says they were amazed. That's a strong word, by the way, in the Greek language. Astonished. The reference, of course, to the circumcised is referring to Jews.
[2:32] We know that any time in the New Testament where it says the circumcised, even believing Jews, but they were the circumcised. The Gentiles were called the uncircumcised.

In this case, they were Jewish followers of Christ. They were Messianic Jews, we would call them in our day. They had accompanied Peter to visit Cornelius, a Roman centurion, Now, why were they amazed?
Why were they astonished? Because the Holy Spirit was being poured out on some of the Gentiles who had gathered with Cornelius that evening.
He had family members there, friends, neighbors, perhaps fellow soldiers. A centurion was over 100 Roman soldiers. And they had gathered at his home, which was apparently a nice-sized home. Many of the Jews that were present thought that salvation was only for the Jews. They thought for centuries, millennia, that salvation was beyond the reach of Gentiles.
[3:47] They had a way to do that in the Old Testament. You became a proselyte of Judaism. You became a Jew, and you're kind of a second-rate Jew, not one by birth, but to be saved, you had to become Jewish.

This had been the common belief among the Jewish population. I mean, you can go back into Exodus, Leviticus. This was the common hell belief. The proof to the Jewish believers that the Gentiles were now being saved is that they heard them speaking in tongues.
Now, that's not the focus of our message tonight. I'll be glad to teach on that sometime. The Greek word for tongues is glossa. Glossa. It always refers to unlearned foreign languages.
You didn't go to school and study Russian and German and French, but they heard in their language. It's that term glossa.
It was reminiscent of what had occurred on the day of Pentecost when those gathered heard in their own language.

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[5:08] That encompassed some 15 different people groups in the opening chapters of the book of Acts on the day of Pentecost. There were 15 different people groups that heard in their own language.

I've always said the miracle wasn't in what was being said. It was in the ear. Somehow God changed the waves, sound waves, and when it hit the eardrum, it was in your native tongue.
What is being passed off today, particularly among some of the more radical televangelists, as legitimate New Testament tongues, I call it gibberish, has no relationship linguistically to the tongues of the New Testament.
But that's not our focus this evening. Our focus this evening is found in verses 47 and 48. And again, I'll read that. Then Peter declared, Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?
And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus. Then they asked him to remain for some days. Now, as we go through the study this evening, and as Mike goes through the larger study of the book of Acts, we need to remember something.
[6:42] Acts is a transitional book. It's a huge transitional book. There's change happening. Much change. The New Testament church, as we understand it, has been birthed.

It was birthed on the day of Pentecost in a very dramatic fashion. You remember, rushing wind, cloven tongues of fire, and they heard in their language dramatic fashion.
The apostles that served with Jesus are now taking the message to the Hebrews throughout Israel. They're telling Hebrews about Jesus, himself a Hebrew. And then, marvel of marvels, a little bit later, well, it's already happened when we get to the 10th chapter, but God raised up a most unlikely apostle, Saul of Tarsus, now named Paul, and he is taking the message of the cross to the Gentiles.
And he's founding churches in the Gentile world, particularly in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. Acts is not a book of doctrine.
[8:04] And things happen there that have not been repeated since then. One of these was speaking in tongues, again meaning unlearned foreign languages.

The completion of the New Testament invalidated the need for speaking in unlearned foreign languages.
Now, when an evangelist or a missionary goes to a foreign land, the people don't hear in their language. Instead, the Christians that go there hand them a Bible written in their language.
This church has paid for Bibles to be translated into native languages. We did the Hmong Bible. Diane and I printed, paid to print a Coho Bible.
It's a small tribal group in Vietnam. About five, six hundred members. They had never held the Word of God in their hands. That was the first time. That was just a real joy for us to be able to do that.
[9:08] The only problem, I've got a copy of that at home. When they printed it, you know, you've heard of the NIV and the King James. And they had at the beginning of the Bible said the Tom Holland version of the Bible.

That was the only thing in English. The Tom Holland version of the Bible. Now, the topic we're going to cover this evening, sort of, is baptism.
And we just read about that in the inspired scriptures. Within the church, the Christian church, there are two ordinances and those are also referred to as sacraments.
I prefer the word sacrament, but they're ordinances. Sacraments are theologically defined as divine ordinances instituted by Christ Himself.
We're going to get to that in a moment. And we have two such divine ordinances or sacraments. The one is baptism and the other is the Lord's Supper.
[10:21] We also call that the Lord's Table or communion. Now, the Roman Catholic Church recognizes several sacraments. I think there's seven total, which are baptism, which are baptism, the Lord's Supper, penance, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and final unction.

Not being Catholic, I didn't understand all those. Holy orders include three orders, the office of bishop, priest, and deacon. the phrase holy orders, the word holy there simply means set apart for some purpose.
Final unction, I didn't know what that was, I looked it up, is basically last rites to those terminally ill or near death.

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You remember how the priest would give them last rites. I had an experience, we were in a restaurant in Texas, I was getting ready to go leave for the FBI a few weeks later.
Diane was extremely pregnant, ready to deliver, and our youngest boy, and we were in a restaurant, it wasn't as big as this room, but it was three-fourths as big.
[11:44] And I guess being in law enforcement all those years, my ears were just tuned to a certain language, because a guy walks into the front, which is like where the water coolers are, and in a normal voice says, you might want to get someone outside, your manager has been shot.

No one in that restaurant heard that by me, and I was in the very back. And I jumped up and I raced outside, thinking I'm going to be in a gun battle. Well, there's this assistant manager, 19-year-old Mexican boy, laying on the ground, unconscious, bleeding from the chest.
I couldn't do CPR, that would have killed him instantly. So I held him. And I'm talking to him, even though he's unconscious, I'm saying, breathe, and when I do that, he would take a breath.
But they were getting few and far between. I could hear the ambulance coming, and then he took a deep breath and he didn't breathe anymore.
The ambulance got there, I said he just took his last breath and they worked on him and they said, he's gone. I mean, there's no saving him. I was later glad I didn't get in a gun battle because I'd left my gun at home.
[12:58] I don't do that very often. I didn't even have a gun on me. But I still would have gone out there. That's just the way it is. But I prayed for him and I wasn't a believer.

I was getting closer. But I really wasn't a believer. But I said a prayer for him. His dad was a, worked in the court as a bailiff over in Fort Worth.
And I was with the district attorney's office. He came to see me. That was my son that died and we heard you were with him. And I said, yeah, could you, he said, my wife is distraught.
He said, we're Roman Catholic, we're Mexican. And said, my wife, she wants to kill herself because he didn't have last rites. Tell me what all happened.
So I told him and I said, wasn't anything I could do. So I held him as he died. But I audibly said a prayer hoping he would hear that.
[14:02] He went home, told his wife what I told him. Next day he came in just smiling his face. He said, my wife's fine. She said, you gave him his last rites. And she was satisfied with that.

I mean, she had to cling to something. And she was happy. I didn't realize I'd given him last rites. But that was final unction, I found out. In some primitive Baptist churches, particularly in the past, but I think even today in the Appalachian mountains and places, there are some primitive Baptist and perhaps even Pentecostal churches out in the middle of the woods that believe there's a third ordinance in the church and that's foot washing.
They hold to that. But that is totally unsupported by Scripture. That is not an ordinance of the church. Professor Peter Lombard, who lived in the 12th century, referred to sacraments as a sign of a sacred thing.
John Calvin wrote in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, which is an amazing book that he wrote when he was 26 years old, he said this, a sacrament is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our conscience the promises of His good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith.
And we, in turn, attest to our piety toward Him in the presence of the Lord and of His angels and before men. So, what constitutes a sacrament?
[15:45] And this would include the two sacraments or ordinances, if you prefer, of our church, the Protestantism, the Christian church.

It would include the Lord's Supper and baptism. Those are the two sacraments we observe in the church. Another way to put this question is in what way do the Scriptures represent the sacraments or ordinances in the church as being different from other practices that we do in the church.
Such as the reading of Scripture, offering of prayers, which are important, those are very important, but they're not sacramental.
Again, what constitutes a sacrament? Well, there are four elements to a sacrament. I've always given you a hint on one of them, but let me make sure you can fill in your blanks for this is the first one.
A sacrament is a divine ordinance instituted by Christ Himself. If Christ did not institute it, then it is not a sacrament.

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[16:58] It doesn't mean we don't do it. We do do it. But it has to have been instituted by Christ Himself. But many things that we do are not specifically commanded by Jesus.

Therefore, they do not meet the test that the Lord's Supper rises to and baptism rises to which were specifically singled out for the church by the Lord Himself.
By the Lord Himself. Let me give you a couple of examples. When the church comes together, we pray. Don't we?
It is absolutely appropriate that we do so. In fact, we need to do more praying when we meet, and that's been a topic of discussion among the elders.
And I think that's coming. Like on Sunday night where we're going to pray. And some of you will be called on, but others will be tipped off beforehand.
[18:04] Men and women. But we're going to pray. That's what the church does. But Christ did not ordain prayer as a sacrament. Another would be singing.

We sing. We didn't sing tonight. I was willing, but when the church comes together, usually, many of you sing.
Others of us make a joyful noise. Amazing section in the book of Mark. Mark. It's where Jesus, according to Mark's gospel, instituted the Lord's Supper.
This happened in the upper room. Let me read that to you in Mark chapter 14, beginning in verse 22 through 25. And as they were eating, he took bread, that's Jesus, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to them and said, Take, this is my body.
And he took a cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. Truly I see to you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.
[19:26] Now, there's another verse of Scripture that I've probably read a thousand times and it went right over my head. Never focused in on it until this lesson.

Because the very next verse says this, And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
That's including Jesus. Jesus and the disciples that were in the upper room and just celebrated, they had a meal and then they celebrated the Lord's table, the Lord's supper.
Then they sang a hymn. Then they went out to the Mount of Olives and we know what was going to transpire there, don't we? So Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn.
Reminds me of the time I was in a room with Cliff Barrows and Billy Graham. Now that's impressive, I said, but there were 8,000 people in the room. And I was next to Mike Stark and we were there. And Cliff Barrows said, you know, a lot of people don't know this, but Billy Graham can't sing.
[20:32] And it frustrates you. And he tells me, he says, Cliff, when I get to heaven, I'm going to sing. And Cliff said, yeah, Billy, you are, but it's going to take heaven to do it. Without heaven, you're not going to be able to do it.

we sing when we assemble and we have biblical warrant to do so, even the example of Christ and his followers.
They sang hymn. But the singing of hymns is not specifically commanded by Christ himself and consequently falls into the category of those things that are permissible and even good, but not mandatory.
Now, let me say, you're not going to be punished if you don't sing. I hope not because we didn't do it tonight. The sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism are mandatory, mandated by the Lord himself.
The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ on the night in which he was betrayed. Baptism was instituted shortly before his ascension. Now, second on your list there, the sacraments are ordinances in which material elements are used as visible signs of God's blessing.
[21:57] So, you're looking for the two words there, material elements. There are two material elements in the Lord's Supper. The bread, which represents the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the wine, or in our case, the juice, which represents the shed blood of our Lord.

In baptism, baptism, the material sign, is water. So, we have these physical material signs. The fact that the two ordinances of the church are meant as signs is a very important concept.
Very important. it sets baptism and the Lord's Supper apart from the other non-sacramental things we do in the church which do not use a material sign.

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And again, I would use the example of praying and singing. There are others. The offering. The offering. It's okay to do an offering. And there are others.
These things are beautiful. They're important. But they're not sacraments or ordinances because there is no material sign attached to them.
[23:21] Now, signs are important, aren't they? About 25 miles from here, there is a sign which says Bartlesville.

Ironically, it used to be 29 miles from here when I was a kid. And the sign hasn't moved. Bartlesville's moved. That-a-way. I pretty much remember when Bartlesville ended at Limestone Corner.
But it's about 25 miles south. There's a sign that says Bartlesville. Now, the sign is not Bartlesville. It points to the location of Bartlesville.
You have to keep coming north. If we see a sign that says drink Diet Coke, our attention is drawn to Diet Coke. that is how signs are used.
The sacrament of baptism points, it's a sign, it points to our identification with Christ by faith.
[24:24] baptism. The next time we witness a baptism, and we've got one coming up, think not only of the person being baptized, although that is very important, important, and think of his or her identification by faith with Christ.

That's important. But beloved, think of your own also. Think of when you went through scriptural baptism. And if you hadn't been, let's settle that issue.
But think of your baptism. The Lord's Supper is a sign that points to our communion with Christ. When it comes to the two sacramental signs, remember, they are physically secondary, outward, and visible.
The reality behind them, though, is primary, inward, and invisible. The reality is Christ. Christ is behind the baptism and the Lord's Supper.
I'm going to finish with that. When we finish the lesson, I'll read you a comment. this goes without saying, and when I say it, you know I'm going to say it anyway, right?
[25:40] As important as baptism and the Lord's table is, neither one saves us, and neither one keeps us saved.

We don't become a Christian by being baptized, and we don't remain a Christian by taking communion from time to time. both of these are sacramental signs and are intended to point to something that has taken place internally and invisibly.
Signs indicate ownership. ownership. Now, many of you probably have a sign at your home indicating ownership called a mailbox.
The signs of the sacraments are intended to indicate ownership. This is particularly true of baptism. Baptism, when properly done, is an indication to the world and to ourselves that we are owned by another.
the Lord Jesus Christ owns us. We're owned by Christ. We have been bought with a price.
[26:55] Doulos, slaves, and we want to be slaves of Jesus. Trust me, His yoke is easy and light. One of the great historical examples of this was the great reformer Martin Luther.

It is recorded that many times Luther was confused and had doubts. He was under great strain, having broken with the church at Rome, where he'd camped out his whole life, and now he finds himself leading the Reformation.
There were times he even questioned his own faith. There were times he came under intense satanic attack. I'm told you can go to a bedroom that he had in a monastery, and on the wall is an inkblot.
It's still there since the 1500s. And supposedly Luther saw Satan come in to accuse him, and he threw an inkwell at him. That inkblot is still there.
In those times when Luther got really low, he would take a piece of paper, and he would write two words in Latin. Baptismos sum.
[28:15] Translated, it means, those are two Latin words, four English words, I have been baptized. Satan, you can't get me.

I've been baptized into Christ. The world can't get me. I can't get me. My own flesh can't get me. I have been baptized into Christ.
Luther understood something that we should all understand. Though scriptural baptism, we have all been identified with the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

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That's what we picture when we baptize. You're buried, you go down, under, you're raised to newness of life. Now, we practice immersion.
Baptism means to dip, to immerse. That's what baptizo in the Greek language means. And that's how we do it. Can people be saved if they're sprinkled? I probably can.
[29:11] I think so. But we immerse. You know, they didn't take Jesus out and throw dirt in His face. He went into a tomb for three days.

Third, the sacraments are a means of grace. Now, let me add here, this only applies to the person that has rightly partaken of the sacrament, whether the Lord's Supper or baptism.
And in that regard, there is nothing magical about either of these rites. There's no hocus-pocus going on in our sanctuary when we baptize or when we celebrate the Lord's table, which we did last Sunday, right?
Unfortunately, not only Rome, but a number of Protestant denominations have treated the sacraments, especially baptism, if it had some sort of magical saving quality.
And it doesn't. I grew up in a denomination that greatly stressed the importance of baptism. They wanted to get you down to the water.
[30:31] There are other denominations that do that. There are many of them in this town. They want you in the water. I know there were people in that congregation that believe you were only saved once you came up out of the water.

river. This begs a question. Can a person be saved and refuse to be baptized? For whatever reason, they say, well, I've been saved, but I don't want to be baptized.
Let me suggest that's different from the question, can a person be saved and not have the opportunity to be baptized before they die? That's a whole different question.
I was privileged in the late 80s, to lead an elderly man to Christ who was on his deathbed. He was a second father to me.
I now live on the farm that he left me in his will. He received Christ and for the next few days, people would come in, doctors, nurses, family, friends.
[31:37] People would come in to see him in the hospital and he would tell them what had happened to him. He became an evangelist. But he couldn't get out of bed much less be baptized.

He died about a week later. It bothered my dad who was still in that denomination. You got to get wet and it's got to be immersion or it's not legitimate. And I said, dad, it'll be all right.
I mean, we couldn't do it. But what about the person who says, I am saved, but I'm not going to go through baptism. And we've had those in this church.
They didn't stick around. I've known people like that. I had relatives like that. One of my aunts, now dead, they're all dead, I'm the last of my generation, refused to be baptized.
And she told my mom, my mom said, why? And she said, because I don't want to mess up my hair. And she went to the hairdresser once a week. Some theologians would answer that question and say, yes, you can be saved, you can go to heaven, you'll go there disobedient, you'll give an account to the Lord.
[32:47] I'm not sure I believe that. I mean, I'm sorry, I'm just not sure I believe that. I may have at one time claiming to be saved, but refusing what is really the first step in obedience, scriptural baptism, I think brings into serious doubt that person's salvation experience.

I'm not talking about the person that can't be, you know, the example I gave her, or a battlefield sort of deal, you know. But I would have serious questions about their salvation experience.
Why would you not want to be? I mean, typically, your first reaction is, what must I do to be obedient, to please the Lord? I'm new at this. One of the first things a new believer wants to do is follow Christ and obey Him.
What proof do any of us have that we're truly saved? Well, it's not that I prayed the right prayer, it's not that I've been baptized, it's not that I go to church, it's not that I take part in the Lord's Supper, it's not even that I carry a MacArthur Study Bible.
The only proof any of us can offer is that we've been saved by Christ and now are living a life of obedience to His commands. And by the way, part of obedience is when you fail, you confess that.
[34:13] And He's righteous and just to forgive you and cleanse you of all unrighteousness. When I say that baptism and the Lord's Supper is not magical, that does not mean they are without meaning.

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They have very deep meaning. God uses them to strengthen our faith and encourage us in the faith. They strengthen us and they are an encouragement to us.
Even if we're just observing a baptism, let that be an encouragement to you. Let it be an encouragement to you. Fourth, the sacraments are seals, certifications, or confirmations to us of the grace they signify.
I have grown very fond of late with the late professor of theology, Dr. John Murray, not to be confused with Andrew Murray, who's also a great man.
Dr. Murray's writings have been a special blessing to me. Listen to what Dr. Murray has to say. Baptism is a means of grace and conveys blessing because it is the certification to us of God's grace, and in the acceptance of that certification, we rely upon God's faithfulness, bear witness to His grace, and thereby strengthen our faith.
[35:43] In the Lord's Supper, that significance is increased and cultivated, namely, communion with Christ and participation of the virtue of from His body and blood.

The Lord's Supper represents that which is continuously being wrought. We partake of Christ's body and blood through the means of the ordinance. We thus see that the accent falls on the faithfulness of God and the efficacy resides in the response we yield to that faithfulness.
All three of these words, seals, certification, and confirmations are important. If you travel overseas, and some of you have, as I have, you carry a passport issued by the United States government. On that document is the great seal of the United States of America. It is intended to show the one possessing it that they are a citizen of this country with all the rights and privileges attached to that citizenship.
I have my law enforcement certification in my billfold issued by the state of Oklahoma. It tells people that I am a trained law enforcement officer in the state.
[37:07] I also, even in retirement, have this badge and this commission card right here I always question how valid that is.

I signed my own commission card. But I've got a badge and a commission card signifying that I am a law enforcement officer though I am retired as a police chief in this state.
I still have certain duties obligations as an officer. The sacraments or ordinance of the church are God's seal and testimony that we are his children and that we are living our lives under his authority and in fellowship with him.
That is their purpose. Well, there's sort of the thumbnail for our message tonight. Perhaps this message will serve as an introduction to the subject of the sacraments and maybe one day we can build on this foundation as we explore further the sacraments of our Lord.
And now just a final word and I read this from one of the Puritans and I can't remember who it might have been Thomas Watson might have been John Owen I can't remember. During the observation of the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and when I say observation I mean when we participate we do the Lord's Supper periodically we've been baptized and now we watch them during those times our King the Lord Jesus Christ meets with the church and that means us the church's people right save people he meets with us in a unique and intimate way he's always there for us but it's very unique and intimate during the Lord's Supper and baptism I hope that fact will the next time we do both those ordinances will really grip your heart there is a special closeness by our
[39:29] Lord when the believing church engages in these two ordinances

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