

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

(Part Eight – series on Baptist Distinctives)

TEXT: Acts 8:36-38

INTRODUCTION: Baptists get their name from their belief about the ordinance of believer's baptism. While we do not believe that baptism is essential to salvation, we do believe that it is **important**. It is not an option. It is commanded by our Savior. It is everywhere assumed in the New Testament that genuine converts to Christ will be willing to be baptized (Acts 2:41).

Baptism is important because of what it signifies. It speaks of the "*washing of water by the word*." It identifies a new believer with Christ and with His Church. It beautifully symbolizes both the gospel and the conversion experience. It is a seal of the new covenant signed in Jesus' blood. No one should receive this ordinance who does not understand or subscribe to the significance of it.

OUTLINE: Baptists have historically stood for baptism by immersion for believers only for several compelling reasons.

I. Because of what Baptism Signifies

- A. Purification (Acts 22:16)
- B. Identification with Christ and His Church (Rom. 6:3,4; Acts 2:41)
- C. The Gospel
 - 1. Dead unto sin
 - 2. Buried with Christ
 - 3. "Raised to walk in newness of life"
- D. A Covenant Seal (Gen. 17:11; Acts 2:41; 1 Pet. 3:21)

II. Because of which Subjects Qualify

- A. The order of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19,20)
- B. The example of Philip and the eunuch (Acts 8:36,36)
- C. The violation of symbolism (if a non-believer is baptized)

III. Because of which Mode Dignifies Conversion

- A. The argument for immersion from culture (John 3:5,12)
- B. The argument from the meaning of "baptizo"
- C. The argument from scriptural precedent (Acts 8:38; Jn. 3:23)
- D. The argument from subsequent persecution (two examples)

1. Felix Mantz in Reformation Switzerland
2. David Barrow and Edward Mintz in colonial Virginia

CONCLUSION: Baptists would not have been willing to be persecuted and martyred for something they felt was unimportant. Both Anabaptists and their successors have faced confiscation of property, banishment, torture, and even death for rejecting infant baptism and insisting on baptism by immersion for believers only. This distinction set them at odds with just about everyone else in Christendom. May we prove to be worthy successors to such noble forbearers.