

Text: Ac 22.16

We are working through Paul's speech to the mob in Jerusalem as he is under arrest.

- Paul emphasized his Jewishness, but presented Jesus as the Jewish Messiah.
- Paul emphasized his zeal, but highlighted Jesus' personal intervention to bring him to faith in the new Way.

Paul's speech will continue and will bring in the Gentiles, which will rile the crowd up once again.

However, today I want to pause and look at just one verse in Paul's speech, as he recalls the words Ananias spoke to him.

Ac 22.16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

The meaning of the words here are plain, so we need not spend a lot of time explaining what is going on.

However, the subject Ananias raises is a constant theme among Baptists, something for which Baptists paid dearly as they began to recover New Testament teaching on the subject.

Of course, that topic is Baptism.

There is a bit of theology in our passage, but the main theme I want to communicate today is the *urgency* and *clarity* of baptism.

Proposition: When someone truly believes in the Lord Jesus, the next step is to make that faith public by believer's baptism.

I. The immediacy of baptism

A. The timing for Saul (Paul)

1. The Damascus road experience just three days earlier
2. Ananias calls on Saul to receive baptism immediately

"Why are you delaying?"¹

¹ L. Scott Kellum, *Acts*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020), 255.

“get yourself baptized”²

B. The timing in the NT

1. Day of Pentecost: 3000 converts, same day baptism (Ac 2.41)
2. Samaritans, soon after conversion (Ac 8.12)
3. Eunuch, immediately on profession (Ac 8.38)
4. Gentiles after responding in faith to Peter’s sermon (Ac 10.48)
5. Lydia and household, soon after conversion (Ac 16.15)
6. Jailer immediately after conversion (Ac 16.31)
7. Crispus and many new Christians in Corinth, soon after conversion (Ac 18.8)
8. The disciples of John, some time after conversion, immediately after proper instruction (Ac 19.3-5)

C. The development of delay

1. As the church became more established, delays instituted for training
2. New converts sometimes hesitated before making public commitment
3. However, as time went on, baptism came to **precede** conversion: *infant* “baptism”

(consequence: churches full of unconverted members)

I plan to discuss some specific stories of the courage baptism demands in an unbelieving world.

II. The significance of baptism

A. According to the sacramental view: baptism conveys grace

1. By undergoing baptism, the candidate
 - a. Receives remission of sins
 - b. Nature regenerated

² A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament In the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 808.

c. Faith strengthened or increased

2. Differences among sacramentalists

a. Catholics: rite itself conveys the grace

b. Lutherans: faith of the candidate as he performs the act receives the grace

c. Calvinist [Reformed]: baptism a sign of the covenant (promise of God), the candidate unites with the covenant, and on exercise of faith receives the benefit

B. The true significance of baptism

1. It is symbolic of the regeneration already granted because of faith in Christ

a. The candidate believes the gospel (Jesus substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection for sinners)

b. The candidate receives baptism as a symbol of faith in Christ

2. The scriptural ground of baptism: Romans 6.3-4

Rm 6.3-4 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

a. Baptized into Christ (thus into his body, the church)

b. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection

c. Baptism represents the change from the old life to the new life

C. The question raised by our passage

Ac 22.16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

1. The English implies that baptism washes away sins

2. Understand the grammar

a. Imperative: rising, be baptized

- b. Imperative: wash away your sins
- c. Causal participle: [by] calling on His name

3. Young's Literal Translation:

and now, why tarriest thou? having risen, baptize thyself, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.

- a. We could insert the word “by” before “calling”
- b. “wash away thy sins by calling upon the name of the Lord”

Baptism is symbolic of the change wrought in the life when it is cleansed from sin by faith in Christ.

¹ Cor 6.¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

¹ Pt 3.²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you— not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience— through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

III. The faith of the baptized

A. Saul immediately followed through, and immediately ran afoul of the Jews

- 1. Began preaching Jesus in Damascus, confounding the Jews who opposed him (9.22)
- 2. The Damascene Jews plotted to kill him, Paul escaped the city over the wall in the night (9.23-25)
- 3. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he preached Christ, but the Jerusalem Jews plotted to take his life (9.29-30)

B. The testimony of Saul replicated in others

1. Obadiah Holmes

“On Sunday, July 20, 1651, John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes, accompanied by John Crandall (a deacon), responded to a request to visit the home of an elderly member, William Witter, a blind brother who resided about two miles outside Lynn, Massachusetts. As Clarke was sharing with the Witter

home a message from Revelation 3:7–13 (Christ’s message to the church at Philadelphia), four or five others came in unexpectedly. Suddenly, two constables entered the home and, with “clamorous tongues,” interrupted Clarke’s message, apprehended Clarke, Holmes, and Crandall, and escorted them into the nearby Puritan meetinghouse. Forced into such worship, the captives kept their hats on inside the room. A constable quickly pushed off the hats, and the three spent the night as prisoners in a nearby inn. The next day, after officials arraigned them, the three managed to return to the Witter home, where Holmes baptized three believers by immersion and Clarke served the Lord’s Supper. Officials promptly transported Clarke, Holmes, and Crandall to a Boston prison and charged them for conducting illegal church services, disrupting Puritan worship, teaching that infant baptism is false, and for administering heretical rebaptism and Communion.”³

a. Verdicts

- 1) Holmes fined 30 pounds
- 2) Clarke fined 20 pounds
- 3) Crandall fined 5 pounds

b. Fines of Clarke and Crandall paid by others, Holmes refused to pay, or allow others to pay for him, sentenced instead to a flogging

- 1) Tied to a post, beaten with a three corded whip
- 2) Flogger laid 90 stripes on his back
- 3) Holmes, “You have struck me as with roses”
- 4) Two bystanders who aided Holmes imprisoned

“Holmes, with his body bruised and bleeding, would endure weeks of sleepless nights, able to allow only his knees and elbows to touch the bed.”⁴

³ David Beale, *Baptist History in England and America: Personalities, Positions, and Practices*, Kindle Edition (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2018), 380–81.

⁴ Beale, 382.

2. The first real president of Harvard University, Henry Dunster

- a. Founded to train Congregationalist ministers
(Covenant/Reformed views of baptism)
- b. Dunster served as president of Harvard for fourteen years, became convinced of believer's baptism
 - 1) Inspired by Obadiah Holmes, a Baptist severely beaten by Congregationalists for his faith
 - 2) Preached against infant baptism and for believer's baptism in the church attached to Harvard
 - 3) Fall 1653, refused to present his newborn son (4th child) for baptism
 - 4) Conflict ensued through 1654, when Harvard finally accepted Dunster's resignation in October
 - 5) Applied for leave to stay in president's house through the winter, as his wife and youngest child were ill
 - 6) Authorities grudgingly allowed him to remain until March 1655, but "but the court would hound Dunster until near the end of his life with legal proceedings over his objections to infant baptism."⁵
 - 7) Ironically, Dunster's replacement held to believer's baptism but agreed to keep quiet about it so he could become president of Harvard

"The contrast between the two men is obvious: While Dunster forfeited the presidency to maintain his convictions, Chauncy forfeited his convictions to gain the presidency."⁶

3. The converts of Adoniram Judson in Burma (Myanmar)

- a. First convert, Maung Nau, came to Christ in May, 1819, six years after Judson began his ministry
 - 1) After a month, Maung Nau gave testimony of salvation

⁵ Beale, 400.

⁶ Beale, 399.

2) Nau baptized in July in public

- b. Opposition of authorities to Judson's work increased
- c. Next converts, Maung Thahlah and Maung Byaay, asked to be baptized

"not absolutely in private, but about sunset, away from public observation"⁷

Despite the hesitancy, Maung Thahlah, at least, persevered in faith for years, until death from cholera.

The testimony of Judson's first convert, Maung Nau

I, Maung Nau, the constant recipient of your excellent favor, approach your feet. Whereas my lords thee [the missionaries] have come to the country of Burmah, not for the purpose of trade, but to preach the religion of Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal God, I, having heard and understood, am, with a joyful mind, filled with love.

I believe that the Divine Son, Jesus Christ, suffered death, in the place of men, to atone for their sins. Like a heavy laden man, I feel my sins are very many. The punishment of my sins I deserve to suffer. Since it is so, do you, Sirs, consider that I, taking refuge in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, shall dwell with yourselves, a band of brothers, in the happiness of heaven, and grant me the ordinance of baptism. It is through the grace of Christ that you, Sirs, have come by ship from one country and continent to another, and that we have met together. I pray my lords three that a suitable day may be appointed, and that I may receive the ordinance of baptism.

As it is only since I met with you, Sirs, that I have known about the eternal God, I venture to pray that you will still unfold to me the religion of God, that my old disposition may be destroyed, and my new disposition improved.⁸

Conclusion:

Proposition: When someone truly believes in the Lord Jesus, the next step is to make that faith public by believer's baptism.

⁷ Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson*, rpt. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1987), 236.

⁸ Anderson, 223–24.