

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 1ST–2ND, 2025 // BAPTISM

A PROMISE FROM GOD (EZEKIEL 36:24–27)

Ezekiel was a prophet who lived and ministered during a very difficult time in Israel's history.

- Because of Israel's sins of idolatry, injustice, and disobedience, God allowed them to be conquered and taken to exile in the land of Babylon.
- But through Ezekiel, God gave His people a message of hope—even though they'd been unfaithful, God was going to restore them.

THE PROBLEM WITH ISRAEL WASN'T THAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH RULES, COMMANDS, OR RELIGION.

The problem was that their hearts were hard.

- All the external purifications of religion God gave them (ritual washings, sacrifices, priestly meditations) couldn't truly change the peoples' hearts.
- All these things were shadows that pointed ahead to a deeper cleansing God would do.

WE'RE NO BETTER THAN THE PEOPLE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL. WE'VE ALL COMMITTED SINS OF IDOLATRY, INJUSTICE, AND DISOBEDIENCE AGAINST GOD.

- Idolatry: anything in our lives that replaces God.
- Injustice: greed, hatred, or prejudice.
- Disobedience: in the things we've done and in the things we haven't done.
- These sins separate us from God. But where do they come from and how do we get fixed?

IMAGINE A PERSON WHO KEEPS GETTING FILTHY, NO MATTER HOW OFTEN OR HOW THOROUGHLY THEY WASH.

- They scrub their body and change their clothes, but still the filth keeps coming back.
- Finally, a doctor tells them the problem isn't on the outside at all; it's a disease in their blood and sweat glands that pushes the impurity out.
- Cleaning the outside won't ever fix it. They're in need of healing from the inside.

MANY TODAY LOOK TO RELIGION FOR CLEANSING.

- Moralism: "If I just live a good enough life..."
- Religious Performance: "If I attend church, give, serve, read my Bible, or pray enough..."
- Self-justification: "If I can prove that I'm a good person in comparison to others..."
- The Old Covenant could clean the hands but not the heart. Something more was (and is) needed!

GOD PROMISES HIS PEOPLE HE WILL DO THE CLEANSING HIMSELF—TO WASH, RENEW, AND INDWELL HIS PEOPLE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Verse 25: "I WILL also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean."

- This cleansing will be God's work, not our work!
- It is only through Christ and His blood that we can be truly clean—not just symbolically, but spiritually and completely (Heb. 9).
- Verse 26: "I WILL give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you..."
- Behavior modification doesn't work. Fear, guilt, and shame are terrible motivators.
- God offers regeneration, where the old heart is removed and a new heart is given!
- Verse 27: "I WILL place my Spirit within you..."
- In our selves, we don't have the power or the desire to follow and obey God.
- God's offer is not just to cleanse and regenerate; it's to indwell us with His Spirit so that we can have the power and desire to obey Him.

JESUS FULFILLS THE PROMISE

JESUS CLEANSSES US FROM THE INSIDE OUT THROUGH HIS BLOOD.

"...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7b).

- In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were used to show people that their sins had been forgiven and atoned for temporarily, but those sacrifices couldn't cleanse the heart.
- Jesus' blood is much different.
- Jesus took the punishment for our sins so we could be permanently and totally forgiven and made completely new.
- When we place faith in Christ, God doesn't just wipe away what's on the surface: He washes our hearts clean on the inside.
- We're cleansed of all our impurities.

JESUS GIVES US A NEW HEART AND A NEW NATURE.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

- Our greatest problem is that we're sinners by both our choices and our very nature.
- The old self that belongs to the old sin nature has a heart of stone. It's stubborn, selfish, rebellious, and wants its own way.
- But when we're born again by faith in Christ (John 3:5), we're given a new nature and new heart.
- The new heart Jesus gives us is one that loves God and wants to do what's right.
- The new nature Jesus gives us wants to live differently in obedience to God. This doesn't mean we're perfect; it means we're changed.
- God's grace is what saves and changes us. We can't do either in our own strength.
- But once we've been changed and given a new nature, we have a responsibility to live according to our new identity in Christ and put our sin and deeds of the flesh to death.
- Grace is opposed to earning, but it is certainly not opposed to effort!

JESUS GIVES US THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO INDWELLS AND EMPOWERS US.

"If you love me, you will keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15–17a).

- The Holy Spirit is not a feeling, emotion, or "hunch" we get. He is the person of the Holy Trinity of God who lives within God's people.
- Through Jesus, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us, guide us, and strengthen us as we follow and obey God's Word.
- You cannot live the Christian life without the Holy Spirit! You can't truly obey from your heart, resist temptation, or joyfully serve God for the right reasons without the Spirit's power.

HOW DO WE RECEIVE CHRIST AND HIS PROMISES?

- Faith: believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God who died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9b).
- Repentance: turn from your sins and self-reliance and towards God (Acts 3:19).
- Confession: acknowledge with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord (Rom. 10:9a)
- Receive: invite Christ into your life (John 1:12).

BAPTISM ILLUSTRATES THE PROMISE

WATER BAPTISM IS SOMETHING WE DO PHYSICALLY THAT ILLUSTRATES PUBLICLY WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN US SPIRITUALLY THROUGH CHRIST.

It's how we as followers of Jesus profess an active faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).

- The water illustrates the washing and cleansing of sin we experience in salvation (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16). It shows that we've been forgiven and cleansed by Jesus' blood.

WATER BAPTISM ILLUSTRATES THAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN A NEW IDENTITY WITH A NEW HEART AND NEW NATURE.

- Our old selves get "buried" in the waters of baptism as a way of illustrating God's removal of that heart of stone (Col. 2:12).
- We come up out of the water to symbolize being raised with Christ into a new kind of resurrection life with a new heart and new nature (Rom. 6:4).

WATER BAPTISM ILLUSTRATES THAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT TO INDWELL AND EMPOWER US.

John the Baptist prophesied that he would baptize with water but Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

What does that mean?

- It's the work where God's Spirit takes up residence within us, gives us new life, and empowers us to live in obedience to Jesus. Though it's a work of the Spirit, its results are visible.
- God's work to save, cleanse, and give us His Holy Spirit is an inner work of God's grace.
- Baptism is a tangible, visible, and public profession of that inner work.
- When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, there will be tangible, visible, and public signs. God calls it "fruit."
- Galatians 5:22–23a, CSB

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. Baptism is commanded (Mt. 28:19).
2. Jesus modeled it (Mt. 3:13–17).
3. The early Church baptized (Acts 2:38–41).
4. If you're a Christian, you should want to; if you don't, something is terribly wrong.

BUT DO I HAVE TO?

When we ask that question, it already proves that our hearts are in the wrong place.

- If we have a new heart, a new spirit, and a new nature through Jesus that desires to obey and please God, why wouldn't we?
- Once we grasp the lengths that Jesus went to for our redemption, we should want to do ANYTHING He asks us to do.

THE PARABLE OF THE YOKE

- Matthew 11:28–30, CSB
- Trying to find meaning, purpose, and identity on our own, apart from our Creator and Savior, is exhausting work.
- Trying to make ourselves clean, prove that we're "good people," or show that we're winning at religion or moralism by virtue-signaling, is soul-crushing.
- God has already promised to do what we can't.

THROUGH CHRIST, GOD HAS PROMISED TO...

- Cleanse you from the inside out—to wipe away the impurities of a defiled heart from sin and rebellion against God.
- Change you by giving you a new heart—to take away the heart of stone and give you a heart that is receptive to the commands of God.
- Put His very Spirit within you—to fill you with power and a desire to live for Him.

SURRENDERING THROUGH FAITH

- Saving faith is truly repenting of sin and self-reliance and trusting fully in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- If you've never truly done that, what is stopping you?
- If you have, but have never professed it publicly through baptism, why?
- Repent, believe, and profess Him as Lord.