**REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED**

Acts 2:38

**“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”**

Today we are here to baptize Michael Ludena who wants to be obedient to the word of God, repenting of his sins and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Talking this opportunity, I would like to share the meaning of baptism today.

In baptism, there are three parts according to today’s verse; the first two parts a person can do, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus; and the third, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, depends on God, God only.

1. **Repent**

What is repentance? Simply speaking, it is turning away from sin and turning toward God. I am going to break this down into three things. **First, it is confessing one’s wrongdoings.** Here, wrongdoings are **not only** **actions** but also **omissions.** John the Baptist delivered the message of repentance, saying, **“Repent and believe the good news.”** When the people heard his message, they **confessed their sins and even illegal actions.** Tax collectors confessed that they collected more money than they were supposed to and put the rest in their pockets. Even Roman soldiers repented, confessing that they extorted the Jewish people. Ooops! Through their confession, couldn’t they be in trouble? Yes, they could.

Though they could get in trouble, **why did they confess their secret sins?** It is because they wanted be **free from their sins and guilty conscience.** It is because they wanted to be **healed and live a new life.** It is because they wanted to be restored to **the original image God gave them.** Do you know that you are created in the image of God, beautiful and glorious? But we lost this image because of our sins, beginning from Adam, and the whole world is groaning for restoration. How much more our spirit wants to be restored and is groaning in sin. **Thanks be to God who opened the door for us to be restored beginning through repentance!**

There is one person who suffered due to his secret sin of adultery and murder of his loyal general. He cried out, saying, **“Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.”** (Psalm 51:2-3) Confession of sin is the beginning of healing. James 5:16 says, **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”** If you want to be healed from sinful way of life, confess your sins with a righteous person and receive prayer support. Then you will be healed through prayer and accountability.

**Secondly, it is renouncing our sinful way of life.** Confession is only the first step of turning away from sin. After confession, the person should renounce his or her sinful way of life. It is simply reversing the sinful life. John the Baptist advised people how they should renounce their sinful life; saying to tax collectors that they should only collect what they supposed to; to Roman soldiers, that they should stop distorting the Jews but be content with their wages.

Repentance without renouncing our sinful way of life is like a body without life. When many of the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to be baptized without repentance, John the Baptist said to them, **“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”** (Mt 3:7-8)

I pray that we renounce all our sinful way of life once for all, but practically we must start with one sin. Without one, there is no two. After renouncing one sin, we will be able to conquer two and three and so on, growing continually in the image of God and being an instrument of righteousness. Now, Michael made a decision to renounce the first one, alcohol. Though drinking itself is not a sin, this sinful habit has controlled him so much so that he could have lost his life many times. May God bless his repentance and help him bear the fruit of repentance. This victory may lead him to win many victories and be an instrument of righteousness! Amen!

**Thirdly, repentance is to prepare the way for the Lord.** It is the way John accepted and obeyed God’s calling from Isaiah, saying, **“The voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord,** **make his path straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked way shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”** When we repent of our sins, our heart is open to accept the gospel. In order to make a straight path, high mountains are made low and low valleys, high. Likewise, through repentance, a proud heart becomes humble, and a fatalistic heart finds hope. Therefore, when we repent, we must repent not only of our sinful life but also our sorrowful and hopeless heart as well, so that our heart may be ready for Jesus to come in and work in our lives. Amen!

1. **Be Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**

Up until now, we talked about repentance, which is John’s baptism. Now, Peter added the name of Jesus Christ to John’s baptism. If we confess our sins and renounce our sinful way of life, that is exactly what John the Baptist did. But our baptism has more than that. It is because of the name of Jesus Christ. What does this mean?

**First, it means that Jesus Christ was punished for our sins.** These days, sin is treated lightly; people justify it by saying “everyone is doing that”. But sin has a serious consequence: God’s punishment. God is a righteous God; therefore, he cannot just ignore sin. The punishment of sin is death, eternal condemnation. Yet, God so loved all sinners and sent his One and Only Son Jesus Christ. Jesus in his obedience came to this world and received the punishment of all our sins on the cross. Not only so, but also he tasted death through burial in the tomb. Yet, on the third day he rose again in order to defeat the power of death for our eternal life.

Therefore, by believing in the name of Jesus, we accept that Jesus humbly came to this world, renouncing his honor and glory of heaven as the Son of God. Then he suffered immensely and shed his precious blood on the cross in order to be a ransom sacrifice for our sins. **When we are being baptized in the name of Christ, we accept that Jesus was punished on our behalf on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and was buried and rose again from the dead in order to open the door for us to enter into the kingdom of God.**

**Secondly, it is believing for the forgiveness of our sins.** There are two parts of forgiveness: **God’s forgiveness and human forgiveness.** God’s forgiveness does not come until his righteousness is fulfilled through punishment. In other word, without believing in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice, there is no way for us to receive God’s forgiveness. All our sins and crimes are ultimately violations against God. David said, **“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”** (Psalm 51:4) When we receive God’s forgiveness through Christ, we are truly free from God’s condemnation. This means we are free from Satan’s accusation for our sins. We are free from the power of sin. Jesus said, **“Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”** Now, there is **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**, especially from Satan and even from ourselves. We are moved from **eternal condemnation to eternal life**. Thank you, Jesus for bringing God’s forgiveness and setting us free from the power of sin and the devil! Amen!

When we receive God’s forgiveness, we should start working on **human forgiveness** as well. First, we should **stop condemning ourselves and others**. Joseph in the Old Testament was sold as a slave to Egypt by his own brothers but he did not blame his brothers; rather, he saw his life in God’s sovereignty, saying, **“You intended to harm me, but God intended for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”** It is the truly blessed life of a forgiven sinner, seeing one’s life in God’s sovereignty. **Secondly, we should start reconciling with those who we have sinned against.** This process may not be easy, but this is the way we bring heaven down to earth. This may be the part of renouncing one’s sinful way of life, being reconciled with God and with men.

1. **Receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

Though repenting of our sins and being baptized is mainly our human decision, believing in God’s forgiveness through Jesus is God’s work.

When I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior, I felt that I had received everything. But this verse tells us that God has more to give; the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet, the gift solely depends on Jesus, who promised it. This means that you do not get to choose what the gift should be, but the Giver chooses.

There are many gifts according to the Bible. Just as Paul said, I want to inform you about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the reason why he gives them. 1 Co 12:7-11 says, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given **for the common good**. 8To one there is given through the Spirit a message of **wisdom**, to another a message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, 9to another faith by the same Spirit, to another **gifts of healing** by that one Spirit, 10to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different kinds of **tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues.** 11All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just **as he determines**.” This reason why the Holy Spirit distributes the gifts is to **edify not oneself but the church** (1 Co 14:4); that is, for **the common good for his kingdom**. Be sure that it is not for one’s own glory. Though it may not be his or her talent, it is good to start using our talents for the church and for his kingdom.

Since God promised to give us the gifts, we need to believe that we will receive them. It may not be right now but in his time for sure. It may not be what you want but what God chooses. But when we acknowledge that he gives us the gifts for the common good of his kingdom, we can freely serve the church of Christ with the gift he gives us in stead of being a slave of our own wishes and desires.

Through today’s message, we meditated on the meaning of baptism deeply. **Repentance** is confessing our sins and renouncing our sinful way of life, one after another. In this way, our hearts are prepared to truly **accept Jesus**, who died on the cross for our sins and was buried and rose again from the dead in order for us to enter into the kingdom of God. Then, we experience the **power of God’s forgiveness** which enables us to practice his forgiveness, reconciling with others. Moreover, God promised give us more, **the gift of the Holy Spirit**, in order to edify the church, expanding the territory of the kingdom of God on earth. Amen! Though I talked about the baptism in steps, these things may happen all at once and also progressively as we are being sanctified, as we renounce our sinful habits one after another and grow in the image of Jesus Christ.