

CHAPTER 16

STEP THREE IN DETAIL - BE BAPTISED IN WATER

¹⁵And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

Mark 16:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁸And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. ¹⁹"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:18-19 (NASB)

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:27 (NASB)

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

1 Peter 3:21 (RSV)

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

Acts 22: 16 (RSV)

The Bible clearly commands us not only to repent and believe, but to go further and be baptised in water as well. Even so, there are sincere and genuine people who hold different opinions about baptism in water and exactly how and when it should be done. I would want to try my hardest not to fall out with other people or to lose relationships based on disagreements about baptism.

However, the Bible is quite clear about baptism in water, so I have a duty to be clear too. I would urge you to look at what the Bible has to say about it and then put it into practice, rather than just fit in with what other people say, or what your particular church denomination says.

When this book was at draft stage I showed it to many people to get comments and advice. To my surprise, a number of people immediately focused on baptism in water. They urged me not to emphasise it, or even mention it, as it is such a controversial subject. I was taken aback by the strength of feeling. One said "Why not just focus on the essentials?" By that they meant repentance and believing (or faith). They implied that baptism in water is a minor side-issue or non-essential, though they did not go so far as to say that explicitly.

They advised me that if I emphasised the need for baptism in water for believers, as opposed to infant baptism, then I would upset people and that they might then reject everything else, including what the Bible says on repentance and believing.

I saw the point they were making. But I could not in good conscience take their advice, even if my approach does mean that I will offend people. If I was to take their approach, where would it end? I might as well feel free to leave out, or tone down, any of the other uncomfortable things that the Bible says. And there is no shortage of those.

I have no authority to rewrite or edit the Bible so as to make it less offensive or more marketable. Neither does anybody else. The reason, therefore, that I have to include, and emphasise, baptism in

water in this book is simply that the Bible does so. There is no other reason to do so. No other reason is needed.

There is no getting around the fact that the Bible teaches the need for baptism in water for believers. That means those old enough to repent and believe for themselves. It is not for babies. If the Bible taught infant baptism anywhere, even once, I would include it in this book and teach it myself. But it doesn't and I would challenge anybody to point to even one verse which supports it, even indirectly

Likewise, if the Bible ever said "*baptism in water is purely optional*" then I would say that too, but it doesn't. Therefore, baptism for believers has to remain in this book, not because I believe in it, or because it is something I have done myself. It is in this book because it is in the Bible, and for no other reason.

Baptism means full immersion i.e. being submerged under the water

So, let us begin by looking at what baptism in water is. The word '*baptise*' simply means to completely dip something under water, in the same way that you would with a sheep dip. Thus a farmer when dipping his sheep is, in the literal sense of the Greek word, baptizing them. It means to completely submerge them beneath the water.

Strangely, the word baptise is the original Greek word. The reason we use the original Greek word rather than our own English words *submerge* or *immerse* is because at the time that the King James Bible was being translated, shortly before 1611, a fierce debate was raging about how baptism should be done.

Some felt that it should be by sprinkling with water on the head and that it should be done to babies. Others argued that it should be done only with those who are old enough to believe and decide to be baptised for themselves, and that it should be done by full immersion in water.

Rather than offend either group the translators of the King James Bible chose simply to use the original Greek word '*baptizein*' as a transliteration. They just Anglicised the very Greek word itself, to create the word '*baptise*', without translating it at all. Then it was up to every man to give it whatever meaning that he believed it had. That was how the King James translators chose to get themselves out of a very tight corner.

There ought not to be any controversy over what the Greek word '*baptizein*' means. Its meaning is totally clear and beyond any doubt. In fact, in 1860 a leading scholar, and Bible translator, Thomas J. Conant (1802 - 1891) was working on the translation of the American Standard Version (and the Revised Standard Version). He argued that we should stop using the words '*baptism*' and '*baptise*' altogether. Instead he said that we should translate the original Greek words into English (i.e. '*submerge*' or '*immerse*') just as we do with all the rest of the words in the Bible.

Thus, he wanted to simply translate it as '*submerge*' or '*immerse*' every time the Greek word '*baptizein*' was in the text. That was clearly the right approach but he could not get the committees to accept what he said. It was too controversial for them.

Their reasons for not taking this obviously correct step were presumably the same as with the translators of the King James Bible in 1611. They feared a backlash of criticism from all those people whose denominational tradition was to practise baptism by sprinkling with water. The reason that is done is simply because the person being 'baptised' is only a baby and would not react well to being dipped under the water. So, the error of baptising babies led on, for practical reasons, to the error of sprinkling rather than submerging. It was not done because the Bible says so, because it doesn't.

So, Thomas Conant left the translation committee and wrote a book called *'The meaning and use of baptizein'*. In that book he gives 236 examples of the use of the Greek word *'baptizein'* in both the New Testament and secular Greek literature. In fact he chose every instance where the word was ever used in the whole New Testament and in all surviving secular Greek literature.

He found, without any exceptions whatsoever, that it always meant 'submerge or immerse'. That is to plunge someone or something entirely under the water. For example it was used to refer to a ship sinking in the sea and so forth. In the whole of Greek literature of any kind there is no other use ever made of that word. Doesn't that settle it? If so, what are we doing sprinkling people's foreheads with water? It is entirely unbiblical.

So, for example, the way that we ought to have translated Mark 16:16 would be:

"He who has believed and has been *submerged in water* shall be saved...."

If we translated *'baptizein'* like that, as we ought to, there being no valid reason not to, then it would make the meaning unmistakable. Instead of this it is being obscured.

Baptism is for believers, not for babies

Moreover, if we look at what actually happened in the first century, from the early years of the Church, through to the end of the book of Acts, we can see that baptism was solely for believers who could decide for themselves. It was not for babies.

Likewise earlier, the baptism that John the Baptist gave was usually in a river. People would go into the river Jordan and they would bend down into the water by themselves and become completely submerged. John the Baptist did not do it for them. They baptised themselves, though John was present, as were the crowds as well. It was not done to infants.

Also, within Judaism, long before John the Baptist, great importance was placed on ritual washing. That involved going into a large bath called a *'mikvah'* in which you submerged yourself to indicate your repentance and to symbolize your cleansing from sin. Likewise, this ritual washing was not done to babies, but only by those old enough to decide for themselves.

That is the background concerning Jewish ritual baptism and the baptism of John. We should keep that background in mind when considering how Christian baptism in water was later practised during the period of the book of Acts. These earlier Jewish forms of baptism and the baptism of John the Baptist *were never done to babies*. It was always by full immersion under the water and only for believers. Therefore that was the model for Christian baptism in water.

I must emphasise however, that when the New Testament speaks about baptism in water it is speaking about being baptised in, or into, the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is *not* the same as the earlier baptism of John the Baptist, which was purely a baptism of repentance from sin. John's baptism was given as a preparation for the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, whose ministry was shortly due to begin. Neither is John's baptism the same thing as the long established practice of baptism in a mikvah bath that was widely practiced within Judaism for ritual cleansing purposes.

To be baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit means to be openly identified with the Lord Jesus, as His disciple. That, of course, involves repenting towards God the Father and believing in the Lord Jesus too. It is also about openly and publicly declaring that you are now His follower, as a prelude to receiving the Holy Spirit. That usually occurred immediately after baptism in water.

Christian baptism in water is also a symbolic act. It means that we identify with Jesus' death as we go down into the water:

³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)

Baptism in water also visually demonstrates our repentance and signifies the washing away of our sins through publicly putting our trust in Jesus Christ and identifying ourselves with His sacrificial death on our behalf:

having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Colossians 2:12 (NASB)

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3 (NASB)

Baptism therefore symbolizes a number of things, all of which are important. One of its most important meanings is that the "old self" or the carnal, fleshly, sinful, self-centred person you have always been up to this point, is symbolically put to death and "buried":

¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:12-14 (NIV)

Apostle Paul goes further in his letter to the Romans and refers to this concept of the old self or the old man being "crucified" with Christ:

⁶knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Romans 6:6 (NASB)

Therefore, when we are baptised in water we are symbolically identifying ourselves with Jesus in His death. It is as if our old self, the sinful person we have been, is put on a cross alongside Jesus to be identified with Him, even in His crucifixion. The symbolism involved in the act of being baptised in water is very important. Our baptism is meant to be a crucial turning point in our lives. It produces big changes and cuts us off from our rebellious, sinful, unbelieving, non-Christian past.

Paul is speaking of this in Colossians 2 and Romans 6 above. So, as we go down under the water in Christian baptism, we are to ask God to cut us off from the "old man" or "old self", i.e. our sinful, carnal nature which has been used to keep us in bondage to sin for so many years. We are also to ask God to give us a fresh start as a new person or a "new creation" in Christ:

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

We are also described by Paul in Galatians 3 as having "put on Christ". It is as if He was a garment that we could wear:

²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 3:26-27 (NASB)

Though the symbolism in baptism is important, it is far more than just symbolic. God will truly cut you off from, and set you free from, a lot of bad things from your past as your old self symbolically "dies" in the water of baptism. Many of the problems, sins, addictions and hang-ups that Christians are plagued by could be avoided, or reduced, if they were properly baptised.

Look how strongly apostle Peter puts it when he refers to baptism in this next passage. He says "...*baptism now saves you....* "

²⁰who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. ²¹Corresponding 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, 1 Peter 3:20-21 (NASB)

Peter is using the word 'baptism' as a collective word to embody and represent all the steps that are needed in order to be saved. It must be so, because he would otherwise be saying that baptism alone is what saves us and that is clearly not true. The same happens elsewhere in the Bible where the single word 'repent' or 'believe' is, likewise, used as a form of shorthand to stand for all the steps combined.

However, even though Peter is obviously using the word 'baptism' to stand for and to include within it all the other steps, i.e. repentance and faith, that come before baptism, it still has to be faced that he is including baptism within the whole process of being saved. We certainly can't say that Peter is minimising the significance or importance of baptism.

Neither can these verses be safely ignored by those who want to argue that baptism is a non-essential detail that comes after we are saved. We need to raise the status of baptism and see it as a key part of the whole process of being saved.

Baptism in water is in the Bible, and it is emphasised, for a reason. It is meant to benefit us and to have a real and lasting impact. We cannot safely leave it out of Christianity or change it to become, instead, something which we do to babies.

Is baptism essential?

A person might ask whether baptism in water is an essential part of believing in Jesus Christ in order to become a Christian. Can we be saved (justified) without water baptism? Strictly speaking, we have an example from the Bible of a person who was saved (i.e. justified) without being baptised. That is the thief on the cross. He recognised his own sinfulness, believed in Jesus Christ and was told "This day you will be with me in paradise".

Obviously, that man was saved (justified) solely by repenting and believing in Jesus Christ. But, we must remember that *he had no opportunity to be baptised in water*. Therefore he died without ever being able to be baptised. However, it would be reckless and unwise to seek to argue from the example of his situation that you, therefore, don't need to be baptised, given that you are able to.

We must never forget that Jesus commanded us to be baptised. It is not optional.

Apart from anything else, it is a matter of obedience to what the Bible says. Jesus *commanded* us to be baptised in water. That instruction was repeated within the New Testament many times. There can be no doubt that we are commanded to be baptised in water. Therefore Christian water baptism ought really to be treated as a part of repenting, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and putting our trust in Him. It is the way that we openly declare and demonstrate that we have done so. We are saying publicly that we have cut ourselves off from our old life of sin and rebellion and begun a new life.

However, baptism is much more than just a symbol. It is really important, and perhaps even essential, for our salvation. At any rate, I have no authority to say that it is *not* essential. Neither does anybody else. I personally would not want to ignore the command that Jesus has given for us to get baptised in water. The thief on the cross had a valid reason not to be baptised, but you and I may not.

As for the question of *when* to get baptised in water, there are different viewpoints on this. Many churches today have baptism classes. People are taken through a series of lessons on what the gospel is and what they need to believe and why. At the end of that course they are then all baptised. I do not necessarily criticize that. If that is done sincerely, then I am sure that God will bless it and use it. However, that is not the way that baptism was practiced in the early church.

In the Bible, as soon as a person made the decision to repent, believe in Jesus and follow Him, they got baptised *there and then*, without waiting. The person would simply look for a river, a lake, a mikvah bath or the sea and go immediately to fully immerse himself in water. This was to demonstrate in public the fact of his conversion and the start of his new life trusting in Jesus Christ. More importantly, it was to obey what Jesus commanded.

Today many of us tend to be very casual about all this, whereas they took their conversion, and its public proclamation, very seriously in the first century. They regarded it as a major life-changing event, which needed to be visibly and publicly proclaimed:

³⁴The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." ³⁸And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. Acts 8:34-38 (NASB)

In this passage Philip explains the gospel to this man from Ethiopia, and he accepts it and believes in Jesus Christ. He then sees some water and asks to be baptised immediately. Evidently, Philip approved of that. That was the normal way to do it. We would do well to adopt this. Apostle Paul himself was baptised very quickly after he became a believer:

¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; Acts 9:17-18 (NASB)

Indeed Ananias, who took care of Paul when he was first converted, told Paul that there was no need to wait to get baptised:

¹²'A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. ¹⁴'And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Acts 22:12-16 (NASB)

Likewise, we see from Acts chapter 18 that the people in Corinth believed and were baptised. The clear implication is that they got baptised straight away, as soon as they came to repent and believe:

⁸*Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.* *Acts 18:8 (NASB)*

Apostle Paul operated in the same way when he baptised the Philippian jailer immediately after the man was converted:

³¹*They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."* ³²*And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.* ³³*And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.* *Acts 16:31-33 (NASB)*

I should mention here that some people have actually used the passage above about the Philippian jailer as a basis for supporting the practice of infant baptism. They do so by arguing that if this man and "all his household" were baptised, then that, presumably, may have included children and even babies. Therefore they argue that we should baptise babies. However, that is extraordinarily weak logic. It is pure supposition and is no proper basis for creating the practice of baptising babies, which is not found anywhere in the Bible.

In any event, the word translated 'household' in that passage would also include the Philippian jailer's employees or slaves that worked in his house. That was common practise in those days, especially for a man senior enough to be in charge of a jail. So, applying the same flawed logic, we could equally seek to use that passage to argue today for the compulsory baptism of our staff or employees!

A far better way to understand the reference to his household is simply to conclude that, following his own conversion, he went and told the gospel message to all his family and even his slaves and employees. Then they quickly believed and repented and were eager to be baptised in water, of their own free will, just as he had been.

Remember, those relatives and/or slaves/staff had also got apostle Paul with them. They may well have already heard Paul explain the gospel earlier as well, while in the prison. So, the key point is that we have to assume that each member of that household made a decision of their own to get baptised in water. There is nothing in that passage, or in any other passage in the Bible, to support the idea of anybody baptising a baby. Every baptism in the Bible involves a person old enough to decide for themselves.

The main origin of infant baptism is that it comes from a misunderstanding of circumcision. Jewish baby boys were circumcised on the eighth day in order that they could be physically marked as members of the Jewish race. It also meant that they could become partakers in the promise made to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, those particular aspects of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were only available, both then and now, to Jewish people, not to Gentiles.

Baptism is not the same as circumcision and it is a major mistake to confuse the two things. Circumcision is not a basis for infant baptism. Neither is it a precedent for how baptism should be done.

By getting baptised in the biblical way a person starts the Christian life well. There is a definite cutting off from the old life and an obvious start of a new life. That helps people to avoid problems of half-heartedness, confusion and compromise, where a person does not want to be known openly as a Christian.

Baptism in water is an unmistakable event. It means that you are publicly and decisively revealed to be a Christian. There is no hiding it. That is a good thing and helps you to make a strong and clean start in your new Christian life.

Look at the Bible for yourself and forget for a moment everything that people have ever told you about baptism. Then form your own conclusions about baptism in water solely from what is written there. As I engage in that exercise, I can see no other way of doing baptism in water than the way that it was practiced in the first century, namely full immersion in water. And it should be immediately after a person repents, not months or years later.

A summary of where many churches have gone wrong on the subject of baptism in water

In the majority of churches baptism in water is handled in the opposite way from what God intended. Let us examine the various ingredients in turn and compare what the Bible says with what we generally see happening:

Biblical baptism:

- 1) full immersion under the water
- 2) done *by* people old enough to believe and repent for themselves
- 3) done as part of the process of becoming a Christian
- 4) done by a person immediately after they have repented and believed

How most churches actually do baptism:

- 1) sprinkling with water
- 2) done *to* babies too young to understand anything
- 3) done to make a baby into a Christian. That is baptism *by itself* is seen as giving salvation to the baby, which is not true. Thus multitudes of nominal Christians assume that they are Christians and are saved, just because their parents had them baptised. I was speaking to a girl some time ago called Alexia who told me she was a Christian. I asked her when she had become a Christian and she replied, perfectly seriously, "*When I was baptised as a baby*". She really thought that event had saved her.
- 4) done either:
to a person as a baby, many years before they repent/believe OR
done *by* a person long after they have repented and believed. It is seen as non-urgent - just whenever you get round to it.

5) always done by every new believer
and considered to be obviously essential

5) not always done at all - very much an optional
extra for those who want it.

I feel I ought to add another point to address a practice which has become increasingly popular, but which is problematic. That is the idea that before getting baptised a person is expected, or even required, to stand with a microphone and 'give their testimony' to all those present. In larger churches, that could mean addressing hundreds of people. It is not that there is anything wrong with doing this in itself. On the contrary, giving one's testimony is a good thing. It enables the gospel to be proclaimed to any unbelievers in the audience. It also helps those present to gauge whether the person getting baptised really believes and repents.

However, there is a problem, and even a danger, with this approach. Firstly, this practice is not biblical. That is, there is no indication in the book of Acts, or in any of the letters, that any new convert was ever required to give his testimony or demonstrate his bona fides in any other way before being baptised. Doing so might bring some advantages. But the point is *it isn't what the apostles did*. Moreover, I believe there were good reasons why they didn't do this and those reasons still apply today.

One problem that can arise where a succession of people come to the lectern, one after the other, to give their testimony, is that it feeds pride. It is evident that for some of them it can turn into a competitive performance in which they are anxious not to be outdone by the others. Therefore, instead of them making simple, sincere statements, one sometimes hears detailed accounts which draw too much attention to the one giving the testimony rather than to God or the gospel. So, for those who are already prone to pride and exhibitionism, this practice of requiring them to give their testimony publicly, especially to a large audience, can become a temptation which may cause them to stumble.

Conversely, for those who are shy by nature, or who are less educated or less articulate, the prospect of being baptised in front of a large audience can come to be seen as an ordeal. It can make them wary or even afraid of being baptised at all. There are people who have refrained from being baptised, or have put it off until later, because they dread the prospect of having to speak in public, and especially to have to speak about themselves. I know this because they have told me. This second problem is actually my main concern.

Of course, if Jesus or the apostles had commanded us to give our testimony in public before being baptised, then there could be no argument on the point. We would all need to do it, whatever we might feel about it. But they neither commanded it nor practiced it themselves. It is a wholly man-made practice, as indeed is so much else of what has come to be seen as normal church practice.

We have no right to impose our own ideas, traditions and preferences on other people and, least of all, to make such things appear to be an essential part of the process of becoming a Christian. It is one thing to *allow* people to give their testimony if they *wish* to do so. But it is quite another thing to *require* it of them.

Indeed, I believe that it is not wise even to allow the practice to become the norm. If we do that, there is effectively no alternative but for new believers to go along with it, even if it is not formally insisted upon by a church. Traditions and familiar practices can easily become so rigid that they might as well be made into rules, because the reality is that they are seen as such.

That said, some churches are actually going so far as to make it part of their written constitution or rules that every person being baptised *must* give their testimony. I came across this recently in the case of a particular evangelical church. My own conviction is that man-made rules such as that, which

do not come from the Bible, should not be imposed on people, notwithstanding any advantages they might be felt to offer.

We should not require, or even ask, people to do anything more than the Bible requires, especially in relation to such a crucially important issue as baptism. The apostles kept it very simple and so should we. For even one person to avoid getting baptized due to shyness or a sense of social or academic inferiority is a tragedy. Yet I fear that there are many for whom that is the case.

So, if that applies to you and you are choosing to avoid or delay water baptism because you don't want to give your testimony to a large audience, then be reassured. You do not *need* to do that if you prefer not to. You can just be baptised at home in the bath, or at a swimming pool, and with only a handful of people present, if that is what you feel is right for you.

The importance of baptism from the Devil's perspective

It is odd that so much of the Church has got baptism so very wrong. If there were to be errors you would ordinarily expect them to be randomly spread out, so that in some ways we might operate biblically and in other ways not. However, the reality is that with baptism most churches tend to get just about everything completely wrong. In fact most churches do the exact opposite of what God says on almost every aspect of baptism.

That cannot be a mere coincidence. It has clearly been orchestrated and arranged on purpose. It shows all the signs of being a satanically coordinated plot or scheme. It looks very much like the Devil has gone out of his way to try to make sure that baptism is messed about with. The Devil wants it to be either done wrongly, or not done at all.

That emphasis on undermining baptism suggests that the Devil considers baptism in water to be very important. Why would he go to so much trouble to deceive us and to confuse our thinking and our practice on the whole subject of baptism if it wasn't vitally important?

Indirectly we can take encouragement from the fact that this is an area where there is so much false teaching and error. It can help to convince us that baptism really matters to God and is extremely useful and necessary for us.