

Written in Stone...

Etched in Stone and Written on the Heart

In a world that often views "rules" as restrictive chains, we are embarking on a journey to rediscover the beauty of the boundaries set by our Creator. God's Word, Written in Stone, invites us to look past the cold surface of the tablets and into the heart of the Law-Giver. We will explore how the Ten Commandments were never intended to be a heavy burden for us to carry, but rather a protective hedge planted by a loving Father. By diving into the moral architecture of God's Word, we'll see how His "thou shalt nots" are actually invitations to a life of true freedom, stability, and purpose.

Throughout this series, we will examine how these ancient decrees remain perfectly relevant to our modern struggles, relationships, work ethic, and for our inner peace. We'll bridge the gap between the Old Covenant Law and the Grace found in Jesus Christ. While the Law reveals our need for a Savior, it also provides a blueprint for abundant life. Join us as we learn that when we live within the lines God has drawn, we don't find confinement—we find the profound blessing of a life aligned with His holiness and His design for human joy.

8 Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:8-10

Today is a day of immense rejoicing. We aren't just here to go through the motions of a Sunday service. We are here to witness a miracle in motion – through the faithfulness of children expressing their faith and through the testimony of baptism.

Water is powerful. It can be as hard as stone and we are all witnesses of just how powerful water can be:

Impacting – hard as concrete. God's law feels fluid and gentle when we move within it. But, when we actively crash against it through blatant disobedience, we don't break the law...the law breaks us. It becomes an unyielding wall.

Nurturing – life giving. You may feel dormant, dry, and dead inside, but one touch of the Living Water (the Holy Spirit) can activate life that has been waiting for years. Restoration can happen suddenly after a long drought.

Empowering – energizing and equipping. Our passions and talents are like a rushing river—powerful but potentially destructive if uncontrolled. When we submit our lives to

God's discipline, He channels our chaotic energy into purposeful power that can light up the world around us.

Overwhelming – unrelenting. God's grace, as witnessed in baptism, doesn't just crash against our past...it represents a relentless surge that picks up our sins, our failures, and our regrets and carries them away "as far as the east is from the west."

So, what is Baptism?

To understand baptism, we have to look back. Before Jesus ever stepped into the Jordan, "baptisms" or washings (known as *mikva'ot*) were common in Jewish tradition for ceremonial purification.

When John the Baptist arrived on the scene he did something radically different. He called for a baptism of repentance. He wasn't just washing hands...he was calling for a washing of the heart.

In the Early Church, baptism became the "line in the sand." Getting baptized often meant:

- Excommunication from your family, church and community.
- Loss of social standing.
- Potential persecution from the state.

It was a bold, visible "yes" to Jesus that could cost them everything.

Ok, what does the Bible say about Baptism?

Baptism isn't just a "nice idea" or a church tradition. It is a Commandment. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives us the Great Commission:

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

Notice the phrasing here. We don't baptize in the name of a denomination, a pastor, or a specific church building. We baptize in the Name of:

- **The Father:** Who authored the plan of redemption.
- **The Son:** Who died to pay the penalty the "Stone Law" required.
- **The Holy Spirit:** Who gives us the power to actually live out God's word.

So, Why do we go all the way under the water? Because the word *baptizo* literally means to "immerse" or "submerge." It's a beautiful, living picture of the Gospel.

"We 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 6:4

When you go under that water, you are identifying with Christ in His death. When you come up, you are identifying with His resurrection. You are telling the world:

1. **The Old Me is Dead:** My sins, my shame, and my old way of living are dead and buried.
2. **The New Me is Alive:** I have been raised to walk in a "newness of life."

That makes sense. But, what about "re-baptism"?

Now, let's address the elephant in the room: **Re-baptism**

Is it a "second salvation"? **No.** Salvation is by grace through faith once and for all.

Is it a powerful testimony? **Absolutely.**

A re-baptism is a reiteration like a couple renewing their wedding vows after fifty years. They aren't "more" married than they were before, but they are saying, *"I know more now about what this love costs, and I am more committed today than the day I first said 'I do.'* So, I stand here today and declare my ongoing love and commitment by saying, *'I STILL Do.'*"

- Do you know God better today than you did when you were originally baptized?
- Have you wandered, become unclean, and are ready to reiterate your love to Him?

Re-baptism...is a reiteration of what you STILL believe.

Today, we witnessed this immersion. Now, I want you to examine your own heart.

- Have you made that public declaration?
- Are you living like someone who has been "raised to new life," or are you still trying to dig up the person who was supposed to be buried?

Let this water remind us all that Jesus is alive, His grace is sufficient, and He calling you today.

Written on our hearts. Written in stone. Written in His blood.

The Second Mile: *Going Beyond Sunday*

Let's dig deeper together to see how God is calling and equipping each of us to reach the lost.

Monday – Water is powerful and reminds of God's power to stop, carry, breathe life, and change landscapes. How has God done these in your heart and life?

Tuesday – Baptism is an outward testimony about what God has accomplished on the inside. What do you remember of your baptism? How does it remain an active and present memory?

Wednesday – Immersive baptism represents our death and burial with Jesus and our resurrection to new life. What has God buried of you and what is different about this new life that He has given you in Jesus?

Thursday – Re-baptism is similar to the Jewish custom of periodic ritual cleansing. But, it is not in any way a surrogate or source of salvation. If it doesn't save you, what does it do?

Friday – Are you living a life of one who has been "raised to new life" or are you still trying to dig up the person who was supposed to be buried? It can only be one or the other.