

No. 31 BAPTISM: "We Are Not the Sort Who Shrink Back"!

[PLEASE NOTE: This talk includes interviews. Follow instructions in assignment letter]

A JOYFUL DAY FOR COURAGEOUS SERVANTS OF JEHOVAH (4 min.)

All of us here today rejoice with you baptism candidates

After many months, a year, or more of study, prayer, and hard work,
you have qualified for Christian baptism

Soon you will go on record as having dedicated yourself to Jehovah God

You will join millions who are pursuing the best way of life

We extend a warm welcome to each of you!

You too are joyful today

You are eager to take this step, and rightly so (Ps 40:8)

Baptism brings many blessings (w10 2/15 25-27 ¶7-13)

At the same time, you may feel somewhat nervous

You may wonder: 'Do I really have what it takes to live up to my
dedication? Will I succeed in serving Jehovah forever?'

We are convinced that you can succeed, that you *will* courageously keep
your integrity

We have the same confidence in you that the apostle Paul had in
the Christians living in Judea in the first century [Read Hebrews
10:39]

Paul did not write: 'I hope you will not shrink back'; rather, he
was convinced that the Christians to whom he wrote were "not the
sort who shrink back"

Why do we have similar confidence in you?

Let us discuss three reasons: (1) You have already shown courage
to get to this point, (2) you can draw courage from the example of
others who have overcome challenges similar to ones you might
face in the future, and (3) Jehovah will help you remain
courageous

HOW HAVE YOU ALREADY SHOWN GODLY COURAGE? (5 min.)

To qualify for baptism, each of you has shown courage in one or more of
the following ways:

You have changed long-held unscriptural beliefs (Joh 4:24)

You have broken free from unclean habits (Ro 12:1; 2Co 7:1)

You have abandoned immoral practices (1Co 6:9-11)

You have rejected nonneutral activities (Isa 2:4; Joh 17:16)

You have chosen the less popular path (Mt 7:13, 14)

You have endured opposition (Mt 10:22)

We commend you for your courage in starting on the road to life

Having succeeded thus far, are you not determined to "go on walking
orderly in this same course"? (Php 3:16)

We are confident that you are!

**HOW HAVE OTHERS OVERCOME CHALLENGES SIMILAR TO THOSE YOU MAY FACE?
(8 min.)**

You will continue to need courage after baptism, for God's servants
are a special target of Satan the Devil

Unlike Jehovah, Jesus, the faithful angels, and those of us here
today, Satan is not happy about the step you will soon take

Just as he tempted Jesus shortly after Jesus was baptized, Satan
will no doubt look for an opportunity to test your resolve (Mt
3:13; 4:1)

When faced with tests, meditate on faithful examples, both in Bible
times and in our day

Examples in Bible times

Recall Paul's words at Hebrews 10:39: "We are not the sort who shrink back"

To "shrink back" means more than having a temporary bout of fear, which even faithful servants of God may experience (1Sa 21:12; 1Ki 19:1-4)

Rather, to "shrink back" means withdrawing from our course of service to Jehovah (w06 10/1 17 ¶7)

The Hebrew Christians to whom Paul wrote faced pressure to return to their former way of life (w99 12/15 16 ¶7-8)

To help fortify their courage, Paul highlighted several past examples of faith

[Read and discuss Hebrews 11:30, 32-34, 36] Paul here alludes to faithful individuals, including perhaps some of those discussed in the preceding symposium

"The walls of Jericho fell": Joshua and Caleb trusted in Jehovah, not giving in to fear of man (w93 11/15 14-15 ¶13-15)

"They defeated kingdoms": Jael courageously took her stand against an enemy of God's people (w15 8/1 14-15)

"By chains and prisons": The prophets Micaiah and Jeremiah endured imprisonment for boldly declaring an unpopular message (w02 2/15 16 ¶19)

No doubt, those examples and others bolstered the faith of the first-century Christians

As a whole, those Christians did not "shrink back" from their course of integrity

We likewise do well to reflect on the example set by courageous servants in the past

Make these Bible characters real to you, and imitate their faith (Heb 6:12; ia 6 ¶10-11)

Examples in our day

We can take courage in knowing that our modern-day brothers and sisters have not shrunk back after baptism

Let us meet two of them

INTERVIEWS (3 min.)

[Interview two Witnesses who faced tests of faith shortly after baptism. Ask: What tested your courage after you were baptized? What helped you not to shrink back?]

WHY CAN YOU BE SURE THAT JEHOVAH WILL HELP YOU REMAIN COURAGEOUS?
(4 min.)

Jehovah promises that he will provide the strength you need [Read 1 Peter 5:10]

You can have confidence in that promise for several reasons

Jehovah drew you to the truth because he saw something good in you (Joh 6:44; w13 5/1 14)

God rejoices over your choice to serve him; he wants you to succeed in following through on that choice (Pr 27:11)

He gave his Son's life for you (Ga 2:20; yp2 227 ¶2)

Having already paid such a high price for faithful humans, he will "kindly give us all other things," including the strength not to shrink back from our Christian course (Ro 8:32)

CONCLUSION (2 min.)

Jehovah is eager to reward his courageous servants, including you baptism candidates [Read Hebrews 10:35, 36, 39]

We are confident that you are "not the sort who shrink back"; you are "the sort who have faith"

With you, we look forward to "the fulfillment of the promise"

We wish for you what is promised to all who seek Jehovah: "May you enjoy life forever"! (Ps 22:26)

PUBLIC DECLARATION OF YOUR PERSONAL DEDICATION (3 min.)

[Invite candidates to stand]

Please answer the following two questions in a *loud* voice:

- (1) On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will? (Your answer, please)
- (2) Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization? (Your answer, please)

Your clear, affirmative answers to these questions indicate that you are qualified for baptism as ordained ministers of Jehovah God

[Prayer by speaker, after which he invites the audience to stand and join the candidates in singing the song indicated on the printed program. Session chairman will take speaker's place on the platform during the song]

TO BE COVERED IN 29 MINUTES

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