

Baptism Comes Before Salvation

There are five passages in the New Testament which mention both baptism and salvation in the same verse (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:4; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). In all of these passages, water baptism precedes the remission of sins. Do you know of a passage where the order is reversed?

Mark 16:16 contains two conditions for salvation: faith and baptism. It also contains the conditions for damnation: a lack of faith. If you want to know what you must do to be lost, it will tell you -- all that is necessary is a lack of faith. If you want to know what to do to be saved from your past sins -- it commands you to believe and be baptized.

In Acts 2:38 Peter told a group of believers to "repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Our Baptist friends often focus on the word "for" in this passage and insist it means "because of," even though it is never translated that way in any reputable translation of the Bible. We have to remind them that if baptism is "because of" the remission of sins, then so is repentance. Baptism and repentance are joined by the little word "and." Whatever one is "for" the other is "for."

After we are buried with Christ in baptism, we are raised to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). This new life comes after baptism in water. Many preachers want to "bury" the "new man," since they claim the newness of life comes before our "burial."

Three days after the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus, Ananias told Saul to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). Many preachers today claim Saul was saved three days before Ananias met him. Ananias must not have known it, for he told Saul how to "wash away" his sins. If Saul had been saved on the road as some preachers claim, he must have been the most miserable saved man in the Bible. Saul was blind and spent three days praying and fasting until Ananias arrived.

1 Peter 3:21 states "baptism doth also now save us." However, baptism is not the only condition for the salvation of the alien sinner. Other requirements must be met, like faith, repentance and love. There is nothing "alone" that will save a sinner, not even faith (James 2:24).

- by David Padfield

Morals in the Pulpit and in the Pew

Once, when I preached a sermon on morals, a mature man in the congregation asked to speak. For perhaps two or three minutes he exhorted the people, giving complete endorsement to what I had preached. I believe his endorsement may have impressed the people more than my sermon had. It would be a good thing, everywhere, if elders and/or other mature, devout men would publicly concur in teaching of truth on moral matters. The more worldly ones would then come to realize that morality is a matter for all, not just for preachers. We need more morals in the pew as well as in the pulpit.

In the same city where I preached the above-mentioned sermon, an elderly lady attended the services. I visited her, and in the course of such I inquired how she happened to attend. She said that "her church" was far across the city and that her son had urged her to attend with us. Her son was foreman in a plant over the very man mentioned above who exhorted the people when I preached. Her son so admired the morals of his worker that he told his mother, "that church must be all right" because that man went there.

Of course, I do not mean that the morality of the people necessarily makes a church right. People may indeed be moral and still be very wrong doctrinally. On the other hand, regardless of the purity of doctrine that is preached, a church can't be right before God and fruitful among men unless the morals of the members are above reproach. In fact, correctness (scripturalness) in worship, work and organization is made attractive to the world by genuine morality and good works (Matthew 5:15-16).

When Christians teach the whole truth, many people will reject it and rebel against it. Yet some may be won to receptiveness and later to obedience through the godliness of Christians. Conversely, any scriptural position a church may take is made quite inconsequential to the world if the people do not live in holiness. A preacher's sermon on morals falls very flat if the congregation does not exemplify the highest ideals. Especially the leaders (elders, deacons,

preachers, etc.) and their wives need to maintain untainted reputations that will portray the very same ideals as are proclaimed in the sermons.

Instead of always whining and complaining about the morals of the world about us, God's people would do better to just demonstrate, in the pulpit and the pew, the qualities that are desirable. Let us say and do, preach and live moral purity of the very highest possible degree. Let the thoughts of our minds, the words of our lips and the deeds of our bodies be holy, godly and righteous altogether. This would abound to the glory of God, to satisfaction in life and usefulness to the world.

- by **Leslie Diestelkamp**

How to Answer When You Don't Know the Answer

No one likes to be 'put on the spot.' We dread the possibility of being asked questions that we can't answer. This is especially true when the questions are about religion.

Without a doubt, one of the biggest hindrances to spreading the gospel is this fear of being asked questions. Many Christians feel uneasy about their level of Bible knowledge. Thus, to avoid potentially embarrassing situations, they do their best to sidestep any discussion that might turn to religious themes. This is sad, because it keeps us from many 'open doors' for personal evangelism.

Since no one has ALL of the answers, it is important for us to know what to do when questions arise that 'stump' us. Here are some suggestions:

1) Realize -- and be ready to explain -- that there are simply some pieces of information that we do not have because God has not supplied them. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). But, we have "all truth" (John 16:12, 13), and "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). So, every piece of essential information has been supplied.

2) When you do not know the answer, it is best to simply admit it. This is much better than trying to 'bluff' your way through. Humbly say, "I don't know." But do not fail to add: "I'll find out and get back to you on that." Following this procedure will actually provide additional opportunities to teach. It keeps the door open to further discussions.

3) Study, study, study! You will feel less intimidated and more willing to engage in biblical discussions if you build your confidence level by increasing your Bible knowledge. Pay special attention to areas where you presently feel 'weak' in knowledge and understanding. Be well prepared to deal with popular denominational errors. Be ready to explain 'issues' that divide brethren.

4) Never shy away from a chance to talk about God and His Word. The more you do this, the easier it will become. Every such conversation serves as an opportunity for you to 'sharpen your sword.'

- by **Greg Gwin**