

Baptism and the Blood

The blood of Jesus saves us from our sins: the blood was "*shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28). What does baptism have to do with the blood?

Peter preached, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). Note that the expression "*for remission of sins*" is the same as in Matthew 26:28. Jesus shed His blood for the remission of sins. How can both be true?

The answer is in Romans 6:3-4: "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*" This tells us that when we are baptized into Christ we are baptized into His death. We contact Christ's blood when we obey the gospel and are baptized into Christ.

What saves us? The blood of Jesus. How do we avail ourselves of the blood? Through baptism into Christ. Is baptism a work of our own merit? No. We simply must submit to the will of God. Now, how can anyone deny the necessity of baptism?

- by T. Doy Moyer

One Sinner Destroys Much Good

Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good. (Ecclesiastes 9:18)

The title of this article comes from a statement of the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 9, verse 18. It conveys a thought that each of us must consider. It tells us that a sinner wields a lot of influence, but it is the wrong kind and it is destructive! Notice that the text doesn't say that "many sinners destroy much good," but "one sinner destroys much good." Many times one sinner does more harm to the cause of good, than one righteous person does to a stampeding herd of ungodliness.

A preacher may be a very effective pulpiteer and he may have a firm grasp on the truth of scripture, but if he doesn't believe what he preaches enough to live it, he is himself a sinner who destroys any good that he achieves (I Timothy 4:11-12).

An elder may have tremendous leadership skills coupled with a broad knowledge of God's word, but if he doesn't practice what he requires about honesty, controlling the tongue, moral purity, and all else, he isn't fit for the position of overseer. He will destroy any good that he accomplishes (I Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:7).

A Bible class teacher may be kind, knowledgeable, and very practical in his application of scripture, but if he is a gossiper, quick tempered, listens to slander, and never asks forgiveness from those against whom he has sinned, any good that he accomplishes will be destroyed by his sins (Romans 2:19-24).

If others see people in the church who claim to be Christians, but whose lives are full of hypocrisy and evil, then any good that is accomplished by the congregation will be destroyed (Hebrews 10:26-29).

We should promote good instead of destroying it. If our lives are not what God says they should be we are destroying the good that we or other saints seem to be achieving. We must repent of our sins and start anew. Christians, if there is sin in your life, stop it and turn to God. Then and only then will the good that we and others are trying to do will not be destroyed.

- by Ron Daly

Warnings

A dozen sirens wailing a warning of a coming tornado cannot save the lives of those who do not heed. Warning that a dam is beginning to break under the pressure of floodwaters cannot save a city of ten thousand living directly below the dam if they do not heed and seek higher ground. The blaring of the horns of a train bearing down on an intersection cannot save motorists

who ignore it and are smashed by trying to cross the tracks. Is there no grace? Is there no mercy? Yes! The warnings are the form of deliverance from peril, but grace and mercy do not profit those who do not make use of them.

God has spoken! He has offered good things and warned mankind of mortal peril. He has set in place a way of salvation from spiritual death and eternal punishment through His gracious gift through Jesus Christ. He has said that all who believe Him, heed His Word, and obey His Son's commandments will be delivered from certain death in sin and will be given eternal life (Hebrews 5:8,9; Matthew 7:21-24; Mark 16:15,16; Romans 2:5-11).

But God's warnings have not profited those who have not heeded His commands to stop, to flee from peril, to seek the safety in Christ. Many warners tell their hearers that belief alone will save them, that they are saved before they obey the warnings or even without obeying the warnings; therefore, the warned ones feel safe though their destruction is imminent (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). Many people isolate themselves from God's warnings by refusing to read His Holy Scriptures, by refusing to listen to the Truth presented by means of radio, by refusing repeated invitations to attend the assemblies where the Truth is taught, and by refusing even to discuss the Scriptures with Christians who are seeking to help them.

Neighbor, God's warning is ever-present. Are you reading it, listening to it, and obeying it unto salvation? The way that leads to life eternal must be taken and traveled (Matthew 7:13,14).

- by Gilbert Alexander

Re-visiting Matthew 18:20

There has been a good bit of discussion about Jesus' statement in Matthew 18:20: "*where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*" It has been accurately explained that the context of this famous phrase limits its application. Specifically, Jesus was not discussing worship assemblies.

Unfortunately, this passage has been misused to justify brethren absenting themselves from the assembly of the church and conducting their own devotionals (including the Lord's Supper). They express confidence that Jesus is 'with them' because a plurality of Christians are in attendance.

God's Word identifies that the Lord's Supper is to be observed "*when ye come together in the church*" and "*when ye come together into one place*" (1 Cor. 11:18,20,34). The objectors argue that when "two or three are gathered together" it constitutes a church. Thus, they attempt to make their case for the observance of the Lord's Supper in these settings.

There are some real problems with this explanation. First, if it is true that these gatherings of "two or three" are really a 'church', then we have churches popping up - and quickly disbanding - all over the place. Are we to believe, for instance, that a 'church' existed in a hotel room for a few moments on Sunday morning (just before the participants headed off to the amusement park)? This 'church' observed the Lord's Supper, and then disbanded never to meet again. Is this really what folks want to defend?

Second, those making this argument need to look at Matthew 18 a little more closely. The context describes how to deal with an erring brother. First you go to him privately. Then you take "one or two more" (note: that would be 'two or three' together - do the math!). Finally, you "tell it unto the church". But, wait! Do you see it?!? The group of "two or three" together is clearly distinguished from "the church". In other words, Jesus' own words show that a simple plurality of Christians does not automatically result in the formation of a 'church'.

So, the very context of Matthew 18:20 proves that these limited, private gatherings do not provide the authorized setting in which the Lord's Supper is to be observed. Think!

- by Greg Gwin