

Baptism Does Not ...

The Bible has much to say on the subject of baptism. The Book of God tells us that baptism is for remission of sin (Acts 2:38); that it saves us (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21); it puts into Christ where all spiritual blessings are (Romans 6:3; Ephesians 1:3); through this act we can become the children of God (Galatians 3:26-28); it is to be preceded by faith, repentance and confession of our faith that Jesus is Lord (Acts 8:36,37; 2:38); and the mode of baptism is immersion (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:4).

It seems that the vast majority of the religious world rejects the idea that baptism has anything to do with the forgiveness of sin. As noted above, their claim is totally false. Yet we have some brethren who take the Bible teaching on baptism to the other extreme, thinking that it is a kind of cure all problem with regard to sin, without ever repenting. This teaching is erroneous as well!

One cannot continue to practice sin after he has been baptized into Christ. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). They had been guilty of all of these things, but no longer did they practice them ("such were some of you"). Now they had been washed in the blood of Lamb (Acts 22:16), set apart by God to be used in His service, and declared just in His sight.

Baptism does not make unlawful marriage lawful. If it was an adulterous relationship before baptism, it is still and adulterous relationship after baptism. One who was involved in homosexuality before baptism cannot continue to practice such after baptism. Baptism washes away the sins that had been committed upon one's repentance. When men and women were told to repent, before baptism, it meant they had to turn from sin to God and they were not to continue in them.

To say that one is not subject to the law of Christ before baptism is to teach something that the Lord's will did not reveal. How did the Corinthians become guilty of fornication, adultery, etc. if they were not subject to that law? How would one become a sinner in need of salvation if he has not violated the law of God? In writing to those at Thessalonica, Paul said, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Will He take vengeance on those who have not submitted to the gospel of Jesus Christ? He said so! Does his not indicate that those who fail to obey are subject to that gospel? Sure it does. Likewise, just because one has been baptized, such does not guarantee that heaven will be that person's home. I don't personally know of anyone who is a member of the Lord's church that believes in the doctrine of once saved always saved. Yet I know several who live as if they believe such to be the truth. Baptism does not automatically punch your ticket to God's eternal abode. It takes faithful living on the part of each individual. Jesus said, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Notice a similar statement made in Revelation 2:10, the later part of that verse, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Baptism does not solve all the problems associated with sin in one's life. You may well need to repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins like those on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38). They turned away from their iniquities, like the Corinthians, and served God. Or you may have been baptized for the remission of your transgressions and you have allowed sin with its allurements to overtake you. You need to repent and pray like Peter told Simon. "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22). May we all be willing to submit to God's plan of forgiveness so that each might stand washed, sanctified, and justified in the sight of our Lord.

- by Jim Mickells

Little Things in Evangelism

A number of studies and surveys on evangelism have shown that as high as ninety percent of all "conversions" are directly related to a personal invitation from a family member, neighbor, or fellow worker. Yet, the tremendous potential of a personal invitation has not impressed many church members.

Many aids and schemes have been tried in the area of personal evangelism. But, there is nothing more effective than one person sitting down at a table with another person with a Bible between them.

It will not be our programs, our advertising, our gimmicks, that will lead the world to Christ. It will be God's power working in us through the gospel coupled with our fervent prayers that will accomplish the task. Unless we pray daily (even with tears) for their salvation, and unless we commit ourselves to doing something specific every week in the interest of those souls, we are not walking in the footsteps of those who cried and died for the lost (Luke 10:42; Matthew 9:38; Romans 9:2; 10:1).

- by Peter Wilson (edited for length)

Turning Forgiveness Around

We hear it frequently in the news these days. It has been a common defense in some high profile criminal cases. The basic argument is that people can be excused for committing even hideous crimes if they can demonstrate that something awful happened in their past. Unfortunately, this approach has proven successful in our perverted justice system. Murders, kidnapers and sexual offenders of every sort have been set free or have had their sentences reduced. As a result, we are seeing more and more criminals rush to assume "victim" status.

It is happening in the church, too. It is not uncommon for sinful brethren to attempt to "turn the tables" on those who are trying to restore them. "You didn't show the proper love toward me;" "You were unkind and didn't help me enough when I needed you;" "You were too harsh in the way you rebuked me;" etc., etc., etc. You see, they have learned how to become the "victims."

We agree that brethren can sometimes approach situations in the wrong way. All of us need to show love, forbearance, patience and kindness. Sometimes we fail in these things. Everyone can do better.

But, we are weary of sinners turning the whole matter of forgiveness around. If they have their way, the faithful ones are forced to beg them for forgiveness, while their own sins are ignored. This simply will not work!

Observe the case of Peter rebuking Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18-24). Simon was told that "wickedness" and a bad heart had left him in the "gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely he could have complained about Peter's harsh words, or unloving manner. Undoubtedly he could have countered with accusations about how he had been mistreated by others. Instead, he humbly accepted the rebuke and requested prayer. Sinners in the church today need to learn a lesson from him.

- by Greg Gwin