

It Is Written

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A Better Understanding Of Baptism

By T. Sean Sullivan

As many lessons as having included baptism, one might think everyone has it all figured out. However, lessons don't always stick and their points are not always being absorbed as they should. There also seems to be a never-ending stream of false ideas from out there. With so much confusion on the subject of baptism, there needs to be some clarification. The Scriptures are our only hope of knowing what God's will is on the matter of baptism (II Timothy 2:15).

Some souls have concluded that baptism is: a Church of Christ ritual. A miraculous life transformer. The only step in the plan of salvation. Let's open the Scriptures to consider these three concepts, to see if this is what God says on the subject.

Is Baptism a Church of Christ Ritual?

Many have falsely concluded that we, as a church, have determined baptism to be a ritual of acceptance. This is a conclusion proposed by a world that does not consider the authority of God's word. (Since they make up their own rules as they go along, they assume that every group does, and therefore they conclude that baptism is just one of "our" rules.) This would effectively make baptism meaningless in the big picture and would render its necessity, a product of human decision. Of course, this is not true. The truth about baptism needs to be known.

The Bible says baptism is an action that expresses our obedience to God's will, "those who gladly received the word were baptized" (Acts 2:38-40). Baptism puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 1:3-10). Baptism is for the washing away your past sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21) and finding the forgiveness necessary to enter into Heaven one day (Revelation 21:27). According to God's word baptism is irrevocably linked to the salvation of man's soul: Jesus declared its necessity (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). John recorded its necessity (John 3:5). The Apostle Peter preached its necessity (Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21). The Apostle Paul proclaimed its necessity (Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27: tie these to Ephesians 1:3-14).

Baptism is not an empty man-made ritual.

Is Baptism a Miraculous Life-Changer?

Some believe that baptism is a miraculous experience. Over the years many have come to the water of baptism expecting to feel a great inexpressible feeling. To experience an entrance of divine power. Or, to come up from the water with a powerful new take on life. These conclusions have not been drawn from God's word. There are some who have come to expect results like being cured of alcoholism, drug abuse, or other cravings. There also continues to be so much pollution from the charismatic movements that many are seeking the miraculous, the unexplainable, or the mystical. These things would make baptism some sort of side-show spectacle.

The truth is that baptism does not bring these changes: When one is properly baptized, they have no sensation other than the wonderful relief and joy of knowing that their sins have been cleansed. Like the Ethiopian, who went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39). Or, like the Philippian man, who "rejoiced" over having obeyed God (Acts 16:30-34). It is not baptism that brings about freedom from various temptations and traps, as so many expect. Overcoming those things is called "repentance" (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30-31; II Peter 3:9). It is when one truly repents that they conquer

temptations and purpose to continue to do so.
Baptism is not a miraculous life changer.

Is Baptism the Only Important Part?

There are so many, even among members of the Lord's church, who emphasize baptism over any other part of God's plan. Statements like, "As long as we get them baptized" shed the wrong light on baptism. Because of these false conclusions, too many over the years have only been "wet sinners" instead of truly being "cleansed converts". When one is baptized for the wrong reason, they are not cleansed (Acts 19:1-5). These people were baptized for the wrong reason, and even though they had "been baptized" they were still in their sins. Paul instructed them more accurately; they immediately desired true baptism.

There is more to the plan than just baptism: A lot of God's plan for our salvation is knowledge. Jesus Christ's gospel is the information about who Jesus is (John 8:24, 20:30-31), what He did for us (Matthew 26-28; Hebrews 9:22-28), and what He expects from us now (Matthew 7:21). Information that we must believe with all our heart (Acts 8:37). Then our actions of belief begin. Repentance is the necessary acknowledging of our guilt in sin and the determination to stop sinning (Acts 2:38, 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). Confession is of our faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God (Matthew 10:32; Acts 8:37). Baptism in water for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Then the determined continuation of the newness of life is our life-long goal (Hebrews 10:35-39). We are then prepared to maintain and eagerly wait for His appearance (II Timothy 4:8; II Peter 3:11-12).

Baptism is not "the only important part" of the Plan of Salvation.

Conclusion

We need to know the facts about baptism. Baptism is not a Church of Christ ritual. Baptism will not bring a miraculous change.

Baptism is not the only necessary part of the plan for your salvation. We must also understand proper baptism is necessary for salvation. Not one record of conversion, in the New Testament, under the New Covenant, fails to demonstrate baptism, as necessary.

We need to embrace that baptism is:

1. A necessary part of God's plan for your salvation.
2. The action of seeking your sins to be cleansed.
3. And, the difference between being lost and being saved when coupled with faith, repentance, confession, and continued endurance

The opportunity for you to obey "all" of God's plan is now, will you?

Can Adversity Be A Blessing?

By Kyle Campbell

Most of the time, we think that adversity is, well, adversity. No one likes to feel the "hard knocks" of life, and most of us honestly want to avoid adversity as much as possible. But the Bible says that adversity can be useful. James 1:2-4 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Adversity shows our mettle; it shows what we are made of. Athletes train for years to build their skills. Their intensive training allows them to get knocked down and be able to pick themselves up. Peter wrote, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ ..." (1 Peter 1:6-7). Trials help someone to develop their faith. Because of this, adversity can be a blessing. Do not despair when difficult times come upon you -- rejoice that you have the opportunity to be made better. Falling down does not make you a failure, but staying down does!