

In Spirit and in Truth: Rooted and Established

Freedom Church of Denton

Baptism

Volume 1, Lesson 4

- **In Devotion** (feel free to highlight, underline, and scribble notes. Take your time, working through the following material over the course of the next week...it would be better for you to get through one sentence with understanding than the whole lesson with no understanding!)

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls
Acts 2:38,41

Sometimes an effect is so near to its cause, as to be almost indistinguishable. Sometimes in language, there is a metonymy, or figure of speech, whereby the effect is put for the cause. For example, God is called salvation in Exodus 15:2. Salvation is actually the effect that God causes, but because He is so intimately involved in the work, He is called by its name. It is true that baptism itself is not what properly saves, that is, the removal of the dirt from the flesh by water (see also 1 Peter 3:20-22). Remission of sin occurs by the mercies of God alone, through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not the physical water itself that saves. Nonetheless, the chief *initial* evidence (effect) that such grace has been applied to an individual's life is his willingness to become obedient to the faith through repentance and baptism. That Peter viewed these events as happening *almost* simultaneous with salvation is betrayed by the strong language of metonymy that he employs. It is also supported by his and the other apostles' practice throughout the apostolic period and in the New Testament. Thus, Peter would respond boldly when confronted with the question "*what must we do?*", with his command to "*repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins!*"

Baptism, one of two ordinances given to the church (the other, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper) was clearly offered as the initiatory rite into this new and living way in the early church. It was no mere token. It was as important to the early church as circumcision was to the Hebrews. It was not only a privilege, but a demand of every new professor to make his confession public.

This event demanded a turning away from one's sin and a turning toward Christ and His provision. It was a renunciation of one's own way to follow the way of another, and a solemn declaration of one's conviction of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That is why it is given such priority in apostolic teaching and is viewed as *almost* synonymous with forgiveness itself. It needs little waiting and requires no self-

justification. Who can hold back the water? When faith finds its fruition, water should be found! Nothing will cement the faith faster, and refresh the professor of faith quicker, than to come through the waters of baptism. Nothing will prepare him more thoroughly for the reception of the new yoke of Christ's discipleship than to publicly renounce his former ways while simultaneously becoming a public "fool" for Christ. This is especially true in more hostile contexts, when baptism may come at great cost, just as it did in apostolic times. For these saints to publicly confess Christ meant that they would become targets of the resistance! Baptism almost always guarantees the persecution of the believer.

So, who is ready for baptism? The one who has cleaned himself up? The one who has sworn off sin forever? The one who is sure in himself that he has managed to muster the courage, faith, and moral certitude as to guarantee to never sin again? May it never be! No, baptism is only for the one who believes! The one who has admitted he *cannot and will not* ever be able to clean himself up! The one who should be baptized is the one that has acknowledged his sin and recognized that Christ has paid his debt! The one that recognizes that the life that he will live, will be a life of *faith* in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him. The one that recognizes that it is Christ that saves, Christ that keeps, and Christ that secures, eternally!

These truths not only serve to inform the seeker, but should also serve to inform the gospel worker. There is little in the way of discipleship that should be shared with a young disciple in the faith until he has become convinced of, and obedient to, this first and foundational step of faith, namely, baptism. And lest one devalues this teaching or thinks that we may have committed the error of exaggeration, we need look no further than the example of Christ Himself. He would not dare enter into the spiritual life and ministry until he had fulfilled all righteousness by going down into the river (see also John 3:13-17). If this is true of the one who knew no sin, how much more is it true of those who knew nothing but sin! It was upon this wonderful and preparatory work that Christ was immediately granted the Spirit of God, in the form of the dove! And following the same pattern, Peter would offer the same promise to those that followed the example of Jesus Christ. He boldly declared to those that obey in baptism, that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is for them and their children, for all who are far off, and for everyone whom the Lord God calls to Himself!

- **In Meditation**

As you consider the following references, first pray and invite the Holy Spirit to come and teach you as only the Teacher and Comforter can. Admit to him your complete inability to understand anything spiritual apart from his grace and illumination. Then consider each of these verses, taking notes on anything that the Spirit brings to your attention; perhaps a **S**in to confess, a **P**romise to claim, an **E**xample to follow, a **C**ommand to obey, or a **S**eed of righteousness to sow. If successful, you are learning to read the Word of God with your **S.P.E.C.S.** on!

John 3 _____

Compare and contrast the two classes of folks that were coming to be baptized by John in the passage above. What were their motivations? _____

What do you think the phrase in verse 8 “bear fruit in keeping with repentance means?” _____

What do you think is the connection between the baptism of water that John offers and the baptism in the Holy Spirit that Jesus offers? _____

1 Peter 3:2-22 _____

Peter says that baptism saves an individual in the same way the ark saved Noah. How does baptism correspond to the ark? _____

How is an appeal to God for a clean conscience made? _____

Matthew 28:18-20 _____

What part does baptism play in the Great Commission? How does it fit in the order? _____

What significance does it play in the discipleship process? _____

Why might this be critical in the order of healthy discipleship? _____

In Application

Please review the following references and ask the following questions for each of the references: Who was baptized? Who baptized them? Where were they baptized? How were they baptized? When were they baptized? Why were they baptized?

Acts 2:38-41 _____

Acts 8:36-38 _____

Acts 9:17-18 _____

Acts 10:44-48 _____

Acts 16:31-33 _____

Acts 19:5 _____

In Prayer

God, thank You for the gift of Your Son. Thank You that He died for my sin on the cross of Calvary. Thank you that You have prescribed a way that I might be washed and cleansed from all my sin, once and for all. Lord, I appeal to you for a clean conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. I vow to obey You in baptism and begin to lead others into that same baptism. Grant me the courage to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that You have commanded. I know that You will be with me in power all the way to the end! Amen.