

POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

THE ESSENTIALITY OF BAPTISM (PART 3) *by Wade L. Webster*

In the last two installments of this study, we considered six reasons why baptism is essential to salvation. We noticed that man cannot obey the commandments of God, cannot enter the kingdom of God, cannot have the remission of sins, cannot get into Christ, cannot be saved, and cannot follow the cases of conversion without being baptized. Obviously, any one of these reasons is sufficient by itself. However, considered one right after another, they are overwhelming proof.

There can be no reasonable doubt concerning the requirement of baptism. In this lesson, we want to conclude our study by considering a couple of final reasons.

Man Cannot Contact The Blood Of Jesus Without Being Baptized

A study of the Scriptures makes clear that the blood of Jesus is essential to man's salvation. It is "through His blood" that we have remission (Mt. 26:28; Heb. 10:1-12), reconciliation (Rom. 5:9-10; Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20), and redemption (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Most men accept that contact must be made with the blood of Jesus in order to be saved. However, the dispute is over how

or when this is done. Does man contact the blood of Jesus at the point of faith or in the act of baptism?

To answer this question of how or when man contacts the blood of Jesus, we must begin by examining the inspired record of Jesus' death. John records:

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water (John 19:30-34).

Long before John witnessed these events and recorded them by inspiration, Zechariah spoke of a day when there would "be a

fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). This fountain for sin and uncleanness was opened at Calvary when the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus with a spear. From the Savior's side flowed blood and water. Of course, these two items work together in baptism to make man clean.

When man is buried in the watery grave of baptism, he contacts the blood of Jesus. Please note that Jesus was "dead already" when His side was pierced and His blood was shed (John 19:34). At first, this may not seem like a significant detail. However, Paul placed great emphasis upon it in the inspired epistle that he penned to the saints at Rome. We read:

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 (Rom. 6:3-4).

Paul clearly linked baptism and the death of Jesus. Please note that we are "baptized into his

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death." Why is this significant? It is significant because Jesus' blood was shed in His death.

We contact His redeeming, remitting, and reconciling blood when we are baptized. Baptism is the doorway into Christ and into His death. It is in the act of baptism that we are washed from our sins and that our robes are made white in His blood (Rev. 1:5; 7:14; cf. Acts 22:16).

Man Cannot Put On Christ Without Being Baptized

To the saints at Galatia, Paul wrote, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). Please pay special attention to the "ye are" of verse 26 and the "have been" of verse 27. They were the children of God by faith because they had been baptized. Neither faith nor baptism can be removed from the plan put forth in these passages without removing salvation. We must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mk. 16:16).

Although Paul does say that they were children of God by faith, he does not say that they were children of God by faith alone. Clearly, baptism was a part of their salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 3:21). The "ye are all" of verse 26 is parallel to the "as many of you" of verse 27. They were the children of God because they had believed and been baptized.

It is important to note from the verses under consideration (Gal.

3:26-27) that Christ is put on in the act of baptism and not at the point of faith.

Please understand that I am not trying to minimize the importance of faith. As I have stressed above, faith is extremely important. After all, man cannot please God without it (Heb. 11:6). However, baptism is also important. To downplay the importance of baptism in our text (Gal. 3:26-27), as many do, is to miss Paul's point. Paul was stressing the importance of baptism. He was stressing that baptism is the point at which man puts on Christ.

To argue that baptism isn't essential to salvation is to argue that putting on Christ isn't essential. Yet, we are clearly commanded by Scripture to put on Christ (Rom. 13:14).

Furthermore, it is God's plan for us to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). There is nothing that God wants more than for us to be like Jesus. He wants us to think (Phil. 2:5), love (John 15:12), walk (1 John 2:6), and to forgive as His Son did (Col. 3:13). To the saints at Colosse, Paul wrote, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10; cf. Eph. 4:24).

Please note that they were "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him" that had created them. Of course, the One who had created them was Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9). At what

point had they put off the old man and put on the new man made in the image of Christ? The context makes clear that this had been done when they were "buried with Him in baptism" and "risen with Him through faith of the operation of God" (Col. 3:12; cf. 3:1). Again, we see both faith and baptism playing a part in their salvation. The context continues by making clear that putting on Christ means putting on "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). It means forbearing one another and forgiving one another as He forgave us (Col. 3:13).

To emphasize how important it is to put on Christ, please consider the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Mt. 22:1-14). In the parable, Jesus told of a man that didn't have on a wedding garment (Mt. 22:11). When asked why he didn't have on a wedding garment, the man was speechless (Mt. 22:12). He had no answer. Because he had on no wedding garment, he was bound, taken away, and cast into outer darkness (Mt. 22:13). In like manner, those who have not put on Christ in baptism will one day stand speechless before the King. They will be without excuse.

The Bible has made clear how and when we put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Sadly, those who fail to follow the clear instructions of Scripture about putting on Christ, will be bound, carried away, and cast into outer darkness on the Day of Judgment.

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POWER

February, 2010
Volume Twenty, Number Two



Deuteronomy 5:32

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POWER is a monthly publication overseen by the elders of the Southaven church of Christ, Southaven, Mississippi.



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Salvation involves a change of raiment (Zech. 3:3-4). The filthy garments of sin have to be taken away and the new garments of salvation have to be put on (Isa. 61:10). In the book of Revelation, John recorded the following scene:

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:13-14)

Please observe that these saints were adorned with robes that had been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. They had put on Christ in baptism and were wearing wedding garments. In spite of great tribulation, they had kept their garments (Rev. 16:15). Because their garments had not been defiled, they were counted worthy to walk with Him in white raiment (Rev. 3:4-5; Rev. 19:8; Job 29:14). Of course, the same honor is offered to us. However, we have to put on Christ in baptism and be faithful unto death in order to enjoy

it.

It is with sadness that I close this study of baptism. It has been good for me to consider these things anew. I hope that you have benefited also. It is my prayer that this study may lead to the salvation of souls for years to come.

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