



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – March 2, 2008

Heart to Heart. . . (Baptism part 4)

The question arises, "*Does one have to be baptized to be saved?*" Let's take God's holy word and see the company baptism keeps. What do the New Testament (after the death of Jesus) inspired writer's link baptism to in regard to Christ and salvation?

Baptism is linked with: *Forgiveness of sins* – Acts 2:38

Washing away of sins – Acts 22:16

Salvation – Mark 16:16/ I Peter 3:21

Entering Christ – Galatians 3:27/Romans 6:3

Being clothed with Christ – Galatians 3:27

Union with Christ's death – Romans 6:3

Sharing in Christ's resurrection – Romans 6:4-5

Receiving the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38-39

Entering into Christ's body – I Corinthians 12:13

Entering into the security of the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Matthew 28:19

Let's be honest and think about all this. Since baptism is linked with these foundational blessings and truth in Christ Jesus, can we just lightly dismiss it and think nothing of it or approach it as optional? ***No matter what one has always believed, we need to let the Scriptures shape our understanding and insight.***

Let's talk about faith. Baptism is linked to faith in Colossians 2:12. The central response to God is one's faith. Not simply believing that God exists (even though that's important) but a deep, committed trust that depends on His goodness and work through Christ on our behalf. Faith responds to God's calling us into fellowship with Himself through Christ. Faith is trusting submission to what God calls for as that has always been the right response of sinners to God. Faith does not simply say, "I believe in Your Son and accept Him as my Lord and Savior.", but responds to God's calling through His word. Just read Hebrews 11 carefully. There is **always** a response expected when God calls. To believe in God is to respond to what He desires and wants from us.

When Israel marched around the city of Jericho, faith was not saying "we accept you as our God". It was present by responding to God's calling them to march (Joshua 6/Hebrews 11:30). Noah built an ark for the salvation of his own soul and that of his family. Noah responded by faith, and the building of the ark was his trusting, reaching out (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham left his home in Ur by faith and his faith responded to God's calling (Hebrews 11:8-10). **Faith always responds!** Many religious people try to distinguish between faith and faith in action. Biblical authors never do this. Abraham believed what God promised him (Genesis 15:6) and said he was justified by faith. How could God do that? Because Abraham responded when God called for a response by leaving his home, country and then offering up his son (Genesis 22) years later. From the time God promised to the end, Abraham trusted His God and responded to His word when asked to do something. True saving faith and the obedience of faith are not separable. The teaching of faith, much like the word love which also responds to the needs of another and not some feely, touchy emotion, is the response called for. It is not confined to some internal attitude or mental ascent.

Acceptable baptism is always linked to faith in the New Testament. Baptism is a trusting in God that God will keep His promise. (Colossians 2:12/Galatians 3:26-27) Baptism is a faith response to God's grace. I do not trust the water is washing my sins but God promised to cleanse me at the time and point He asks me to be baptized in water in the name of Jesus. Baptism is where one calls on the name of the Lord to fulfill His promise. (Read carefully Paul's recount of his conversion in Acts 22.) I have to trust God to do as He said and I respond to what He asks of me. Those who do not believe in the Lord and His word would not be baptized! It was that simple. Even God's intended purpose of the baptism of John (before the death of Jesus), was refused by many who did not believe in it (Luke 7:29-30). God's word points clearly that those who believed were baptized! (See Acts 8:12;35-38;16:14-15;30-33;18:8 as examples of this!) Not only were these believers baptized, they were eager and joyful when they did so. (See Acts 2:38-41;8:8-12;16:33-34) In the very words of Jesus, He said believe + baptism = saved (Mark 16:16). Today, more and more are claiming believe + saved = baptism. Does that not distort the words of Jesus? Not one true believer asked, "*Does one have to be baptized to be saved?*" They listened to the saving message and responded by faith to His saving grace and baptism was where the union between the Lord and Savior took place. More next week. Think about it!!!

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