



"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 9, 2008

Heart to Heart. . . (Baptism part 5)

Baptism is very difficult for many to accept. Minds have been tainted with religious ideas and thoughts. It seems people are not willing to allow God's word to form their understanding and insight on the subject. We need true and honest hearts to look at the word, seeking for the truth as stated by God.

We have looked at the link between faith and baptism. Baptism being tied to faith makes perfect sense since baptism proclaims the central events of the Christian faith: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is the truth about God's wondrous and gracious works in Christ that convicts us of our own helplessness and compels us to trust in God with all our heart. Faith's response is shown in baptism. While baptism is a distinct response, the New Testament does not treat it apart and separate from faith. When true believers are baptized, they are trusting God's grace. Look carefully at Colossians 2:12. Baptism points away from the person being baptized to the One who died and rose to save the world, Jesus Christ. The very act of baptism is a confession of trust in someone other than us. It does not point to us, it points to Him! It is not a work of man but a trust in the working of God. To separate baptism from trusting submission is to violate its character and the New Testament teaching.

Let's look at carefully at this. In the New Testament writings, the blessings that are tied to faith are tied to baptism. Paul teaches that union with Christ is by grace through faith that is apart from human merit. What is offered in faith is received in baptism. *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Galatians 3:26-27) Listen carefully to the text. He points to their faith in Christ that has made them sons and then shows them how it happened by starting with the word "for"! In being baptized into Christ, these people became *"sons of God through faith."* Why are people afraid to see this? More time is spent explaining it away than just simply receiving and accepting. No twisting! No manipulations! Just read and accept it!

Each and every New Testament writer insists that salvation is by faith apart from human merit. The apostle Peter taught that (Acts 15:10-11). Paul's writings show salvation by faith (Ephesians 2:6-8/Romans 11:6 are especially clear). It is clear that our goodness has no saving power! Listen to what Peter says after speaking about what happened to Noah during the flood: *"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* (1 Peter 3:21) Baptism is where the appeal to God for cleansing us takes place **through** the resurrected Christ. Did Peter mislead in this writing? Why do so many gloss over this and not see baptism's tie to faith? Peter simply says, *"baptism now saves you."* He made sure they understood it was not a physical, external purification, but an appeal for a good conscience before God! It was an inner cleansing through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Listen carefully, the saving power does not lie in baptism or the faith that responds but in the redemptive work of God in Christ! Faith-baptism links us with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that is said to save us.

Peter taught one is saved by faith. There is no conflict between faith in our Lord and Savior for salvation and our humbly submitting to Him on His terms, which is baptism. Trusting sinners do not instruct the Lord or tell Him what He can or cannot say. When Peter preached that day in Acts 2, those people joyfully and humbly submitted to the word spoken (Acts 2:37-41). They brought no personal creed into line with the word spoken! They understood their fate and guilt and allowed God's word to shape their faith, not the reverse. May God open our minds and hearts to hear and accept salvation on His terms, not ours. More next week. Think about it!!!

Brent