



"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 – November 15, 2009**

## Heart to Heart...

It seems more and more if you talk to someone about baptism as part of God's grace saving process, people accuse you of believing in self-salvation. Many say it is a work of man. More and more "churched" people believe that baptism has no saving merit but is only an outward sign of an inner salvation. Others tell us baptism is merely symbolic and a witness to the salvation they already possess. In other words, salvation first, then baptism administered down the road.

There are those who have little to no opinion about baptism at all. It is nothing more than a religious ritual of practice. Baptism to them is seen as an ordinance with little significance. Their baptism meant little and remains that in their heart at present. They just don't see what people make such a fuss over something.

Still there are others who make a fuss about baptism all the time. It's all they talk about and they scare people into baptism. We see that filtrate into the minds of little innocent children who come to believe they will not make it to heaven because they haven't been baptized. (We need to carefully study Matthew 18 and see what Jesus says about little children.) Parents want their little children baptized because of this fear and once baptism is administered, the child has little to no understanding of the purpose. They have little concept of their sinfulness so it does little for the heart and as they age, the Lord means little.

One cannot read the New Testament and think that baptism is a trivial issue. I once heard a brother in Christ tell me that we "spend all this talk on baptism while the world is lost and starving!" That's a shame he came to believe that but maybe we are causing it because we aren't really seeing things the way Jesus taught them and God revealed them. Here is the interesting thing about New Testament baptism. No one ever tried to prove anything about it. They simply taught a message and those who received the message were called to obey! Take the 3000 in Acts 2. Did they want to be right with God in Christ? They were told through the preaching to repent and be baptized into Christ's name for the forgiveness of their sins and the promise was the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39). Were they confused? Did they argue the purpose? Paul went to great lengths to remind those baptized into Christ what baptism meant (Romans 6:1-7 & Galatians 3:26-27). We find one of the inspired writers of the New Testament, who was a persecutor of Christ, in his penitent heart was told to stop delaying and be baptized to wash away his sins calling on the Lord's name (Acts 22:15-16). Peter nor Ananias nor Paul was attempting to prove anything about baptism. The people who heard the "good news" were called to obey. No one said, "Do I have to be baptized?" or "That's not a necessary part of salvation!" All this debating business is a modern thing as people have moved away from the teachings of God's word and into other religious mind sets. Baptism was not debated in the New Testament.

It's rather interesting that Paul met 12 men from Ephesus who were disciples but they were only acquainted with the teachings of John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7). They didn't discuss whether baptism saved or not. They were taught about the Lord Jesus and were baptized in His name. There is something serious about baptism if one is honest with Scripture. Think about it!!!

Brent