



"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 22, 2009**

## Heart to Heart...

When the term *baptism* is mentioned, some claim it is a work of man and no one is saved by works (which we aren't). *Baptism* is practiced by many but the many fail to connect *baptism* with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our religious climate has done a great injustice to God and His holy word and *baptism* is one of those major injustices. "Modern churches" and "modern believers" teach *baptism* but it is optional or the way to "join their church." Others replace baptism (immersion) with sprinkling or pouring. That is not New Testament teaching.

In Galatians 3:26-27, each verse starts with the word "for", the Greek word '*gar*' meaning 'because.' It is explaining what was said in the previous verse. Paul discusses how the Law was a tutor to lead one to Christ in the previous verses so we may be justified by faith (v.23-25). Then comes the word "for", "*gar*" because of faith, we became sons of God (v.26). He continues the "for", "*gar*" or because when they were baptized into Christ, they entered by faith into Christ and clothed themselves with Christ. Why did Paul teach this? To show that race, sexism and elitism had all been removed in Christ (v.28-29)! What do we learn if we are honest with Scripture? Paul knew more about God's grace and generosity than anyone and baptism was part of the grace of God acting upon the heart of a penitent believer. Being sons and daughters of God through faith meant that when they were baptized into Christ and clothed with Him on that basis, Christ took away all the barriers that kept people apart. When someone was baptized into Christ, Jesus was tearing down the partitions that divided.

Just because in every passage we read when people were brought into union with Jesus that baptism wasn't mentioned does not mean it was not administered. It just doesn't need to be mentioned with every conversion. Yet in regard to trying to keep people focused on Christ, many of the writers of the New Testament called upon their immersion (baptism) into Christ as their vital beginning and what it accomplished. (See Romans 6 as an example.)

Jesus words still speak, "***Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.***" (Mark 16:15-16) How dare anyone say that baptism is not part of salvation when Jesus ties them together? Without faith in the gospel and submitting into union with Christ through baptism, Jesus said they are condemned. That's not a preachers words but Jesus' own words. This was the command He sent His apostles with.

Peter penned God's inspired words to those believers that were scattered thought Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (I Peter 1:1). They were going through some tough times and Peter reminded them just as Noah and his family were brought safely through the water, he corresponded the believers baptism to that (I Peter 3:20-21). Peter, in regard for the words of Jesus, said "***baptism now saves you!***" How and where? Their union with Jesus at baptism is where they found salvation. Their faith reached to the resurrected Christ, appealing to God for a good conscience. That's what happened. That leads us to this: if baptism isn't essential for salvation, did Peter, Paul and the rest of the apostles lie to those they taught (and us)? Did Jesus lie? Think about it!!!

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