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EDITORIAL

What Does the Bible Teach?

“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

How can one walk in the Spirit? To walk in the Spirit also means to walk according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1), or being led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18). And, when one walks by the guidance of the Spirit of God then one stays away from fulfilling the lust of the flesh, says Galatians 5:16.

The Spirit of God does not operate miraculously and directly on some individuals, because God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34). God Loves all people (John 3:16). He wants to save all people (2Peter 3:9). Therefore all have equal opportunity and responsibility to walk according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit of God operates by or through the written word of God which is available to all people everywhere in the book of God, the Bible. (1 Peter 1:22,23). According to 2 Timothy 3:16,17, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” We must, therefore, read, hear, study the Bible, God’s word, as it is written and given by God to man and, walk according to the written word of God, which will keep us away from fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

We read in the Bible, in John 14:25,26, that before accomplishing the plan of salvation from sin for man, according to the will of God, by His death on the cross, and His burial, and resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-4), to His apostles Christ had said: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you," Further, he told them, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, "but whatever He hears He will speak: and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:13). Having thus received the Holy Spirit of God as their Guide and Helper, according to the promise of Christ, as we read from Acts 2:1-4, the apostles of Christ wrote the books of the New Testament of Christ, which is the will of God for us, today.

In the New Testament of the Bible, we read that when people anywhere believe in Jesus Christ and repent of sins and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins then they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). This is when and how one begun to walk in or by the Spirit of God. Because the Spirit of God spoke through the apostles, as He does even today by and through the written word? and He told them in the beginning to repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. They did it, as we read in Acts 2:41, and so must all people do the same everywhere to receive the same promise. Thus, after obeying the first commands of the Holy Spirit of God, when man continue to hear what the Spirit of God speaks through the written pages of the Bible and does them as He says, then one continue to walk according to the Spirit of God and thereby keeps himself from fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Speaking of the works of the flesh, the Spirit of God through His apostle reveals in Galatians 5:19-21 that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Qualifications Of Wives Of Elders And Deacons

J.C. CHOATE

The scriptures nowhere teach that women can be elders or deacons in the church. There are qualifications listed in 1 Timothy

3 and Titus 1 for elders and deacons, but no qualifications are given to women for being elders and deacons. It would be very difficult for a woman to be "the husband of one wife", as is required of those who might be considered for the office of elders or deacons in the church. In other words the qualifications for elders and deacons are directed to men, not to women.

Each elder must be the husband of one wife, and they must have faithful children, members of the Lord's church. Through this experience of rearing children to adulthood and faithfulness in Christ, he will have gained experience that will enable him to work effectively as a leader in the church. The role of the wife as a helpmeet for her husband, in the home, cannot be over-emphasized.

Looking at the requirements from the standpoint of the wife of the elder or deacon, her qualifications would include being the only wife of her husband, that is, with neither one having been previously married to another and divorced. While the elder and his wife must have believing children, the deacon and his wife are expected to have children, "ruling their children and their own house well." (1 Timothy 3:13).

Let us note the specific requirements:

1. Must have children who are faithful.
2. Grave.
3. Not slanderers.
4. Sober.
5. Faithful in all things.

With only two or three exceptions, the wife of an elder and the wife of the deacon should have the same qualifications as their husbands. Paul does specifically point out that the women should be grave (reverent), not slanderers (not malicious gossipers), sober (temperate), faithful in all things. (1 Timothy 3:11). Wives of elders and deacons, then, are to have the proper attitude and disposition in their dealings with members of the local congregation. They are to set a good example in showing respect toward the leadership and their brothers and sisters in Christ. They are not to be slanderers, that is, they are not to be finding fault with others, or expressing criticism in the form of gossip for other elders and deacons and members of the church in general. They are not to be envious and jealous of one another. Rather, they should love each other, have a forgiving spirit, and be ready to engage in every

good work. In other words, they are Christians and should act and talk like Christians. They should set a good example in all of their actions and dealings with others.

The wives of elders and deacons should not try to control, boss, and direct their husbands. When they attempt to do so, it becomes very obvious to the members of the congregation and, in such cases, their husbands are hurt and the church is hurt. An elder or a deacon who is being controlled by his wife should either resign or should re-assert headship over his own family, as the scriptures require. This doesn't mean that husbands should be mean, ugly, disrespectful, and overbearing in dealing with their wives, but they must be the heads of their families and give the kind of leadership that enables them to be respected by the members of the local congregation in which they are serving as elders and deacons.

Although the wives of church leaders cannot serve as elders and deacons, still they have a powerful and influential role to play in the work of the local congregation. As they fill their role of strong Christian women in their homes, they will be highly respected, will be able to give their husbands the kind of support and encouragement they need, and will be able to help rear and direct their children in the way they should go.

What work can they do outside? They will be able to serve as teachers of children, young women, and older women. They will be in position to use their homes to show hospitality. They will have opportunity to do personal work, to work with their husbands in visiting the members of the local congregation, helping to provide for the needs of the poor and hurting, visiting the sick, and setting a good example of Christian love and concern for those who need their care.

It would be well for young married women to put forth every effort possible to help their husbands to grow and develop as Christians and to look forward to the day when they can qualify to be deacons and elders in the church. Of course they must not do this with some ulterior motive in mind, such as gaining recognition, or having a position of power in the church, but to be able to be more effective in **serv**ing the Lord. We need good elders' wives and deacons' wives to help the Lord's church to grow, and to spread the cause of Christ.

You Must Face The Facts

FRANCIS DAVID

Everyday we face challenges in our lives. We cannot escape from this. Beside challenges, we have to face some facts in our lives. The reality of growing old is a fact that we will have to face one day. The death is also a fact that we will all face one day. According to the Bible, we are right now facing some facts and in the coming days we will be facing some more facts. Let us see what are those facts.

The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Rom.3:23). The sin is a reality which exist in this world and we are all facing this reality. Sin problem is every where. It is a universal problem, and God says all have sinned. The little innocent children are not sinners because they have not attained the age of accountability. The wages of sin is death and we have to face this fact. Sin and righteous are opposite to each other. Sin separates us from God(Isa.59:1,2). We must turn ourselves from sinning and accept the salvation of God. God wants us that we must separate ourselves from sin and walk with him.

There is another fact that we will face one day and that is standing before the judgment seat of Christ. We read in the Scriptures, as it says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2Cor.5:10). You and me and we all will face the judgment. Our judgment will be based on the Scripture. Are we preparing ourselves to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? The Judgment of God will be true and righteous (I Pet.2:23). The writer of Ecclesiastes says: "God will bring every deed in to Judgment." (Eccl.12:14). Apostle Paul writes: "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom.14:12). This is a Bible based fact and we will all face it.

There is another fact that we need to know and that is about heaven and hell. These two places are not like a myth. These two places are real. In the word of God the heaven is called a Holy City (Rev.21:10-17). It is the Throne of God (Rev.22:1-5). It is a city where all faithful want to go (Heb.11:10; Rev.2:10). What about hell? It is a horrible place and I believe you will not want to go there. The Bible says; it is like a lake of fire (Matt.18:9), It is outer

darkness (Matt.22:13). This place is where all the wicked will be tormented (Lk.16:23). The fact is that it is a place of eternal destruction (Matt.10:28). God's word says: "But outside are dogs, and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie." (Rev.22:15). The fact about heaven is the Bible says: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. (Rev.22:14). Friends, are you ready to face the facts about heaven and hell?

Lastly we see, we will face the fact of death. We read and the Scriptures says "And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgment." (Heb.9:27). Everyday the fact is we are nearing to death. Life gets narrow and narrow. In Psalm 90 we read about the eternity of God and Man's frailty. In 9 and 10 verses the Psalmist says: "For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years; Yet their boast is only labour and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Friends, the time is moving and moving, but are you ready for eternity? Apostle Paul says: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Eph.5:14,15). Life passes away quickly, death and judgment will be upon us, if we are wise we will prepare ourselves for this.

If you are not a child of God, you can become one today by believing in Jesus, confessing Him as the Son of God, repenting of your old sinful life and be baptized in the watery grave for the forgiveness of your sins. If you are an erring Christian, then its time for you to change and come back and be faithful. Are you willing to do it?

Be Imitators Of God

THOMAS R. DOHLING

The example of the Christians at Thessalonica is a case of being imitators of God. After their conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ brought about by the apostles' teachings, Paul says that they "became imitators of us and of the Lord, when you received the message with joy that comes from the Holy Spirit, despite great

affliction. As a result you became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the message of the Lord has echoed forth not just in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place reports of your faith in God have spread, so that we do not need to say anything. For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath" (1 Thessa.l:6-10).

The imitator of God [and of Christ], does not seek to please people but God, who examines his heart. He does not seek glory from people. He lives his life according to God's will. He now becomes like a little child—innocently trusting, loving, and pleasing God. He is now without guile. He becomes like a nursing mother caring for her own children. He is now willing to share not only the gospel of God with all but also his life.

He is now holy and righteous and blameless in his conduct and he lives in a way that is worthy of God who called him to his own kingdom and his glory. (see 1 Thess. 2).

Once the Christian has received the elementary instructions about Christ, he is instructed to move on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1-3), and imitate those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12).

A word of caution for those who fall away. It is impossible for him who has once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, and then have fallen away, to be renewed again to repentance, since he is crucifying the Son of God for himself all over again and holding him up to ridicule. He is reserved to be burned. (Hebrews 6:4-8).

Paul the apostle, after saying that he had more reason to boast of his achievements in the flesh and listing out his credentials, says that he counted his human achievements as "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but rubbish, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness ... but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection" (see Philippians 3:8-11).

The imitator of God is not content to rest in a limited knowledge of his Maker; he yearns to know Him better because

he knows his own lack and knows that only God can satisfy him. Once he has received the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, he cannot rest until his humble body is transformed into the likeness of his Master's glorious body! (read Philippians 3 for details).

Sadly, there are many who claim to be imitators of God but are really enemies of the cross of Christ because their god is the belly, they are not ashamed of the shameful things they do, and they always think about earthly things; their end is destruction (Phil. 3:18, 19). The imitator of Christ knows he does not belong to the earth; he belongs to heaven where his Lord is and his longing expectation is to be with his Lord forever! The man who has truly seen Jesus will never be the same again. His pride will be laid at Jesus' feet and in humility and total surrender he will imitate his Master always.

God is eternal and unchangeable love. In His sovereignty, He decided to treat man in grace. It is His love that motivates His grace. Righteousness and Justice stood in the way because of the sin barrier between man and God. In Love, God the Father sent His Son to the cross to die for the sins of the whole world. Righteousness and Justice are thus satisfied, the barrier is removed, and love and grace can be given to men.

Good News!—"You Can Do It"

DAVID THURMAN

Have you ever set out to do something, only to stumble and fall? Have you ever had the best intentions, only to see your good efforts come to little, or nothing? Do you ever feel frustrated that your life is not all you want it to be? God has some good news for you today. You can do it! That is, you can have a fulfilled, purposeful life, freed from the failures and the emptiness that comes with failure. God tells us how you, and I, can do it.

"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being

justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men" (Titus 3:3-8). In these few verses, God offers you the best news possible. Your life can have meaning, and you can succeed. To see how, we first see why your life (and mine) is such a struggle.

WE WERE FOOLED BY SATAN

Paul begins by explaining that we were deceived, disobedient and enslaved to our own wants and desires. Satan made us look foolish, because we thought into his nonsense that living for ourselves would make us happy. So, we looked for the fun things in life to make us feel good. For some it was sexual sin. For others it was the desire to make money. For others it was what money could buy. But all of this is foolishness.

In the process of being fooled by Satan we wind up disenchanting, unhappy and unfulfilled. When we pursue our own desires and lusts, we can never find enough satisfaction, enough purpose to make us feel good about anything. So, in this foolish state even the good things we do are unfulfilling.

Satan has always used this method. He convinced Adam and Eve they would be like God (Gen. 3) if they only would eat the forbidden fruit. He convinced King David that an affair with Bathsheba would feel good (2 Sam. 11 & 12). Satan is always looking for ways to pull the wool over your eyes and mine. He does this by convincing us we are missing something we need. He tells us we would be happier if we only would satisfy all of our wants and desires. Satan fools us into thinking life would be better if we lived for ourselves.

WE WERE FOOLED BY SIN

Our efforts to live good lives were foiled by our desires. In the process of seeking happiness we missed happiness. The thing Satan does so well is fool us into pursuing things that we think will make us happy. Then, we discover we are not happy at all. That is, our efforts have sabotaged the very thing we were trying to gain.

Some people think alcohol or drugs will make them happy. They enjoy the moment, then awaken to find themselves needing

more stimulation to be happy. Some husbands or wives think a different spouse will make them happy. So, they divorce and find another spouse, only to find that marriage is still marriage and they still have to commit and work at a relationship. Some keep changing spouses, all in the hope of finding the happiness they are seeking. We could go on and on. The businessman who puts work ahead of all else to provide for his family, then discovers one day his family doesn't want him. The teenager who thinks sex will make him happy and grown up, only to face sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancy. Satan fools us and we wind up foiled by the whole process.

WE WERE FRUSTRATED BY SELFISHNESS

Once we bought into Satan's lies and experienced the emptiness that comes from living for self, we lived lives that were frustrating. Paul describes this as living in malice, being hateful and hating each other. We created a world in which people don't trust each other. A world in which prejudice, anger and violence prevail. All of this occurs because of our selfishness.

When we give into our own wants, we immediately create this atmosphere. Others are guarded or defensive, afraid that they will be used. We use others, in order to satisfy our wants. While we pursue happiness and fulfillment, we lose happiness and fulfillment, especially in our personal relationships.

Satan sells us a bill of goods. We live for ourselves and find ourselves empty and unhappy. The good news is that God did not leave us there. God found a way to help us succeed in finding happiness.

WE ARE FREED BY GOD'S INITIATIVE

Paul says that the kindness and love of God appeared and freed us from the foolishness Satan had given us. God saved us, not because we deserved it or had impressed Him with our goodness. In fact, we were disobedient, deceived and selfish. But God took the initiative to reach out to you and to me with the offer of mercy. God did this because of His great love for you, for each one of you, for every one of us.

We were without hope and without resources. All our efforts to produce something positive kept running into failure and frustration. Then, God acted by sending His only Son to die in your place, freeing you to live the kind of life that would actually bring

you happiness.

This is the best news of all. God sees in you the potential for a happy and wonderful life. He knows you messed it all up when you chose to listen to Satan. He knows you are frustrated and unhappy. He knows you have tried your best and want more from your life. He knows you are stuck. But, knowing all that, God still reaches out to you, wanting to free you from your slavery.

WE ARE FORGIVEN BY GOD'S GRACE

Paul says it plainly, we are justified by grace. God knows we have tried and tried, and that we have failed repeatedly. So, He saves us by His grace. This is undeserved, since we are slaves to sin. There is nothing we have done or could do in order to be worthy of this grace. God takes the initiative and saves us by His own mercy.

That is why it is so important to be washed. Paul says we are forgiven by the washing of regeneration. Simply, this means we must be born again. We must be taken from the dead life we had, and made new by the washing of rebirth. This washing is simple. It is in the act of immersion in water in the name of Jesus the Christ that you can be freed from your former life and forgiven by God's grace. The act of baptism does not earn you anything. It is simply the process God ordained by which you can be born again. Once you are born again, you can now live life the way God intended. When that happens, all your sins, all your failures, all your mistakes are washed away and you are free to live for God.

WE ARE FILLED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

The washing (baptism) of regeneration (new birth) is followed by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Paul goes on to say that God poured His Spirit out on us richly, or generously. God did not withhold when He saved us. He freed us from Satan, He forgave us by grace and He gave us His Spirit to insure that we belong to Him.

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14-16). When the Spirit of God is given to us, we know we are His children. That changes our allegiance. No longer are we slaves to Satan, but we

are servants of God. No longer are we governed by selfishness, but we serve others as God wants. With God as our Father we can now live the kind of life that will bring fulfillment.

YOU CAN DO IT

Notice the last thing Paul says in our passage. Once we grasp the good news that God has saved us, we can now devote ourselves to doing good. These things are profitable for everyone. You will never do good on your own. Satan will fool you, sin will foil your best efforts and you will wind up frustrated. But, once washed by the blood of Jesus, born again by water and the Spirit, you can now be careful to do the good things you always wanted to do. Now, the good you do will matter, will bring satisfaction and you can be happy.

Better yet, notice that Paul says these things will be profitable for everyone. That is, when you are born again by God's plan, you now have the power to get along with others, making your life more meaningful as well as ministering to them. In place of hatred and malice you will operate in love and compassion.

WHY WAIT?

God has promised you can do it! Why wait? Be born again by being baptized in the name of Jesus. Let God claim you as His child. He will lead you in righteousness and goodness. And, when you surrender, you will be free to live a happy, fulfilling life. Why would you wait? Be saved by God's grace—today!

The Power of Words

JOHNNY RAMSEY

The inspired Solomon wrote, "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue; And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof* (Prov. 18:21). And the Lord Jesus said, "*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*" (Matt. 12:37). The apostle Peter informs us that to see good days involves keeping our lips from guile and from speaking evil (1 Pet. 3:10). Hitler inflamed the Nazi world with carefully chosen words of hatred, excitement and slanted viewpoints. Franklin Roosevelt used brilliant words in his famous "fireside chats" to stir a nation and

the people during an era of the great depression. Football coaches have won or lost decisive games with wise, or unwise, speeches before contests on the field ever began.

The apostle Paul wrote, *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks"* (Eph. 5:3-4). And James wrote, *"If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain"* (James 1:26). A famous gospel song declares:

Angry words, O let them never
From the tongue unbridled slip,
May the heart's best impulse ever
Check them 'ere they soil the lip.

Bitter words, like sharp arrows, pierce and wound the soul (Psa. 64:3). We must guard the door of our mouth lest we do terrible harm in the world about us (Psa. 141:3). In Prov. 6:16-19, we learn of seven things which God hates. Five of them refer to the misuse of our speech! Someone has challenged us with these words: "It is especially difficult to remain silent when you have nothing to say." Each one of us, through the years, has wished he could recall many things said in anger, retaliation and thoughtlessness. So much damage can be done through envious words and shallow thinking. It is really dangerous to allow that small member of our body, the tongue, to run loose (James 3:1-10).

A daily application of Col. 4:6 is needed by all of us: *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one."* The sin of tale-bearing is condemned in the Bible, and the application of "the golden rule" (Matt. 7:12) prohibits us from abusing our neighbor with unfair words. Careless words have wrecked promising lives, and unkind remarks have broken hearts and severed friendships. Only eternity will reveal the damaging nature of the fiery tongue!

A very striking three-point lesson is found in Psa. 40:9, *"I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great assembly; Lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Jehovah, thou knowest."* It is certainly true that Jehovah fully knows about our speech. We might "fool the hapless public and be a subtle fraud, but we can never fool God." It is certain that we can never deceive God in this matter of our words (Gal. 6:7).

The improper use of our tongue in cursing, lying, gossiping

and flattering is no more damning than our failure to use our lips to praise God, convert sinners, restore the erring and build up the kingdom by preaching the gospel and rebuking sin. I am confident that hell will have many occupants who made one serious blunder—they simply sealed their lips, and thereby the saving power of the gospel of Christ was *"hidden to them that are lost"* (2 Cor. 4:3). No doubt men who claimed to be gospel preacher will be in that sad company also for shutting their eyes and lips to flagrant sin that should have been clearly opposed. Many brothers who *"never miss a service"* consistently miss opportunities to *"reprove, rebuke and exhort"* (2 Tim. 4:3).

Have you ever studied the Bible with this question in mind? "What would the history of the world be, if others had sealed their lips as we do today?" Stephen, Jeremiah, Paul, Amos, John the Immerser and Daniel all valiantly spoke out for God under trying conditions. We must also *"speak as the Oracles of God"* (1 Pet. 4:11) as we are *"set for the defense of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:16). It will not please the Lord if we fail courageously to give answer when the world asks a reason for our faith (1 Pet. 3:15). The sincere speech of loyal servants of the Master is powerful, piercing, pungent and penetrating in the midst of an age of profanity, secularism and debauchery. Let us speak out for the Truth that has the power to save lost souls: *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32).

Will Any Baptism Do?

CLINTON HARDIN

In today's religious world, there is much confusion concerning God's purpose for baptism. Because "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33), any misconceptions rise from man. Therefore, if we will listen to His Word, God can clarify any misunderstanding concerning His purpose for baptism.

We sometimes hear people say that baptism is not important; it only has the purpose of granting membership into some church group. Others say that baptism is not essential to salvation but is essential to obedience, meaning that after a person has been saved he should be baptized in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as a public testimony of his salvation. They also state that baptism

is no more than a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. To say this is the sole purpose for baptism is to admit baptism is not where we meet God to have our sins removed by Him. When we study the Bible (the "truth," John 17:17), we find that God's ordained purpose of baptism is more dynamic than those purposes taught by some traditional religious teachers.

MORE THAN OBEDIENCE

Baptism is more than an ordinary act of obedience by man because it is the time God has chosen to take our sins away. God teaches us that He is at work in baptism. Man is in submission to God. God performs the circumcision "made without hands." Paul put it this way, "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12).

What does the Divine do in baptism? He takes away our sins and raises us up to a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). What then is God's ordained purpose of baptism? To save us! Contrary to what the religious world teaches us, Peter says that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21) because this is the time God has chosen to take our sins away by the blood of Christ, for it is He "who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

The same powerful God who resurrected Christ takes our sins away at baptism and raises us up in Christ where all spiritual blessings are (Ephesians 1:3). From Romans 6:1-11 we learn in baptism that we are "crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with," and we are resurrected with Him to walk in newness of life. In Titus 3:5 we read, "He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Acts 22:16 records that Paul was told, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins."

On the day of Pentecost, Peter answered the question "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" with "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38). Isaiah 59:1-2 reveals to us that our sins separate us from the

Divine. Therefore, before God, Christ and the Holy Spirit can abide in us, God must, in baptism, first remove our sins. When our sins are removed and the Divine abides in us, then we are a new creature: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

ONE BAPTISM

The question now becomes, "Can we obey a baptism that has a different purpose than God ordained and say we have obeyed God in baptism?" Paul teaches us that there is one baptism. Just as there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Just as there is only one God to obey, there is only one baptism to which we can submit. A person who obeys God in baptism to show the world he has been saved is not obeying the same baptism that a person obeys for God to save him. If a person is baptized with the purpose of showing the world he has been saved, it is a work of man, not of God, for God is not there to take his sins away, to put him in Christ and confer on him all other spiritual blessings that are in Christ. Therefore, when we change the purpose that God has ordained in baptism, we take God out of baptism. When we take God's divine action out of baptism, we no longer have the one baptism ordained by God.

When we see baptism listed among the elite "ones" in Ephesians 4:4-6, we should realize that baptism is not an ordinary command to be obeyed like feeding the poor, visiting the sick, praying or teaching. It is special because Divine action is working to save us. We obey the other commands because Christ lives in us. We obey God in baptism to let Him shower His gift of salvation on us by washing us clean of our sins.

A SPECIAL COMMAND

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus makes baptism a special command to be obeyed above all things stated in the next verse. Baptism is involved in our becoming a disciple of Christ; then there are things to learn and obey. From the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16, we should realize that baptism is special because baptism is the expected response when Christ is preached. In Acts 2, when Jesus was preached on the day of Pentecost, the result was that about 3,000 people were baptized.

In Acts 8:12 Jesus was preached, and the result was "both men and women" were baptized. In Acts 8:35-38, when the eunuch heard Jesus preached, Philip baptized him. Likewise, in Acts 16:30-34, when the jailer and his family heard Jesus preached, the response was that "he and all his family were baptized".

People who teach that baptism is to show that you have been saved also teach that we should be baptized to obey God. But if we are not being baptized for the purpose God ordained, how can we say we are obeying God? Jesus said, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" and "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Luke 6:46; cf. Matthew 7:21).

A SINCERE ERROR

Some congregations of the Lord's church are accepting people into their fellowship who have been baptized to show they have been saved rather than to be saved by God at the time of their baptism. This is not the one baptism established by God in His Word. The Bible teaches us that the church is to be the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). As a church, we can be the pillar and ground of the truth by knowing truth, living truth and teaching truth. We cannot be the pillar and ground of the truth if we accept baptisms contrary to what God ordained.

God has not authorized us to make man's final judgment of heaven or hell, but He has authorized us to stand for, teach and uphold the truth. There is a distinct difference between judging and standing for the truth. When we accept people into our fellowship with baptisms that have no God-ordained purpose, we do them no favor. We actually withhold the truth from them by letting them hear what they want to hear instead of what they need to learn. In Acts 19:1-5, Paul did not make final judgment of the men who had been baptized into John's baptism. Instead, he taught them the truth about God's baptism, and "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus".

God, in His mercy, may save the honest and sincere souls who have been taught error. God knows their hearts and why they haven't been able to understand the truth. Romans 9:14-15 teaches us, in principle, that we can't grant or deny God's mercy. God has reserved that judgment for Himself. The consequence of accepting into the church fellowship a person who was baptized

for a purpose not ordained by God is that we have crossed the line into God's holy ground and granted God's mercy. We must not do that. Elders of the Lord's church must lead people to accept those who have obeyed the one baptism ordained by God, not the baptism that has its purpose rooted in the traditions of men.

Jesus teaches us that if we keep the traditions of men, we will reject or nullify the commandment of God (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:9). Paul warned us not to be cheated by anyone according to the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8). When we seek the one faith of Ephesians 4:5, we will know the gospel which, according to Paul, includes the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). From a study of the gospel, we will acquire a faith that leads us to the water knowing without a doubt that Christ will be there to take away our sins and to raise us up as new creatures in Christ through faith in the working of God (Colossians 2:11-12).

Because we have faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, we are willing to submit ourselves to God in the watery grave of baptism for its biblical purpose—remission of our sins—that we may be raised to a new life in Christ.

Baptism and Salvation

L.O. SANDERSON

The Bible speaks about several baptisms—unto Moses, John's baptism, baptism of suffering, of the Spirit, of fire, and the baptism set forth by Christ and taught and practiced by the apostles. Human doctrines provide for modes of baptism—sprinkling, pouring and unnecessary immersion. However, Paul is very plain and specific when he says, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

Baptism unto Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) involved a multitude at one time, included only the Israelites, and happened but one time; it could not be the one baptism for people of all nations under Christ. John's baptism was a preparation for the Messiah to come, involved Jews only, and was not acceptable after Pentecost (Acts 19:1-6). The baptism of John could not be the "one baptism" for which Paul contended.

The baptism of suffering related to Christ (Matthew 20:22); however, James and John asked for it (Mark 10:39), and no doubt experienced it.

Holy Spirit baptism, a promise of God, came upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4) and upon Cornelius and his household (10:44-47) just as it did the apostles (11:15). It was neither promised to nor received by others. It could not have been the "one baptism." Whether "fire" relates to fiery trials or eternal fire, it is not a baptism to be desired or bound on God's children. It is not the "one baptism."

The one baptism, and the only one related to our salvation over which we have any control, is the one exemplified by our Lord (Matthew 3:13-17), commanded to be performed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (28:19-20), taught and practiced by the apostles through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This baptism was in water, much water, necessitating a going down into and a coming up out of the water (Mark 1:9-10; Acts 8:38-39). This baptism was a burial (Colossians 2:12)—a death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:4).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF BAPTISM AND SALVATION

Baptism is related to pardon. When preceded by true faith and repentance and administered "in the name of Jesus Christ" it is "for [unto] the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). To the penitent believer, therefore, we can speak in scriptural language: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (22:16).

Baptism is a requisite to church membership. Paul declared, "by [in] one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The "one body" is the church (Colossians 1:18). This process is clearly set forth in the first church: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Jesus was discussing this very point when He told Nicodemus that he must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom (John 3:5).

Baptism is necessary to salvation. On this matter, Jesus Himself has spoken: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). In Acts 2:47 we are assured that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." But who were added? Those who "gladly received the word" and "were baptized". The baptized were saved; the saved were added to the church. The unsaved were not added; the unbaptized were not saved! The apostle Peter taught the same truth: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21).

Baptism is essential to inheritance. Paul explains how we

become children of God: "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" (Galatians 3:26-27). How did they become children? They believed and were baptized into Christ! They were "born again"—born into the family of God, and therefore children. Now watch, as Paul makes the connection: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). We become heirs by being children of God; we become children of God by faith and baptism. Therefore, baptism is essential to inheritance.

Because baptism stands between us and pardon; because it is a requisite to church membership, necessary to forgiveness, and essential to our becoming heirs of God, who can dare say there is no relationship between baptism and salvation? It is not only important, it is mandatory!

SOME RELATED SCRIPTURES

We are saved by washing. Works of righteousness which we might do could not atone for sin; but obedience to God's righteous will is a condition of salvation. Hence, "according to his mercy he saved us, but the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). All accepted authorities say this "washing of regeneration" refers to baptism. If so—and it should not be shadowed by an "if-God in mercy permits our advantage of Christ's atonement on the simple condition of "washing"—of baptism.

The church is cleansed by washing. The church includes all the saved; the saved, however, have been baptized. God's family is the church; His children are born into His family by the new birth—born of the water and Spirit. Or, as Paul explains it, by faith and baptism, we are children of God. Concerning this called out people, Paul says, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). Here, sanctification and cleansing depend on the "washing of water" which is effected "by the word." Again authorities agree that this "washing" refers to baptism. Therefore, hearing the word, we believe; believing the word, we are baptized; and by this act we are set apart from the world and pardoned of our sins.

An appropriate exhortation. In view of the fact that we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and that the church is cleansed by it, we can well appreciate this timely exhortation: "Let

us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Hebrews 10:22-23). Here the "sprinkling of the blood" (1 Peter 1:2) applies to the heart; our obedience—the washing of water—involved the physical body. Being assured, therefore, that application of blood and obedience to truth assure the right relationship with our Lord, let us draw near and hold fast.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

We are saved by the gospel. Paul declared the gospel; Christians received it, stood therein, and were saved thereby. That gospel was the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel is God's power unto salvation. What shall we do about it? We must believe it (Romans 1:16), and we must obey it (1 Peter 1:22). Those who fail to obey it will have the vengeance of God upon them in the last day (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). God foreordained that "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood" would be His means of salvation (1 Peter 1:2). Christ shed His blood; obedience is our part. But how shall we obey the gospel? Can we die, be buried, and rise again? No—that is impossible in this life.

We obey a form of the gospel. We learn this fact from Romans 6:17-18: "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." They obeyed; they obeyed the doctrine delivered them; that which was delivered was the gospel. But they obeyed a form—a likeness—of it. Not until they obeyed this form of doctrine were they made free from sin. How did they obey a form of the doctrine?

They obeyed in baptism. There is only one act in all of the word of our Savior that bears a likeness to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ—it is baptism. "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" (Romans 6:4). If in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Baptism and salvation are inseparable!

The Necessity of Baptism

KENNETH GOSNELL

Sometimes the strangest things can save us. I read in the newspaper about a Japanese senior citizen who was saved by a vacuum cleaner. While the 70-year-old Japanese man from Northern Japan was eating with his family, he began to choke on a sticky rice cake. Family members first tried unsuccessfully to remove the food with their fingers. Then his quick-witted daughter saved him by pulling out his dentures and sticking the hose of the vacuum cleaner into his mouth and sucking out the rice cake with the vacuum cleaner turned on high.

Peter makes it very clear in Acts 2:38 that God saves us by immersion in water. Now we should not miss the point that it is Christ who saves us, but He does it by means of baptism. Therefore baptism is essential. The Bible clearly states some very specific reasons why baptism is essential for salvation.

BAPTISM IS WHERE WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Acts 2:38, Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Many people wonder if the Holy Spirit comes before or after conversion. After studying the Bible, one must come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit always comes at baptism except in a few special cases.

Cornelius received the Spirit before baptism in Acts 10. The Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit until after the coming of the apostles in Acts 8. And the Ephesians had to be rebaptized to receive the Spirit in Acts 19. The solution to these three special cases is to look at the context of each passage. The presence of the Holy Spirit is promised in Acts 2:38 (further explanation is given to us in verse 39—"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call"). In Acts 8 and 19, the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands so that these men were able to have special manifestations of the Holy Spirit, such as the ability to perform miracles and prophesy.

The Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius in Acts 10 to show the universality of the gospel. God wanted to include Gentiles, and His bestowing the Holy Spirit was indisputable evidence that the

Gentiles should be included in salvation. When we understand the context of each passage, we know that the rule of practice is that the Holy Spirit is given at baptism. Therefore, baptism is essential if we want to receive the Holy Spirit.

BAPTISM IS WHERE WE ARE SAVED

Peter states in no uncertain terms that “water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). He might have been recalling the very words of Jesus recorded in Mark 16:15-16. There Jesus said to His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Watchman Nee, a noted evangelical author and speaker, in his book, *Love Not the World*, includes a sermon called “A World Under Water.” He chose for his text Mark 16:16. And then adds, “To many of us the form of that second sentence comes as a surprise. Jesus did not say that he who believes and is saved should be baptized. No, He put it the other way round. He who believes and is baptized, He said, shall be saved, It is only at our peril that we change something that the Lord has said into something He did not say. Everything He says matters, and He means every word of it. But if this is so, then it must be a fact that only by having faith in Him and being baptized are we saved. Some will be puzzled at this. ‘What do you mean?’ they will protest. But do not be puzzled; and do not blame me! I did not say that; my Lord said it. He it was who laid down the order: faith, then baptism, then salvation. We must not reverse it to faith, salvation, baptism, however much we might prefer it that way. What the Lord said must stand, and it is for us only to pay heed to it.”

We must then conclude that baptism is not for saved people but rather baptism is for lost people. Therefore, baptism is only essential if we want to be saved.

BAPTISM IS WHERE WE ARE GIVEN A NEW LIFE

Paul says in Romans 6:3-4, “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Baptism is where we are

buried with Christ into His death so as to bring about the death of sin in our lives. This is the place where the old life is left and the new life begins. Paul states that a change takes place at baptism. At baptism we are given (1) a new life; (2) a new start; (3) a new direction to walk; (4) a new destiny; (5) a new purpose; (6) a new hope; (7) a new set of values; (8) a new strength; (9) a new purity; (10) a new helper. Therefore, baptism is essential if we want to receive a new life.

BAPTISM IS WHERE WE RECEIVE THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

In Acts 22:16 we have these powerful words: "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." Many people want to say that to be saved all you have to do is call on the name of the Lord. In Acts 22 we have the information on how and where to call on the name of the Lord. We call on the name of Lord at baptism. And when we do, we receive the forgiveness of sins. That means that all of our sins are wiped away as if they never happened. I wouldn't want to miss out on that. Sydney Harris once wrote, "There's no point in burying a hatchet if you're going to put up a marker on the site."

Psalms 103:12 tells us that God buried our sins and did not mark the spot "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Therefore, baptism is essential if we want to receive the forgiveness of sins.

BAPTISM IS WHERE WE PUT ON CHRIST

Paul states in Galatians 3:26-27, "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." This speaks of having an intimate personal relationship with Christ. If you are not sure that you have been baptized for the right reasons, then do it because it makes a difference in your relationship to Jesus. At baptism we "clothe ourselves in Christ," we put on the garments of redemption. Therefore, baptism is only essential if we want to put on Christ.

Winston Churchill once said: "It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required." That is the motto we need to remember pertaining to baptism. God has gone to great lengths so that everyone would know what to do in order to be saved. We not only need to do those things that seem good, but we must do what is essential or required. We must be baptized.