

# Baptism: The Purposes it Fulfills and Changes it Effects

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PAUL, the prisoner at Rome, sent for the Jews who lived in that city and sought to expound to them their (Old Testament) Scriptures and to convince them that Jesus, who was crucified, had fulfilled, in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, the words of their prophets, in what they foretold as to the life on earth of the Messiah and of His world-wide Kingdom, which was established in Jerusalem at Pentecost. The Apostle would also remind them of the Mosaic Tabernacle, with its altar, laver, holy place, and the Holy of Holies, which typified the more glorious universal Kingdom, with its divine Ruler, who now reigns from His throne in the Jerusalem which is in Heaven.

Some of Paul's hearers disbelieved, and he then quoted the words of God given by Isaiah their prophet saying:

For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are full of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them. (Acts 28:23 RV)

The first three of the above sentences show how those under condemnation remain in their lost position. The last five sentences tell how others may find salvation. Through the drawing power of the Gospel, they take four steps toward God, and then God, in one step, comes near to them with healing, through forgiving their sin. Man hears, believes, repents, and turns or obeys, and then God saves. Belief that is only mental does not include repentance, but belief with the heart includes repentance, as it is the heart that urges us to surrender our will and decide to obey the Gospel and turn to God. That decision and resolution, called repentance, was in Scriptural times given effect

to by those who believed being immersed into Christ. In this way, the penitent believer passed through the appointed straight gate into the narrow way, and did not climb in some other way.

What would the message be which Paul proclaimed to these Jews? It would just be the message which he ever declared to Jew and Gentile. The Apostle says God sent him to declare Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He would make known the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation. He would bring to their knowledge that the sin of the world had to the full been stoned for, and that the love of God had been manifested by the death of the Son of God, and that salvation could now be obtained through His name.

The eight lines quoted from Isaiah show how men respond when they hear the Gospel and learn what they and all who hear must do so that God can bestow on them the salvation made possible by Calvary.

God offers salvation to every creature, but we are left free to keep our heart hardened and to refuse to look at or hear the Gospel. Unless the Gospel is in our heart and the Savior has first-place in our affections, God has not promised that he will receive us. With our natural earthly desires in our mind and heart, we are not fit for the life and fellowship that are in the family of God. Our sins may have been atoned for by the blood of Christ, but our heart and soul have not been changed and prepared for our entrance into the Kingdom of God. We must be born again. The profound changes involved in this can only come through our ears and eyes being opened to the Gospel, and if the Gospel is then understood and brought into our hearts.

There is no limit to the power of the Gospel. The divine message, and its influence on the spirit of those who believe on the name of Jesus Christ, cannot be estimated. But God does not arbitrarily impose His power on man or by supernatural direct means seek to change man. God, through the Holy Spirit, has placed the divine means within the reach of man, and has left us free to apply them or plant them in our heart. The Word is the incorruptible seed, it is spirit and it is life, and it must be received into a good and honest heart, to take root and spring forth to a life of faith in Christ and love to God.

Long before I turned to God by being immersed into the death of Christ, and while I was yet living in the world, I knew the Gospel and in a mental way believed that it was true, but my heart was hardened to

it, and I resisted its influence to change my heart and bring through repentance my decision to turn to God. Paul says: 'With the heart we believe unto righteousness,' or right doing. Real New Testament belief is not a passing incident, but a deep-seated life-long devotion and trust given to Jesus.

Of what use is our faith in Christ and our love for Him as Lord, if these convictions do not find expression in our life. James says, 'faith without works is dead,' and John says, 'this is the love of God, to keep His commandments.' We cannot come to God with a dead faith or without openly confessing Jesus as our Lord, or without promising to give Him a life of obedience. God loved us, but His love did not bring redemption and salvation until His love was embodied in His active works of grace. Likewise, God asks for an obedient or perfected faith from man in order to the remission of his sins.

This tract is headed 'Baptism,' and you may say, why then do you write so much as to the belief of the Gospel, and the change of heart, and obedience to God. We do it because whenever we teach what Christ and His apostles say as to baptism being a condition of salvation, there are religious bodies around us who persistently say that we cannot consistently contend for Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 and at the same time believe that redemption or atonement comes only through the death of Christ. The foregoing part of our writing shows that there need be no doubt about our believing in a full and complete Gospel, and the following part we hope will assure you that we also believe fully and completely in all the conditions of pardon that accompany the Gospel and that there is no contradiction between the two.

Let me repeat that only the blood of Christ atones for sin. If confession and baptism had been made conditions of salvation because there is merit or atonement in them, then that would have been inconsistent with and contradictory to what we say as to the blood of Christ. But nobody believes, and the Scriptures do not say, that baptism, or anything man can do, has merit or atonement, and therefore it is apparent that, by God's sovereign right, they are made conditions for quite another reason which does not conflict with or dishonor the death of Christ. Groundless imagination and unsound reasoning, of course may make them conflict, but we can only pray to be delivered from such opposition. While those who talk of universal conditions being suited to a deathbed or to a thief on a cross, and gibe at a water

salvation, may be left until calm consideration of the Scriptures brings them to realize that they are ridiculing, not man, but the plain words of Christ and His Apostles.

Others we meet claim to have had special personal communication with the Holy Spirit, and to have received, quite apart from the revealed Word of God, an assurance of their salvation, although they were not baptized. There is nothing resembling these fanciful conversions in the Scriptures. Our Lord said that His Commission was for all the world and for every creature, and as to forgiveness under the Gospel, God has never been a respecter of persons. The eunuch and even Saul only received a knowledge of what they must do to be saved, through the words of Philip and Ananias. The words of these two messengers of God were in keeping with the Commission of our Lord. What greater assurance should any person require than that of the words of our Lord, when He says, 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'?

The Lord did not speak to Saul regarding how he could be saved, but only warned him as to his persecution of the disciples and told him that he had work awaiting that Saul could do, and that he had chosen him for this great work. When Saul sought to learn what he must do to be accepted, the Lord at once said, 'Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all the things which are appointed for thee to do.' Nothing is said to indicate that Saul was saved on his journey. To infer from what the Lord said to him that Saul was saved, is to deny the words of Ananias and contradict what took place in the city. During his first three days, Saul was far from being like a man who had made his peace with God. The reasonable explanation is that the Lord, with His supernatural knowledge of things to come, acted on His knowledge that Saul would of a surety retain his faith and repentance and be baptized in Damascus.

Under the ministry of Ananias, Saul completed his conversion, and like all converts he, after his obedience, would receive the gift or indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Afterward, he went into Arabia, and there he received direct from the Lord his appointment and was instructed as to his mission and message (Gal. 1:11, Acts 9, 22, 26).

With a few small exceptions, the religious bodies all believe in baptism, and are satisfied that it is divinely commanded and required from every follower of Jesus Christ. The great majority have always insisted that it

is placed outside the Church and is a condition of entrance. The Church of Scotland, and the bodies that have come from it, teach this in their standards. However, they have departed from the Scriptures in that they do not insist that faith and repentance are qualifications that each candidate for baptism must possess, and they have followed the priest-craft practice of the Church of Rome in that they baptize children of an irresponsible age. This takes away the challenge which baptism presents to those who have come to years of responsibility, and it leaves them without an ordinance in which, as in primitive times, they can openly confess Christ and turn to God. Confirmation or any man-made ceremony can never fill the gap which the stoppage of believer's baptism has left.

We often come in contact with the 'Baptists' and 'Brethren,' also with popular missions who have an undercurrent of the doctrine of the Brethren. Although we all practice believer's baptism, yet we have a decided opposition to each other regarding the design or purpose and the place of baptism. Our Body or Church interpret John 3:16 in the light of John 3:5 and other passages, and feels that to believe in Christ includes believing in all that he said, and we have to accept everything that he said as to how we can enter His Kingdom, and what he said regarding the conditions on which all the world can be saved. The opposing bodies strenuously contend that baptism is not a condition of salvation. They reason that it cannot be a condition, and that it is simply an act of Christian life. We feel that it cannot be considered the highest form of obedience, to observe the command apart from the divine design and away from the time or occasion as shown in the examples of the 'Acts of Apostles.'

This difference affects not only how we are saved, but it also brings a difference on the 'once saved, always saved' question. If God has only promised to save man when he, in baptism, pledges himself to a life of faith, then it follows that should he drift away from the Lord and from the faith, and go back into the world, then God would also withdraw from the covenant made at the confession and baptism.

In 1 Cor. 13, Paul speaks of the gifts and offices temporarily given by the Lord after His ascension. They were spiritual gifts that were to remain while the Church was being built and during the time that the faith was being completed, or as given in Ephesians 4, until the Church had come to its full stature and had a perfect faith. When that which is

perfect is come, then that which is in part or is temporary will be done away. When the structure of the Church and the revelation of the Faith were completed, then the Apostles and their gifted delegates and assistants would pass away. There would then be no apostles to confer gifts, and supernatural gifts would cease to be a usual part of Christian experience.

John's baptism and the baptisms of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2; 10:44) had both fulfilled their purposes and had passed away. John's work of preparing the people for the Messiah, and the baptisms of the Holy Spirit given to show that God was with this new work at Pentecost, and also with that of the receiving of the uncircumcised Gentiles at Caesarea, these were both for those occasions only and were not continued.

In Ephesians (4:3-6 R.V.) Paul writes, not of the things that were temporary, but of some of the things that remain and are permanent. He mentions the seven fundamentals of the unity of the Spirit. Let me quote his words: 'There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all.' We cannot consider the high position in which baptism is here placed with the very ordinary place given to the ordinance by those who simply include it amongst 'the things whatsoever I commanded you,' and then not feel that the one position cannot be compared with the other. The Commission (Matthew 28:19 R.V.) also gives baptism a distinct and separate place from the general instructions, and says, 'make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you.' While at this passage, let me say that baptism put them into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and from this we infer that they could not previously have been in Christ. While a Christian is a disciple and continues to be one all his life, yet it remains true that we were made disciples or learners before being born again. It is through being learners and anxious disciples of Jesus that we were brought forward to obedience and salvation. We are disciples of Jesus when we hear the Gospel, and we continue to be one both before and after conversion right on. The context shows that the word is here used in its general sense, that of being a learner.

Those who oppose our teaching on baptism do not often question that belief, repentance, and confession are conditions, but they strongly object to baptism. The first three are acts of man just as much as baptism is, and all in Scripture are joined as conditions of salvation. Our Lord, and Peter and Paul draw no distinction between mental and outward physical acts. Our Lord joins belief with baptism; Peter joins repentance with baptism; while Paul joins belief with outward confession. If belief, repentance and confession can be conditions of salvation and yet not in any way take away from the death of Christ or from the full atonement of Calvary, how does it come that baptism should do so. Baptism, like the other three conditions, is only an act of faith by man, which cannot be classified with what God has done for our salvation. It is wrong to mix up the things needful, though not of merit, which man must do to be saved, with the things that God has done for our redemption. No man will be kept out of the Kingdom because his sins are not atoned, but because he has not by faith and obedience come to Christ for remission of his sins. Naaman, in his haste and error, at first thought his dipping was part of his cure and that Elisha was prescribing the dirty muddy waters of Jordan for the taking away of his incurable foul disease. But he saw his error, and at once gave the glory to the God of Israel. He realized his dipping only manifested his faith and obedience to God, while it complied with the conditions given by the prophet of God. Without faith and obedience, God does not promise that by His almighty power He will cleanse the soul.

The following passages on baptism are tabulated because it is felt that they support the position this tract seeks to defend. One and all they are well worth being turned up and examined. They not only give you some knowledge of baptism, but as you seek to harmonize them with all the other passages on conversion you will have widened your understanding as to the importance and necessity of attaining the perfection or fullness of our faith. Paul speaks of the 'fullness of faith' and the 'obedience of faith,' and James refers to the perfecting of our faith. Baptism brings our faith to where it is counted to us as righteousness, to where we obtain our salvation, or come to the first great objective we have in view. And it takes us through our Red Sea on our journey toward our Jordan and the promised land.

<b>Inward Changes</b>	<b>Manifestation</b>	<b>Outward Result</b>
Mark 16:16. believeth		baptized saved
John 3:5. by Spirit		by water enter kingdom
Eph. 5:26. by the word		by water sanctified and cleansed
Titus 3:5. renewed by the washing of regeneration	Holy Spirit	saved
Matt. 28:19. make disciples		baptized into name of Christ
Acts 2:38. believed, repented		baptized saved
Acts 22:16. believed, repented, confession		sins washed away baptized
1 Pet. 3:21. seeking good conscience		baptized saved
Col. 2:13. by faith in resurrection		baptized forgiven trespasses
Gal. 3:26. through faith		baptized into Christ
Rom. 6:3. old man crucified		baptized into death of Christ
1 Cor. 12:13. by one Spirit		baptized into one body
Heb. 10:22. true heart, body washed, heart cleaned		enter new and living way
Acts 19:5. disciple		baptized into name of Lord Jesus
Acts 3:19. repent, turn again		sins blotted out
Acts 26:20. Repent, turn to God		forgiveness of sins
Acts 28:27. Understand, turn again R.V.		with heart healed by God

The following passages touch on the subject, but are not full enough to be included in the foregoing list. Acts 8:12; 8:16; 8:38; 10:48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 1 Corinth. 1:13; Ephes. 4:3. In several passages, where the A.V. says 'baptized in the name,' the R.V. has corrected the translation and says 'baptized into the name'.



Each one of the foregoing passages tells of an inward change and also of an outward demonstration of the new life begotten within each one. They are thus 'born of water and the Spirit.' All the texts teach that salvation follows baptism, the act in which we turn to God. Salvation is plainly stated in the majority of the cases and clearly indicated in the others by such words as, 'into Christ,' 'into the death of Christ,' 'into name of Christ,' 'put on Christ,' 'enter kingdom,' 'into one body,' 'into new and living way,' 'healed by God,' while 'born again' suggests into the family of God. The main idea in the passages is that, 'he that believeth and is baptized is saved' or 'shall be saved.'

We cannot find a single passage in all the New Testament where it says a person is saved or in Christ and we afterward read of his baptism. In the case of Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11), there is nothing to indicate that he was saved before his baptism. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was the same as that in Acts 2:2, had no connection with their being saved, any more than that possessed by the messages God sent by the Angel. Let me point out that the Holy Spirit fell on those of the household of Cornelius as Peter began to speak, therefore it was given even before they believed. That proves too much to be of support to the 'faith alone' theory. Peter's words show that he believed that the Spirit was, in this particular case, given to show that the Gentiles, although not circumcised, could assuredly come under the universal commission of the Lord (Acts 11:14). Peter in Acts 15:9, says 'God put no difference between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith.' Both by belief of the Gospel, changed their heart and altered their attitude toward God, and then both, by their baptism, brought a change in the attitude of God toward them. In each case, like all New Testament conversions, they complied with the great commission, in that there was an inward change and also an outward demonstration of it in order that God should save them. Peter says that in baptism we seek for a good conscience toward God. The rich young man could not obtain a good conscience without obedience and a full surrender.

Baptism is the way in which God asks that we should manifest our faith and love. It tells whether or not the Gospel has renewed our spirit and put new life into our soul. No method of confession devised by man compares with it as a test of our faith, and it gives unequalled assurance that we have accepted Jesus as our Lord. Abraham, no doubt, in his life gave indications of his faith in God, but yet God put him to a definite trial and then he blessed him and entered into a covenant with him.

James tells us that in this trial Abraham perfected his faith. Why should not our faith be perfected in baptism, before God enters into the great covenant with us (Heb. 10:22 R.V.)

We meet men who speak as if baptism was no more than a symbolic rite and that it was not in reality a condition of pardon or was part of the new birth. While it is a figure of the burial and resurrection of Jesus, and at the same time shows forth the burial of the old man and the birth of the new man or child of God, yet, what is of greater importance, it is a command of God, and in itself a real act of obedience. Obedience is the very spirit of it. As Adam only entered Eden under the condition of being obedient, so Jesus taught that no man can enter the Kingdom of God unless through a birth of water. The teaching in Romans 6 on baptism confirms this understanding. In verse 17, it says, 'whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered.' The whole teaching of Jesus leaves us in no doubt as to the correct meaning of the words, 'his servant ye are whom ye obey.'

Take away baptism, or alter its design and place, and where can we find an ordinance or sacred rite in which man, the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, can turn to God? Or, how can we be, not only begotten, but born again? Faith begets within us a new life and this new life leads to our birth. The principal part is the begetting of life by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, the power of God; but we are not born by receiving something into our heart, but by our emerging into a new world or kingdom for which the new life has prepared us. (Read Romans 6:4). The Savior speaking of the new birth, said, 'water' and 'Spirit,' and He no doubt meant both, for less than that would fall short of the figure of a birth. Paul says, 'The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, and thus his words are equivalent to 'water and Spirit,' only it indicates how the Spirit operates. Baptism is the only washing associated with the 'Regeneration' or 'Gospel Age.' Peter says, 'Baptism doth now save us,' but the Apostles would credit us with knowing that baptism presupposes repentance, and that repentance presumes that we have believed. The work of the Spirit brings the baptism that saves. Peter was not afraid to include water amongst the things that bring salvation from God.

Some of the teaching of this booklet is not in accord with what is commonly taught in our land. Those who oppose popular errors and

endeavor to bring beliefs into line with the Scriptures are often misunderstood, and therefore are much misrepresented. We have at this time devoted our space to an important although an every-day part of the faith, and have sought to make ourselves familiar with 'what must we do to be saved' or, in other words, 'what changes are necessary in man to fit him for Christian fellowship and how does he come into the Kingdom.'

Let us draw toward an end by re-stating one or two of our differences or misunderstandings.

(1) Although the Scriptures teach that baptism is a condition of pardon, it does not follow that baptism in any way regenerates or changes the disposition of man. It is because new life is begotten in us that we are baptized.

(2) The Scriptures do not instruct us to 'only believe.' Faith alone is only mentioned to be condemned. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ has a wide comprehensive meaning compared with that of the narrow, bewildering 'only believe.' The phrase, 'the moment you believe' conveys an idea that is not found in Scripture. Believing in Christ is never represented as a sudden change in man, it comes by the hearing of the Word. We first hear the reasoned-out address, with proofs of the resurrection and the divinity of Christ, and the believing follows as a natural consequence. The Apostles, with many other words, testified and exhorted them. Mankind cannot expect to have an exceptional experience like that of Saul, when the fact that Jesus was divine would at once flash through his acute mind. The Savior did not say ye are saved the moment you believe. Even the thief on the cross did more than that, he openly confessed Christ. Faith makes the great changes within us, but baptism changes our state, takes us out of a state of condemnation into that of salvation. We bury the old life and rise to the new. So says Paul.

(3) Because we say that Scripture does not teach that the Holy Spirit, by supernatural, direct, personal means converts the soul, we are unjustly accused of denying the work of the Holy Spirit. Now we all believe that the Holy Spirit convicts and converts, but we differ as to how the Spirit does convert and renew. This cannot be settled by going to passages which do not say how the Spirit operates, we must seek for passages where it says how the Spirit does act, and mentions the

instruments and means by which the work is accomplished. Such as where Paul says the Corinthians were begotten by the Gospel. All the means we read of are means used by the Spirit. We are not here speaking of what the Spirit can do, but of what has been done and what the Spirit has promised to do.

(4) We are accused of not giving the death of Christ the prominence that it should get. Surely when we meet every Lord's day to 'break bread' it can never be far from our mind that by one offering our Savior hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. When Peter at Pentecost preached Christ, and Him crucified, it did not take away from the Lord's importance as our Redeemer when Peter went on to insist that His Lordship should also be acknowledged by their baptism. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and all that the name implies. We worship on the first day of the week, and that reminds us of His resurrection and that He is now enthroned in heaven. Christ died for our sins, but he also rose for our justification. To honor His Lordship does not take away from, but intensifies and deepens, the love we have because of His death. We believe that the story of the Cross has power to convert the soul, and we do not bring discredit upon its spiritual power and influence by suggesting that it requires a further and different display of divine agency to make it effectual. The Apostles gloried in the Gospel with its power.

(5) We are told that we cannot afford to ignore the righteous or good life of the great numbers of those who are not immersed. This seems about equal to saying that our Lord should have accepted the rich young man just as he was, and that he should not have required a further test of the faith of the young man. If Jesus has made known the conditions on which he will grant forgiveness, why should persons in ordinary circumstances claim special terms, more especially, as the 'obedience of faith' required by God is so simple, that to have granted such terms shows the profound mercy of God. By grace are we saved through faith. The Apostle Paul (Titus 3:5) shows where he is on this question. He says, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.' While John 3:5, with the same meaning, says, 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'

While the Lord has not authorized us to receive the unimmersed into His Church, yet we dare not condemn those whom we exclude. We leave them to be judged at the last day when the all-wise Judge will sit upon His throne. Meantime, we would remind them that a confession of their belief, and their baptism, would give them an assurance of salvation which we consider they at present cannot justly claim.

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