

Baptism is Not Enough

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The late James Bales, in his book *The Hub of the Bible*, entitled the fifteenth chapter as “Baptism Is Not Enough.” To a church that is continually stressing the need to be baptized for the remission of sins, it might be puzzling to consider that there is something more that is needed. Nonetheless, more there is and blessed are those who realize this fact.



Grace, Faith, Baptism... is there more?

In the second chapter of Acts, Peter and the other apostles preached the first sermons of the Christian era. Their Spirit-guided words pricked the hearts of the crowds concerning guilt and sin so that they asked, “What shall we do?” (2:37). As we know, these believers were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38), along with many other words of exhortation and instruction (2:40). Many heeded the Divine commands and about three thousand became Christians that day. But they were not through!

Baptism may be called the “door of the church.” It is the portal by which one goes from outside to inside the church. Belief and repentance are the stoop and porch leading to the house of God. Paul told the Galatian brethren that they had been baptized into Christ, indicating that they were now inside the house of God ([Gal. 3:27](#); [1 Tim. 3:15](#)). Under this figure, do we now wander aimlessly about with no purpose nor plan? When we’re tired of being inside, no longer thrilled with the experience, do we walk back out the door? Surely there is something for the newborn in Christ to accomplish which suggests that being baptized into Christ is not an end but a beginning.

Being “born again” is a phrase which does indeed suggest a beginning. When we are converted, we put off the old man of corruption and put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness ([Eph. 4:22-24](#)). While we may feel like the same person (and undoubtedly in many respects we are), there must be some aspects of our lives that are different, indicated by our willingness to repent as a part of conversion, a term indicating change from our old ways to God’s new ways. It is necessary that we learn how to live as a part of God’s family, for we rise from the watery

tomb infused with neither great knowledge nor wisdom. But we can rise with great desire.

Baptism was not enough for the converts on Pentecost. It is not enough to begin a godly life, for one must continue. The writer noted that these 3,000 converts “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” ([Acts 2:42](#)). Notice how these early Christians continued. It was not sporadically, or when they could slip out from work, or avoid confrontation with their spouses, etc. They continued their Christian journey steadfastly . First, they continued to learn from the apostles, gaining understanding of spiritual principles essential to form the Christian character. Later in life the venerable Peter said, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). We must continue to learn God’s wonderful teachings, and let them influence our thoughts and actions. Second, they continued steadfastly in fellowship. The term “fellowship” was used to express a relationship involving sharing and communing. Certainly the early brethren shared time in worship, shared material resources, and shared time in one another’s company. Each had entered fellowship with God, Christ and the Spirit, and so had entered fellowship with other Christians. They were a part of a spiritual family! We should so see ourselves. The Hebrews writer said that we should not sin in forsaking the fellowship of the spiritual family found in our worship assemblies on Sunday mornings and evening, and Wednesday evenings. More, we should seek opportunities to be together outside the worship assemblies, sharing our lives and common pursuits.

Third, they continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread. I know of no one who does not continue steadfastly in the breaking of bread for nourishment, so that is not what the record emphasizes. They continued to acknowledge the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior through the Lord’s Supper.

Fourth, they continued steadfastly in prayers. Since prayer is our means of communicating with our Father, these brethren, no doubt together and individually, actively continued this practice. There are proper and improper ways to pray, so the child of God would do well to consider the prayers of Jesus and the apostles in order to know what to pray for, and how to frame acceptable prayers.

When the brethren today continue steadfastly in these particulars, they continue the journey begun at conversion, and they continue to be influences for Christ in their homes and communities. When brethren fail to continue steadfastly in these particulars, they cease to grow spiritually and to be a blessing to others. Baptism is not enough!