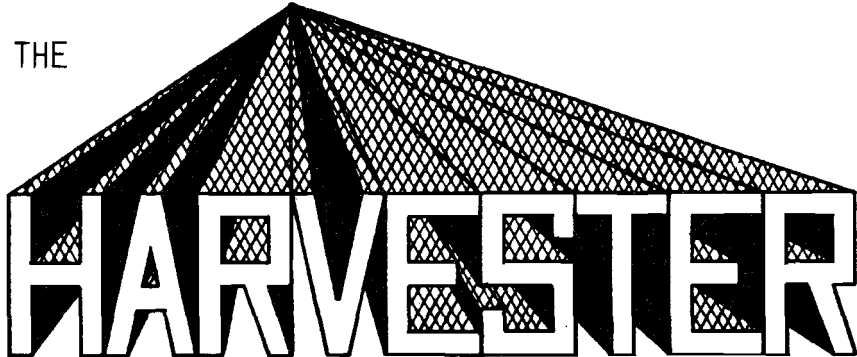


THE



"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

May 1990

No. 053

ONCE BAPTIZED, ALWAYS SAVED?

The phrase, *"whereunto even baptism doth also now save us"* found in 1 Peter 3:21, is a very comforting and wholesome doctrine among churches of Christ. However, I am afraid many members take it too lightly and use it as a crutch for spiritual laziness. Without a doubt baptism in a watery grave does put one in a saved condition (Acts 22:16), but if a person does absolutely nothing else after baptism, will he still be saved?

It perplexes me how we are always quick to jump on our neighbors who teach the false doctrine of "Once saved, Always saved" and yet, we are guilty of the very same principle. How can we point out error when we are engulfed with the same sins? *"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the*

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beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."(Matt. 7:5) Brethren, after one is baptized, should he do anything else? That is a question we hope to answer simply by turning to the Scriptures.

First, let us state that baptism is NOT the last step in obtaining salvation. Frequently we list the "plan of salvation" as: Hearing, Believing, Repenting, Confessing, and being Baptized, in that order. Baptism is the act which puts one into Christ (Rom. 6:3 and Gal. 3:27). It is at that point that we become a disciple of Christ, a Christian. Thus, baptism is not the final step that a child of God takes, as many seem to portray. Baptism is the very beginning of our Christian life! It is the very first time that our own personal sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. The "plan of salvation" certainly puts us on the right road to heaven but it is after baptism that our conduct really counts toward eternal salvation!

Jesus illustrated this point beautifully in John 3:3. *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* After baptism, we become babes in Christ. We will not know everything about our new spiritual world. No one expects us to. It will take time to grow, to study God's word, to know how to behave. But, we are compelled to GROW in Christ. Peter wrote specifically to Christians in 1 Peter 2:2-3, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."* Unfortunately, many do not care to "grow up" in the spiritual sense. They refuse to do anything after baptism, content to remain stagnant. Is it any wonder then that Paul said such brethren are "worldly"? *"And I, brethren,*

could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."(1 Cor. 3:1-2)

Some of Paul's final words were: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"(2 Tim. 4:7). This apostle recognized that his entire life would be incomplete and worthless until he "finished his course", of which baptism was only the beginning. After he was baptized, in my opinion, he did more for Christ than all the men in the last one hundred years or so. Sometimes Paul compared the Christian life to a running event (1 Cor. 9:24-27). A person does not win a footrace simply by entering the competition. He has to start running the required distance and cannot stop until he has crossed the finish line. Brethren, baptism is NOT our finish line. It is the starting gun! Now is the time to begin serving the Lord, just as the apostle Paul did.

So, what must one do after baptism in order to be saved? In John 15:1-5, the Master said that those who are IN HIM (i.e., baptized) must produce. They must bring forth fruit or else they cannot be a part of Him. Those who are IN CHRIST cannot afford to lay back and rest on their laurels of having been baptized. Likewise, Paul seems to discourage the theory of "once baptized, always saved". In 1 Timothy 4, the apostle gives his young "son in the faith" these words of advice: to give himself fully to the items mentioned in verse 13 in order to show PROGRESS to all those around him (v. 15). It was very important to set a good example, and especially to the new converts. If Timothy continues in these things, then he will save himself and others (v. 16).

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It is after we are baptized that we are required to perform our Christian duties: things like showing our love to God (Jude 21), worshipping God (John 4:24), and attending services (Heb. 10:25). In particular, becoming a teacher is a very significant duty and one that is usually neglected by most members. I am referring to the art of becoming "*skilful in the word of righteousness*" (Heb. 5:12-14). Of course, not all of us can teach from the pulpit. But we can and should teach our children in our homes like Lois and Eunice did (2 Tim. 1:5). Or we can teach our friends and neighbors about Jesus Christ through our examples and manner of life, not by tossing our head back and acting so snug about it.

Teaching is definitely one of the most important things a Christian can do after his baptism, for this is exactly how we can do our share to spread the gospel. "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*" (Matt. 28:19-20)

Finally, Peter gives us a list of items that each one of us can work on. In writing to them who have already been baptized, "*them that have obtained like precious faith with us*", he

greatly encourages their GROWTH in Christ. To be ADDED to their Christian faith, is: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Surely there is no man today who has already perfected these traits. However, if a brother or sister in Christ refuses to progress through these steps and prefers to sit on his hands, then Peter said this person is spiritually blind (v. 9). He has forgotten his regeneration and has made his baptism of none effect. Therefore, each disciple must work hard to make his salvation sure (v. 10). Baptism alone will NOT save us if we go back into the world like a dog to his vomit or a sow to her wallowing (2 Pet. 2:22).

The world will judge the church by its work. The world will judge the members by their fruits. The world will judge those who are baptized by their lives. Have we given the lost souls any incentive to obey the Lord? Can we truly prove to them that there is LIFE after baptism, that we are born-again, and that we are new creatures? Certainly, baptism is no reason to stop living a full and enriching life in Christ today.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Besides Melchizedek, what other King came out to meet Abram as he returned from rescuing Lot?
2. In the Parable of the Great Banquet, how many excuses were there for people not to come?
3. When Paul was told that he would be bound if he went to Jerusalem, he said he was

willing not only to be bound but to what,
for the name of Christ?

4. How many times does the word "whale" appear in the book of Jonah (KJV)?
5. According to the book of Esther, the day that Haman was hung, what did the king give Esther?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. What was the name of Rebekah's nurse?
DEBORAH (Gen. 35:8)
2. How many times did Samson lie to Delilah about the secret of his strength? THREE TIMES (Judges 16:15)
3. Why did Jesus say all men would hate the disciples? BECAUSE OF HIM (Luke 21:17)
4. In Isaiah's prophecy, what will live with the lamb when the Branch of Jesse arises?
THE WOLF (Isa. 11:6)
5. Which name is found more often in scripture: Jesus or Christ? JESUS

SEVEN LOOKS

LOOK BACK -- Remember God's goodness..1 Ki. 8:56

LOOK UP -- In praise.....Psa. 103:1

LOOK DOWN -- In humility; in caution..1 Co 10:12

LOOK FORWARD -- In confidence; in hope....
...2 Tim. 1:12

LOOK WITHIN -- Daily, thoroughly.....Psa. 19:14

LOOK AROUND -- Be vigilant.....Heb. 12:15

LOOK UNTO JESUSIsa. 45:22

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

Last month I ran across an item concerning church attendance that I would like to share with our readers.

TEN REASONS FOR ATTENDING CHURCH

1. From the Standpoint of Godliness: It teaches the Bible--which is the basis of our faith in God--and leads to Christ as our Savior and Lord.
2. From the Standpoint of Education: It trains the mind and heart along the lines of things eternal.
3. From the Social Standpoint: It enables one to enjoy the friendship and fellowship of genuine Christians.
4. From the Standpoint of Personality: It helps to develop the Christian character necessary to face life's problems victoriously.
5. From the Standpoint of Character: It is the chief aim of the church to teach us to be examples of the believer in word and deed.
6. From the Standpoint of Interest: It presents interesting lessons for our edification and exhortation.
7. From the Standpoint of Family: It is a service for every age, and the whole family can go together and profit by its teaching.
8. From the Standpoint of Service: It affords simple opportunity to serve God and the church in ways that are not available elsewhere.
9. From the Standpoint of Immortality: It turns our eyes heavenward and makes us realize that we must prepare for a life beyond the mortal grave.
10. From the Practical Standpoint: The hour or so spent in church each Sunday could not be expended more profitably.

-- Selected --

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
April 29 - May 4	Estesburg Church near Somerset, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 13-18	Hopkinsville Church Morrow, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 13-19	N. Fifth Street West Monroe, LA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
May 28 - June 1	Oak Grove Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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Ask for the Guide Book; the Bible from heaven;
For our salvation its pages were given;
If of a truth you are seeking the way,
Ask for the Guide Book, believe, and obey.

Heed not the voices that bid you remain,
Heed not the false guides who seek only gain;
Ask for the Guide Book,--its teachings are true,
Heeding it daily will carry you through.

Thousands are traveling in death's downward way;
Few walk the path that is narrow to-day:
One ends in darkness, and one ends in light,--
One is the wrong way, and one is the right.

Though you may teach that the Saviour has died,
Claim to be just and appear sanctified,--
Still, if the law of the Lord you deny,
"Vain your profession," the Lord will reply.

-- Author Unknown --

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The man who tries to drown his troubles in
drinking usually finds he has only irrigated
them.