

For Purity of Purpose

Kevin Cauley

It is clear from the scriptures that in order for one to be saved, one must be baptized ([Mark 16:16](#)). Since the word “baptize” is a transliteration from the Greek word “baptizo” the significance of the word is lost to us in the English language. So it is within the context of how the word “baptize” is used that we come to the conclusion that baptism must be immersion. Specifically in [Romans 6:1-11](#) where we are taught that baptism is in the likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To be buried, one must be completely immersed in the burial material, in this case, water. For one to be baptized in a way that is not burial (such as pouring or sprinkling) would not be a fulfillment of the need to be buried. To this, most members of the Lord’s body would agree. However, when it comes to the stated purpose for which one is baptized, many accept the idea that as long as the candidate is submersed, then they are saved, regardless of their state of mind. So with this idea, many say that although one may not believe that baptism is necessary for remission of sins, if one is immersed God will forgive those sins regardless of the individual’s belief regarding baptism itself. Is this a correct understanding of the scriptures? Let’s examine the question in light of the plan of salvation. The Bible teaches that for a person to come into a state of salvation, one must: (1) hear the gospel message ([Romans 10:17](#)), (2) believe it ([John 3:16](#)), (3) repent of ones sins ([Acts 17:30](#)), (4) confess the name of Christ ([Matthew 10:32](#)) and (5) be baptized ([Mark 16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#)). Each of these steps involves purity of purpose. Let’s look at some scriptures that indicate this.

When we look at the step of hearing the gospel, we recognize that not any hearing will do. It takes more than just letting the word go in one ear and out the other in order for a person to respond. Jesus said in [Matthew 7:24-27](#) that the person who hears and acts upon what he hears is like a wise man, but that the person who hears and does not act upon what he hears is like a foolish man. In other words, not only must we hear the gospel message, but also we must hear it in a certain way, with a specific purpose. We must hear the gospel with the view that we are going to act upon it or with the view that we are going to obey it. So when one hears the gospel, one must hear it with the purpose in mind of obeying what one hears.

When we look at the step of believing the gospel, we recognize that purity of purpose must be involved here as well. It is not sufficient to believe just anything, but we must believe the message of the Gospel. Moreover, we must not have ulterior motives for believing the gospel. One cannot believe something with the purpose in mind of simply making another person happy. One must believe with a view of salvation in mind. There are certain things that a person must believe in order to be saved and there is the proper motive for believing those things. [Romans 10:10](#) states that with the heart man believes unto righteousness. The heart must be pure in order to believe the gospel. The purpose must be understood.

When we look at the step of repentance, the Bible is clear that it is more than merely being sorry. In [2 Corinthians 7:10](#) we read, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” It is not sufficient to merely be sorry for one’s sins. The purpose of repentance is more than mere sorrow. The purpose of repentance is to stop doing the sinful things that one once did and to reform the pattern of one’s life after righteousness. So repentance must be with the proper attitude and correct purpose or else it is no repentance at all. Again, the purpose must be understood for one to be saved.

One’s confession as well must be pure. Does saying the words, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” regardless of one’s attitude fulfill the requirement of confession? No. An atheist can say the words, but that does not make him a Christian. The words in and of themselves contain no “magic” formula that works salvation upon an individual. These words must come from the heart; they must be meant.

Again, [Romans 10:10](#) says that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. That presupposes that one has already believed. Confession must be done with purity of purpose and that purpose must be understood for one to be saved.

Now we get to the step of baptism. Should we conclude anything different regarding this particular step of salvation? Should we conclude that in all the other steps one’s motive and purpose must be pure, but that when it comes to baptism that we do not have to have a pure motive and purpose? There is nothing magic in the waters of baptism. The water is just water. So dunking a person under the water just for the sake of dunking someone under the water is not going to cut it. If the proper motive and purpose is not present, it is meaningless just like all the other steps of salvation. If a person is not baptized for the proper motives and purposes, he is just getting wet. The Bible clearly teaches that the purpose of baptism is for the remission of sins ([Acts 2:38](#); [Acts 22:16](#)). At this point many will ask, “What if a person is being baptized to obey God, but does not understand that baptism is for the remission of sins.” In response, I ask, “Can a person merely hear the word of God ‘to obey God’ but not act upon the words that he hears?” “Can a person merely believe something ‘to obey God’ but not believe the gospel of Jesus Christ?” “Can a person merely repent ‘to obey God’ but not actually change one’s life?” “Can a person merely confess ‘to obey God’ but not actually mean what he says?” If one cannot do these things “to obey God” without actually involving the purity of purpose with which these things are done, what makes a person think that they can be baptized ‘to obey God’ without actually involving the purity of purpose with which baptism is to be done?

The truth of the matter is that baptism is an act of faith. When a person is baptized, they must believe that baptism is for the remission of their sins—that is the act of faith. [Colossians 2:12](#) says, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Without that act of faith involved in baptism, one is merely getting wet. If a person is just baptized “to obey God” what is the act of faith? Wherein are you putting your trust when you are baptized “to obey God?” Someone says, “I am putting my trust in God.” Great! So what are you putting your trust in God to do? When faith trusts God, it trusts

God to do something ([Romans 4:20-22](#); [Hebrews 11](#)). Baptism doesn't need to show that one merely believes God; confession accomplishes that! Baptism is not just a restatement of one's confession. It is more than that. Notice what Peter says on the matter of baptism. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Notice what is said in this passage. 1) Baptism saves us. 2) Baptism is not merely taking a bath. 3) Baptism is the response to God of a good conscience. 4) Baptism saves by the resurrection of Jesus. Notice item number 3). When we are baptized, we have to have a good conscience about it—we must do it with the right purposes in mind. The good conscience when taught properly is going to understand that baptism is necessary for salvation and is going to motivate the individual to take the appropriate action. To say that one can be baptized correctly without understanding the purpose of baptism denies the role of the conscience in baptism.

Many have asked me the question: "Can you be taught wrong and baptized right?" In response, I ask, "Can you be taught wrong and hear right?" "Can you be taught wrong and believe right?" "Can you be taught wrong and repent right?" "Can you be taught wrong and confess right?" If we cannot do these things, then what makes us think that we can be taught wrong and baptized right? The bottom line is that God has clearly identified the purity of purpose for baptism. There is no reason for someone not to know what the purpose of baptism is when they are baptized and if they are not following the purposes that God has clearly set forth, they are just getting wet.