



THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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CHRIST, THE SAINTS AND SIN

Jim Stauffer

In the second chapter of his first epistle, John spends the first few verses in explanation of the work of Christ in the forgiveness of the sins of mankind and especially the children of God.

It is interesting that he starts by saying *these things write I unto you that ye may not sin*. It is always better to prevent negative things than try to correct them after they have occurred. It is simpler, easier and particularly less painful.

Much sin in the world has repercussions beyond the initial act and the person guilty of the sin. Consider hateful actions and the damage they do to the lives of men. Murders, thefts and the like harm many people. Sins of sexual immorality, are so prominent today because many no longer even treat them as sin. These sins disrupt families and have a lasting effect on the faithful spouse and children in addition to the damage to the soul of the sinner. Sin has a cumulative and devastating effect on any society of mankind as well. We see it in the expense of incarcerating criminals. We see its effect in the destruction of the moral fiber of our communities and the subsequent alteration of the expectation children then have of what is right and wrong.

Therefore, John warns of walking in darkness rather than in the light of the life and teaching of Christ. But he also realistically acknowledges that all sin and have access to forgiveness through confession and prayer because of the death of Christ.

He then begins chapter 2 by suggesting Jesus is an Advocate before God for the children of God. Please understand just who the children of God are. Paul identifies them as people of faith in Christ. **Gal. 3:26** *For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.* So it is important for those of faith to recognize their sin, repent of it and pray for forgiveness through the Mediator (Advocate) Jesus Christ the righteous.

The reason Jesus Christ has become the Mediator between God and man (**1 Tim. 2:5**) is because He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (**vs 2**). Paul says the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the pathway to justification for man if he has faith in

the blood of Christ (**Rom. 3:23-26**). Propitiation is very similar to atonement. In the Greek the two words differ slightly with propitiation being the act that is capable of removing sin while atonement removes God's displeasure over our sin and reconciles us to Him as we were before being separated by our sin (**Isa. 59:1,2; 2 Cor. 5:18,19**).

After explaining that to us John then deals with the practicality of his lesson. **1 John 2:3** *And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* He says the person who has this restored relationship with God will follow His commandments (**John 14:15**). He thus separates those with their *affection on things above* (**Col. 3:2**) from those who love this present world and continue to search worldly avenues for peace and happiness (**1 John 2:15-17**).

While it is a great comfort to know and understand the process of God's love toward us, it is just as surely no license to sin freely taking advantage of His love. Paul teaches this clearly to us in his letter to the Romans when he answers the rhetorical question about God's grace. He says if the grace of God is sufficient to cover any and all sin, why is it not reasonable to sin even more to increase the good work of God's grace. His answer is **Rom. 6:2** *God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?* The children of God referred to in this text are those sons of faith who have been made alive in Christ after having been dead in their trespasses (**Eph. 2:1-3**). Peter explains the change this way, *who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.* (**1 Pet. 2:24**)

John accurately places Jesus as the central figure in the remission of sins necessary for man to have a peaceful relationship with God. The wonderful grace of God has sent His Son to be the perfect sacrifice for sin, but He does not take the situation lightly. The very price Jesus paid in sacrificing heaven and living in suffering and shame on the earth justify the demand God reminds us of through the words of John. If we love God as he loved us we will keep His commandments. If it is our desire to live our lives knowing the Savior we will obey his very commandments. Think on these things.

Baptism and the Fellowship of the Saints

by Steve Klein

A few months ago, a preacher from "a church of Christ" in our area had a Baptist preacher as a guest on his radio program. Throughout the broadcast, the former cheerfully referred to the latter as a "brother." As I listened I thought to myself, "Doesn't he know any better than that?" "How can he call someone a brother in Christ who has not been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins?" There would have been a time when nearly every true Christian listening would have been asking the same questions. But the times they are a changing.

A generation ago, perhaps only Carl Ketcherside and his fringe of followers would have argued that Baptists and other evangelicals who were not baptized for the correct reason were nonetheless brethren in Christ. Then, such a claim would have been firmly rejected by every sound Christian, and even by the vast majority of those who were not so sound. Now, many are apparently questioning truths they once held dear regarding scriptural baptism and fellowship. They are wondering if it is possible that an individual who thinks he has been saved by faith alone, and has only been baptized because it is commanded, could in fact be saved? They are wondering if baptism which was not performed *"for the remission of sins,"* could still be effective. And ultimately, they are wondering if fellowship should not be extended to believers who have been baptized for the wrong reason.

F. Lagard Smith, in his recent book *Who Is My Brother?* is currently leading the way in paving this broad path of fellowship. He writes that "despite their misunderstandings of baptism's purpose - believers who are immersed in order to obey the command to be baptized might nevertheless be regarded in God's eyes as saved believers" (128).

A generation ago, any book containing such a statement would have been greeted with cries for correction and demands for debate from virtually every corner of the brotherhood. Now, more than a few are touting it as "a good book" and "a breath of fresh air." Its author styles himself a "conservative" and is received as such by congregations which view themselves as sound. Times have changed indeed.

What about Acts 19:1-7?

Times may change, but the Scriptures do not. In **Acts 19:1-7**, the Scriptures teach that baptism for the wrong purpose does not save. In that text, twelve men who had been baptized *"into John's baptism"* were told by the apostle Paul that *"John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus"* (19:4). Upon hearing this, these twelve men *"were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (19:5). Obviously, a baptism which is not "in the name of Christ for the remission of sins," will not save.

LaGard Smith does not agree with this assessment. He asserts that the case of the twelve men in **Acts 19** is not applicable to the case of the modern day believer who is baptized for the wrong reason. He says, "Unlike these men (in **Acts 19**, sk), whose faith in God had been claimed through John rather than through Jesus, today's Baptists, for example, are fully convinced about the necessity of being baptized in the name of Jesus" (127). "The men from Ephesus," he asserts, "had to be re-baptized, not merely because of misunderstanding about timing and purpose, but because their baptism was not based upon the redemptive blood of Jesus. For those who are baptized in the name of Christ, however, the issue surely must be different" (129).

If LaGard's reasoning on **Acts 19** were correct, he would have the beginnings of a case for fellowshipping every baptized believer, regardless of the reason for their baptism. However, he would still have much to prove. For instance, even if the timing and purpose of baptism were not the issue in **Acts 19**, how does he know that these issues are not of consequence to God? Examples can be given from both Old and New Testaments demonstrating that God often considers the reason someone is complying with his will before he accepts them. God has rejected prayers, fasts, and sacrifices because they were not done for the right reason (**Matt. 6:5; Isa. 58:4**). To prove that God would not also reject baptism done for the wrong reason would truly be a very tough brief to argue.

But the reality is that LaGard is just wrong in his reasoning on **Acts 19**. He doesn't even have the beginnings of a case. The basis of his reasoning is that the twelve men re-baptized in Acts 19 claimed their "faith in God ... through John rather than through Jesus." This is patently false. The context of **Acts 19** would indicate that these twelve men had probably been taught by Apollos, a man who had been *"instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John"* (**Acts 18:25**). According to the text, the only thing Apollos did not teach accurately was baptism. He knew *"the way of the Lord."* Please notice that the phrase *"the way"* is used seven other times in Acts, and in every other instance it has obvious reference to those who claimed their "faith in God" through Jesus Christ (**cf. Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:26; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22**).

The twelve men in **Acts 19** are also called *"disciples,"* and although John the Baptist had disciples (**cf. Matt. 9:14**), every single one of the other thirty-one times Luke uses the term *"disciple(s)"* in Acts, he plainly refers to disciples of Christ, not John. A disciple is a learner or follower. These men were disciples of Jesus. They followed Jesus' teaching to the extent they had correctly learned it, but they had not been taught accurately concerning the purpose and effects of baptism. But suppose this is not right; suppose these men knew nothing directly of Christ and his teachings and that they only knew what John had said and done. They would still have known that Jesus was *"the Lamb*

of God who takes away the sin of the world"! That's what John taught (**John 1:29**)! They would have had faith in the redemptive power of Christ's blood! But they had not been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of their sins. They needed to be re-baptized for exactly the same reason people today who have not been baptized for the remission of sins today need to be - in order to be saved!
Can Baptism for the Wrong Reason Be "In the Name of Jesus"?

Read again the quotes from pages 127 and 129 of Who is My Brother? In essence LaGard is saying that those in **Acts 19** had not yet been baptized "in the name of Jesus" but "today's Baptist for example," has been baptized "in the name of Jesus." This is a glaring error. LaGard is claiming that any person who believes in Jesus, and has been baptized based on that belief, has been baptized "in the name of Christ" or "in the name of Jesus" - it doesn't matter whether that person knows the meaning and purpose of baptism. According to LaGard's reasoning, a person can be baptized not for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**), not to get into Christ (**Gal. 3:27**), not to have his sins washed away (**Acts 22:16**) and still have been baptized "in the name of Jesus." As incredible as it seems, F. LaGard Smith simply does not know what it means to do something "in the name of Jesus"!

Jesus makes it abundantly clear in **Matthew 7:22-23** that just because people claim to have done something in the Lord's name, does not mean they have. Many claimed to prophesy in Jesus name whom he never even knew! To do something in Jesus name is to do something he has empowered, permitted, authorized, or asked us to do.

To do something in the name of Jesus also involves doing it for the reason and purpose that he has assigned. If we do not do what he has asked for the reason he has asked, he doesn't accept it. How do we know this is true? Consider other things we are to do "in Jesus name." If someone gives you a "cup of cold water" in his name, "because you belong to Christ . . . he will by no means lose his reward" (**Mark 9:41**). But if someone does that same charitable deed "before men, to be seen by them" he will receive "no reward" from the Father in heaven (**Matt. 6:1**). The reason the charitable deed is done is what determines if it is done in Jesus' name or not.

Similarly, when a church withdraws fellowship from a sinful member "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" they do it "that his spirit may be saved in the day of judgment" (**1 Cor. 5:4-5; cf. 2 Thess. 3:6**). If a church withdraws from someone because it is following the lead of a bully (like Diotrefes) who wants to control everything (**3 John 9-10**), that church has not practiced withdrawal "in the name of Jesus," no matter what it may claim.

To pray "in the name of Jesus" (**Eph. 5:20**) is not merely to add to one's prayers a meaningless formula, but it is to ask something from God as Christ's representatives on earth, in his mission and stead, in his spirit and with His aim. If I pray selfishly or not according to the will of God, I am not praying in Jesus name, even if I believe in Jesus and say "in Jesus' name, Amen" at the end of my prayer (**cf. Jas. 4:3; 1 John 5:14**).

Yes, baptism in the name of Jesus requires that the one baptized "believes" on Jesus Christ (**Acts 19:5; 8:37**), but it also requires that the one baptized do so "for the remission of sins" (**Acts 2:38**), to "wash away your sins" (**Acts 22:16**), and to "put on Christ" (**Gal. 3:27**). No one who has failed to be baptized for these reasons can possibly be in fellowship "in Christ" with anyone who has.

DISOBEDIENCE

Must a Thing Be Prohibited?

Some think they are at liberty to introduce anything into God's worship, providing God has not in so many words, prohibited it. This is evidently a mistake. Such a plan of procedure would open the flood gates for innumerable innovations. On this principle every kind of food and drink might be brought into the Lord's Supper, and the offering of animal sacrifices and burning of incense might be added to the worship.

We must remember that law is inclusive and exclusive, including the things commanded and excluding all things else. This principle is too well known to need argument. Besides in religious matters God alone has the right to guide man, and when man undertakes to add forms of service or worship not authorized by God's law, he assumes prerogatives which belong exclusively to God. He is presuming to take the office of God, and one who has proper reverence for God so regards him.

In the law of Moses (**Deut. 28**), God sets before the Hebrews a long list of awful consequences of disobedience - failure of crops and fruits because of drouths and pests, destruction of the sacredness of home by moral corruption, sickness and physical ailments of all sorts, poverty and want, destruction and oppression at home by their enemies and final carrying away by their enemies into captivity where no rest would be found; *so thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see*. These are the consequences of disobedience to God's law to them and the after history shows that God will not clear the guilty (**Num. 14:18**), He will not be mocked, and that His threats of punishment are carried out faithfully, as are His promises of reward. **Sound Doctrine, Volume 1, Pages 139, 140. C.R. Nichol and R. L. Whiteside.**

Deut. 4:2 *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you.*

2 John 9 *Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: 11 for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.*

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Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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SUNDAY SERMON: WORKING TOGETHER



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10