

CROSSROADS

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CHRISTIAN STUDIES

SERIES ONE

MODULE 4

STUDY 1

WATER

BAPTISM

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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WATER BAPTISM

Congratulations on beginning your new life in Christ. You are now a child of God (John 1:12), your sins are forgiven and you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within (1 Corinthians 6:19). You have already taken the most important step in life, but it is important that you follow up on this step with a commitment to seek the Word of God diligently and to obey all that it commands in the power of His grace. One of the commands which is necessary to our obedience to Christ is that of water baptism. Let's explore this intriguing subject, even if only briefly at this point, so that we may know and understand its purpose in the life of the Christian.

Note: You may have been a Christian for some time. Know that the truths of water baptism apply to you also and are important to your spiritual growth and your walk with the Lord.

It is interesting to note what a well-known evangelist once described as the reaction of witchdoctors in Africa to people who become saved and are then baptized. To the former event, the witchdoctors showed little response, but there was great agitation when the new converts went down to the water to be baptized. Even the witchdoctors understood something of the power which can be released through this action - for the enemy will lose all hold over those who understand the significance of the symbolism of water baptism, then, by the grace of God, apply these truths to their lives.

Indeed, through the action of water baptism, coupled with acceptance of what it represents, a Believer who needs to be released from bondage can be truly delivered. However, it is not water baptism itself that will deliver us, but our God-given faith applied to the truths of the Cross, and us surrendering to the will of God. Water baptism is meant to highlight the truths pertaining to our salvation and our position in Christ. It is a physical representation or picture of what happened positionally to the Believer when he or she received Christ - and was thus born again.

“. . .Even the witchdoctors understood something of the power which can be released through . . . the action of water baptism. . .”

For the Christian, water baptism is like a wedding ceremony in which one pronounces one’s vows, speaking them forth before a public gathering which is present to witness the event. Water baptism performs the same function before God, and represents a vow presented to the world, to oneself, to the enemy and to all darkness - a vow of commitment. It is also a symbolic demonstration of death to the old man (the old unregenerate self) and life to the new man, raised in “*newness of life*” (Romans 6:4). All this is symbolized as we go down into the water and are then brought up out of it. In this way we demonstrate that we have died to what we were, and now have new life through God’s saving presence surrounding our spirit, a cleansed spirit and the imparting of the Divine Nature through Divine connection in Christ. As a new creature in Christ, through the action of water baptism we are also making a public declaration of our commitment to Him.

So water baptism not only symbolizes our escape from sin’s tyranny, it is also a demonstration of our commitment to Christ, through Whom we have been given new life (John 5:24; John 10:10). Water baptism is thus not just symbolic, but should represent the beginning of a journey of faith, a journey to which one is henceforth committed.

WATER BAPTISM IN THE SCRIPTURES

Water baptism is not a new thing. Its origin goes back beyond the birth of Christ, for it was the outward ceremony which demonstrated that a Gentile had accepted Judaism as his religion.

John the Baptist was the first to use water baptism as a symbol of repentance (Matthew 3:6). This element remains foundational to water baptism today, although there are other truths which are also expressed through the medium of water baptism.

“. . . Water baptism not only symbolizes our escape from sin’s tyranny, it is also a demonstration of our commitment to Christ, through Whom we have been given new life. . .”

Jesus Himself chose this action as the means by which Believers would demonstrate to the world that they had become Christians. He set the example for us to follow when He was baptized by John in the River Jordan. We know that Jesus was perfect and without sin, and had no need to be baptized in regard to repentance. He did so, however, in order *“to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). In being baptized, Jesus was identifying with man and demonstrating to all subsequent Believers the pathway they were to take:

1 PETER 2:21 For even to this were you called - it is inseparable from your vocation. For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you [His personal] example, so that you should follow on in His footsteps. (Amp.)

The Disciples of Jesus continued to baptize (to demonstrate repentance: John 4:1-2), and Jesus commanded water baptism in the Great Commission which He gave to the Disciples before He ascended into heaven.

MATTHEW 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, “All power (all authority) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.

MATTHEW 28:19 *Go ye therefore (this means all Believers from all ages), and teach all nations (every tribe, every tongue: e.g. Revelation 7:9), baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:*

MATTHEW 28:20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world (age). Amen.”*

The Apostles then practised water baptism in obedience to the Lord’s command. We see in the Book of Acts, numerous accounts of Believers, who, after receiving Christ, were baptized in water (Acts 2:38, 41; Acts 8:16; 36-39; Acts 10:46-47; Acts 16:29-33; Acts 19:1-5). Note that the Apostles in the Book of Acts baptized people immediately after they received salvation.

Having established that water baptism is a valid New Testament experience, given as a commandment by Jesus to the Body of Christ, we will now go on to explore its purpose in the life of the Christian.

THE PURPOSE OF WATER BAPTISM

As a Christian you are a child of God (John 1:12), your sins are forgiven and you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within (1 Corinthians 6:19). You have already taken the most important step in life, but it is important that you follow up on this step with a commitment to seek the Word of God diligently and to obey all that it commands. One of the commands which is necessary to our obedience to Christ is that of water baptism. Let’s explore this intriguing subject, even if only briefly at this point, so that we may know and understand its purpose in the life of the Christian.

Note: You may have been a Christian for some time. Know that the truths that water baptism represents apply to you also and are important to your spiritual growth and your walk with the Lord.

Water baptism can be compared to a burial service. And a burial service is conducted only for someone who is already dead - in this case, dead to sin. When we go down into the waters of baptism, we are publicly expressing that we were in Christ when He was buried in the tomb and we are dead to all forms of sin, including the sin nature. In other words, we are identifying ourselves with Christ in His death. Therefore, if we were buried with Christ, we were also resurrected with Him, spiritually, into “*newness of life*” (Romans 6:4), with a new Divine Nature to order our behaviour, being dead to sin and alive to Jesus Christ our Saviour. Water baptism highlights, through symbolism, what happened at regeneration, enabling us to focus on the importance of spiritual events which occurred then, i.e. we became identified with Christ’s death and His Resurrection, we died to sin and were raised to live a new life of faith in Him through the grace of the Divine Nature within.

“. . . Water baptism can be compared to a burial service . . . identifying ourselves with Christ in His death. . . ”

Water baptism thus represents the removal of the sin nature from our spirit. This means that it represents, in a broader sense, the death of the old man at the Cross, the old man being that person the Believer was before he or she was saved - totally depraved, unregenerate and lacking the life of God (1 John 5:12), self-centred and self-ruled, dominated by the sin nature. Via the symbolism of water baptism, we can thus gain a greater awareness of who we are in Christ, and the benefits that are to be appropriated through our spiritual position as sons of God. With this awareness, we may also gain greater trust in God and His Word.

However, once faith is applied to the deliverance aspect that water baptism represents, this action can be used in a mighty way against the enemy, cutting off any remaining legal or illegal

ground which he may have in our lives. Through this means his influence can be totally severed from our minds and our bodies and remain as such, as we continue to live according to God's Word and give the enemy no legal ground to return. When we walk with God, the enemy cannot walk with us. If we seek, find and embrace the Light of God's Word, no darkness can enter concerning the areas we have embraced.

THE STORY OF THE RED SEA CROSSING

Background Reading: Exodus Chapters 1 - 2

Let's examine the story from the Old Testament, where God's chosen people, the Israelites, had been sojourning in a strange land (Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6) for approximately four hundred years. The four hundred years (Genesis 15:13-14) is counted from the confirmation of Isaac (the son of Abraham) as the seed when Ishmael was cast out (Genesis 21:12; Galatians 4:30), to the time of Moses on Mt Sinai when the Law was given. The period of 430 years (Galatians 3:17) is counted from the departure of Abram from Haran at the age of seventy five, twenty five years before Isaac was born and five years before he was confirmed as the son of the promise. The full 430 years covers the time period called the Dispensation of Promise. The sojourning in a strange land refers to the Israelite wanderings through the lands of Canaan, Philistia and finally Egypt. They remained in Egypt from the time of Joseph for 215 years. During these years, Israel grew into a nation of millions, becoming slaves, however, to the Egyptians. This transpired after a pharaoh rose to the throne who did not recognise Joseph or his people. God promised He would judge this nation (Egypt) because they had made His chosen people slaves, and that Israel would "*come out with great substance*" (Genesis 15:14).

The Egyptians enslaved the Israelites, fearing their growing numbers. The Israelites were treated harshly by their foreign captors, who forced them to work in the fields and to build cities constructed of bricks and mortar. The reason the people of Israel

came into bondage was because they moved away from the Covenant (agreement) that God had made with their forefather Abraham. They did this by living in ungodly ways like the Egyptians, and worshipping false gods (Joshua 24:14).

“. . .once faith is applied to the deliverance aspect that water baptism represents, this action can be used in a mighty way against the enemy. . .”

Under the affliction of the Egyptians, the Israelites cried out for help and God heard their cry.

EXODUS 2:23 *And it came to pass in process of time, that the King of Egypt (the Pharaoh) died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage (groaned because of their slavery), and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage (The pressure from Egypt is now becoming so hard and so difficult on the Israelites that they are now ready to leave. To be frank, they would in no way have left Egypt had the blessings continued, as it was during the time of Joseph. At times, the Lord has to allow difficulties, in order for us to become willing to do His Will). (E.S.B.)*

EXODUS 2:24 **God heard their groaning and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob.** *(It is not clear here how much the Israelites were conscious of God, or whether they had almost forgotten Him. We do know that it was God Who took the initiative in their deliverance in view of His Covenants and Promises to their fathers. God always keeps His Word!) (E.S.B.)*

EXODUS 2:25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them (was concerned about them).

God heard the Israelites' cry for help, and through His mercy, called a man named Moses to help lead His chosen people out of Egypt.

GOD CALLS MOSES

The scriptures tell us:

EXODUS 3:6 . . . He (God) said (to Moses), “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

EXODUS 3:7 And the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction (misery) of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters (slave drivers who oppressed them severely); for I know their sorrows (suffering);

EXODUS 3:8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey (the Promised Land) . . .

EXODUS 3:9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

EXODUS 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send you (Moses) unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

When Moses and his brother Aaron approached Pharaoh (the King of Egypt) to tell him to let God's people go, Pharaoh refused. God then performed ten mighty miracles, the object of which was to force Pharaoh to release His people from not only their slavery but the land of Egypt itself. God sent plagues of hail, boils, frogs, lice, flies and locusts, brought death to the Egyptians' domestic animals, turned the Nile to blood, and caused the land to be covered in darkness. When Pharaoh still refused to let the people go, the final judgement on Egypt and its gods was the death of the firstborn in every household (Exodus 11:5; Exodus 12:29-33). This final act of judgement brought the swift release of the captive Israelites, as Pharaoh, at that moment, realized he was dealing with a power greater than his own, a power greater than his gods possessed.

The people of Israel were then brought out of Egypt under Moses' leadership, through God's Divine protection and guidance.

GOD'S PROTECTION THROUGH HIS DIRECTION

Background Reading: Exodus 13:17 - 14:4

God led the Israelites with a pillar of cloud and fire throughout their journeys. Under the leadership of Moses, Israel followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

The pillar of cloud and fire provided light and showed the Israelites the route they were to travel. These supernatural manifestations also provided a continual physical sign which reminded them that God was with them.

EXODUS 13:21 And the Lord went before (ahead of) them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them (guide) the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go (so they could travel) by day and night:

The pillar of cloud and fire also provided protection on one occasion for the Israelites, for Exodus 14:19-20 describes the pillar acting as a rear guard which prevented the Egyptians from

overtaking them. During the forty years the Israelites spent wondering in the desert before entering the Promised Land, the pillar of cloud and fire never left them by day or by night.

EXODUS 13:22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night (it did not depart), from before the people.

GOING THROUGH THE RED SEA

A short time after the Israelites were released from captivity, Pharaoh changed his mind about letting them go - for he was economically dependent upon the slave labour they provided. The horror of the death of the firstborn had receded, and with a darkened mind, Pharaoh set out with his army to pursue the Israelites in order to recapture them.

“. . . These supernatural manifestations also provided a continual physical sign which reminded them that God was with them. . . ”

When the Israelites were being chased by the Egyptians, God led the Israelites to the Red Sea. As we have mentioned, God held back the enemy by placing the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians, so protecting His people.

EXODUS 14:19 . . . the pillar of the cloud went from before their face (in front of Israel), and stood behind them:

EXODUS 14:20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them (to the Egyptians), but it gave light by night to these (to Israel): so that the one came not near the other all the night (it separated the two peoples).

Then God parted the Red Sea for Israel and told Moses to lead the people through to safety on the other side.

EXODUS 14:21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea (turned it into) dry land, and the waters were divided.

EXODUS 14:22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. (“He made the waters to stand as a heap” [Psalm 78:13])

The sea was about twelve miles wide, and it has been estimated that the wall of water on either side of the Israelites would have been something like one hundred feet high. This was no quirk of nature but a mighty and Divine miracle, executed by the power of God.

“. . . God held back the enemy by placing the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians, so protecting His people. . .”

When the Egyptians saw that the Israelites had gone through the Red Sea, they attempted to follow them. However the Egyptian soldiers were all drowned when God allowed the sea to flow back into its original position, consuming the mighty army totally.

EXODUS 14:23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

EXODUS 14:24 *And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians (threw them into confusion - with thunderbolts, lightning, rain etc.),*

EXODUS 14:25 *And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."*

EXODUS 14:26 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again (flow back) upon (over) the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.*

EXODUS 14:28 *And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them (not one survived).*

EXODUS 14:30 *Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*

After the people of Israel obeyed the Lord's directions (given through His mouthpiece, Moses) and crossed through the Red Sea, it closed in behind them and drowned their enemy. In this process, the enemy from their past life of slavery was totally cut off. On that day, the Egyptian soldiers who threatened the Israelites' newly won freedom followed them into the Red Sea, and were drowned.

Thus the result of God's chosen people obeying all His directions was that they were finally set free from the physical bondage of Egypt.

APPLYING THE RED SEA STORY TODAY

We need to understand that Old Testament teaching can apply to us today because:

the Old Testament has many physical type-patterns of spiritual truths that are relevant today.

Knowing that God is in the ever eternal present, and we (mankind) are locked into a time zone, our approach and thinking when studying God's Word should be in the knowledge of the following:

The present and final outcome of mankind was known by God even before the Book of Genesis was written. With this foreknowledge, God's Spirit chose, directed and anointed people to write down His Word. So from God's perspective, and according to His foreknowledge, the Bible (God's Plan of Redemption for mankind) has been constructed from the back (the Book of Revelation) to the front (the Book of Genesis). This explains why the Old Testament shows us many physical type-patterns of spiritual truths which apply to us today - because God placed them there to highlight the spiritual truths of Calvary. **We could also say that everything recorded in the Bible points to Calvary.** Indeed the Old Testament sacrifices, ceremonies and festivals are a shadow or a type-pattern of the reality of Christ's sacrifice and His finished work. The precious Blood of Jesus flowed backwards from the Cross to cleanse the sins of the Old Testament Saints as well as flowing forwards from the Cross to cleanse the sins of the New Testament Saints. Everything points to the Cross, God's pivotal point for mankind's redemption.

1 JOHN 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

“. . .from God’s perspective, and according to His foreknowledge, the Bible (God’s Plan of Redemption for mankind) has been constructed from the back (the Book of Revelation) to the front (the Book of Genesis). . .”

We will now examine the significance of the story of the Red Sea crossing in relation to water baptism. The crossing of the Red Sea is a type-pattern of water baptism today, a type-pattern of the spiritual truths contained within water baptism which we can understand and apply today.

The Israelites in Old Testament times are a type-pattern of regenerated (born-again) Believers.

The Egyptians in this story are a type-pattern of Satan and his forces, for scripture tells us that the devil and his forces are our enemy today:

EPHESIANS 6:12 For we wrestle (fight) not against flesh and blood (man), but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Satan and his forces of evil organised in different levels of authority).

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (mentally self-controlled), be vigilant (watchful, alert); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (destroy):

Just as the Egyptians were the Israelites’ enemy in this story, holding them in bondage as captives, so today Satan is man’s enemy, and he desires to keep mankind in bondage as his prisoner in the Kingdom of Darkness.

He keeps people in bondage through ignorance and unbelief which result in fear, spiritual and physical poverty, sickness, disease, mental torment, etc. These are all curses and are not from God. People are being held as prisoners to these curses, and need to be set free from them by God's power.

“. . .The crossing of the Red Sea is a type-pattern of water baptism today, a type-pattern of the spiritual truths contained within water baptism which we can understand and apply today. . .”

The pillar of cloud and fire which God used to give direction to His people is a type-pattern of God's Word of instruction today, i.e. the Bible. Therefore just as God, in Old Testament times, directed the Israelites with the pillar of cloud and fire, He has provided us today with the direction, and hence protection, of His Word.

MATTHEW 4:4 But He (Jesus) answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ ” (Deuteronomy 8:3)

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God (“God-breathed”: Gk. “theopneustos”), and is profitable for doctrine (what is taught must come from the scriptures), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

To receive this protection, however, we must yield to all that God's Word instructs, relying on His grace to work in our lives so that we both will to do His will, and then receive the empowerment to carry it out. And one of God's directions is that all Believers are to be baptized in water - focusing, of course, on the finished work of Christ on the Cross. By God's grace we can

accept what water baptism represents, even though we may not fully understand. This acceptance then constitutes “faith,” belief and trust at a new convert’s level, which is all that is required at this stage.

As far as God was concerned, the Israelites were set free the moment they chose to follow God’s appointed leader, Moses. To walk in this freedom, however, they had to act on their commitment. In other words, they were not just to give lip service - they had to physically obey all the commandments that were given by God through Moses.

The same applies to us today. We were completely set free in a legal or positional sense from the powers of darkness when we accepted Christ as our Saviour and Lord - for Christ defeated Satan on our behalf at Calvary. To experience the reality of our legal position at a conditional level (i.e. to be set free in an experiential sense), however, we must act in faith on our commitment by doing what the Lord has instructed us to do. One such action needed after we accept Jesus as Lord is that of water baptism. This represents, for us as Christians, the public declaration of our commitment to Christ’s Lordship and an acceptance of God’s command to be water-baptized, as conveyed in His Word.

“ . . .As far as God was concerned, the Israelites were set free the moment they chose to follow God’s appointed leader, Moses. To walk in this freedom, however, they had to act on their commitment. . . ”

INTERIM GRACE PERIOD

Sometimes there appears to be an “interim grace period” after people are first saved and possibly water-baptized whereby God, in a limited way, places His protective hand upon them for a period of time so that the enemy may be impeded or restrained to some extent. This is especially so if people are fellowshipping in

a church of faith-filled Christians who are praying effectual prayers on their behalf. During this interim grace period, people should be taught the fundamental truths of God's Word - including the deliverance aspect of what water baptism represents concerning Christ's victory for us on the Cross. The Believer should then appropriate their deliverance by faith. While this is possible before water baptism, it is certainly available at water baptism (being a tangible platform from which the Believer can release their faith), and following water baptism. The actual experience of water baptism, being a real event, can help the Believer to release their faith at this time or focus their faith retrospectively if they have already been baptized. Their faith of course must be focused on the spiritual realities that took place for them at Calvary (salvation and deliverance) and became theirs to appropriate at salvation.

Many new converts are water-baptized with little understanding. However many, with the help of the Holy Spirit, have accepted what it represents in a simple way - this being that they are dead to the old life as a sinner and in Christ have been made alive to God. These water-baptized converts must then progressively grow in the knowledge of their blood-won salvation.

The Bible tells us that God's children, when they lack spiritual knowledge, go into spiritual captivity (Hosea 4:6). In other words, darkness takes root in their minds instead of the liberating Holy Light of God's Word (1 Peter 5:8). Yes, new converts must accept that they are new creations in Christ, but they must then, with the help of the Holy Spirit, understand what this means, and walk in this spiritual knowledge.

Not only do Christians go into captivity when they are ignorant of God's Word, they will also go into captivity when they do not embrace God's Word. In other words, they may know His Word, in areas, intellectually, but until they embrace it from the heart, they will never experience deliverance in these areas.

Similarly unless the new Christian accepts from the heart the simple truths (i.e. of Calvary and the Resurrection) that Water Baptism represents, they will not receive the grace they need to progress in their new Christian walk.

“ . . . The actual experience of water baptism, being a real event, can help the Believer to release their faith at this time. . . ”

As we have seen, a short time after the Israelites began their journey, and before they reached the Red Sea, the Egyptians began pursuing them to try to bring them back into bondage. God was able to protect them as long as they stayed within the boundaries of His direction. This took the form of obeying the instructions given by Him through Moses, and following the pillar of cloud and fire.

So too today, as long as we follow and trust in the direction given by God’s Word of promise, God can protect us and our enemy cannot legally touch us. This is why God commands all Christians to study His Covenant (Word), so we can know the requirements of the Christian life and operate, with His help, within its boundaries. We can also learn of and operate within all the rights and authority we have in Christ. In this we will lack nothing, which means that all our needs will be met in Him. The purpose of this is not to gratify our flesh but so that we can do His will in our lives. Amen.

Therefore:

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 Study (young and old so as) to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not (has no cause) to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

HEBREWS 10:24 And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities: (Amp.)

HEBREWS 10:25 Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as Believers] (not neglecting to go to church and teaching meetings), as is the habit of some people, but admonishing - warning, urging and encouraging - one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching (the return of our Lord Jesus Christ). (Amp.)

The cloud protected the Israelites just before they crossed the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were closing in on them. This can be likened to the interim grace period. However if the Israelites had not crossed the Red Sea on Moses' command, the pillar of cloud and fire would have moved on ahead of them and they would have lost their protection. This story gives us a clear picture of the value of obedience. God does not want His people to stagnate, and thus come under enemy attack, but to be obedient and therefore always moving on towards the next blessing and the ongoing deepening of their relationship with Him.

So too today we need to move on in God. We do this by learning of the promises in His Word and appropriating these promises by faith, trusting in His empowerment to do everything He desires us to do. Remember it is through the Divine Nature that we gain the desire and receive the power to do God's will in our lives. It is the power, or the energies and graces of the Divine Nature, that energize, at an experiential level, the human nature of man. Through this process man gains the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), being enabled to walk as a Christian with this same mind (Philippians 2:5). In other words, the grace of God's very Nature at work in the yielded Saint brings them into this union of thought, which constitutes faith, thereby releasing God's power. In this man's thoughts and desires are ordered by a passion for truth, justice and love.

“. . . Remember it is through the Divine Nature that we gain the desire and receive the power to do God's will in our lives. . . ”

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE WATER-BAPTIZED ?

The main reason we should be water-baptized is because God has commanded us to do so - for Jesus said:

***MATTHEW 28:19** Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*

We should obey God in this and every other area because He is our Heavenly Father and is looking after our well-being by commanding us to do what is right. God loves us and wants us to be free from any bondage with which the enemy may have ensnared us. After salvation, however, the consequences of our past sins may still remain. Water baptism is a tool God has provided to deal with these bondages in an easy and effective manner.

When the spiritual truths of that which water baptism represents are fully understood, Christians should be able to apply their faith in this area in an effective way. In other words, they should be able to focus their faith in a simple way on the deliverance aspect that water baptism represents - for through the Cross and the Resurrection we can be delivered from all bondage. By this means, they, the captives with all their complexities, can be set free by the power of God through the Blood of Jesus.

“ . . . The main reason we should be water-baptized is because God has commanded us to do so . . . ”

At salvation the past (in terms of evil actions and their consequences) in a positional sense has been severed - legally cut. It is faith which makes this a conditional reality in our lives. For the Christian everything comes back to the Cross and Jesus'

Words, “*It is finished.*” By these Words Jesus was saying that He had completed the work of sacrifice, having paid the price for our redemption and deliverance. Amen.

CUTTING THE ENEMY OFF

The Israelites being led through the Red Sea is a type-pattern of Christians being water-baptized today. Remember it was not the water that saved them, but the power of God’s Word and their obedience.

Jesus conquered all sin at the Cross, including its power. This includes deliverance from the consequences of past sin. However because as new Christians we are ignorant and immature, God has given us a point of contact from which we can release our God-given faith to bring about the desired result (this being deliverance) - if we have searched for truth in His Word after salvation or have heard and received the Word being preached.

Because of the tangible platform that water baptism provides, it becomes easier for many to believe and trust in a way that they hadn’t done before in regard to what had already happened in their lives in a positional (legal) sense. Also, when new converts are water-baptized, God’s grace is at work to make it easier for them to accept some of the realities of their salvation, i.e. that the old man is dead and the new man in Christ is current. Obedience allows God’s grace and Anointing to flow, if the water baptism is approached in a proper sense by the Believer. Sometimes it is not so much a matter of faith, but child-like openness and trust, also called “acceptance,” in this atmosphere of God, which brings results. In fact this should be the normal course of events, and this is why the Lord wants new converts to be water-baptized without delay - so they can receive this grace that would deepen the spiritual realities of their salvation (Acts 2:38; Acts 16:30-33). Then with their child-like trust, they can experience the deliverance wrought for them at Calvary. Amen.

“ . . . Sometimes it is not so much a matter of faith, but child-like openness and trust, also called “acceptance,” in this atmosphere of God, which brings results. . . ”

We have seen in the Exodus story that the Egyptians were cut off, and prevented from following the Israelites through the Red Sea. Today, the devil and his forces can also be cut off, and so prevented from following a Christian through the water (if that person believes it) when he or she is baptized.

After the Israelites went through the Red Sea, the waters closed in on their enemy, cutting off that enemy and all the past bondages of Egypt. Today when you are water-baptized (which represents what happened at salvation in a positional sense), all past ties of sin and bondage that remain in your life **can, in a spiritual sense, be actually** (experientially) **cut off** (if they have not already been cut). This leaves no way for the enemy to return, as long as you continue to hold faith in what water baptism represents, and to follow God’s direction day by day. Then the light of God’s will for your life will rule the day, and you will not stumble in darkness (John 8:12).

At regeneration, God’s saving presence came to surround our spirit, and death (including the sin nature) was expelled from our spirit. This cut the enemy’s ties to our spirit, resulting in us becoming sons of God whereby we can cry “*Abba Father*” (Romans 8:15). Spiritual regeneration thus severs all Satan’s legal rights to a person’s spirit and Satan is no longer able to maintain his position (on behalf of the Kingdom of Darkness) as that person’s legal spiritual father (John 8:44).

While water baptism symbolizes this event, it does not actually do anything in regard to our spiritual position with God. However it can be a door which allows God, by His grace, to do much in our lives.

It is not denied that after regeneration and before water baptism, a person can be totally set free from bondages through faith in, or openness towards, God's Word. You may then ask, "Why be baptized if a person can be set free without it?"

Unfortunately, in most cases, Christians do not realize when, let alone how, the enemy is at work in their lives, even after they have been Christians for many years. And water baptism provides an effective way for problems to be dealt with by the Lord, even when these are not understood or remain to a large extent unrecognized.

“ . . . Today when you are water-baptized . . . all past ties of sin and bondage that remain in your life can, in a spiritual sense, be actually (experientially) cut off . . . ”

DOES WATER BAPTISM SAVE YOUR SPIRIT ?

Some Christians have the view that we must be baptized in water to be saved spiritually. Well let's see what God's Word shows us concerning this:

ROMANS 10:9 **That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus (that Jesus is your Lord), and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead (in a bodily resurrection), you shall be saved.**

ROMANS 10:10 ***For with the heart man believes (faith is exercised) unto (resulting in) righteousness (rightstanding with God); and with the mouth confession (open acknowledgement) is made unto salvation (action with your faith).***

We can see through scripture that it is our action of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord which saves us spiritually. Thus water baptism has nothing to do with the salvation of our spirit, i.e. spiritual regeneration. Water baptism is, however, a command of God which, when obeyed in faith, can help bring deliverance (if needed) in a simple and effective way, at an experiential level, to soul and body.

HOW ARE WE TO BE BAPTIZED ?

Let's look at Matthew 28:19:

MATTHEW 28:19 Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

This scripture tells us in whose Name we are to be baptized in water:

“in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

The Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit form one God of unity. On earth, however, the Name of Jesus has the same authority as the Name of “*the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” Therefore it really does not matter whether you are baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit or in the Name of Jesus. Both are acceptable to God, for Jesus' Name has authority in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:9-10). We would recommend, however, that people be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the reason being that the Word instructs us to do it this way (Matthew 28:19).

Note: We mention this point because some may have been water-baptized in the Name of Jesus and may think, after studying this teaching, that they need to be re-baptized. This of course is not necessary.

***“. . .baptizing them in the Name of the
Father, and of the Son, and of
the Holy Spirit. . .”***

When God speaks about being water-baptized He means we must be fully immersed in the water. The word “baptism” comes from the Greek word “baptizo” which means “to dip” or “to immerse,” “to plunge,” “to submerge.” The word was commonly used in secular Greek of a sinking ship (Dr.B.Rossier, A Study Through the Book of Romans, pg.95). James Strong (The New Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible) gives the meaning of “baptizo” as:

- “1. To dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
2. To cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash . . .
3. To overwhelm.”

Wuest notes that the words “baptize” and “baptism” *“are not native to the English language. Therefore they do not have any intrinsic meaning of their own. The only rightful meaning they can have is the one that is derived from the Greek word of which they are the spelling. The verb is spelled baptizō (βαπτίζω), from which with a slight change in spelling we get our word “baptize.” The noun is baptisma (βαπτισμα), and taking off the last letter, we have “baptism.” ”*

“In secular documents of the Koine (common Greek) period, we find the following uses of “baptizo” - a submerged boat, ceremonial ablutions, a person flooded or overwhelmed in calamities . . . In the LXX we have in Leviticus 4:6 the words, “And the priest shall dip (baptizo) his finger in the blood. . . ” ”¹

***“. . .When God speaks about being water-
baptized He means we must be fully
immersed in the water. . .”***

All this means that when we are water-baptized, according to the Greek and indeed the scriptural meaning, we must go right under the water so that it covers us totally.

“baptism” = “immersion”

“immersed” = “covered totally”

As you are being fully immersed and are coming up out of the water, you can (through faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross) be set free by the power of God as the Israelites were when they went through the Red Sea. In order to do so, however, when you are baptized you must believe that the enemy will be cut off by God’s power. This took place in a positional and legal sense at salvation. We can, however, apply our faith, with proper focus, to these truths at water baptism, so making them a living, conditional reality. This means, potentially, the freeing of areas of our mind and body by the delivering power of God through the Cross. Then, or course, we must continue to live in God’s Word of deliverance, day by day, so that the enemy has no legal ground to return.

Again, most new converts will not have a deep understanding of all this but with God’s grace an acceptance can come, which is all that is needed - if a preacher or teacher bothers to teach them these truths.

Note: If you were baptized in a church when you were a baby by being sprinkled on the head with water, then you have not truly been water-baptized. This practice is merely a religious ritual, a tradition instituted by man with the help of the enemy. As a counterfeit, this practice does nothing except allow wrong teaching to continue and with it, unbelief. The enemy loves it and God hates it.

“. . .most new converts will not have a deep understanding of all this but with God’s grace an acceptance can come, which is all that is needed. . .”

The following gives us a simple outline of how to be baptized:

You can be baptized in any form of water deep enough to cover you, e.g. in a river, the sea or a baptismal tank. However, we need to remember that water baptism is meant to be a public declaration with other Believers present, as, for instance, in a church.

A mature Christian, normally a minister of the Gospel, should accompany you and tell you to speak out, in faith (1 John 1:9). You could say, for example, “Lord, You say in Your Word that if I confess and repent of my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I believe You will do this, in Jesus’ Name.”

Then the mature Christian should say, as you are being immersed in the water, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

When you obey God’s command to be water-baptized according to His Word, believing and trusting in or accepting what it represents, the enemy, if not already cut off experientially, can be cut off from your life and left behind. The enemy, if he had been troubling you, will not be able to trouble you again as long as you continue to live for God, trusting in Him and obeying all that His Word commands. Otherwise, as we know, sin gives the enemy legal ground to enter our lives and bring us again into bondage. Water baptism is meant to represent what happened at salvation - the cleansing of the spirit and death, in a positional sense, to all sin. It gives us a vivid picture in our minds, and so a platform which we can use as a springboard for our ongoing faith walk.

APPLYING FAITH TO OUR ACTIONS

The action of being water-baptized will be of no benefit to us unless we apply faith of some description to it - for God's Word states:

HEBREWS 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is (that He exists), and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

The word "faith" is a noun. This means it is not an action, but a "substance" (Hebrews 1:1). It is not mental assent but a conviction within, an inner knowing which is so strong that nothing can persuade us to the contrary. The Word tells us:

ROMANS 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing (- and believing - the message of God), and hearing by (the preaching and sharing of) the Word of God.

The normal way we obtain Bible faith is through either hearing or reading the Word of God. As we read the Word or hear the Word being preached or taught under the Anointing of God, we can come to a position of belief. Sometimes, as we have said, and particularly in relation to new converts, even an acceptance of that which is preached or taught will be sufficient to obtain the promise.

Faith comes into our hearts when the Lord brings us to a position, by His grace, not only to believe on what His Word has said, but also to trust in that which we have believed on, i.e. what His Word has said. Trust only comes as the Divine Nature energizes our human nature, the two being enmeshed together as we yield to the Holy Spirit. The goal of His mighty work within us is for us to be set free and become, in Christ, the person we are meant to be. So to put it simply, faith is a gift from God which is gained as we absorb the truths of His Word, being the union of belief and trust in one's own heart (James 1:17).

So when we have the substance of faith we:

- have no doubt in someone or something.
- believe and trust wholeheartedly.
- are fully persuaded with full assurance.
- have absolute certainty in the trustworthiness of someone or something.
- have full confidence in another.

Many new Christians ready to be water-baptized will not be in this position, and will not have this kind of faith because there has neither been the time nor the Teachers required. Knowing this, God will generally bring Anointing and grace that would cause those who are being baptized to accept, in a greater depth (than the day they were saved), the realities of their salvation. For this to happen, however, God still needs them to focus on the simple teaching of their salvation. Indeed He has provided Teachers in the Church to teach new babes in Christ the Word of truth concerning these matters. This takes place through preaching, teaching or the printed word. The Word of God is what brings the Anointing which provides the grace needed for them to accept the realities of Calvary, at some level at least, at this time. Those who have already been water-baptized will need to obtain a deeper level of faith to appropriate their deliverance retrospectively. A simple acceptance of the truths that Calvary represents may not be sufficient for older Christians who need to apply their faith backwards to the truths their baptism represented. The reason for this is that more is required of those who have had the time and opportunity to develop faith beyond the baby level. This principle is found in Luke 12:48 where we find the words *“for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.”*

“ . . . Trust only comes as the Divine Nature energizes our human nature, the two being enmeshed together as we yield to the Holy Spirit. . . ”

Many believe in God, but even the devils “*believe and tremble*” (James 2:19). It is one thing to acknowledge there is a God. It is another to accept Him as Saviour and to trust Him - and our actions will reveal this. Trust comes to us as we yield to the Spirit of Grace Who empowers us to trust. Our actions will then constitute the fruit of this trust.

As we obey His Word in this area of water baptism, God continues to gain legal ground to protect and deliver us as we continue to appropriate His promises. But water baptism will only be a symbolic action unless we allow God to give us the grace to accept Calvary’s realities.

Therefore, before the new convert is immersed in the water, we should teach them that they need to allow God’s grace to deepen to them the realities of what water baptism represents - that being the finished work of Christ, and Him defeating sin in our lives. This includes the power of the sin nature. Then they must go on to be taught to not only accept but understand that the sin nature, although defeated in a positional sense (and removed from our spirit), has not been annihilated or eradicated. It remains with us, ready to spring into action and empower us to do wrong if we so desire it. However, Christ won the right for us to receive, as we were resurrected with Him, the graces and energies of the Divine Nature by which we can order our lives, and be empowered to live righteously.

Darkness cannot stay where the Light of God’s presence is allowed to shine, and darkness cannot return as you continue to live by faith in God’s Word of deliverance and protection - for darkness cannot enter a lighted room. You will also then need to daily take up your cross of self-denial.

LUKE 9:23 And He (Jesus) said to them all, “If any man will come after Me (to follow Me as a Disciple), let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

You are not to do this by willpower, but by God’s grace which empowers you to do His will - as you yield to the Holy Spirit within.

Whose benefit is the Lord thinking of when He commands us (all Believers) to be baptized in water? Ours of course, for He loves us and wants us to have total victory and peace while we are here on earth.

JOHN 10:10 . . . I (Jesus) am come that they (all who believe) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

The enemy could not follow the Israelites through the Red Sea. Similarly our enemy cannot legally follow us through the water once we have repented of all sin and have, with God’s grace, accepted the legalities that water baptism represents - i.e. sin’s defeat at the Cross.

Note: Water baptism is also a means by which we can demonstrate to ourselves, the world and the powers of darkness that our old man, the old unregenerate self, is dead, and that we have died to the old life of sin. In doing so, we are also making a public declaration of our faith in the Gospel, our relationship to Christ and our commitment to follow His leading as our Lord and Saviour.

RECEIVING FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

When we are water-baptized in faith, we are taking ourselves back to the legal ground of Calvary so that God can deliver us, in a conditional sense (if needed), from the consequences of sin. This is achieved by us having God-given faith in the Blood and the finished work of Christ, and believing

on 1 John 1:9. As we have said, for the new convert this may mean receiving sufficient God-given grace to enable a simple but profound acceptance of these truths.

The Word tells us:

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess (and repent of) our sins, He (the Lord) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Acts 2:38 shows the importance of repentance in relation to being water-baptized and receiving the benefits it provides:

ACTS 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, “Repent (turn around from all wrongdoing), and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (We must not take this out of context. We must be baptized through Jesus, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as Matthew 28:19 states. In other words, we must first be regenerated.)

Anyone who is about to be water-baptized should quote, in faith, 1 John 1:9, and believe the Lord for any cleansing that may be needed. With God’s grace we can take Him at His Word, receive His forgiveness, then thank Him for our cleansing of all unrighteousness which has resulted from sin. The Blood will deliver us from all evil. Water baptism brings the Believer back to the Cross and therefore the Blood of the Lamb.

“. . .When we are water-baptized in faith, we are taking ourselves back to the legal ground of Calvary so that God can deliver us, in a conditional sense. . .”

New converts may quote and believe the scripture 1 John 1:9 before water baptism, but until they are baptized in water, and

apply faith to this action, appropriating the promises, they may never have the full victory that God's Word offers in this verse. This is because until then, they have not obeyed God's Word fully in this area. If we want to have full victory in our lives, however, and live in the abundant life that Jesus spoke of, we must goal to do all the Lord commands us to do, for He knows best. Remember it is not the water that saves or delivers. Through our obedience and faith, it is the power behind the Word of God that delivers and sets free. And His Word of deliverance comes through the Cross, having been given to all who trust, believe and follow Him. As we have said, this can happen before water baptism, at water baptism and after water baptism.

So when you are baptized in water, you should read out 1 John 1:9 as an act of repentance, and believe it 100%. This scripture should be spoken in faith by every person who is to be baptized in water. Even if there was no need because Believers had already done this at salvation, to read out 1 John 1:9 is still an act humility by which they declare that God has washed their sins away, by the Blood of Christ making them white as snow, righteous before God in Him (Isaiah 1:18).

Note: It is true that this verse, when applied in faith at any time, will bring needed deliverance (cleansing) to the life of the Christian. So we do not deny that deliverance occurs independently of water baptism. When this verse is used in conjunction with water baptism, however, it provides a great opportunity for deliverance, if needed, even from unidentified or complex bondages, through one simple action combined with faith. Note too that simple acceptance by young Christians constitutes a form of faith (belief and trust).

“ . . . Remember it is not the water that saves or delivers . . . it is the power behind the Word of God that delivers and sets free. . . ”

If you have already been water-baptized by full immersion, you can now apply your faith concerning these truths of God's Word to that action, having already obeyed God in this area. You can focus your faith retrospectively on your action of water baptism and all it represents for the cleansing of all unrighteousness. To do this, however, greater faith is needed than that of the simple acceptance of the new convert. Some even choose to be re-baptized for this purpose, to gain a tangible platform from which to release their faith. However, the decision is very much an individual one, and to obey the Word of the Lord we only need, following salvation, to be water-baptized once.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING GOD'S TEACHING ON WATER BAPTISM

People are not aware of the fact that water baptism (with repentance) can help set in force a spiritual law (God's protective covering) which can completely block the enemy from interfering in their lives. Again it is not the water baptism itself but what it represents, and our faith in the finished work of the Cross (us in Christ and being dead to the old man) that can block the enemy's interference.

People need to know the reasons for being baptized in water. They need to know that it is not to be done just as a religious ordinance, but to be used as a solid platform from which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, a greater acceptance of the truths concerning our salvation can be established - with spiritual consequences. Many have been deceived and blinded from the truth in this area.

People who think water baptism by immersion is just nonsense and of no importance are ignorant of the spiritual truth that this act of humility and submission entails.

“ . . . People are not aware of the fact that water baptism (with repentance) can help set in force a spiritual law (God’s protective covering) which can completely block the enemy from interfering in their lives. . . ”

Again we say that without faith (belief coupled with trust) of some description, relating of course to one’s obedience and the acceptance of Calvary’s truths, the action of water baptism will be of very little benefit, spiritually or physically. We need to have faith in what this action of obedience can do when we focus on the truths that water baptism represents - for an action is useless without faith, just as faith without action is of no effect.

***JAMES 2:20** But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works (action) is dead?*

***JAMES 2:21** Was not Abraham our father (shown to be) justified (considered righteous) by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

***JAMES 2:22** Do you see how faith wrought (was working) with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (Abraham’s faith and works were working together so that his faith was perfected)*

***HEBREWS 11:6** But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is (that He exists), and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*

Faith (the union of belief and trust) and action must be combined together to bring about a positive result. Active faith will make your works perfect and bring into existence that which is needed in both your life and others, by the power of God.

Works without faith will achieve nothing spiritually, and therefore nothing physically, except allowing bondage to continue in a person's life.

God tells us to whom much is given, of them will much be required. A new convert will probably know very little about their salvation. Therefore they should be taught, even briefly, before or just prior to their water baptism about what it represents. At this time, God's grace will accompany the Word of truth to cause the open and humble hearted to accept these basic truths concerning the realities of their salvation. This acceptance, for the babe in Christ, constitutes God-given faith (belief and trust). They may not understand much at this time, but a simple acceptance of the Truth that they are saved and forgiven by the Blood of the Lamb indeed constitutes "faith." Later, in the weeks and years that follow, more will be required of these children of God. They are meant to mature and grow in Christ, and much more will be expected and required of them by God because they will have had both time and opportunity to seek, find and embrace God's will for them as well as His precious truths.

New converts need to understand the reason for being water-baptized, and doing all that God commands them. They need to understand that this can help block the enemy from interfering in their lives, as long as they continue in God's Word through faith and obedience. If we sin, however, we give the enemy legal ground to return to oppress us in some way. If we find ourselves in this position we need to repent according to 1 John 1:9, and then trust in the leading and empowerment of the Spirit so that we may walk uprightly again in His will.

WHAT IS REQUIRED AFTER WATER BAPTISM ?

After the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, their journey continued to the land God had promised them (even though it took forty years), as they followed God's direction.

Once we have, in faith, gone through the waters of baptism (which represents what happened at the Cross), we have legally cut off the enemy's right to interfere in our lives. In this way we

are, by faith, possessing our bought inheritance. But this freedom will only remain as long as we continue to live as God's Word directs us. We also need to remain mindful of what our water baptism represents, and maintain our faith in our bought deliverance through the Blood of the Cross, ever trusting in the grace of God.

After the Cross of Calvary and us dying in Christ so as to be raised with Him in "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:3-4), the enemy can only regain access to our lives if we:

1. SIN

ROMANS 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey (the Believer is either a slave to Christ, for that's what the word "servant" means, or else a slave to sin, which he will be if he doesn't keep his Faith in Christ and the Cross [E.S.B.]); whether of sin (the devil's way) unto death (bondage), or of obedience (God's way) unto righteousness (victory)?

ROMANS 14:23 . . . for whatsoever (anything that) is not of faith is sin (therefore a bondage and so a curse).

We can only be held captive by our enemy and his forces if we sin - for sin gives Satan, as the head of the Kingdom of Darkness, legal ground to enter a person's life and take them captive into bondage.

When the Israelites moved away from God's covenant by living contrary to the way God had instructed, they rejected God's protection, and allowed themselves to come into bondage. So too today if we do anything contrary to God's Word, we are rejecting God's full protection and giving the enemy legal ground to enter our lives.

Satan will use such legal ground to try to afflict Christians, if he can, with sickness, disease, fear, mental torment, unbelief, poverty, etc. In this way he takes them into bondage and renders them ineffective. Remember, however, that we can avoid giving Satan legal ground by walking in the light of God's Word and living according to His Covenant, i.e. living for Him.

“. . . We can only be held captive by our enemy and his forces if we sin - for sin gives Satan . . . legal ground to enter a person's life and take them captive into bondage. . .”

If we step outside the direction of God's Word in any area of our lives, God is unable to fully protect us until we will to return to Him and come under His covering again, through repentance and obedience. God will not go against our free will and cannot legally protect us if we choose not to obey Him and remain unrepentant.

2. ARE IGNORANT of God's Word

HOSEA 4:6 My people (Christians) are destroyed (in areas of their lives) for lack of knowledge (of God's truths in these areas) . . .

ISAIAH 5:13 Therefore My people are gone into (spiritual) captivity (bondage), because they have no knowledge (of God's truths in their hearts) . . .

Not knowing enough about their authority in Christ and the protection God's Word offers is a major way in which Christians give the enemy legal ground to attack them. This is one of the reasons God commands us to study His Word - so we can know our authority in Christ and take advantage of God's protection.

For instance, we can sin unknowingly and thus allow Satan to be our master in that area of sin, so removing ourselves from God's protection. In doing so, we give Satan the right to attack us through that area of wrong, and place us in bondage to that sin. So from a lack of knowledge, we will be robbing ourselves of God's full protection and blessing.

REPENTANCE

If we are in bondage of any kind, to allow God to set us free we need to call out to Jesus through repentance, truly repenting of all sin which has given the enemy access to our lives.

1 JOHN 1:9 *If we confess (and repent of) our sins, He (the Lord) is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (bondage - the results of sin).*

Repentance does not mean being sorry when we have been caught for doing something wrong. True repentance means having a heart attitude to turn away from the wrong (sin) we have in our lives, and then to live and act according to God's Word - His Divine standard which brings abundant life. After this God can empower us to live as He desires, if we believe for this empowerment in our lives.

If true repentance is to take place, we must purpose to act on that change of heart. These actions will then be fruits of repentance. To maintain our freedom in the area of repentance, we must continue to walk according to this change of heart - by His power, the power of the Divine Nature that we are now partakers of in Christ (2 Peter 1:4). This means that, as the Book of James tells us, we are to be "*doers of the Word and not hearers only.*"

JAMES 1:22 *But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. (In other words, do what it says or you will delude yourselves.)*

When we have been set free from the enemy's influence in any area of our lives, if we do not continue to do as the Lord has commanded, relying on His power within to do so, we run the risk of allowing the enemy to regain legal ground. The enemy will then be able to re-enter our lives through that area, and bring us back into bondage. The sin nature will also become enthroned again to give us power to sin as we choose to disobey God - by choosing to go against His Word and will.

“. . . True repentance means having a heart attitude to turn away from the wrong (sin) we have in our lives, and then to live and act according to God's Word - His Divine standard which brings abundant life. . .”

We must realize our enemy's intent for he is seeking to devour anyone he can. He is seeking to establish legal or illegal ground in people's lives so he can take them captive, and cause as much destruction and damage as he possibly can. Scripture tells us in this regard to:

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (mentally alert and aware), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary (enemy) the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking (people not in faith) whom he may devour

So in our faith-walk, we need to be careful that we do not give the enemy legal ground to take advantage of. This is not only for our own sakes but also for the sake of others - for as we live fully in our authority in Christ, people will see the liberty that is in the Gospel, and be drawn to the Lord. Indeed it is our personal witness as Christians that usually speaks louder than many words.

In addition to obeying the Lord's commands and giving the enemy no legal ground, as Christians we must know that all future sin must be put under the Blood of our Saviour. If we do not do

this, hell will grasp its opportunity, and the sin nature will continue to reign in that area of our lives, providing us with the power to commit sin.

Christians who remain unrepentant regarding certain sins in their life, continue, in a metaphorical sense, to be nailed to the cross of Christ, being unable to embrace the things of God that such sin keeps them from. Until the sinning Christian repents, he is one of the frozen chosen, unable to be used of God in many ways.

Christ was nailed to the cross so that our sins could also be nailed there and be left behind as we, positionally and conditionally, walk with Christ in “*newness of life*” (Romans 6:4). If we do not deal with our sin, we remain, in a sense, nailed to the Cross.

The bottom line is that unless we deal with sin in our lives, we cannot be denailed from the Cross. And if we are not denailed, then we are not free to walk experientially in “*newness of life*” (Resurrection power) in the areas that this sin has touched. The conditions by which we gain this Resurrection power are: the confession of all sin, the application of Christ’s Blood and the receiving of God’s grace. This initiates a journey whereby one moves on in Christ, and this includes ongoing sanctification that will never cease while we remain in this mortal body. Through this process, progressive transformation will cause us to develop from faith to faith - for it tells us in the Word of God that “*the just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38; Habakkuk 2:4). This sanctification begins with repentance and forgiveness, and ends with empowerment - which results in God-given faith!

“ . . . The bottom line is that unless we deal with sin in our lives, we cannot be denailed from the Cross. . . ”

HOW DO WE STAY WITHIN GOD'S PROTECTION ?

Background Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

To stay within God's protection and to have His guidance, we need to purpose to obey all His commands, believing, with proper focus, for His empowerment to live the saved life through the Divine Nature. Indeed the Bible says:

JOSHUA 1:8 This Book of the Law (God's Word) shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein (think about God's commands and promises: Philippians 4:8) day and night, that you may observe (be watchful) to do (act) according to all that is written therein: (and this is the remarkable promise) for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

PSALM 119:105 Your Word (Oh Lord) is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (to give true spiritual guidance and direction).

The difference between our enemy and the Israelites' enemy in this story is that the Israelites' enemy died. Our enemy cannot be killed. Satan can only be cut off by God's power as long as we continue to live within God's direction (commands), according to His prescribed order. Indeed there is protection in direction only if it is yielded to and acted upon.

It is interesting to realize however that although the physical enemy of the Israelites was destroyed and therefore removed from them forever, they were only delivered in an external sense. The Egyptian soldiers could no longer take them captive, for they lay dead on the bottom of the Red Sea. But for the next 40 years, God tried to deliver the people from the internal bondage of self-rule. They had allowed God to rule them in order to escape from Egypt, being in a desperate situation, especially at the Red Sea. But when the Lord tried to change their hearts and develop the trust in them which would be required to enter the Promised Land,

they balked. Instead of trusting the God Who had parted the Red Sea, they elected to self-rule, declaring that they wanted to be the god of their own lives. This bondage, springing from unbelief, manifested itself in the recurrent murmuring, grumbling and open rebellion demonstrated by the people, and became the reason why they died in the desert, never entering the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:7-19). While the external enemy was removed by God's power and the threat forever quashed, the internal bondage - self's desires and opinions - was much harder to remove.

The same is true for us today. The enemy can be dealt with, even though he cannot be taken out of the picture completely. But the bondage to self (my thoughts, my desires, my opinions, what I want), will keep us forever in the wilderness. While we as Christians have received the gift of salvation, only as we, by God's grace, deny all that self desires, all that the flesh demands, will we become free to enter the Promised Land of God's perfect will for our lives, and to walk in that will by the power of His grace. No amount of deliverance will bring us to this point, only yielding to God, then receiving the empowerment to walk accordingly.

“. . . Instead of trusting the God Who had parted the Red Sea, they elected to self-rule, declaring that they wanted to be the god of their own lives. . . ”

Our Heavenly Father loves us and wants to look after us. However He can only do so as we allow Him to, by yielding every aspect of our lives to Him and submitting to His Word of protection and provision. The enemy will try to deceive us and entice us to think and do wrong, but as we know from God's Word, he can only tell lies.

JOHN 8:44 . . . He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not (didn't remain) in the truth, because there is no truth in him (since his

*rebellion). **When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own** (his own native language): **for he is a liar, and the father of it** (father of lies, for lies originated with him).*

This shows the importance of knowing God's Word, both logos (written) and rhema (revealed), for His will is revealed through both. When a situation presents itself or a thought comes into our minds, we will then know how to deal with either, according to God's Word. Indeed "*there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1). The way to live in the victory God has provided is to reject anything not in line with His Word and anything not of God. We should then seek to live and act according to the directions of His Word, believing that God's grace is available, through the power of the Divine Nature, to give us the spiritual strength and desire we need to flow in His will. And if we don't know His will in any given area, we should seek the Lord and ask - with an open unbiased heart (Matthew 7:7-8)

EXERCISING OUR AUTHORITY

Once we have obeyed, in faith, God's teaching on water baptism, and then continue to purpose to live according to His Word, the enemy will be defeated in our lives on a personal experiential level. Then if we are continuing or at least goaling "to observe to do all," we can truly tell the devil, with all authority, to get out of our affairs in the Name of Jesus, and he has to obey. This includes, for instance, any meddling he may be involved in with regard to our finances, our work situation, our family affairs, and even our physical health. After we have done all the Lord has commanded, we then have every right to command Satan to depart, and he has to do so. Water baptism is part of the ALL of God's commandments. If we as Christians neglect this commandment, we will suffer the consequences.

As God's Word says:

JAMES 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God (His Word and His will). Resist the devil (in faith), and he will flee from you (in terror by God's power at work).

BECAUSE:

PHILIPPIANS 2:10 . . . at the Name of Jesus (when spoken in faith) every knee should (must) bow, of things in heaven (angels and departed Saints) and in things in (on) earth (earth's human occupants) and things under the earth (Satanic forces and hell's lost human occupants)

Being water-baptized with properly focused faith will give the new Christian a much greater or more solid platform from which to springboard into their new Christian life. In this way they will make a start which reinforces the wonderful truths of Calvary, and they will receive greater assurance of their position in Christ through knowing and re-enacting the truths that water baptism represents.

Many studying this will have already been water-baptized so they will need to obtain the faith required to retrospectively apply this faith to the truths that water baptism represents.

“ . . .If we are continuing or at least goaling “to observe to do all,” we can truly tell the devil, with all authority, to get out of our affairs in the Name of Jesus, and he has to obey. . .”

So in Christ, when our faith is properly focused, we have every right to speak to any form of bondage that the enemy may try to place upon us, and tell it to leave in Jesus' Name. Our ability to do this should be enhanced by the knowledge we have either gained or been refreshed in, through our obedience to the scriptures as they relate to water baptism. For example, if you are

experiencing symptoms of some kind of sickness, you first need to examine yourself and see if you have sinned, thus giving Satan legal ground to afflict you or hold you in bondage. If such be the case, you will need to repent according to 1 John 1:9, and then thank God for His cleansing and healing power.

Sometimes people who are sick may just have faulty genetics or a poor immune system. Nevertheless, God can heal such people. Some have done little or no exercise while others have eaten poorly, all of which has helped produce a physiological environment that has promoted a particular sickness or disease. Therefore a genetic predisposition (DNA) along with poor diet and a lack of exercise over many years can be identified as the reason why many people become sick. We also know, however, that the enemy adds his weight to this kind of situation, for he seeks to promote sickness and disease by which man is afflicted and destroyed. Christ has paid for our healing and desires us to be whole in every area - but we must look after the temple that houses our spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Now we need to know that not every sickness comes from Satan. For example, if you did not eat for many weeks, you would become ill through your own doing. Therefore even though we are told as Christians that God will heal us because Christ has paid the price for our healing, if we are abusing our bodies (as we have already indicated) through overeating, poor diet, lack of exercise or excess work etc., then we will be sinning in that area of abuse. Therefore healing may not come so readily. Commonsense should help steer us in these matters so that we eat correctly, do some form of exercise and have proper rest, which is to take appropriate care of the body God has given us.

Satan may try to attack us by placing sickness or bondage upon us, even if we have not given him any legal ground to do so. In this case, when we have also purposed to do right in the natural, we need to take authority over that sickness or bondage by commanding Satan, or the symptoms, to depart from our life in Jesus' Name. We could say, "Lord, I command Satan to depart from my life and I rebuke all symptoms of this sickness that has come from the Kingdom of Darkness, in Jesus' Name." Then if

we have spoken this in faith and are walking in obedience to God, His power will block Satan from affecting us in that area - as we continue in faith, having dealt with any spiritual blockages, and having done the right things physically, e.g. as pertaining to diet and exercise.

“. . . We could say, “Lord, I command Satan to depart from my life and I rebuke all symptoms of this sickness that has come from the Kingdom of Darkness, in Jesus’ Name. . .”

Even after having done all to clear every known blockage, and to right the areas of self-abuse, the symptoms of the sickness may not disappear immediately. We should not allow this to sway us. We need to hold fast to our liberation by faith, and confess that by Jesus’ stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5). We overcome everything not of God by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). As we hold fast to our confession of faith, we allow God’s power to flow into our area of need. The symptoms will then subside and our liberation will become a physical reality - as we continue, by the power of the Divine Nature, to live righteously, and also to do right in regard to our body.

However, note this warning: If you are sick and realize you cannot yet enter (for whatever reason) into a position whereby God can heal you, then you need to see a doctor. You can then view this experience as a sign which shows you that you need to study and grow more in God’s Word. Alternatively you may need to allow the Lord to reveal to you that which is blocking you from receiving. Even if you have abused your body with food (too much or too little), or with drugs or alcohol, God can heal it if you repent of this abuse. In some countries where there is not enough food available, it is obviously not people’s fault and they are

therefore, in a spiritual sense, not accountable. In this situation, God has greater legal ground to heal people.

Conclusion

We need to understand that it is for the Christian's own good to be water-baptized, for God's commandments are just, right and holy, and given so that we may prosper and grow in Him. And obeying God's Word has real rewards, for water baptism is not just a symbolic action. It can be an effective spiritual weapon like a gun barrel that delivers the bullet which is fired toward the target. Water baptism is that gun barrel and the bullet fired through it is our faith focused on the finished work of Christ, us in Him in His death, and being raised with Him in His Resurrection in newness of life. The bullet when fired then blasts away the devil's inroads into our life, and evicts him as an illegal squatter. All this can bring benefit to us, not only of a spiritual nature but a physical nature as well.

***“...Water baptism is that gun barrel and
the bullet fired through it is our faith
focused on the finished work of Christ. . .
when fired then blasts away the devil's
inroads into our life. . .”***

Picture this in your mind: the Red Sea opens as you go into the water. Then when you come up out of the water you are on the other side of the sea, safe on dry land. The spiritual sea closes in behind you and the enemy is cut off from affecting you any further.

The devil's interference is thus halted in your life, as long as you continue to fulfill the conditions of God's Word. Satan and his forces cannot pass through the water (which can spiritually represent Jesus' Blood) as you appropriate all things in Christ by faith, according to the truths of God's Word. The consequences of your past life of sin are left behind through the power of God's

Word. This is achieved by faith coupled with action. Water baptism represents the victory won at the Cross of Calvary by Christ. We thus die in Christ and God raises us up to be born again in newness of life, being partakers of God's Divine Nature. Through the energies and graces of this Nature we may order our life, defeat sin and keep the sin nature dethroned (Romans 6:3-4).

There are many problems and bondages which trouble people today because they have neither heard, nor acted on, these truths in God's Word.

Some people may have been water-baptized many years ago without really knowing what happened at salvation. Even today they may remain ignorant of God's Word in this area and without knowing their legal ground, have not asked or believed for the Lord to cleanse them of all unrighteousness. They have not then used the action of water baptism as a springboard from which to exercise their faith concerning their position and authority in Christ. If you are in this position, you can, after studying this teaching, ask the Lord (on the basis that the old man is dead as your water baptism represented, and you are a new creature in Christ with the rights of a joint heir with Him) to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. As we have said, however, when a person has been a Christian for some time, greater faith is needed to obtain deliverance by looking back at one's baptism and claiming that which it represented. Sometimes people are re-baptized to give another tangible platform from which to claim experientially what was provided legally at salvation i.e. deliverance from all unrighteousness. This is, of course, an individual decision.

Note: We do not advocate water baptism as being the only means by which these freedoms may be achieved, but it certainly provides God-given leverage, at the beginning of our Christian walk, to remove the enemy's inroads into our lives. It may be the grace which comes from obedience that helps one focus properly on the Cross, so that the Believer is simply open to the power of God to deliver them. Whatever it is that causes a Believer to be delivered at a conditional level, we know it is the grace of God at work - but we must allow it into our lives. God will respond to humility - to those who would allow Him to humble them through

first being yielded to His direction. Indeed He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, and is no respecter of persons. In other words God does not change and treats us all as equals with no favourites.

God's Word of truth tells us we can only be set free from all the bondages of the enemy when we meet all the conditions of His Word - when we goal to "observe to do all" through the power of the Divine Nature within. And being baptized in water with proper focus is ONE of the conditions which can help set us free at the beginning of our new life in Christ.

Note: In fact, the greatest deliverance can come when our mind is first renewed in the truths of Calvary, then washed in further areas through renewal. As we understand truth and act on it in our personal lives, deliverance will take place. This is because the sin which gave legal ground is removed, and by God's power, the bondage subsequently departs. Indeed this is the only way that bondages relating to mind / emotional problems, e.g. pride, fear, jealousy, hatred, depression, can be released to produce long term freedom. This is God's prescribed order of victory - whereby we can have "*the mind of Christ*" in that area (1 Corinthians 2:16). If people continue in these sins, the legal ground remains, and no amount of prayer for deliverance will produce permanent results. Renewing one's mind, then acting on that renewal in faith, through the empowerment of the Spirit, is the only answer. All is based, of course, on the Cross and Christ's finished work. It necessarily involves us yielding to the Holy Spirit and receiving empowerment through the Divine Nature which energizes our human nature to both desire and do God's will, without questioning or wavering. Obeying all that God has commanded is required to reach this level of blessing and freedom.

“. . .In fact, the greatest deliverance can come when our mind is first renewed in the truths of Calvary. . .”

Being baptized according to God's Word can help us be "cleansed," "delivered," and "protected" from all evil, at a conditional level, as we continue to observe to do all! Again we are not saying it is the physical action of water baptism that saves or sets free. Rather it is willingly obeying God's command to be water-baptized, along with a faith-focus on what it represents - namely Calvary and us in Christ.

This is GOOD NEWS. Amen! It is called the Gospel of Jesus Christ - "*the power of God unto salvation*" of body, soul and spirit.

ROMANS 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation (of spirit, soul and body) to every one who believes . . .

So in summary water baptism is:

1. A symbolic action which can help us focus our faith on (or even accept) the spiritual realities which were set in place at the Cross of Calvary, and flow on to us from the moment of our regeneration.

2. A means by which God's grace may work to give us a greater awareness, and again acceptance, of these realities and hence a greater trust in God's promises for us. It therefore becomes a springboard from which we can exercise our faith in regard to any needed deliverance. In this way, it functions as **a platform from which, with proper spiritual focus, we can be completely delivered** from all remaining bondages which may affect us.

3. A means by which we make a public declaration of our repentance from sin, our identification with Jesus our Lord and our commitment to God.

So immerse yourself totally in God's Word of deliverance and live within His Divine protection and blessings by willingly obeying, in faith, God's Word of truth. Believe for the power of

the Divine Nature to take you out of the bondage of Egypt and the wilderness of self, and into the promised land of His Divine will. Remember that you cannot take this journey unless you yield to the Lord daily, laying down fleshly dictates and self's ambitions.

Remember Jesus said:

JOHN 8:32 . . . you shall know the truth, and the truth (as you act upon it) shall make you free.

One reason God has offered this form of deliverance, through the knowledge in our hearts of the truth that sets us free, is because of the complexities that exist within each individual. And as we have said, people are often unaware of the ways in which Satan actually has them bound. Thus water baptism can function as an easy and effective springboard to deliverance. To stay delivered, however, we must walk in the light of God's Word. In other words, we need to keep our lives clean and remain mindful of what our water baptism represented - death to the past so we can have life and have it abundantly in Christ. We need to continue to maintain our faith in what it represents. To help us do this effectively, it is a good idea to review, from time to time, the teaching on water baptism. By doing so you will be able to keep your mind refreshed with the principles you have learned and acted upon, and so keep your faith appropriately focused - namely on the finished work of Christ and your commitment to Him as Lord.

TODAY you can know the truth which is needed to set the captives free if you open your heart and receive Jesus as Lord of your whole life, not just of certain areas.

Remember: While water baptism is not essential to our salvation, it is essential to our obedience in Christ - for baptism is a command, not a choice.

In finishing this teaching, remember that water baptism is like a wedding ceremony in which you confess again your commitment to Christ through vows made in public. You made

this commitment by faith at salvation, but by God's grace, water baptism becomes the formal and outward expression of your marriage to Christ. It is really a declaration of that which has already taken place. Soon we will complete our wedding ceremony when we come around the Lord in heaven to enjoy "*the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.*"

REVELATION 19:9 And he said unto me, "Write, Blessed are they who are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." And he said unto me, "These are the true sayings of God."

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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NOTES

- 1 Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Studies In The Vocabulary Of The Greek New Testament, pg. 72.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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