

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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BAPTISM, A RESPONSE OF FAITH

by Owen D. Olbricht

Only a casual reading of the New Testament should cause the reader to see that baptism is an important Bible subject. Jesus was the one who sent the apostles into all the world to preach the gospel and baptize people (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16), which makes baptism from God, not from men. It is mentioned more times than repentance and confession of sins, which two requirements are urgently preached by many preachers who neglect speaking about the necessity of baptism for the forgiveness of sins as preached by Peter (Acts 2:38).

Baptism is not to be considered devoid of faith but as a response of faith. The **Jerusalem Bible**, translated by Catholic scholars, in a footnote on Romans 6:4 stated,

Baptism is not contrasted with faith but goes with it, Gal. 3:26seq.; Eph. 4:5; Heb. 10:22, cf. Acts 12seq., 37; 16:31-33; 18:8; 19:2-5, and gives it outward expression by the operative symbolism of the baptismal ceremonial. [Baptism does give an outward expression of one's faith, but it is not clear in the quote precisely what is meant by the "operative symbolism of the baptismal ceremonial." - Editor] For this reason Paul ascribes to faith and to baptism the same effect (Rom. 6:3-9 and Gal. 2:16-20). The sinner is immersed in water (the etymological mean of 'baptize' is 'dip') and thus 'buried with Christ, Col. 2:12, with whom also the Christian emerges to resurrection, Rom. 8:11g. as a 'new creature', 2 Col. 5:17b, a 'new person' Eph. 2:15n, a member of the one

Body animated by the one Spirit, 1 Col. 12:13; Eph. 4:4seq.

The requirements of those being baptized include hearing the gospel (Mark 16:15,16), faith in Jesus in His redemptive act as Lord and Messiah (Acts 8: 36,37), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession (Rom. 10:10), and seeking forgiveness of sins, to be washed away by the blood of Jesus (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). Baptism is to be administered by a burial and resurrection in water of the one seeking to right a wrong relationship with God (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Through baptism a new life is to begin (Rom. 6:4) and an entrance into the body of Christ, His church, is to be expected (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22,23).

Obedience from the heart in baptism brings about at least four different changes: (1) **condition**, from being lost to being saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), from being dirty with sin to being washed (Acts 22:16), and from being guilty of sin to being forgiven (Acts 2:38; Col. 2:12,13); (2) **location**, from being out of Christ to being in Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), being outside the body, the church, to being in the body (1 Cor. 12:13), and from being outside the kingdom to being in the kingdom (John 3:5; Col. 1:13,14); (3) **servitude**, from being a servant of sin to being free from the servitude to sin (Rom. 6:17,18, this is in conjunction with Romans 6:3,4); and (4) **relationship**, from being a child of the evil one to being a child of God (Gal. 3:26,27).

Some of the restoration leaders came to some of these conclusions in their teaching, but did not always consistently apply

them. Even we today, like some of them, might wish to accept everyone who has been immersed as forgiven, regardless of their understanding at the time of their baptism. Such an attitude is hard to justify from clear statements of the New Testament writers that baptism is for the purpose of cleansing from sins those who are convinced they should follow Jesus as their Lord.

Even though in practice Alexander Campbell accepted those who did not consider they were being forgiven when they were being baptized, he wrote in *Christian Baptism: With Its Antecedents and Consequents*, p. 202:

Evident, then it is, that there is no specific design on account of which any one can constitutionally be baptized, except it be for the remission of sins previously committed.

Besides this statement he made others which indicate that he had concluded that baptism was to be received by the believer for the purpose of being forgiven.

Some of the most prejudiced and unfounded statements concerning baptism are found in the study Bibles. The notes in them explaining the text would lead the reader to conclude that the Bible does not say what it means and does not mean what it says. A careful examination of these explanations will help the astute reader to conclude that these notes are misleading and erroneous.

Those who would like a fuller discussion of baptism are encouraged to read the new book, **Baptism: A Response of Faith** (Delight, AR: Gospel Light, 2000) written by the author of this article. The published price is \$8.00, but can be purchased as a special introduction offer from the

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P.O. Box 251
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

TED J. CLARKE EDITOR
Phone (870) 625-3217
Fax (870) 625-3137
E-Mail tedjc@centurytel.net

Website

www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
Joseph Chase - Webmaster
E-mail: chasejoseph@yahoo.com

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author in response to this article for \$6.00 postage paid. Owen D. Olbricht, 305 W. Maryland Ave., Sherwood, AR 72120.

[Editor's Note: We gladly recommend brother Olbricht' new book, *Baptism: A Response to Faith*. This is an excellent companion to his previous work on baptism (*Baptism: New Birth or Empty Ritual*) and deals with a number of issues which includes a discussion of restoration leaders and baptism and a chapter exposing the erroneous comments on baptism in many of the present day study Bibles which are so popular. This is an excellent personal study book, or a book to give to a friend who is struggling with understanding the place of baptism in God's plan of salvation. Although the author uses the New American Standard Bible for his Scripture quotations, I did not find any place where doing so compromised the truth of the biblical teaching on baptism. You can check and read all the references he gives from your own King James or American Standard Versions. His special offer of \$6.00, which includes postage, is a true bargain you don't want to miss.]

IS MY FAITH WORKING?

by Joe W. Nichols

There were times while the apostles were in training under Jesus' supervision that their faith weakened or ceased to work at all. Peter's faith weakened as he walked on the water and he began to sink (Matt. 14:29-31). The twelve while in a boat on Galilee were fearful of the tempest; they awakened Jesus from His sleep, who said unto them, "**Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?**" He then stilled the storm (Matt. 8:23-26). After Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, He "**unbraided them (the eleven) with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen Him after He was risen**" (Mk. 16:14).

It appears also that John the Baptist's faith weakened some. He had witness borne to him at Jesus' baptism that Jesus was Christ (Matt. 3:13-17). Yet, later while in prison, he sent messengers to Jesus inquiring, "**Art thou He that cometh, or look we for another?**" (Matt. 11:2,3).

A faith that is weak or not working at all can be detrimental to one getting to heaven. The Bible says, "**And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him**" (Heb. 11:6). Our faith is manifested in action in respect to what we believe. James says, "**I by my works will show thee my faith**" (James. 2:18b).

Our faith is manifested in the following actions:

1. Entering baptism and trusting that the immersion will put us into Christ and into His death and that God takes notice and remits our sins (Rom. 6: 3,4).
2. Walking in the light with confidence that the blood of Christ continually cleanses us of our sins (1 John 1:7-10).
3. Seeking the kingdom first while believing that God will see to our basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter (Matt. 6: 33).
4. Assembling with the saints of God for edification and to worship (Heb. 10:25).
5. Praying confidently to God the Father with the expectation of receiving that which is within the will of God (1 John 5:14,15).
6. Passing through this life as sojourners and pilgrims desiring "**a better country, that is heavenly,**" (Heb. 11:16). Therefore, "**God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city**" (Heb. 11:16b).

One thing for certain, brethren, as witnessed in both the Old and New Testaments; when our faith weakens, we lose; when our faith

works, we gain. **God blesses a faith that works!** How many of us fail to receive blessings from God simply because we will not exercise our faith? Our faith carries us to God who is waiting to bless. Perhaps, from time to time, we should all ask ourselves the question, **Is My Faith Working?**

P.O. Box 853
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LET'S STUDY THE BIBLE

The church of Christ in your area has a number of **free** Bible Study services to offer you. If you have a desire to study the Scriptures to come to an understanding of God's will for you, or to make certain that you know what to do to be saved and remain saved, we will be delighted to sit down with you in your own home and study the Bible with you. If you would like to study through a Bible Correspondence Course, we will gladly lead you through such a course by mail. If you desire a Bible tract on a particular subject, we will do our best to locate material on the subject you request and get that to you. If you have any questions about any of the articles that appear in **Fulton County Gospel News** or any other Bible topic, we will do our best to give you an answer from the Bible. Of course, there are no charges for any of these services offered by churches of Christ.

Our street address and Post Office box number, phone numbers, fax number, and e-mail address can be found in the box on page two of each issue of **FCGN**. If you need help locating a faithful church of Christ in your area, let us know and we will assist you in making contact with them. Contact us or the church of Christ in your area if we can help you in any of the ways above. If you call or write, be sure to give complete information as to your name, address, telephone number, and your request for information materials. - Mammoth Spring Church of Christ

When Joe Wright, a minister in Kansas, was asked to open the 1996 session of the Kansas legislature with a prayer, everyone was expecting the usual toned-down, bland generalities. But this is what they heard:

Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that is exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that.

We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it Pluralism;

We have worshiped other gods and called it multi-culturalism;

We have endorsed perversion and called it alternative lifestyle;

We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery;

We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare;

We have killed our unborn and called it choice;

We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable;

We have neglected to discipline our own children and called it building self-esteem;

We have abused power and called it politics;

We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition;

We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression;

We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.

Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of Your will. We ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Editor's Note: Mr. Wright received some severe criticism from some for the content of his prayer, and he will likely never again be

asked to offer such a prayer in his state's legislature. However, he spoke great words of truth and wisdom. May God open the eyes of politicians everywhere to reverse the trend to call evil good.]

Contributed by Ralph Sanders
New Palestine, IN

(Continued from page 4.)

and regular mail version, then we want you to keep getting the paper just as you have in the past.

You must be certain to advise us of any address changes at your regular mailing address or the post office will not deliver your copy of **FCGN**. Once we are notified that they will not forward your paper to you, we have no choice but to drop you from our mailing list. Also, the post office now charges us \$.60 each time they give us a change of address for you. In a further move to be good stewards and to save unnecessary costs, we will delete your name unless **you**, not the post office, notify us of your address change. Since you receive the paper free of charge, surely it is not asking too much for you to be responsible to notify us of your address changes. That too is a big help to keep down our costs! With the thousands of names on our mailing list, mistakes sometimes happen. We can lose a name or change of address and sometimes computer software problems cause malfunctions. If you send us an address change and it doesn't get changed, then something unusual has happened. Kindly let us know and we will work hard to correct the problem. If you do not wish to receive the paper, simply let us know and we will delete your name. You would not believe some of the harsh messages we sometimes get because we missed an address change or from some who do not want to receive the paper. Remember Matthew 7:12.

We truly thank you all for your understanding and cooperation to help us keep **FCGN** going into all the world to preach of Christ and His church.

Ted J. Clarke, Editor

AN APPEAL TO ALL READERS OF FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

Dear Brethren and Friends: As we have stated numerous times, we want everyone who desires to receive **FCGN** to be able to have it on a regular basis to enhance their growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We have had such a fantastic growth over the past few years that we have reached a need to cut our costs. We can do this and still enable all who want the paper to receive it for free.

About two years ago the elders asked me to try to hold our copies published for each issue at 10,000. Over the past two years we have slowly gone past that to about 11,500 copies printed each month. This has increased our printing costs, plus mailing costs jumped significantly in January of 1999 and again this January. I just cannot say, "No," when someone writes and requests an individual subscription or a bundle of **FCGN**. Many increases have come from foreign nations and these readers are some of the most thankful and the poorest in financial ability. They have little or no means of receiving good sound literature without cost, so it means a lot to them to receive **FCGN**. Obviously, it costs significantly more to mail to our foreign readers and that puts us in a cost squeeze.

We want to say a huge **THANK YOU** to a tremendously loyal and great group of churches and individual Christians who provide needed support for this good work. However, the voluntary donations we receive have not kept pace with our costs and increase in subscribers to this free publication. Accordingly, we need to do something to keep this great work going. A large number of you can help without it costing you anything. Here's how.

Brother Joseph Chase of Pittsburgh, Texas has come as a blessing from the Lord to help us deal with these problems. Brother Chase has set up a web site for **FCGN** that enables you to receive the paper in an electronic form,

which still costs you nothing. What is more exciting is that it costs us nothing (or very little) to make it available to you over the internet. In an effort to reduce some of the costs we are experiencing, we are asking that all of our readers who also have computer internet or e-mail service to consider the following. One, notify us that you will be glad to receive your copy of the paper by way of the internet. That will save us the cost of printing and mailing a copy to you. If you want a printed version of the paper, you can then print it out on your personal printer. Two, send us an e-mail or a postcard and let us know: (1) your present name and mailing address on your **FCGN** label [we need both your name and mailing address to locate your name in our mailing list of several thousand, for we have hundreds who share the same name]; (2) your e-mail or web address where you want to receive the electronic version of **FCGN** each month; (3) whether you can receive the **HTML** version (with graphics and various sized print), or if you wish to receive the **plain text** version (much like a standard e-mail). Brother Chase had graciously agreed to handle the electronic mailing list and send you the paper each month to your e-mail address or web site. Three, **be certain to tell us if you agree to receive the electronic FCGN**. Otherwise, we will still be spending the money for printing and mailing you a copy. If you can help us to cut our expenses in this way, please let us know as soon as possible. **FCGN** is free to all who desire to receive it and you can help us to keep that as a continuing reality. You may contact Joseph Chase, who is our webmaster, at:

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

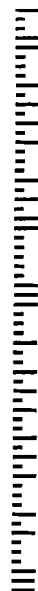
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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