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## WATER SALVATION

By Harold Turner

Recently a friend told me about listening to a conversation between a denominational preacher and another person. The preacher stated that the churches of Christ believed in "Water Salvation." This is an accusation that we hear frequently. It seems to be one of the more popular deceptive "smoke screens" used by denominational preachers to prejudice both their members and others against the church of Christ. The accusation is not made in honesty, because there is no proof for such a statement.

I am not in a position to speak for all of the churches of Christ, because the churches of Christ are not denominational in structure or design. There is no set of by-laws, which bind all congregations into the denominational structure. Each local congregation is ruled only by the Bible and the eldership within the local group (Acts 14:23, 20:28, 1 Tim. 5:17). Because of this no person can speak as an authority for the churches of Christ. However, I can speak from several years experience as a minister in the church. I have been associated with several congregations through the past years. I have known and discussed the Bible with several gospel preachers. I have read the teachings of many others. And never have I known of one elder, preacher, or teacher, who believed in, or taught "Water Salvation."

But, doesn't the churches of Christ teach that baptism in water is essential for salvation? Doesn't the churches of Christ teach that when one is baptized in water his sins are washed away? As stated above, I cannot speak as an authority for all, but speaking only for myself as a member and minister in the church of Christ; I believe that the Bible teaches that baptism in water is essential for salvation, and that in baptism one's sins are washed away. Yet I do not believe in "Water Salvation."

Salvation is in Christ, and only the blood of Christ can wash away our sins. These two facts are clearly supported by the Bible. Acts 4:12 states very clearly that there is no salvation outside Christ. Rev. 1:5 states that Christ, "Washed us from our sins in his own blood." The blood of Christ is essential for our purging (Heb. 9:14), redemption (Eph.

1:7), forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), justification (Rom. 5:9), sanctification (Heb. 13:12), and for our cleansing from sins (1 John 1:7). These show plainly that only the blood of Christ can remove our sins, and that salvation depends upon our being in Christ.

How then do we reconcile the two statements; (1) That salvation is possible only by the blood of Christ, and (2) that baptism in water is essential for salvation?

First, we have stated that salvation is only in Christ. By understanding how we get into Christ we can better understand how these two statements are reconciled. The Bible states four things essential in bringing one UNTO Christ, and one thing that puts us INTO Christ. The gospel is the power of God UNTO salvation (Rom. 1:16). Belief is UNTO righteousness (Rom. 10:10). The confession of our faith is UNTO salvation (Rom. 10:10) and repentance is UNTO life (Acts 11:18). Only after these conditions have been met are we ready to enter INTO Christ. There are two Scriptures which show us clearly the step we take that puts us into Christ. Rom. 6:3 states, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized INTO Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Gal. 3:27 states, "For as many of you as have been baptized INTO Christ have put on Christ." Now, since we are baptized INTO Christ, and since salvation is only in Christ, we conclude that baptism is essential for our salvation.

But, how do we reconcile baptism with the blood of Christ? In Rom. 6:3 we learn that we are baptized INTO the death of Christ. What does this mean? Why is baptism into his death significant? What happened in his death? From John 19:33-34 we learn that when the soldiers found Jesus dead, one of them pierced his side, and "Forthwith came there out blood and water." His blood was shed in his death. We are baptized into his death. Hence, in baptism we come in contact with the blood, in a spiritual sense, and the blood washes away our sins.

In Rev. 1:5 we read that Christ "Washed us from our sins in his own blood." But when and where does this take place? In Acts 22:16 Saul was admonished, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash

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## The Ordinary Things

By Oran Rhodes

Many studies have been made concerning the use of figurative language in the Bible, but most of these are of little value to the average Bible student. On the other hand, when one observes the way inspired writers have used ordinary things to describe more difficult concepts, he would do well to take notice to these. In the Epistle of James, the writer frequently uses the ordinary scenes of nature to illustrate the meaning of spiritual teachings.

To explain how someone of uncertain faith reacts under the pressures of decisions, James says, "... For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." (James 1:6). From this picture we are able to see how an unstable person can be driven in uncertain and in different directions when the pressures are applied to him.

In a similar way, when the question of faith and works is discussed, James recorded this analogy from nature; "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26). There is little question but that people could understand that a physical body became physically dead when the spirit departed from it, and little misunderstanding should come about when one is shown the inspired comparison of faith to the body and works to the spirit. The conclusion would seem obviously clear unless seen through glasses of preconception.

Several figures are used in the third chapter of James in discussing the tongue. For example, in James 3:4-5 James said, "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, withersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." What a wonderful and simple description of the way our tongue controls our eventual actions.

In James 4:14 a figure is used to illustrate the brevity and uncertainty of life: "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Another figure that James uses to explain the kind of patience brethren

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EDITORS: Erwin Cowen  
and Harrold Turner.

# What Must the Church Do to Be Saved?

By Ordell Heavin

It is true that the divine part of the church shall never fail, and that the message of the church is impregnable (1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Pet. 1:25, Dan. 2:44). However, from the human standpoint, only eternal vigilance and unfaltering loyalty can prevent a major falling away from the "Rock of Ages". May I suggest seven points for deep consideration on the solemn theme: What must the church do to be saved?

1. DEVELOP ELDERS WHO CAN CONVICT THE GAINSAYER (1 Tim. 3:1-7)

This is, of course, required of spiritual overseers (Titus 1:10). If the shepherds of the flock are to fend off wolves they must meet the qualification of being "Apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2, Acts 20:28-30). Therefore we must place the premium on spiritual growth rather than popularity when we select the elders, who are to oversee God's flock.

2. TRAIN YOUNG MEN TO BOLDLY PREACH THE GOSPEL.

We must give the best we have to the Lord's service. Too much man-power is being sacrificed on the altar of secular pride and materialistic enterprise. The congregations are failing in their responsibility to perpetuate the gospel through succeeding generations. Elders, preachers, parents, and Bible teachers must begin now to inspire, instruct, and instill within young men the urgency of preaching the Word.

3. PRACTICE CHURCH DISCIPLINE CONSTANTLY AND CONSISTENTLY.

In order to preserve truth and strengthen the children of God, there must be, as the Bible directs, discipline within the body of Christ. When Bishops of the local church allow the name of the Lord to be degraded and scoffed at by worldly, insincere members it sets the church back for years. Required reading on this subject is Hebrews 12.

4. DEMAND A MUCH HIGHER MORAL TONE.

Corinth of the first century and America today would in many ways make almost identical twins. The appalling decline of moral fiber in our nation, and around the world plays right into the devil's hand. Sadly, we are not teaching and preaching and practicing the high standards we once did. Immodesty and adultery can be found in our midst as well as out in the world. Let's stop compromising with the devil and start living for Jesus.

5. DO MORE TEACHING ON CHURCH IDENTITY.

A generation ago gospel meetings were conducted to introduce our neighbors to

New Testament principles of worship, doctrine, and organization. Exceedingly clear denunciation of false doctrine could be heard from most every pulpit. Today in so many places it is different. Some of our own children seldom, if ever, hear lessons on instrumental music, the Lord's Supper, church membership, and how Christians should live daily. Just a few more years of failure to "Preach the word", and we will preach ourselves right out of the picture. It takes sound doctrine to be the church of our Lord. (Titus 2:1).

6. PREACH THE WORD AND NOT EMOTIONALISM.

The one commodity we have to offer the world is the pure message of the Lord. Nearly any actor in Hollywood can jerk more tears than we can and most lawyers are sharper in swaying audiences. But the one precious ingredient we have, by God's trust in us, is the gospel of His grace (Acts 20:24). When we resort to playing on people's emotions and become "Response crazy" we walk the road of insincerity and sectarianism. What is more powerful than the gospel? (Rom. 1:16.) The word is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

7. ABOVE ALL BE CHRIST-CENTERED.

This is the truth of all that we could ever say regarding keeping the church safe and secure in the Lord's bosom. A step away from Christ is a step into darkness (John 8:12). Walking with Him in love and truth sheds constant light upon our pathway of life (Col. 1:10). When the church is centered upon the Lord, there is no room for indifference or worldliness. When Christ is the point of focus we will proclaim His message, follow His example, and obey His commands. Nothing short of that will save your soul. WHAT IS YOUR DECISION?

Friend of mine, I appeal to you to search the New Testament. Learn of Christ and His church; obey His will, and live faithful to Him all the days of your life. You can become a member of His body by; believing in Christ as the Son of God, turning from your sins, confessing the name of Christ, and being immersed in water for the remission of sins. The Lord will then add you to His church (Acts 2:47), and you will be able to assist His cause as you go through life. You will be a part of that immovable kingdom, and your name will be enrolled in Heaven (Heb. 12:23-28). In Matt. 16:18 Jesus promised to build His church. Won't you hasten to be a member of that divine and glorious kingdom?

**THE ORDINARY THINGS (cont.)**

need, is one that can be easily understood by anyone with a knowledge of the soil and planting. In James 5:7 we are told, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

These are not all of the figures used, but these do show that throughout the letter, this type of explanation is given. This is certainly not unique to James. We can see figures used in almost every book in the New Testament to clarify certain lessons. Actually this usage of figures is a mere extension of the teaching methods of Jesus Christ. Jesus used figures and parables upon many occasions in order to give meaning to His spiritual concepts.

We need to learn from God's word that we, too, should use simple understandable terminology to explain things that are more difficult. Too many preachers and teachers today are using the theological rhetoric and verbiage of the world to explain the simple things. This often makes it seem difficult or completely unintelligible to some. If there is one thing the lesson should show it is that inspired writers speak in a way that can be easily understood when giving explanation. The same should be true with us today.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Prov. 20:1.

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." Prov. 18:8.

# Salvation By Grace

By Coy Walters

What does the word grace mean? The word always has the idea of favor; "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52). When the word is used to indicate God's favor to man it also includes the idea of "Unmerited favor." This is due to the fact that God didn't have to provide a plan for man's salvation. He was not obligated to do so. This is the reason that Paul could say, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8).

But why did God grant grace to men? It was because of His magnificent love; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). "But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). It was through Christ that God could show his grace; "For if by the trespass of the one many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." (Rom. 5:15).

Man must have God's grace in order to be saved, because sin had entered the world, which had been provided for him; "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." (Rom. 5:12). "For all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23). In the great chapter on God's saving grace, Paul described man without God's grace as being, "Dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest . . . that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:1-3, 12).

It is the grace of God which delivers man from this state of sin. God's grace provides salvation. The price has been paid. "But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9). But it is also God's grace that gives us His word that we might know about His grace. "And now I commend you to God, and to the

word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified." (Acts 20:32).

In Acts 15:11, Peter understands that salvation is by grace; "But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus." But it was his faith which caused this understanding. Notice the fact, that they "Believed" in the grace of God. Peter's faith was evident from the life he lived. He had preached before multitudes, been persecuted, and had healed the sick and raised the dead. This example of Peter helps us to understand Paul's statement, "For by grace have ye been saved through faith."

It seems clear from the "Word of his grace" that God's grace demands a life of labor or an obedient faith from each person. Paul could say, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10). Paul gives the credit of his salvation where it belongs, to the grace of God. Paul's salvation is not in labor or works, but his labor is proof of his faith in salvation by grace. In Titus 2:11-12 Paul writes, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world."

But some ask, "What does Paul mean in Eph. 2:9, where he tells us that salvation is not by works lest any man should boast?" This is better understood when one looks at the next verse, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Salvation is not of works, yet we are created for good works. What does Paul mean? The answer is that works alone cannot save us, but grace through faith (obedience to the word of his grace) will. The conditions of salvation, such as, Mark 16:16, and 2 Peter 1:5-11, do not make void God's grace because there is no room for boasting when one does that which God's grace instructs him to do. (Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 2:11-12).

Let us emphasize that by the grace of God, provisions for salvation have been made. By an obedient faith, on man's part, God can appropriate these divine blessings. Men are saved by grace, but not by grace only. Let each of us do as Paul and Peter, and put more faith in the power of God's grace. Then maybe we can come closer to accomplishing for the Lord's Kingdom, as much as they did.

# SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT GOD No.3

By Leslie Leonard

God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9).

Instead of accepting this as true, men often try to measure God by their own fleshly standards. There is a tendency for man to think that God should think and feel as men do. The result is that they have made their God a god of their own creation, who thinks and acts the way they want him to think and act. Hence, their God is only a mental idol, which they have created in their own minds, and which is often completely different from the God of the Scriptures. But, Jehovah, the God of the Scriptures, does not seek to fit our little patterns. He insists that He is God, and demands that we fit His pattern.

One of the areas where man often errs is in assuming that anything that is pleasing to men ought to be pleasing to God. If a thing satisfies man's senses of beauty or desire, then he assumes that it must also satisfy God. But men often overlook the fact that things which may satisfy us in many ways may not satisfy God. The thing that pleases God is our believing, trusting, and obeying Him, rather than trying to satisfy ourselves.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, the first priests of the Mosaic Age, are a good example of men trying to please themselves rather than God, and of the consequences for such acts.

In Lev. 10:1-2 we are told, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

Obviously they had been instructed to make the offering, and how to do it. It is believed that they were to take the fire from the great altar, which the Lord had kindled, and for some reason they took fire from another source. It is not clear what really did happen, but whatever the case, it made the fire "strange fire", rather than the fire that they were to use. For some reason, these priests obviously must have thought that it was of little importance, but the lesson shows that God considered it otherwise. They didn't follow God's instructions, and as a result

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**SOME BASIC FACTS (cont.)**

they were stricken dead.

God's statement to Aaron gives us more insight into the situation. "Then Moses said unto Aaron, that is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified . . ." (Lev. 10:3). Obviously their action showed a lack of respect for God.

This tendency to depend upon our own understanding still exists. Those who worship, or attempt to worship, often assume that the form is of little importance. They overlook the fact that God has revealed to us how He is to be worshiped. For us to disregard His revelation, and to do whatever we feel is right, is to make the same mistake that Nadab and Abihu did.

God's striking them dead emphasized his displeasure with their action. He may not strike us dead when we attempt to worship him some other way than He has designated, but our worship will not be accepted, and we will be rejected, and are spiritually dead.

We must realize that we are not the one to decide what is and is not important. Only God decides what is important. Things that please us, may not please God. Actually, we are not worshipping God when we do the things that please us, but we are worshipping ourselves.

We must remember that we are not God; we cannot think as He thinks, and our ways are not His ways.

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"In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." Prov. 14:23.

"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." Prov. 13:10.

**WATER SALVATION (cont.)**

away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." The blood washes away our sins, and baptism washes away our sins. How can this be? We are baptized into the death of Christ where his blood was shed. In Matt. 26:28 Jesus said that his blood was shed "For the remission of sins." But when and where does this blood remit our sins? In Acts 2:38 we are told that repentance and baptism are "For the remission of sins." Blood is for the remission of sins, and baptism is for the remission of sins. How can this be? We are baptized into his death where the blood was shed.

The above shows clearly that baptism is for the remission of, or washing away of our sins, however, neither Scripture stated that water is for the remission of sins, or the washing away of sins. This would show that there is more to baptism than a mere dipping in water. Baptism is an expression of our faith in God's power and God's way to save us. In Col. 2:12 Paul states that we are "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with him through faith in the operation of God . . ." Notice from this that baptism is an act of faith in the operation of God, not in water, nor in ourselves, to save.

To teach that baptism is essential for our salvation is not to teach "Water Salvation", but rather to teach that salvation is by the operation of God and the blood of Christ. The teaching that baptism is essential for our salvation is not a doctrine enacted by the churches of Christ, but by the Lord himself. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ." Would you risk believing, "He that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved?" In 1 Peter 3:21 the Bible plainly states, "... baptism doth also now save us . . ." Would you risk believing that "Baptism doth NOT also now save us?" Baptism is not an ordinance of the churches, but a command of Christ, which must be obeyed in order to be saved.

In Rom. 6:17-18 we learn that by obeying from the heart that FORM of doctrine, which the apostles preached, we are "Then made free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness." What is a form? Is it not a likeness or similar pattern? What is the form that one obeys? In 1 Cor. 15:3-4 Paul said that he preached the (1) death, (2) burial, and (3) resurrection of Christ. And in the verses preceding verses he declared that these had been saved by this. How do we obey a form of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? In Romans 6:3-6 Paul shows that we are baptized into death, buried in baptism, and raised up to walk in a newness of life. Hence baptism is the FORM that we are to obey, and in

doing this we are made free from sin; our sins are washed away.

Yes, we do believe and teach that baptism is essential for our salvation in Christ. But, no, we do not believe nor teach "Water Salvation." Some day, every person will have to give an account unto God. He will not be judged by what "his church" taught, but by what Christ taught (John 12:48). We have the choice of following Christ or following men. It is your soul that is at stake. No preacher can plead your case at the judgment if you have not obeyed and followed Christ. You owe it to yourself to study this matter carefully, and then to accept what the Bible teaches. "Let no man deceive you" (Eph. 5:6). "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." (1 Thess. 5:21).

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. 15:1.

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits." Prov. 16:2.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov. 16:7.

"If men can be found faithful in hard places they can be trusted in high places."

"The highest type of education is to learn to do God's will."

"If you are looking for wholesome society, remember that the church is God's society—not a perfect people, but the best people on earth."

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