



# The Country Preacher's Journal

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

## WHAT IS BAPTISM FOR?

James E. Farley

There is a good deal of controversy and confusion in the religious world concerning the purpose of baptism. I would like to address this question in a simple and systematic way. Allow me to begin with an illustration that may be of some help to us as we study together. What if your friend came by your house one day with a pick-up truck full of bushel baskets. You say, "Hey Charlie, where ya goin'?" Charlie answers, "I'm goin' to pick tomatoes. Wanta come along?" You get into Charlie's truck and you drive with him to a peach orchard. Charlie gets out and says, "Come on, before all the tomatoes are gone!" You look around and see nothing but peach trees everywhere, and they are full of ripe peaches. What are you going to think about your friend Charlie? You know that you do not go to the peach orchard to pick tomatoes, right?

What's my point? Just as you do not go to the peach orchard to pick tomatoes, you do not go to passages in the Bible that say

nothing about baptism to learn what baptism is for. If you and I want to pick tomatoes, we must go to the tomato patch... If you and I want to learn about baptism, we must go to passages of Scripture that teach about baptism. That is simple enough, isn't it? Furthermore, if you want to learn about baptism's relation to a man's salvation, to the remission of a man's sins, to the washing away of sins, you will want to go to passages that teach about baptism and salvation... about baptism and the remission

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of sins... about baptism and the washing away of sins. John 3:16-17 is rightly called the "Golden Text" of the Bible. However, one cannot go to John 3:16-17 and learn anything at all about baptism and its relationship to man's salvation, for that passage doesn't touch the topic of baptism top, side, or bottom!!! Surely you will agree that this

systematic way of studying a Bible topic is correct. The Bible is right! It is certainly the mind of God in human language, and is our standard of right and wrong.

Let us then look at some passages that speak of baptism and its relationship to man's salvation. Let us first look at Mark 16:15-16. Take the necessary time, right now, before reading anything further in this article, to turn to that passage and read. OK... as you read that passage of inspired Scripture, did you learn from God that BELIEF

comes before or after a man's salvation? Read it again if you need to... You will certainly agree that FAITH comes BEFORE SALVATION in this passage that speaks of both, right? All are in

agreement that a person must believe if he expects to please God. (Compare Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). Well, what about baptism? Does baptism, in this verbally inspired passage of divine Scripture, come before or after a man's salvation? Go ahead... read it again... and notice carefully the coordinating

conjunction, "and", there. Why, you will agree, won't you, that baptism comes before being "saved" in this passage, right? You see, when you go to the tomato patch, you find tomatoes!

Let us now look at Acts 2:37-38. Here is a passage that speaks of both repentance and of baptism, and of the "remission of sins". Those to whom Peter spoke already believed, for they had been "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?". Go ahead and read Acts 2:37-38 now. Now, as you read this you will agree, will you not, that repentance certainly comes before the remission of sins, right? A person certainly must repent before he can be saved, right? (Compare Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9). What about baptism in this passage? Does it come before or after the remission of sins? It comes before, doesn't it? Here again is a passage that speaks of baptism and its relationship to the remission of sins, and it says that baptism is "for the remission of sins."

Let us now look at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, that great persecutor of the Lord's church. He was there supporting the death of faithful Stephen. (Acts 7:58-60). He brought "great persecution" against the church scattering faithful men and women everywhere. (Acts 8:1-4). He breathed "out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord..." (Acts

9:1). On his way to the city of Damascus to further persecute the church, Jesus appeared to him. After realizing that the one speaking to him was Jesus, he asked the Lord, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord said, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:3-6). Notice carefully here that there were some things that Saul MUST DO. In fact, when we compare the Acts 9 record with Paul's own account of his conversion in Acts 22, we learn that Jesus told him, "Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do." (Acts 22:10). There were some things for Paul to do, and he was going to have to do ALL THINGS commanded by the Lord.

The question is, was Saul saved then and there on the road to Damascus? We further learn that he went into the city and was there for three days, blind, and praying and fasting. (Acts 9:9, 11). Was he saved? God commanded a gospel preacher by the name of Ananias to go and tell Saul what he MUST do. Ananias came to the house where Saul was and told him what the Lord had in mind for him and how many things he would have to suffer for the Lord's sake. (Acts 9:10-16; Acts 22:12-15). Then the faithful Ananias said to Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on

the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). Here is yet another passage that speaks of baptism and the washing away of sins. The question is, does baptism come before or after the washing away of sins in this passage? Furthermore, as to the question about when Saul of Tarsus was saved... if he was saved on the road to Damascus, he was saved while yet in his sins, for they had not been washed away until he was baptized. This is what the Word says, and the Bible is right!!!

The precious blood of Jesus washes our sins away. (Revelation 1:5). There is no contradiction between Revelation 1:5 and Acts 22:16, for it is in baptism that one contacts the death of Christ where the blood was shed. (John 19:34). The inspired apostle Paul says so. (Romans 6:3-5). Jesus Himself said that His blood would be shed "for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28). Peter, by inspiration, said that baptism is "for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38) Contradiction? Absolutely not, for it is in baptism that we contact the wonderful, cleansing blood of the Lamb.

Friends, the only conclusion that you can come to is that baptism is essential for one's salvation. It is commanded by the Lord for that very purpose. (Mark 16:16). Who will argue with the Lord Jesus???

If you have comments or questions concerning these things, I would be happy to talk

or correspond with you. Write to me at: James E. Farley, 759 Ratliff Creek Road, Pikeville, Kentucky 41501. You can e-mail me at: mscoc@kymtnnet.org.

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## Faith In Adversity

By Randall F. Matheny

The parents of Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael may never have known of the faith and bravery of their sons. If they did know, they were no doubt very pleased. The four Hebrew youth had grown up in a nation that had never fully recovered from a long descent into sin. Judah was to go into captivity in Babylon because they had followed the apostasy of Manasseh into an embrace of idolatry (2 Kng. 21:1-18; 24:1-4) which caused Jerusalem to be filled from one end to the other with innocent blood (2 Kng. 21:16). There was only a brief respite under the reign of good king Josiah. The record of Daniel and his three friends proves that all the godly were not gone from Judah, though perhaps they were too few to make an immediate difference in the fall of their nation. It is safe and certain to assume that they made a difference in a few of their children, which in turn made a difference in a nation in captivity. Among all the millions who had lived before them, the honor that was bestowed upon the four Hebrew youth by God, by immortalizing their story in the Bible remains a

beacon for all parents who love their children and for all parents and children who love their God.

Parents today still have the unique responsibility for bringing their children "up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Regular exposure to other faithful Christians is important and can help in accomplishing this, but the real training must be done daily in the home. Children must be reminded of the heritage of God's people by telling them Bible stories and then reinforcing the lessons by living faithfully, and insisting on godliness in our homes. Activities and friends must be monitored, and children guided back in the right direction when they become confused and drift off course. The law of Moses, under which the Hebrew boys lived, prescribed that teaching begin in the tender years of youth (Deut. 6:6-7). We would do well to follow that example (Rom. 15:4). It is interesting to note that Paul commended Timothy to continue in the things of the Scripture that he had been taught from childhood. The word translated "childhood" is from the Greek word *brephos*, meaning an infant, indicating that Timothy had been taught from very early childhood. Child development experts have discovered that learning begins much earlier than had been long thought and that the experiences of childhood have a much greater effect on later development than had been previously understood.

Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael were able to remain faithful in spite of such harsh treatment by their captors because someone cared enough, and was not too busy to train them up in the way that they should go, and when they were older, they did not depart from it (Prov. 22:6).

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