**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Is Baptism Necessary for True Conversion?**

Last week on our program we talked about genuine conversion. We talked about requirements for true conversion to Christ. We said that essential elements for true conversion are a change in conviction, a change in attitude, a change in one’s focus in life, a change in where one puts his trust, a change in conduct and a change in outlook. We mentioned that a person could be baptized but not be genuinely converted to Christ and not be saved. Why? Because baptism without the proper condition of heart will accomplish nothing. There has to be a genuine conversion of the heart if one’s baptism is of any meaning.

But that brings up some questions: What does baptism accomplish? Is baptism necessary? Is baptism a part of true conversion? There are those who believe that baptism is not necessary for one to be converted to Christ. They believe that one is converted to Christ the moment he puts his trust in Christ as Lord and Savior and then he is baptized sometime later as a public declaration of his conversion and salvation. The question we want to address on our program today is – Is baptism necessary for true conversion to Christ?

The Bible teaches that baptism is the door through which one enters Christ. In Romans 6:3 Paul says, *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”* Notice, we are “baptized into Christ Jesus.” To be “baptized into” indicates a transition into some one or into some thing. This phrase “baptized into” is found in other passages. In 1 Cor. 12:13 it states that the saints there “were all baptized into one body.” To be baptized into one body is to pass from without it into it, now to form a constituent member with its members. Once he was not a member of the body, but being baptized into the body he is now a member of it. In 1 Cor. 10:2, Paul says, referring to when the Israelites came up out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, that they “were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” They passed from being under Egyptian authority to being completely under the authority of Moses who would now lead them to the promised land. Here in Romans 6:3 it says we are “baptized into Christ Jesus.” There is indicated here a transition into Christ. Before baptism one is outside of Christ, but when the penitent believer is baptized he enters Christ. He is now in union with Christ where there is redemption, salvation, eternal life, and he is now completely under the Lord’s control. You see, conversion to Christ is not completed until the penitent believer is baptized into Christ. No one is in Christ who has not been baptized into Christ.

Look with me also in Gal. 3:26-27. Paul says, *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Verse 26 states the present condition of the Galatians – Paul says, *“you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* Verse 27 gives the reason that statement is so. This is indicated by the word “For,” at the beginning of the verse, meaning here’s the cause or the reason. He says, “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*  Paul is saying, you are all (at the present time) sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and the reason you are at the present time sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus is that as many as were been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. When the Galatians were baptized into Christ, meaning into union with Christ, they put on Christ. And putting on Christ means sharing His sonship. When a person puts on Christ he becomes what Christ is. We are sons of God. We are “joint heirs with Christ,” Paul says in Romans 8:17. The act that makes us sons of God through faith is our baptism into Christ by which we put on Christ and come to share His sonship. Can’t you see that true conversion to Christ requires baptism?

Now I want to return to Romans 6 and look at the context of Romans 6:3-4. In this passage Paul is teaching that the Christian is not to continue in sin because he has died to sin. Romans 6:1,2 says, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”* Paul is saying that Christians are not to continue in sin because they have died to sin. When did they die to sin? Verses 3 and 4 explains when and how this death to sin took place. He says, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*  As we mentioned earlier baptism puts the sinner into Christ. This union which is formed between the sinner and Christ extends so far as the death of Christ. Paul says *“as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.”* The sinner enters into the death of Christ when he is baptized, thus to die with Him. This tells us when and how the death to sin takes place. One does not die to sin before he is baptized into Christ, but when he is baptized into Christ. And just as Christ was raised from the dead, even so the one buried with Christ in baptism should now walk in newness of life. When the penitent believer is baptized into Christ conversion is completed. He is dead to sin and is now to walk in newness of life. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* Who is in Christ? -- the one who is baptized into Christ. And Paul says “he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Again, true conversion does not occur without baptism.

We also can see that baptism is part of our conversion to Christ when we come to understand that baptism is commanded for salvation. In order for man to be saved from his sins he must be baptized. Consider with me a few passages of scripture on this subject.

Acts 22:16 - The Lord sends Ananias to Saul of Tarsus. Ananias says to Saul, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* This passage indicates that Saul is still in his sins at this time. He has not found forgiveness of sins as yet. You see, Ananias would not have told Saul to wash away his sins if he were already clean. One who is clean does not need to be washed. Saul was told to wash because he was filthy with sin.

Not only did Ananias tell him to wash, but he connected that washing away of sins with baptism: He said “be baptized, and wash away your sins.” There is a washing or cleansing that takes place in baptism. Suppose a man tells his son, “Playing time is over. Wash away that dirt.” Such a command would only make sense if the boy were dirty. Moreover, if the man told him, “take a bath and wash away that dirt,” everyone would understand that it was by means of the taking of the bath that the dirt was to be washed away.

That is exactly what Ananias tells Saul! “Take a bath and wash away your sins.” But the bath is baptism. Sins are washed away in baptism.

Of course the washing away of sins is not to be understood literally. It is a figurative manner of speaking of the forgiveness of sins. There is no literal washing away of sins – not by baptism, not by faith, not by grace, not in the blood of Christ, not at all. Washing away of sins is just a figurative way of expressing the forgiveness of sins. And the passage states that sins are washed away, they are forgiven in the act of baptism. This states that baptism is necessary for salvation.

The final clause of this verse says, “calling on the name of the Lord.” In other words, in the act of baptism, Saul would be relying on the Lord for his forgiveness. In seeking forgiveness in this manner, Saul would not be relying upon some magical efficacy of water; he also would not be relying upon his own actions here; rather he would be relying upon the Lord, making his appeal to the Lord in the divinely appointed manner, baptism.

Consider with me one other passages, 1 Peter 3:20-21

*“20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*

*21 There is also an antitype which now saves us--baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”*

After referring to the salvation of Noah and his family “through water,” Peter then affirms that baptism “also an antitype” or “after a true likeness” now saves us. Peter is saying that the salvation of Noah and his family “through water” is a type of the salvation which men today can receive through the waters of baptism. Noah and his family, Peter says, “were saved through water.” The word “through” is used here to mean, “of the means or instrument by which anything is affected.” Water, then was the means or instrument by which the salvation of Noah and his family was affected. Just as the waters of the flood saved Noah and his family from the destruction of the antediluvian world and also from the wickedness of that world, so the waters of baptism save us. This is what Peter is saying. Saves us from what? From persecution? From sickness or death? NO, because the baptized person is subject to these. The only reasonable conclusion is baptism saves us from sin. That’s what Peter says, “baptism now saves us.”

Of course, baptism is not the savior, this passage is not saying that. Jesus is the Savior. Baptism saves as being a means or instrument of salvation – just as Noah was saved by God “through” or by means of water. But the passage says that baptism saves us, making baptism necessary for salvation.

Surely we can see from these passages that baptism is essential if we are to be truly converted to Christ and be saved.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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