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FOREWORD

The name of Frank Chesser is synonymous with superb Bible literature. His previous books are masterpieces that thrillingly blend solid biblical instruction with an eloquence of expression that invigorates the soul as the mind is tutored. This production follows in the qualitative vein of the author's previous literary contributions.

Never was the need more crucial, or the time riper, for a fresh and thorough presentation on the scriptural theme of baptism. The Savior cautioned that the kingdom of God may not be entered except by the process of the new birth, which involves an immersion in water as a prelude to accessing Heaven's promise of pardon. But this divine ordinance has long been the target of attack in a Western civilization that salivates over the theology of Martin Luther's "salvation by faith alone." Were that not distressing enough, increasingly voices of confused protest now are raised within the church, wounding the body of Christ more terribly than any Roman sword could inflict.

Some are so bold as to adamantly contend that baptism is not necessary to receive divine forgiveness. Others shrug that a comprehension of the ordinance's design, namely "for the forgiveness of sins," is an inconsequential matter. If such is so, a significant amount of inspired "ink" was employed for naught, and confusion reigns supreme, truth is trampled, and lost souls remain in darkness. The tragedy of it all is heartrending.

Our brother has explored this theme inside and out, top to bottom. In a dozen and a half riveting chapters he has exposed the terror of error, namely the perverted notion that baptism is a "work of merit," and thus the rite must be excluded from the Lord's offer of "grace."



In his engaging use of the English language, the author has woven together a fantastic tapestry of general Bible truth in precept and principle, from both Testaments. The basic proposition is this: obedience to God matters! And there are numerous connections between immersion and a multitude of other divine obligations. Those who have isolated baptism from the full complement of biblical truth, setting this divine ordinance up as a target in the crosshairs of their theological delusion, have committed a heinous spiritual crime.

It is a pure delight to recommend this valuable treatise to all who passionately love sacred truth as embodied in the Holy Bible.

Wayne Jackson
Stockton, California





PREFACE

Using baptism as a pivot, this book is a study of the principles of redemption that inhere in the nature of God and are irrevocably connected to every aspect of life. When practically applied, they answer every basic question and serve as preventives and solutions to every problem of life. They are all-inclusive, embracing personal, family, worship, business, and recreational life.

It is a common occurrence to hear one announce his intention to devote fresh study and reflection to some specific Bible subject. At the end of this spiritual quest, disclosure is made that new insights and altered convictions were reached. This study has had the opposite effect upon me. It has reinforced and mightily deepened the convictions that I have believed and taught on every Bible truth for the forty-seven years that I have preached the gospel.

Baptism was chosen as the axis of this study because of denominationalism's 600-year war with this simple command of God and the ingression of this tragic spirit into the church. This voyage of faith based on "God said" has potently convicted my mind regarding the spiritual uniqueness and significance of this gospel demand for the salvation of the soul.

Of necessity, the practical application of these principles involves some repetition. The Bible is the most repetitious book ever written. Every trait of God's inexpressible nature and the principles of redemption inherent therein are set forth in the first twelve chapters of Genesis. They are then repeated, re-emphasized, and re-illustrated incessantly until the close of God's revelation to man.

Special thanks is due to my treasured friend, James Andrews, who is unsurpassed in his editing and publishing abilities; to Peggy Coulter, who is uniquely equipped in book



design and marketing skills; to my beloved wife, Cherry, for her expertise in typing and grammar; and to Wayne Jackson, an unexcelled Bible scholar, for his kind and encouraging words regarding this work. May this effort glorify God in the promotion of His truths for the salvation and edification of men.

Frank Chesser
Montgomery, Alabama





1

THE ONE BAPTISM

God spoke, and time sprang out of the bosom of eternity. Eternity gave birth to time as a temporary arrangement for transient humanity. “In the beginning” marks the commencement of time, the universe, and man (Gen. 1:1). At time’s inception, there was no backward look, for back of time is eternity. Everything material is limited by time, as is time itself, for time’s final sunset was predestined in eternity. Time is not eternity’s interlude, for eternity is beginningless and endless. If time’s duration is a billion years, it will only be a microscopic pebble on the unending shores of eternity. When eternity bids good-bye to time, time will not be missed. There will be no void to fill.

Man’s body is birthed for time and his spirit for eternity. The moment he enters the door of life, he commences a hasty exit toward the door of death. His days on earth pass with more swiftness than a weaver’s shuttle (Job 7:6); a fleeing shadow (Job 14:2); or a dissipating vapor (James 4:14). Time marks him at birth and claims him at death.

On the sixth day of time, the first human pair breathed their first breath under the creative power of God. Only in the hand of God could lifeless dust and a rib be transformed into the ineffable complexity of two perfect human beings. They walked with God in spiritual intimacy, embraced each other with hands of flawless purity, and filled the beauty of Eden with untainted joy and laughter. They welcomed the night with no regrets and greeted the dawn with impeccable delight. Sonorous songs of praise to the majesty of God flowed from unblem-



ished lips. The offspring of God drank from endless streams of perfection and innocence that coursed through their paradisaic home.

Man's Problem

Sin ruined everything. The seductive sound of the serpent's voice penetrated the serenity of Eden, encased Eve's mind in the web of deceit, subverted her view of God, and postured the world on the road of ruin. Sin emanated from the womb of self-rule. It coiled around the heart of the perfect work of God and crushed its spiritual life. Walking with God was supplanted by judgment, and the perfection and innocence of Eden was retained only in the memory of Adam and Eve.

From Genesis 3:6 onward, sin has slithered throughout the world of humanity, inserting the incalculable venom of suffering, sorrow, and death into the spiritual bloodstream of every human being. Sin is man at war with himself. Sin devises a field of battle and sets man in its midst. Sin places a sword in man's hand and erects his own heart as its target. Cries of pain, ruin, despair, dying, and death fill the air as lives come to a tragic end in the heat of combat and souls encounter eternity unprepared to meet God.

What was Adam and Eve's response to their sin? Did they arrogantly affirm, "We have created a problem, but we can solve it"? Sin drove the dagger of doom and hopelessness into their hearts. It expelled them from the presence of God and engulfed them with shame. Bowed with unexcelled human sorrow, they cringed at the sound of God's voice while hiding among the trees of the garden.

Sin renders man spiritually impotent. One just as soon attempt to eclipse the sun with a thread as to try to conquer the deadly sting of sin with human exertion. If a man possessed the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the courage of Daniel, the endurance of Job, the convictions of Paul, and the purity of Mary, he would yet stand in the presence of sin in a state of spiritual paralysis.

God's Remedy

Only God who cannot sin can cure sin. God in flesh, fully divine and fully human, living a flawless life, and suffering



the unutterable horrors of death on a cross is God's remedy for sin.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14–15).

A day of rest followed God's six days of creative work. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made" (Gen. 2:2). Why? Because every need of man had been abundantly supplied. There was not a single flaw in the work of God. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Man's soul constituted evidence of God's perfect work. There was not a single blemish in the spirit of man. As God's spiritual progeny, bearing the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve enjoyed affinity with the sinlessness of God. Sin marred the work of God, severed man from God, and thrust him into a world of ruin. Following this one sin, a resumptive life of perfection could not have rectified the problem, removed the barrier, and restored fellowship between God and man. Such is the inscrutable horror of just one sin in the sight of God who is so holy that he "cannot look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

God's love and man's sin made indispensable a second work of God on man's behalf—the work of redemption. When sin became a reality, God headed toward Calvary. The balance of the Old Testament and the first four books of the New Testament answer one basic question: "How did God get from man's problem of sin to His solution in Christ and the cross?" Genesis 3:6 to John 20 is an incremental unfolding of God's eternal purpose to conquer the problem that started in Eden and to redeem man from his sin by the blood of His Son. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9).

The Old Testament closes with a bridge to the New Testament with a promise of the coming of Elijah whom Jesus identi-



fies as John the Baptist (Matt. 11:14). The New Testament opens with the birth of Christ, Herod's efforts to kill Him, the preparatory work of John, the baptism and wilderness temptation of Christ, and the beginning of the ministry of Christ (Matt. 1–4). The four accounts of the gospel are divine declarations of the deity of Christ as demonstrated by His teachings and miracles.

Twelve chosen men accompanied Jesus during the three and one-half years of His public ministry. These apostles were personally selected by Christ to inaugurate Christianity and commence its spread throughout the earth. Just hours prior to His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus endeavored to prepare these ambassadors for His death and subsequent events (John 13–17). He informed them of the coming of the Holy Spirit who would equip them for their apostolic work.

The Price Paid for Sin

Shortly before His arrest, Jesus entered the garden of inexpressible sorrow. His great heart trembled with immeasurable grief over the weight of sin that bore down upon His soul that only God in the flesh could endure. He prayed in such agony of spirit that He broke the heart of God and submerged the streets of heaven in a torrent of angelic tears. His head was bowed with anguish. His body was soaked with bloody sweat. With “strong crying and tears” (Heb. 5:7), He shook the pedestal of the earth. The foundations of eternity shuddered at the sight of the weeping Christ. An angel journeyed through time and space and enfolded the suffering Savior in the arms of solace.

Lanterns intruded into the darkness of Gethsemane. Swords threatened its peace. Voices of abhorrence filled the air. A kiss of betrayal and death was placed upon the countenance of perfect purity. The apostles fled in fear. Peter denied his Master while seeking warmth at the enemy's fire. Justice was spurned. The face of Christ was marred with human spittle and buffeting hands of hate. Thorns of mockery perforated His brow and scoffing knees knelt at His feet. His back was rent asunder and suffused with blood. Feminine voices of lament tempered the taunts and jeers on the road to Golgotha.



Nails pierced His hands and feet. The Son of God was centered between two thieves and entered a world of pain that only the mind of God could comprehend. Simeon's prophetic sword pierced His mother's heart. The sun veiled its eyes and the Temple's curtain was rent. The earth quivered, rocks shattered, graves opened, and once-dead saints walked among the living, following the resurrection of Christ. Heaven wept and hell rejoiced.

Where lies the real horror of the cross? It is not to be found in the tyranny of the Roman and Jewish courts. It cannot be witnessed in the abusive hands of the Roman soldiers. Nor can it be attested to by the physical pain and agony of the crucifixion. The true terror of the cross can only be perceived to the degree that man's finite mind is capable, in those unfathomable words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). This is the reason Jesus prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). It was in view of this ungraspable tragedy that the prayer of Christ was bathed in "strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). It was due to His extreme aversion to the truth of these words, defying man's ability to comprehend, that resulted in the capillaries of His body oozing bloody sweat. It was because of the inescapable calamity depicted in these words that God dispatched an angel from heaven to strengthen Him.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). The body of God's Son was ensconced in a borrowed tomb. Early on the following Sunday morning, He broke the bonds of death and placed the seal of immortality on every tombstone. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:20). For the next forty days, Jesus "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). On one occasion, an assembly in excess of five hundred became eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:6).

Final Instruction to the Apostles

Moments before Jesus ascended into heaven, He met with the apostles and commissioned them to go "into all the world



and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Jesus then specified the commencing and closing acts of gospel obedience that enables man to enjoy the salvation that God’s love, grace, and the blood of Christ supplies: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). He also warns of the absence of the initial act of obedience that negates the possibility of additional expressions of compliance with the will of God and leads to condemnation, “but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

Jesus instructed the apostles to remain in the city of Jerusalem until they became recipients of “power from on high” (Luke 24:49). He informed them that this gift of power would come from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Upon receiving this power the apostles were to preach “repentance and remission of sins” in the name of the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:47). As Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles “worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52).

Gospel Preached on Pentecost

Ten days later, as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to address the huge assembly of multilingual people who had convened in Jerusalem “out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). The people were astonished to hear these lowly Galileans speak to them fluently in their own native languages. Unable to discern the truth concerning the occasion, some foolishly accused the apostles of being drunk. Peter quickly dispensed with the inane assertion and then averred that what was transpiring was the fulfillment of a prophetic declaration by one of their own prophets (Joel 2:28–32).

Having radiated the light of truth on what was occurring, Peter proceeded to preach the first gospel sermon under the great commission, as an accomplished fact, in the name of the resurrected Christ. He pointed to the numerous proofs of the deity of Christ by His “miracles and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22). So powerful and undeniable were the mighty works of Christ that even His most ardent enemies were constrained to admit, “This man doeth many miracles” (John 11:47).



Peter asserted that Christ had been “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). In His omniscience, God foreknew the choice that Adam and Eve would make in Eden, and God foreknew the means by which man’s choice would be rectified. Jesus was God’s remedy for sin, the perfect “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

Peter cast the guilt for the brutal death of the sinless Christ at the feet of those to whom he was speaking. Their own words had verified this truth as they cried for the blood of Christ to “be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). Their evil deeds did not constitute finality because God raised the body of His Son from the dead (Acts 2:24). Peter’s climactic point regarding the resurrection of Christ was buttressed with quotations from David, avowing with all certainty that God “hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Response to Peter’s Sermon

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit . . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:37–41).

The purpose of gospel preaching is to generate within man an acute awareness of his sins and his inability to provide his own cure; to enlighten his mind with the good news of redemption through Christ and Calvary, and to urge compliance with the conditions of the gospel in the obedience of faith, culminating in the act of baptism, in order to enjoy the forgiveness of sin. This is the exact formula that Peter followed on this eminent day of Pentecost.

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Peter called for faith in the very Christ for whose blood they had clamored and for evidence of their faith in repentance and baptism “for the remission of sins.” Jesus de-



clared that “repentance and remission of sins shall be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). It was in this inaugural sermon in Jerusalem that Peter commanded repentance and promised the remission of sins to all who would consummate their obedience to the gospel by being baptized in the name of the resurrected Christ.

Conversion of the Samaritans

Saul’s relentless assault against the church effectuated a dispersion of the disciples of Christ. Philip journeyed to Samaria and preached the gospel of the crucified, resurrected Christ (Acts 8:5). Demonstrations of Philip’s miraculous power confirmed the divine nature of his message. Prior to Philip’s arrival, the Samaritans had lived in the valley of deception under the influence of a sorcerer named Simon. Upon witnessing the miracles of Philip, they were immediately able to discern the vast difference between Philip’s supernatural wonders and Simon’s magical tricks. They embraced the gospel in the obedience of faith, believing and being baptized into Christ (Acts 8:12). Even Simon’s heart was opened to the gospel Philip preached, and he also believed and was baptized (Acts 8:13). Why? Because Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Following Philip’s work in Samaria, he was instructed by an angel to journey southward to a road stretching from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). Upon arriving, he observed a eunuch from Ethiopia traveling in a chariot and reading from Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the lamb-like nature and death of Christ (Isa. 53:7–8). He inquired as to the eunuch’s degree of perception of the prophecy. The eunuch expressed his need of assistance and solicited Philip’s aid.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (Acts 8:35–36).



Philip baptized the believing eunuch into Christ. This text proves that attempting to preach Christ apart from baptism is folly because it was Jesus Himself who said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). This inspired text identifies water as the element of the baptism of the gospel. Immersion in water for the remission of sins is the culminating act of faith’s obedience to the gospel that Peter preached on Pentecost, that Philip preached to the Samaritans and the eunuch, and that Jesus said is to encompass the earth (Mark 16:15–16).

Conversion of Saul

Saul hated Christ and the church. He viewed Christ as an imposter and the church as an illegitimate sect. His heart was void of mercy as he invaded homes and imprisoned both men and women (Acts 8:3). He transformed children into orphans in his bloody rampage against Christianity. He confessed to being “exceedingly mad” at the followers of Christ (Acts 26:11). Armed with authority from the high priest, he was on his way to Damascus to effuse his hatred upon the saints of God.

As an angel barred the path of Balaam (Num 22), even so Christ stood between Saul and the fruition of his plans of death in Damascus. When Jesus demanded of Saul a reason for his conduct, Saul entreated Christ for confirmation of His identity. Upon learning that it was Jesus, he earnestly inquired as to what action he should take. Jesus instructed him to proceed to Damascus and someone would inform him as to “what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). In a state of blindness, he refrained from physical nourishment for three days and bathed his hours in prayer. When God sent Ananias to answer the question Saul had raised, he said, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

In consort with four highly touted biblical savants, a popular television evangelist examined this simple and direct command of God for an hour. The escalation of frustration during the course of the discussion was palpable. In the closing moments of the dialogue, the host, in a state of exasperation, averred, “We may never know what this text means, but one



thing is certain; it does not mean that water baptism can wash away sins, because only the blood of Christ can wash away sins.”

He was indubitably correct. There is only one power that can draw and match swords with sin and emerge the victor, and that power is in the blood of Christ. Revelation’s new song centers in Christ and resonates with the melody of redemption. “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9).

Means of Reaching the Blood of Christ

This celebrated evangelist and his distinguished panel were posing the wrong question. Acts 22:16 does not address “What washes away sins?” but Revelation 1:5 does: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” The blood of Christ possesses exclusive power to cure the deadly disease of sin. When does the blood of Christ wash away sins? This is the question that Acts 22:16 answers. The blood of God’s Son washes away sins when man, by faith, completes his obedience to the gospel in the act of baptism.

Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus. He knew his redemption was not yet a reality because he inquired of Christ as to what he should do. Instead of responding to Saul by informing him of his present possession of salvation, Jesus ordered him to Damascus and assured him that someone would come and tell him what to do. Rather than rejoicing over his liberation from sin, Saul lived without sight, food, and drink for three days. When Ananias, God’s missionary to Saul, arrived, he did not calm Saul’s bleeding spirit with words of assurance that his sins had already been released as a result of his acceptance of Christ on the road to Damascus. Instead, by the authority of God, he commanded him to be baptized so that his sins could be removed.

Saul was a penitent believer, but he was lost. He had not reached the blood of Christ. No man can be saved apart from the blood of the Son of God, for “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). It is the blood of Christ that pro-



cures “remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28); “justifies” (Rom. 5:9); provides “redemption” (Eph. 1:7); brings one “nigh” to God (Eph. 2:13); makes “peace” between God and man (Col. 1:20); “cleanses” one from sin (1 John 1:7); and “washes” sins away (Rev. 1:5). Jesus shed His blood in His death (John 19:34). Reconciliation is made possible “by the death of his Son” (Rom. 5:10). Man must reach the death and shed blood of Christ in order to enjoy the salvation that God’s love and grace have provided.

Baptism is the culminating act of the obedience of faith that enables man to unite with the death and blood of Christ.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3–4).

The blessings of newness of life, termination of the old man of sin, and freedom from sin (Rom. 6:6–8) are enjoyed only by those who are “buried with him by baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4). Peter was able to affirm that “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21) because it is this God-ordained act of gospel obedience that allows man to reach the death and shed blood of Christ. Salvation is “in Christ” (2 Tim. 2:10); man is baptized “into Christ” (Rom. 6:3); thus, allowing him to contact the blood of Christ and “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Consequently, it was the power in the blood of the cross that secured Saul’s redemption when, by faith, he complied with God’s instructions to “be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). God, by grace through blood, saves when man, by faith, obeys.

Conversion of Cornelius and Household

Cornelius was a Roman officer in command of a hundred soldiers. He was devout, reverent, benevolent, and prayerful (Acts 10:1–2). An angel appeared to him, depicted his beneficent and prayerful spirit as a memorial before God, and instructed him to send for Peter who would tell him what he needed to do. Two servants and a soldier were immediately dispatched to Joppa to seek Peter. Shortly before their arrival, Peter received a vision that signaled the launching of the gospel to the Gentile world. When Peter and six Jewish brethren



arrived at the home of Cornelius two days later, they found the Roman official assembled with some of his friends and relatives. Cornelius related the words and instructions of the angel and then affirmed their eagerness to “hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

Peter’s sermon stressed the impartial nature of God, the life and work of Christ, His sacrificial death and resurrection, verification of these truths by eye witnesses, the judgment to come, and the enjoyment of remission of sins only through Christ (Acts 10:34–43). As Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit empowered Cornelius and his household with the miraculous ability to magnify God in foreign languages as characterized the apostles on Pentecost of Acts 2. Peter used this unique incident on this occasion and two others (Acts 11 and 15) to accentuate the truth that the Gentiles were to be recipients of the gospel and “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). In view of God’s miraculous work, no man possessed the right to “forbid water, that these should not be baptized” (Acts 10:47); and therefore, Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Why? Because Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

Conversion of Lydia and Companions

While in Troas, a man appeared to Paul in a vision and made supplication for aid in Macedonia (Acts 16:8–9). Paul and his company traveled to Philippi and found a group of women who had assembled for worship. Lydia, a business woman from Thyatira, listened with rapt attention as Paul expounded the gospel. Her heart was receptive to the message of redemption through Christ and “she was baptized, and her household” (Acts 16:15).

Conversion of the Philippian Jailer

When Paul expelled an evil spirit from a young slave woman who was being used for financial gain, her owners brought Paul and Silas before the rulers with accusations of unlawful conduct. The judicial officers ordered them beaten and imprisoned. As Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, an



earthquake jarred the prison's foundation, and the means of securing the prisoners were removed. Assuming the prisoners had escaped, the jailer was on the verge of suicide when Paul informed him that no one had left the prison. The jailer inquired, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They urged him: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

The jailer was a pagan. He had no knowledge of Christ, nor did he understand what was involved in believing on Christ. He needed instruction in the way of the Lord that would enable him to make a proper response to the gospel. "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straight-way" (Acts 16:32–33). Why? Because Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Rejection of God's Counsel

Speaking of the baptism of John the Baptist, inspiration attests, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30). The baptism taught by John was "for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). John's authority to baptize was from God, not man (Matt. 21:23–27). It was an anticipatory act of obedience in view of the coming reality of the cross. When the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the baptism of John, they spurned the very counsel of God.

John's baptism was temporary. It was a part of the preparatory work of John in anticipation of the inauguration of the kingdom or church on Pentecost of Acts 2. When Paul encountered some twelve men who had been baptized with the baptism of John after the events of Acts 2, he immersed them again in the name of the resurrected Christ (Acts 19:1–7). The baptism of the commission of Christ that commenced on Pentecost is permanent. It is an indispensable component of the gospel that is to embrace the entirety of accountable humanity (Mark 16:15–16). If the Pharisees and lawyers who refused to be baptized under John's baptism were repudiating the counsel of God, what does this say of men today who rebuff the



command of Christ to be baptized in order to be saved? Can a man be saved while rejecting the counsel of God?

Justification of God's Counsel

Conversely, the publicans “justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John” (Luke 7:29). These despised tax collectors understood that the baptism heralded by John was by the authority of God. When they complied with John’s baptism, they were submitting to the authority of God. They were “justifying God,” acknowledging and affirming the justice and righteousness of God. Jesus Christ has all authority “in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). He has made baptism a prerequisite to salvation. When a man rejects baptism as commanded by Christ, he is in rebellion to the authority of Christ. He is refusing to “justify God,” to confess and declare the justice and righteousness of God by yielding to the authority of God. Can a man be saved while refusing to “justify God”?

God's Invitation

Man’s problem is sin. God’s solution is the blood of Christ. The conditions of the gospel constitute the means by which man appropriates the provisions of grace and blood to his soul. Those who refuse to obey the gospel will be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess.1:9).

“Come unto me” is God’s invitation through the gospel. Redemption is man’s greatest need. God wants to save man. Hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels,” not man (Matt. 25:41). If only one of God’s offspring was going to be lost, that tragic state would be the result of human volition, not of divine will. Jesus died “that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). He tasted “death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). It is God’s fervent desire for “all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

“What must I do to be saved?” is the question of the ages. Man’s greatest need is to know the answer to this question. This inquiry inheres in every gospel sermon. No gospel sermon is complete until this question is answered. It has become fashionable for preachers to close their sermons without



answering this question. They issue God's "come" without God's "how."

Did Peter refuse to answer this question on Pentecost of Acts 2? Of what value is Acts 2:22–36 without Acts 2:38? Why preach the Christ of the cross without advising man how to benefit therefrom by submitting to the conditions of the gospel? Where lies the merit in a sermon on the grace of God apart from informing man how to respond to grace in the obedience of faith? How effective are sermons on the love of God when they are severed from divine instruction on how to profit from God's love by surrendering to the gospel in compliance with its conditions? Why extend God's invitation without communicating God's means of responding to the invitation? What is the rationale in preaching so as to motivate man to raise the question, "What must I do to be saved?" and then refusing to give him the answer?

Did Philip neglect to proclaim the whole gospel to the Samaritans? Can one point to the wisdom in "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" without telling man how to be saved, so they can be "baptized, both men and women"? (Acts 8:12). Did Ananias decline to answer Saul's question of Acts 9:6? God sent Ananias to Saul with Acts 22:16. Every penitent believer on earth needs to hear the answer Ananias gave Saul.

Cornelius needed to hear "all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33). "All things" embraced the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 10:39–40); and baptism (Acts 10:45), the culminating act of gospel compliance, enabling Cornelius and his household to appropriate the provisions of the cross to their souls in obedient faith. Any preacher who closes his sermon without informing man how to reach the blood of Christ in gospel obedience has stopped short of proclaiming "all things commanded of God." How much difference can be discerned in giving the wrong answer to man's greatest question, and not giving any answer at all? It is God's gospel and God's invitation—not man's.

When Life Ends

Time is a small valley nestled between the mountain peaks of eternity. At birth man embarks on a brief, fleeting, journey



through the valley of time. With a gloomy face, the cold, clammy hands of death stalk man every step of the way like a wild beast stealthily pursues its prey. Death is as near as the breath of one's mouth, as close as one's shadow. Like the talons of a hawk, the talons of death can sink themselves into a man's life in the blink of an eye. Genesis 5 records the lives of eight men who lived from 777 years to 969 years, but at the close of each life, the text reads, "and he died." One would fare better endeavoring to elude the incoming tides of the oceans than the onrushing tide of time that swiftly sweeps man to the close of his life.

When death wins its battle with life and the earth claims its own, the souls of men enter the eternal realm to await the resurrection and the judgment. The standard of judgment will be the immutable words of Christ: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). His Word will read then even as it does now: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

Questions

1. What contrasts can be drawn in man's circumstances before and after Genesis 3:6?
2. In what sense did God rest and then return to work?
3. What basic question is answered from Genesis 3:6 to John 20?
4. Discuss the price paid for sin.
5. Where lies the real horror of the cross?
6. What final instructions and promises did Jesus give the apostles?
7. In what sense is the sermon on Pentecost of Acts 2 the first gospel sermon?
8. What basic point did Peter make?



9. What question was raised, and what answer was given?
10. What is the basic purpose of gospel preaching?
11. Discuss the conversion of the Samaritans.
12. Discuss the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.
13. What was Saul doing prior to his conversion?
14. What transpired on the road to Damascus?
15. What points can be made to disprove that Saul was saved on the Damascus road?
16. Relate the circumstances of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, and how does the Bible use their reception of miraculous power from the Holy Spirit?
17. Relate the circumstances of the conversion of Lydia and her household.
18. Discuss the conversion of the Philippian jailer and the misuse of this text by the religious world.
19. Discuss the baptism of John the Baptist and the rejection of it by the Pharisees and lawyers.
20. In what sense were the publicans “justifying God” by their submission to John’s baptism?
21. What are some points that need to be made regarding God’s invitation?