



The Living God Ministries, Inc.

Montgomery & Spanish Fort, Alabama

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What Moved You to Seek Baptism?

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort, AL.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Several years ago my wife and I flew to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania for a week. We were there visiting some friends, who were members of an Education Committee, to discuss things, and brainstorm ideas on continuing the creating of an environment that is conducive for growth in the congregations we served at that time.

While there we spent all day in New York City with a fellow pastor and longtime friend, catching up on things, discussing some research I am working on, and viewing a few sites within the city. On the way home that evening from NYC back to Yardley, PA the "Train" broke down due to mechanical failure, and we waited outside until another came...a little more than a half hour. We ended up getting to bed after 1:00 am. The following Thanksgiving Day we had 28 people in the same house...a wonderful experience. Most of them were not "church members", but of Catholic faith. During one discussion around the table after dinner, a man asked me several questions about baptism. His perspective was much different than what I understand, and what the Bible clearly teaches. It was a sincere conversation, and appreciated.

I always consider it a special opportunity to discuss the subject of "baptism" with those who are seeking to undergo this special ceremony. During one Feast in Cartagena, Colombia, I baptized a man from Cucuta after talking with him over that year. It was a special event for him, for my wife and me, and for the congregation. Some of the same questions from our trip to PA were discussed with this man.

Most of you who read my Friday evening messages have been baptized. I would like you to look back to the time *before* you were baptized and remember what *moved you to seek to be baptized*. There are several factors that we would probably have had in common. It can be helpful to look back and then renew our motivations as we go forward.

First, baptism is commanded. Jesus gave a command to the apostles before His ascension. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . ."* (Matthew 28:19) That comes from quite a high authority! On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter answered those who were convicted of the wrong they had done in being complicit with Christ's death by crucifixion. *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38)

The person undergoing baptism makes a public statement about leaving the old life behind and committing to walk in a new way of life defined by the Word of God including the laws and commandments of God. *"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."* (Romans 6:4) John the Baptist and Peter (as we saw above) emphasized the need to repent before one was baptized.

So, what does one repent of? What does one turn from? What is one forgiven of upon repentance?

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered" (Romans 4:7) Those entering the New Covenant, including those called to be part of the church of God, are expected to live by the laws of God. *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"* then He adds, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."* (Hebrews 10:16-17) As we know, *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."* (1 John 3:4 AV)

How many have been baptized but have never confronted their lawless deeds and their breaking of God's commandments?

A valid baptism involves understanding repentance and the changes one needs to make concerning one's attitude and actions toward the law of God. One needs to come face to face with one's natural nature and mindset that is not connected to the mind of God. *"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."* (Romans 8:7) The apostle John speaks of the ongoing process of identifying and confessing sins and seeking forgiveness. Certainly this is important in preparing for baptism. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

One needs to understand what the consequence of committing sins is and how to deal with that consequence.

First, let's examine Hebrews 9:27: "*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.*" Ecclesiastes 3 examines the natural cycles of life. "*A time to be born, and a time to die*" (v.2) "*For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals: as one dies, so dies the other*" (v.19) Then we are told, "*All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.*" (v.20) All animals and humans are destined to die because they are made of temporary substance with temporary life. They will all come to the end of life as part of the natural order of things. This first death is not a penalty earned by committing sins.

Lets' examine Paul's statement. "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23)

This death penalty is different from the death that naturally befalls everyone. This has to be the second death or the loss of eternal life. Notice the rest of the verse, "*but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (v.23) This death that is incurred by sin is contrasted with eternal life. There are two paths and destinies that are available to human beings. This is described in one of the most quoted Scriptures. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16) We see that to perish is contrasted with having everlasting life. Jesus contrasted the two ways and two paths in Matthew 7. He contrasted "*the way that leads to destruction*" with "*the way which leads to life.*" (Vs.13-14)

How can this death penalty and potential loss of eternal life be dealt with?

The repentant sinner is faced with a dilemma. This penalty of eternal death hangs over them. If their own future eternal life is forfeited to pay the penalty, where does that leave them? We will continue this thought with the subject of baptism preparation in a general sense in letters in the future...

As I like to close with each Friday, arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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