



The Voice Of Truth

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Hillcrest church of Christ

1621 Hillcrest Drive
Green Bay, WI 54313
(920) 499-5677

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com

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Does Baptism "Sanctify" A Sinful Relationship?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

It is said by some that since baptism washes away all sins, it sanctifies marriages which existed at the time of baptism - so those involved in adulterous marriages (those which violate **Matthew 19:9**) do not have to separate after baptism. This is a false teaching which jeopardizes both the doctrinal and moral purity of the church. What they are saying then is that non-Christians are simply not under (*amenable to*) the law (*gospel*) of Christ. Marriages involving only non-Christians are acceptable to God even if they violate **Matthew 19:9** because non-Christians are not under the law of Christ.

In **Matthew 19:5** we learn that marriage was not just for Adam and Eve, but it is for all mankind, ". . . For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh." Surely no one contends this was for Adam and Eve only, as they had neither father nor mother. Now, since we have all mankind involved in marriage, it is crystal clear that marriage is not an institution limited to the church or covenant, limited to Christians only. Marriage antedates the church and the nation.

Does the covenant of God apply to all men? The Biblical answer to this question is "YES." The Lord commissioned his apostles to teach "all nations" (**Matthew 28:19-20**), "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (**Acts 1:8**), and "to preach the word to the whole creation" (**Mark 16:15-16**). Christ will judge all men by His words (**John 5:22, 27; 12:48**). The commands to repent and be baptized are in the covenant of Christ (**Acts 2:28; Mark 16:15-16**). They are not addressed to Christians but to the alien sinners. Therefore, all men are accountable to the covenant of Christ.

Some might ask, "*Doesn't baptism take away all sin?*" The Biblically correct answer to that question is "NO!" Baptism will not forgive a sin known to an individual which is yet unrepented. Repentance demands that one sever all relationships which violate the will of God. Faith in Jesus Christ must precede baptism (**Mark 16:16**), and baptism without prior faith is of no value; repentance must also precede baptism (**Acts 2:38**), and baptism without prior

repentance of every known sin is useless. One who will not repent is not ready to be baptized. If a man makes it clear that he does not intend to repent of his sinful situation, he cannot be scripturally baptized! He would just get wet! The notion that baptism somehow sanctifies an unholy relationship so as to turn adultery into marriage is preposterous. Baptism is not some sort of magic which performs marriage ceremonies for adulterers!

If one can keep on committing adultery after being baptized, then one can keep on committing murder after being baptized. If not, why not? Baptism does many things: baptism puts one into Jesus Christ (**Galatians 3:26-27**); it is into the death of Christ (**Romans 6:3-4**); it saves one from sin (**Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21**); it brings remission of sins (**Acts 2:37-38**); baptism washes away sins (**Acts 22:16**); it inducts one into the body, the church (**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**); baptism is into newness of life (**Romans 6:3-5**); it frees one from sin (**Romans 6:17-18**). But baptism will not remove temptation, nor does it guarantee eternal life and will not change a sinful practice into a righteous one or change a sinful relationship into a righteous one!

All men are subject to the laws of Christ on divorce and remarriage. I would be a false teacher if I tried to justify those who are living in a sinful relationship!

I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a homosexual couple who refused to give up their sinful lifestyle.

I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a man who was living with two wives.

I would not baptize a couple in an adulterous marriage for the same reason I would not baptize a woman who worked as a prostitute and was unwilling to change her occupation.

Some have said I am making adultery the unpardonable sin; but I would beg to disagree. One who is scripturally immersed is forgiven of all sins. But when they continue their sinful activities, they are separated from God and need to repent, lest they be lost. So the man or woman in an unscriptural marriage can be forgiven, but they cannot remain (repentance) in that unscriptural union and be pleasing to God.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17