



The Voice of Truth



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What Baptism Cannot Do

By Jimmy Pettigrew

There is an operation of God that takes place when a penitent believer is baptized. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (**Colossians 2:12**). God operates to: remit, blot out, and wash away sins (**Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16**). Baptism is important, necessary to receive remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**), necessary for one to be in Christ (**Romans 6:3-4**), necessary to become a child of God (**Galatians 3:26-27**), necessary to be put into the one body, the church (**1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23**).

However, this operation involves the past life, and only as one is brought into Christ does the operation affect the present and future. One must live a Christian life. What baptism cannot do:

1. Baptism cannot change the life. This is done by repentance. Notice these verses: "But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went" (**Matthew 21:28-29**). A changed life is wrought by repentance.

2. Baptism cannot remove temptations. "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have (its) perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (**James 1:2-4**). The true view of temptation or trial is that it is an opportunity to gain new strength through overcoming. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you" (**1 Peter 4:12**).

3. Baptism cannot prevent one from doing wrong. It is true that a child of God should not err from the truth, but even after

preaching to others Peter was still condemned for his action; "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Cephas before (them) all, If thou, being a Jew, livest as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (**Galatians 2:11, 14**). Notice what the apostle Paul wrote, "But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (**1 Corinthians 9:27**).

4. Baptism cannot guarantee eternal salvation. "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure" (**Philippians 2:12-13**). One purged, cleansed from sin, must add the Christian qualities stated in **2 Peter 1:5-11**, "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in (your) virtue knowledge; and in (your) knowledge self-control; and in (your) self-control patience; and in (your) patience godliness; and in (your) godliness brotherly kindness; and in (your) brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Baptism does not instill these

important qualities of Christian character.

There is a marvelous working of God that takes place when people are baptized. One is raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:3-4**). If we fail to live the new life, we are failing to live in harmony with one of the meanings of our baptism; we were raised a new creation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Our affections, thinking, must be fixed on things above. Baptism is important, but baptism is not the end of what a Christian must do. Does your life show that you been raised with Christ? Or, does it show that you need to recall the meaning of your baptism?

Weakness and Weak Brethren

By Mark Mayberry

In this lesson, let us consider what the Bible says on the subject of weakness. God's Word speaks of those who are weak in conscience and in faith; it refers to the weakness of the flesh, and also describes those who are spiritually weak. Yet, none of these conditions should be constant or chronic. No one is justified by saying, "I am weak. I will forever be weak. Therefore, I am excused." Rather, we are commanded to grow in grace, faith and knowledge (**Eph. 4:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:17-18**). In each case, in the very context that discusses weakness, we also learn that God has made provision for the weak to become strong.

Weak In Conscience

In 1st Corinthians 8, Paul discusses those who are weak in conscience regarding meat that had been sacrificed to idols (**1 Cor. 8:1-12**). Apparently, such individuals came from a Gentile background. Prior to their conversion, they had worshipped in the idol's temple, and in various ways, had honored false gods. Now that they were Christians, how should they view such matters? What position should they take regarding meat that had been offered in sacrifice to an idol? Paul affirms the truth that the idol is nothing, and meat formerly used in idolatrous worship is clean. Yet, not all men have this knowledge. Therefore, caution is in order. Paul admonished the brethren to treat one another with deference. He said, "Don't violate your own

conscience, or do anything that would cause a fellow-Christian to violate theirs." The Corinthian disciples were to be helpful and supportive towards one another. Furthermore, they were to avoid any actions that would imply an endorsement of idolatry (**1 Cor. 10:14-33**).

Having emphasized the need for forbearance, let us recognize that weakness should not be a permanent state. God has made provision for the weak to become strong. True, a man should not violate his conscience, but one's conscience should be reflective of a continually growing basis of knowledge. Ignorance may lead us to object to things that are not objectionable. Ignorance may also lead us to participate in things that are sinful and wrong. However, with continued growth, both of these problems should be corrected. The conscience operates according to what it has been taught, and it must be constantly instructed according to the Word of God (**1 Tim. 1:5; 3:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:18**).

Weak In Faith

In Romans 14, Paul discusses those who are weak in faith regarding the eating of meats and the observing of days. Apparently such individuals came from a Jewish background. Throughout their lives, they had been taught that certain meats were to be regarded as unclean and certain days treated as holy. Now they are Christians. How should they view such matters? Paul affirms the truth that all meats are clean and days are equal. The solution is in the context. Yet, not all have this knowledge. Therefore, caution is in order. Again, Paul admonished the brethren to treat one another with deference: "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." Further, he repeated the admonition, "Don't violate your own conscience, or do anything that would cause fellow Christians to violate theirs" (**Rom. 14:1-4, 13-23**).

Nevertheless, let us recognize that weakness should not be a perpetual condition. God has made provision for the weak to become strong. Once more, the solution is in the context. Here, as well as in other places,

God's word affirms that meats are clean and days (other than the Lord's day) are insignificant (**Acts 10:9-16; Col. 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5**). The weak brother is mistaken in his beliefs. Now that he has been properly instructed, he should accept God's revelation on the subject. Granted, sometimes it takes a while for teaching to sink in, but in time, his conscientious convictions should reflect this newfound understanding of God's word.

How tragic that in recent years this passage has been used in defense of Homer Hailey, an aged and learned brother, who teaches error on marriage-divorce-and-remarriage. Those brethren who would employ **Romans 14** in defense of brother Hailey's error must, of necessity, categorize him as the weak brother who misunderstands God's will, as opposed to the strong brother who knows the truth. Such application is mistaken on two fronts: (1) although the context of **Romans 14** speaks of things that are morally neutral, it has been improperly applied to matters of serious and doctrinal import. Can one commit fornication "to the Lord?" Is adultery "clean?" Are unscriptural marriages matters of moral indifference? Obviously not. (2) The weak brother of **Romans 14** is expected to accept God's revelation on the disputed subject: Meats are clean and days are nothing. Hopefully, in time, his conscience will reflect this newfound understanding. Ultimately, it matters not whether he eats meats or refrains from such, but he must accept the truth of God. The weak brother is not to remain weak forever.

How amazing, therefore, it is that this passage has been used in defense of an aged warrior of the cross who has held an erroneous position of marriage-divorce-and-remarriage for over 50 years. First of all, his doctrine allows for men and women in unscriptural marriages to remain in a state of adultery. The eternal consequences of such teaching are grave (**Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21**). Secondly, despite the repeated and prolonged efforts of faithful men, brother Hailey shows absolutely no willingness to change his position. How could such an individual be called a weak brother? If by

some stretch of the imagination, the term could be properly applied, then we must ask, "How much time is required for a weak brother to become strong?" Obviously, we should give individuals time to come to a knowledge of the truth. However, if fifty years is not sufficient, how much time is required? Seventy-five years? One hundred? Patience demands that we allow adequate time for study, correction and restoration. No one is advocating rashness. However, if longsuffering requires 50, 75 or 100 years, then the bounds of Christian fellowship can never effectively be drawn. If such a rule were applied to the restorative efforts of a local congregation, no disciplinary action would ever be forthcoming (**Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Tit. 3:10-11; etc.**).

Weak In Flesh

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus made reference to the weakness of the flesh (**Matt. 26:36-41; Mark 14:32-38**). Indeed, honesty demands that we acknowledge, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." However, is this an excuse of permanent weakness? Is this a justification for continually sinning? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be! How shall those who have died to sin still live in it? (**Rom. 6:1-2**). Instead, the solution is in the context: Here, as in other passages, watchfulness and prayer are essential to overcoming temptation (**Acts 20:31-32; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2-4**). If we are watchful and constant in prayer, we will be prepared to meet Satan's assault; however, if we are negligent and forgetful, we will be overthrown (**1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jas. 4:7-10**).

Weak In Spirit

In a variety of verses, the Scriptures speak of those who are spiritually weak. Indeed, there are many in this condition. Yet, how does one move from a state of weakness to a state of spiritual strength? The solution is in the context: Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders to "assist" the weak (**Acts 20:35**). The Thessalonians are told to patiently "help" the weak (**1 Thess. 5:14**). In writing to the Corinthians, Paul not only referred to their weakness, but also repeatedly

alluded to the source of spiritual strength, the gospel of Jesus Christ (**2 Cor. 13:1-10**).

Conclusion

We have discussed those who are weak in conscience, in faith, in flesh and in spirit. Weakness is a reality, but God does not want us to remain in this state perpetually. He wants us to become strong. Strength is derived from sharing a genuine relationship with God, and abiding in his word. In admonishing Joshua to "Be strong and courageous," God said, "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (**Josh. 1:6-9**). The Corinthians were admonished to "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (**1 Cor. 16:13**). The Ephesians were exhorted to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." They did this by putting on the full armor of God (**Eph. 6:10-13**). Timothy was told, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He did this by abiding in the foundational message of truth, and sharing it with others (**2 Tim. 2:1-2**). John said, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (**1 John 2:14**). This, brethren, is the key! Like the heroes of Hebrews chapter 11, by faith we can from weakness be made strong (**Heb. 11:32-34**). Through faith in God's revealed word, we can be sound, knowledgeable, and, ultimately, victorious.

What My Sin Does To God

Author unknown

While the difference in the boys' words is ever so slight, the attitudes of heart manifested by each are worlds apart.

When we sin, we indeed do great harm to

ourselves. We bring God's wrath upon ourselves (**Ephesians 5:5 ff; Colossians 3:5 ff**), render ourselves spiritually dead (**Romans 6:23**) and find ourselves separated from God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). When we persist in sin, we seal our eternity in hell (**Revelation 21:8**). This, of course, goes without mentioning the physical consequences we suffer here and now (cf. **1 Peter 2:20; 1 Peter 4:15**). Indeed, God will punish sinners!

However, as God's children, have you ever stopped to think about how we can disappoint and grieve our Father in heaven by the sins we commit? This should positively effect our actions far more than the fear of God's wrath, for "perfect love casts out fear" (**1 John 4:17-19**). God loved us enough to send His only Son to die for us (**John 3:16**). Yet, when we sin, we reject God's love for us by crucifying again the Son of God, putting Him to an open shame (**Hebrews 6:6**).

God, as a loving Father who is not willing that any of His children should perish but that all should come to repentance (**2 Peter 3:9**), is indeed grieved when we sin (**Genesis 6:5-7; Psalm 95:10; Ephesians 4:30**). Like any father who loves his children, God only wants the best for us. If only we would be as concerned about our Father as He is for us (cf. **1 John 4:19; 1 John 5:1-3**).

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; 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; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

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

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

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Times of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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