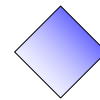


The Voice of Truth



June 17, 2012

After Baptism – What Then?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The Word of God tells us that there is one baptism (**Ephesians 4:5**), and this baptism is for all lost men (**Mark 16:16**). The design of baptism into Christ is for remission of sins, to obtain salvation (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**). Baptism changes ones state and relationship with God. One is out of Christ until he/she is baptized into Christ (**Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27**). Salvation is to be found only in Christ (**2 Timothy 2:10**); along with all spiritual blessings (**Ephesians 1:3**). Thus, one cannot have salvation or any other spiritual blessings out of Christ before being baptized into Christ!

Therefore, after baptism - what then? Baptism does not guarantee eternal life! Even after one is baptized into Christ, he/she can so sin as to be lost; and Paul told some: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace" (**Galatians 5:4**). They had fallen from grace! He had declared, earlier, that these had been called into the grace of Christ by the Gospel (**Galatians 1:16**). Here Paul plainly declared what so many in the religious world state cannot be done: They had fallen from grace! Baptism did not guarantee their eternal salvation (**Galatians 3:26-27**)!

Baptism does not guarantee eternal life; what then, after baptism? Let us make a list. After baptism you MUST:

- (1) Put the kingdom (the church) first (**Matthew 6:33**). Put God before pleasure, loved ones, company, work, etc. Like Paul, count all things loss for Christ (**Philippians 3:7-8**).
- (2) All of life is devoted to Christ (**Galatians 2:20**). We are to be living sacrifices for Christ (**Romans 12:1-2**). "For to me to live is Christ" (**Philippians 1:21**).
- (3) You must worship God every Lord's day (**Acts 20:7**;

Hebrew 10:25). Where else would a Christian want to be?

(4) You must live with care. Satan exists to make war with the saints of God (**Revelation 13:7**). Peter thus warned: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (**1 Peter 5:8**).

(5) Cease to practice sinful or doubtful things. Live as a new creature (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). The one who is baptized into Christ is raised up to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:4**). "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners" (**1 Corinthians 15:33**). "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (**1 Thessalonians 5:22**).

(6) Set your affection on things above. Don't put your trust in things of the world, for all will be burned up (**2 Peter 3:10**). "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (**Colossians 3:1-3**).

(7) Keep in touch with God. We must permit God to speak to us daily through the study of His Word (**Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15**). Never quit growing spiritually.

(8) Be doers of the Word (**James 1:22**). Show faith by works (**James 2**).

(9) We must be more concerned about obedience than sacrifice. To obey is better than sacrifice (**1 Samuel 15:22**).

(10) We must add to our faith (**2 Peter 1:5-8**). "For he that lacketh these things is blind, ... but, if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble" (**2 Peter 1:9-10**).

Brethren, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ ..." (**Philippians 1:27**). We must live the gospel to be ready for eternity. If you want to convince others of the value of Christianity – live it! ♦

A faith that will not take us to
Every services of the Lord's church
Will not take us to heaven! ♦

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“Increasing In Strength”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Spiritual growth is something that is required of all children of God. Unlike our involuntary physical growth, one can control his/her spiritual growth, and does so on a daily basis. In fact, the Bible even commands men and women to grow spiritually. The apostle Peter wrote, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (**I Pet. 2:2; II Pet. 3:18**). In the book of Hebrews, the Jewish Christians were chastised and rebuked for not growing as they should. They were told, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Based on these passages, we can learn some vital points concerning spiritual growth. We learn that spiritual growth: **1)** Begins at an early spiritual age. Those who are new babes in Christ can and must “grow.” **2)** One grows through a diet of “milk” (or “the first principles”) and then later advances to the “meat” of God’s word. **3)** One grows from a babe in Christ to mature in Christ through “exercising” and using the senses. **4)** One’s growth and maturity in Christ is seen as one is better able to discern “both good and evil.”

Now that we understand these points, let us study about one specific case of spiritual growth in the New Testament. Saul (Paul) is a prime example of one who grew spiritually, and grew fairly quickly in the faith. We find the record of his conversion in **Acts 9**. There, Christ told him to go to Damascus and it would be told him what he “*must do*” to be saved (**Acts 9:3-6**). Saul entered the city, and for three days and nights fasted and prayed before God (**v. 9, 11**). Once Ananias told him what he must do, Saul was baptized for the remission of his sins (**v. 17-18**). Then, “*he took food and was strengthened*” (**v. 19**).

Following this, we see Saul with the disciples at Damascus. Notice what happened then: “*And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in*

Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:20-22).

Notice that in the text of **Acts 9:19-22**, the words “*strengthened*” and “*strength*” were used in reference to Saul. Do these words refer to the same thing? No. One time, Saul “*was strengthened*” after having received food. Remember, he had gone without food or drink for three straight days (**Acts 9:9**). The next time the word was used, we find Saul increasing “*the more in strength*” as a result of his preaching Christ (**v. 20**), and confounding (baffling) the Jews (**v. 22**).

Now, what was the difference between the first use of the word “*strength*” or “*strengthened*” and the second? The difference was that Saul was strengthened physically the first time, and spiritually the second time.

How did Saul increase “*the more in* (spiritual) *strength*”? It came through his learning and then his proclaiming the truth concerning Christ. Two, it came through his obedience and standing for the truth even when it contradicted his former lifestyle (**Acts 9:21**). It also came through controversy, i.e., confounding the Jews concerning Christ. What we read in **Acts 9:20-22** is a specific application of **Hebrews 5:14** which tells us spiritual growth requires us having our “*senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*”

A problem that is plaguing the Lord’s church in many places today is a lack of maturity on the part of Christians. Too many congregations have 20, 30, and 40 year-old babies when it comes to spiritual growth. These people cannot teach, they cannot lead the worship services, they cannot talk to someone about their soul one-on-one, they have little interest in spiritual matters, they know very little about the Bible, (other than what the preacher has said) and they certainly want nothing to do with controversy or with having to maintain the lines God has drawn against sin and error, i.e., “*discerning good and evil*” (See also: **Ezek. 22:26**)! It seems rather than increasing “*the more in strength*” as Saul did, they are satisfied to be baptized, and then “*live and let live.*” They are spiritual weaklings (some call them “*spiritual invertebrates*” — no backbone!); spiritual babies who need to be rebuked for their lack of

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growth (**Heb. 5:12-14**).

Brethren, we cannot have this attitude if we are going to be what God wants us to be. Let us have the fire and zeal of Saul. In fact, he would later write to Titus and say that Christ died *"that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (**Tit. 2:14**). He wrote the Romans that Christians must be, among other things, *"fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"* (**Rom. 12:11**). We will not be what God wants us to be if we do not have that fire and fervor to stand for God's word, to proclaim it far and wide, and let the chips fall where they may!

It is past time that we got busy on our spiritual growth. Brethren, this is not something that you wait for like a teenager's "growth spurt." Spiritual growth is something we must work at on a daily basis.

Why did Saul increase *"the more in strength"*? It was not because someone else did his work, nor because he let people think what they wanted to about Christ and His church. He did not grow as a result of "taking his seat" and waiting for strangers to walk in the door at Damascus or Jerusalem. He did not grow by saying that he and the Jews were "worshipping the same God." Saul stands out as a good example for all of us, because when we do what he did, we will grow as he did!

Was this all Saul did in order to become strong spiritually? Of course, not! We see Saul (Paul) consistently in prayer with God (**Eph. 1:15-23, 3:13-21; Phil. 1:3-4; Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:2; II Tim. 1:3**). We see sacrifices Saul (Paul) made for the Lord (**Acts 15:25-26, 16:22-23, 21:13, 23:12-13; II Cor. 11:8, 23-28, 12:15; Col. 4:10, 18**). We also find Saul (Paul) concerned about his brethren, and being a good example toward them (**II Cor. 11:28; I Thess. 2:2-12**). All of these things played a part in Saul's spiritual growth; and in **Acts 9:20-22**, we find a living example of

Hebrews 5:14.

By the way, how is our growth? Are we still a ways off from where we would like to be as a Christian? I know of no person who would say they have grown as much as needed, do you? Therefore, let us get to work and be busy in our spiritual growth.

Let us follow the righteous example of Saul (Paul) who shows us what true strength is (**I Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17**). Let us not merely tolerate, but demand that the strong, sound preaching of the gospel thunder forth from the pulpit. Let us challenge ourselves to bring others to Christ by explaining the truth to them. Let us not back down from the devil when he rears his head and challenges us. Let us not apologize for controversy between truth and error. Let us, with a determined resolve, stand as Saul stood, and do what he did. Let us *"confound the Jews"* of our day and discern both good and evil that we might lead others to Christ. *"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* (**Gal. 6:9**)

Conclusion

Who knows the untold numbers of people that came to the Lord as a result of Saul's (Paul's) work (**Acts 19:10, 28:23-24, 30-31**, etc.). But, he could have done nothing had he sat on the sidelines and been satisfied to occupy his space, and not challenge error in her strongholds and citadels. Had he not *"increased ... in strength"* in his early days as a Christian, he may not have done all that he did.

You may never (physically) grow more than five feet tall, but you (and I) can be giants for the Lord when we increase in our spiritual strength and grow as a Christian should!

"Not to know is ignorance, but to refuse to learn is pride." - L.E. Sloan Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

When an archer misses the mark, he turns and looks for the fault within himself.
Failure to hit the bull's-eye is never the fault of the target. To improve your aim -
Improve yourself. ♦

THINK ABOUT IT!

When a farmer stops plowing his land, stops planting seed, and stops harvesting his crops, he has stopped doing those things that identify him as being a farmer. When a Christian stops attending worship services regularly, stops studying, stops giving as he has been prospered, and has stopped working for the Lord, he has stopped being a Christian because he has stopped doing those things that identify him as a Christian. *"By their fruits ye shall know them,"* (**Matthew 7:20**). ♦

Seeking First Century Christianity Today

By Jonathan L. Perz

Why is it that twenty-first century “Christians” seek a form of Christianity so different than that of the first century? Man adds to and takes away from God’s word as if there were no warnings in scripture against such behavior (**Rev. 22:18-19**). If you look around in the church you have chosen to be a part of, what do you see?

Do you see a church like the one you can read about in your Bible? Do the members act like the Christians of the first century? Is the worship like that of the first century (at least the good and proper examples of it)? Is the Lord’s money being spent the way the first century saints spent it? Have you even considered that these things are prescribed within the pages of the New Testament?

I am not suggesting that we give up all modern living and imitate life as it was in ancient times. I am suggesting that we give up modern innovations to the way the Lord’s church is organized and operated! You might ask, “Why?” The answer is simple.

The apostles, who labored to establish the church, were granted authority by Christ to teach and preach the things they did (**Mt. 16:19**). Their teaching was unified (**1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16**). They taught the same things in all of the local churches in that day (**1 Cor. 4:17**). They be-seeched the followers of Christ to stand fast in those things taught (**Phil. 1:27; 2 Thess. 2:15**). They did this because this is what the inspiration of God taught them (**2 Tim. 3:16**). Jesus Christ wanted His church (**Mt. 16:18**) to have certain characteristics (**Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-13**). Furthermore, Jesus Christ wanted His followers to do as He commanded (**John 14:15; 15:10**). What has changed in the past 1974 years?

If Christ is the same today as He was in the first century (**Heb. 13:8**), and if the Gospel is the same today as it was in the first century (**Gal. 1:6-10**), why is it so difficult to find genuine first century Christianity today?

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

Things That Impress Visitors

1. Members that day dream or sleep through sermon; talk during observance of the Lord’s Supper.
2. Members that open a bottle of pop during services which makes a noise each time it opens.
3. Scribbling in and playing with the hymnals.
4. Members who whisper, talk, write notes, and pass pictures, etc. during services.
5. Members who are privileged to serve during the worship, but are so over medicated that they sound drunk.
6. Persistent late-comers who disturb and distract the worshipers.
7. Members who do not speak to visitors. ♦

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

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule 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

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com