

# THE RELATION OF BAPTISM TO SALVATION

BY J. R. GRAVES, LL.D.,

*Editor of "The Baptist," etc.*

"If a man love me, he will keep my words—commandments."

"He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." \* \* "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."—Christ.

- 1. HAS CHRISTIAN IMMERSION ANY CONNECTION WITH SALVATION!**
- 2. IF ANY, WHAT IS THE RELATION?**
- 3. IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD WE CONSIDER OURSELVES NO FRIENDS OF CHRIST, UNLESS WE OBEY HIS COMMAND TO BE BAPTIZED?**

## THE RELATION OF BAPTISM TO SALVATION.

"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I command you?

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"If a man love me, he will keep my words"—commandments."—Christ.

THE above are the words of Christ, and fraught with meaning of the utmost moment to each one of us. The reasonable inference from the above solemn declaration is, That Christ accounts no one as his friend, in fact, that no one loves him, unless he obeys whatsoever things Christ commands him. Now Christian immersion stands first and foremost among the commands Christ enjoined upon all who **profess** to love him—the first and representative of

all future obedience—since, embraced in its profession, is the pledge of unqualified and continued obedience in all the requirements of Christ. The questions proposed to be discussed, therefore, are:

**I. Has Christian immersion any connection with salvation?**

**II. If any, what is that relation?**

**III. In what circumstances should we consider ourselves unsaved,—no friends of Christ unless we obey his command to be baptized?**

There are those who evidence impatience at the announcement of such a topic, because, in their opinion, the Scriptures do not furnish the shadow of a reason to justify any one in supposing that immersion in water—an overt act, and contingent entirely upon the will of third parties can, in any way, by a merciful Savior, be connected with our eternal salvation; that simple faith in Christ is the one and all-sufficient thing that Christ requires of a believer to secure his richest blessings here, and salvation hereafter.

If there be no semblance of a connection between baptism and salvation, how can we account for the fact, that every denomination of professing Christians, save the Baptists, do, in the published Symbols of their faith,—whether called "Decrees of Councils," "Confessions of Faith," "Creeds," or "Disciplines," teach that there is a vital connection—*i. e.*, that, where baptism is wanting, no salvation can exist; and base their constant practice upon this doctrine? There must be a relation of some sort, or we cannot rationally account for the almost universal belief and perpetuation of so gross an error through so many ages. Naked error cannot endure the light, and it must have the outer semblance of truth with which to clothe itself.

The theory that baptism is essential to salvation, and that, in the use of this rite as the effectual **means**, the blessings of remission of sins and regeneration are obtained, and all the benefits of Christ's mediation secured to the recipient, whether adult or infant, is commonly known as "baptismal regeneration;" and it might better be called *baptismal salvation*, since a

regenerated person is, without doubt, a saved person. Now, this theory is held and practiced to-day by the overwhelming mass of professed Christians, by all Catholic and by all Protestant sects, as well as by many hundreds of thousands who do not class themselves with Protestants; as the Campbellites, Mormons, and lesser sects.

Among these sects have been found, in every age of their existence, the profoundest scholarship that has blessed or cursed the world. We must therefore admit, that if the Scriptures do not clearly teach a **vital** relation existing between baptism and salvation, there must be a very strong appearance of it for so many to be deceived; and this we do admit.

If asked, at the outset, how is it possible for so many to be wrong, and wrong for so many ages, on so important a matter, while only a comparative few have been and are in the right, my answer is, that error, and especially religious error, has always carried the multitude; and that form of religious error that is peculiarly agreeable to the human heart is most certain to be popular. Mankind easily believes what they want to believe.

It is the demand of the depraved heart of man to be saved, in part, at least, by his own self-help—deeds of righteousness that he can do—and not simply and solely by the **unmerited** grace of God. We might therefore expect that such a doctrine as salvation by circumcision would be universally popular to the Jews, and salvation by baptism to the Gentiles, who adopted the forms of Christianity, and this is lamentably true.

The following passages, in addition to those at the head of this, are the principal ones relied upon as proof-texts of a vital connection between baptism and salvation:

MATT. III: 15: "*Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to*  
***fulfill***

***all righteousness.***"

LUKE VII: 30: "*But the Pharisees and lawyers* ***rejected the counsel***

***of God against themselves, not being baptized of John.***"

MARK XVI:16: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*"

MARK I: 4: "*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism*

*of repentance* ***for the remission of sins.***"

JOHN III: 5: "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.*"

ACTS II:38: "*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 Ghost.*"

ACTS XXII:16: "*Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.*"

TITUS III:5: "*According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"

GAL. III:27: "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*"

I PETER III:21: "*The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"

ROM. VI:5: "*For if we have been planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.*"

Cor. XII:13: "*For in [not by] one Spirit we are all baptized into one*

*body."*

I submit a brief statement of doctrine which all Protestant sects, in common with the Catholics, from whom they derived it, believe to be sustained by the above Scriptures:

### **GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH.**

"Holy baptism is the appointed sacrament of salvation, by which all past sins are washed away, and without which there is no promise of salvation."

CHRYSOSTOM.—"In baptism, or the spiritual circumcision, there is no trouble to be undergone; but to throw off the load of sin, and receive pardon for all foregoing offenses."

### **LATIN CATHOLIC.**

"The baptism of the church is given for the remission of sins."

"If there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless."

"The body of Christ is his true Church, into which no one can enter, except by baptism; by which sacrament the sinner is regenerated, and receives remission of all sins that are past: and it is therefore called the sacrament of salvation. If infants need not regeneration, baptism would be a needless grace, and an unmeaning ceremony to them."

### **PROTESTANT.**

LUTHER.—"This is not done by changing of a garment, or by any laws or works, but by a new birth, and by the renewing of the inward man, which is done in baptism, as Paul saith: 'All ye that are baptized have put on Christ.' Also according to Titus iii:5: For, besides that, they who are baptized are regenerated and renewed, by the Holy Spirit, to a heavenly righteousness, and to eternal life, there riseth in them also a

new light and a new frame; there riseth in them new and holy affections, as the fear of God, true faith, and assured hopes, etc.; there beginneth in them also a new will, and this is to put on Christ truly, and according to the Gospel."

It is still the doctrine of the Lutheran Church. This is from a manual for scholars and candidates for confirmation in that church, published at Halle, by Pastor Weber, 1834. Candidates are taught to believe and required to recite this before confirmation: "Baptism is not mere water only, but **water put into God's command**, and united with God's Word. **It effects the forgiveness of sins, redeems from death and the Devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe it**, as the word and promise of God show. \* \* \* The water, indeed, does not do this, but the Word of God that is **with and by means of the water**, and the faith which trusts that Word of God **in the water**. For without the Word of God the water is mere water, and no baptism; but, with the Word of God, baptism is a gracious **Water of Life**, and a bath of the new birth in the Holy Ghost."

LUTHER'S CHURCH AT WITTEMBURG.—"We believe and confess that baptism is that sea into the bottom whereof, as the apostle saith, God doth cast all our sins."

CONFESSION OF SAXONY.—"I baptize thee; that is, I do witness, that, by this dipping, thy sins be washed away, and that thou art now received of the true God."

CONFESSION OF BOHEMIA.—"We believe that whatsoever by baptism is in the outward ceremony signified and witnessed, all that doth the Lord God perform inwardly; that is, he washeth away sin, begetteth a new man again, and bestoweth salvation upon him. For the bestowing of these excellent fruits was holy baptism given and granted to the church."

HELVETIA.—"To be baptized into the name of Christ, is to be enrolled, entered and received into covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God; that is to say, to be called the sons of God; to be purged also from the filthiness of sins, and to be endued with the manifold grace of God for to lead a new and innocent life."

CONFESSION OF SUEVELAND.—"As touching baptism, we confess that it is the font of regeneration, washeth away sins, and saveth us."

PRESBYTERIAN CONFESSION OF FAITH.—"Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party to be baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace,—of his engrafting into Christ,—of regeneration,—of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life."

If baptism is indeed a **seal** of the Covenant of Grace, then no one ever was or can be saved without baptism, or be engrafted into Christ, or receive remission of sins or regeneration. If the rite is not a "sacrament" of salvation, it is essential to it.

#### **EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND.**

Every one confirmed in this church is required to give the following answer to the Bishop, after giving to him their **Christian** names:

QUES.—"Who gave thee this name?"

ANS.—"My sponsors in baptism, wherein I was made an heir of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

They are required to believe this in their hearts. Mr. Melville, the most distinguished preacher of the Church of England, and standard defender of its faith, says: "We believe it to be specially and through the sacrament of baptism that the Holy Ghost acts in renovating the nature which became corrupt through the apostasy. We really think that no fair, no straightforward dealing, man can get rid of the

conclusion that the church holds what is called 'baptismal regeneration.' You may dislike the doctrine, you may wish it expunged from the Prayer Book, but so long as I subscribe to that Prayer Book, and so long as I officiate according to the forms of that Prayer Book, I do not see how I can be commonly honest, and yet deny that every baptized person is on that account regenerate.

These views of Mr. Melville were fully indorsed by Bishop McIlvaine.

Because of these teachings, Bishop Cummings, a few years ago, seceded, and formed the Reformed Episcopal Church.

### **THE METHODIST DISCIPLINE.**

According to this unalterable standard of American Methodism, it is conceded by Mr. Wesley that all infants are regenerated by baptism, and that, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless baptized; and it is equally true that no regenerated adult person can be baptized according to the office of baptism of this church. Each one is required to confess that he is unpardoned and unregenerated, and comes to baptism to **seek** these blessings; and that he may receive them, the whole congregation is required to pray:

"Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin (and that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God, but live in sin, committing many actual (transgressions), and that our Savior Christ saith none shall enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerated and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost, I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that, of his bounteous goodness, he will grant unto these persons that which by nature they cannot have; that they may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made lively members of the same.

"O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in these persons may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in them. Regard, we

beseech thee, the supplications of this congregation, and grant that these persons now to be baptized may receive the fullness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children."

Mr. Wesley, the father and founder of Methodism, in his Sermons and Doctrinal Tracts, the now standard theology of Methodism, says: "It is certain that our church supposes that all who are baptized in infancy are, at the same time, born again; and it is allowed that the whole office for baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition."—Sermon xiv.

This he teaches is its efficacy in case of adults: "By baptism we, who are by nature the children of wrath, are made the children of God; and this regeneration, which our church, in so many places, ascribes to baptism, is more than barely being admitted into the church, though commonly connected therewith; being grafted into the body of Christ's church, we are made the children of God by adoption and grace. \* \* By water, then, as a means—the water of baptism—we are regenerated or born again; whence it is also called, by the apostle, the 'washing of regeneration.' If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism; seeing, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless this be washed away by baptism. Infants need to be washed from original sin; therefore they are proper subjects of baptism."—Sermon xiv.

The last General Conference, held in Memphis, Tenn., decided that the increasing numbers, who were received professing regeneration before baptism, was an evil, since it granted that one could be regenerated without the means.

#### **THE DISCIPLES', OR CAMPBELLITES', CREED.**

"Immersion is the means divinely appointed for the actual enjoyment of this first and greatest of blessings."—Mill. Harb.

"I affirm, then, that the first institution in which we can meet with God, is the institution of baptism."

This is a law, or a work—*i. e.*, something to be done.

"It is not our faith in God's promise of remission, but our going down into the water [an act or work] that obtains the remission of sins." "I assert that there is but one action ordained, in the New Testament, to which God has promised, or testified, that he will forgive our sins; this action is Christian immersion."

"No man has any proof that he is pardoned until he is baptized; and, if men are conscious that their sins are forgiven, and that they are pardoned before they are immersed, I advise them not to go down into the water, for they have no need of it."

"Remission of sins cannot be enjoyed by any person before immersion."

"Before we are justified in Christ, live in Christ, and fall asleep in Christ, we must be introduced or immersed into Christ."

If the above is not baptismal salvation, the following most certainly is:

"Is it, or is it not, through faith in the blood of Christ that we receive the remission of our sins **through the act of immersion**? [Here a **work and faith are conjoined**. Read on.] The value and efficacy of his sacrifice is the very document itself which constitutes the burthen of the testimony; belief of this testimony is what impelled us into the water. **Knowing that the efficacy of the blood** is to be communicated to our consciences, in the way which God has been pleased to appoint [through the act of immersion], we stagger not at the promise of God, but flee to the sacred ordinance, which brought the blood of Jesus in contact with our consciences. [Here we have faith and works inseparably conjoined.]

Without knowing and believing this, immersion is a blasted nut: the shell is there, but the kernel is wanting."—Campbell on Chris. .Bap., p. 521.

"In baptism we are in spirit, as well as in person, buried with the Lord, wherein also we are raised with him."—Campbell on Bap., p. 256.

The reader can see that all the different denominations—the last no more than the first—that were originated by men since the days of the apostles, do teach that baptism is virtually connected with salvation; so vitally, that without it, there can be no spiritual life, no possibility of salvation. They all understand the passages they quote to sustain their theory of baptismal regeneration **literally**; that sins are literally washed away by the literal water of baptism through the working of the Holy Spirit, and that it is the **bath** of regeneration, into which persons descend unpardoned sinners, and out of which they arise saints; that baptism seals them heirs of grace, washes them "whiter than snow."

The Baptist churches are **alone** in repudiating in faith and practice the above doctrine. They have alone, in all ages since the ascension of Christ, taught that a moral nature, renewed by the Holy Spirit—a birth from above—is in all cases essential to baptism, and that the rite, among other things, was appointed to symbolize this great fact; that it is the act for the profession of repentance **exercised**, of faith **possessed**, and regeneration **enjoyed**.

In 1120, the Baptists of Europe, put forth a tract, entitled **Antichrist**," in which they say this: "A third work of Antichrist consists in this, that he attributes the regeneration of the Holy Spirit unto the mere external act [of baptism], baptizing infants in that faith, teaching that thereby baptism and regeneration must be had, on which principle he confers and bestows orders, and, indeed, grounds all his Christianity, which is contrary to the word of the Holy Scriptures."

They also put forth fourteen Articles of Faith, of which this is **one**:  
"ARTICLE 7. We believe in the ordinance of baptism. The water is the visible external, which [not confers but] **represents** to us that which by virtue of God's invisible operation is **within us**, namely, the renovation of our minds and the mortification of our members through the faith of Jesus Christ, and by this ordinance we are received into the holy congregation of God's people, **previously** professing and declaring our faith and change of life."

From the above the reader can see that the professed Christian world is divided into only two grand divisions viz: Catholics, Protestants, Campbellites, and Mormons on the one side and Baptists alone on the other. All can see the doctrinal difference is fundamental and vital; and the two theories being the very antipodes of each other, they cannot both be evangelical—scriptural. If one is scriptural, the other is perilously wrong; utterly unscriptural and subversive of the whole plan of salvation.

**If one theory will save the souls of men the other certainly will not, else there are two distinct and opposite plans of salvation.**

This is a plain, unvarnished, honest statement of the case, written to honor the Author and Finisher of the Faith, for he is the one Lord and Savior—and can be the author of but "**one faith**," *one* baptism, and *one* church as the pattern of all his churches. It is incumbent upon every one professing to be the friend of Jesus, to examine honestly and prayerfully the word of God, and decide which of these two theories is the scriptural and right one; for the reader is bound to adopt the one or the other— risk his soul's eternal salvation upon one or the other—for there is no possible middle ground. I have placed the theories fairly before your eyes, expressed in the very words of their Creeds and Confessions, and indorsed by their standard teachers.

Before entering upon the examination, I will assume four plain statements to be granted, and will therefore lay them down in the form of Axioms:

#### **AXIOM I.**

**Contradictory propositions cannot be equally true; if one is true, the opposite of it must be false.**

#### **AXIOM II.**

**The Holy Scriptures, rightly translated and interpreted, in no instance contradict themselves.**

#### **AXIOM III.**

**If any passage interpreted according to the primary or literal signification of the terms, conflicts with an admitted fundamental doctrine of the gospel or the general teachings of Scriptures, it must be interpreted by the secondary or figurative sense of the term, and, vice versa.**

#### **AXIOM IV.**

**There is but one way revealed in the Scriptures by which a sinner can come to God through Christ, and receive the blessings of pardon, regeneration, and salvation.**

From the examination of the symbols of faith of the various denominations as expressed above, I will take it for granted that only **two ways** have yet been proposed; and from the word of God we are justified in stating that there are only two ways conceivable by which sinful man may come to God for pardon and salvation.

1. By an **act of faith**, an individual mental act upon repentance.
2. Through some **overt act** or "sacrament," dependent upon the will of others.

In scriptural terms:

1. By grace only, without works: or,
2. By works only, which God is graciously pleased to make efficacious.

There are a few cardinal truths which underlie and form the foundation of the gospel plan of salvation, which all who have rightly apprehended the gospel, and tasted of its blessedness, known to be **saving truths**.

1. That there is but one Mediator between God and man, and he the Priest of Calvary, who once offered himself up for us all. No **human** priest or mediator is therefore tolerated in the gospel, because there is no physical **sacrifice** to offer, no **sacrament** to perform, no visible **seal** to be fixed.

**There is no priest but Jesus.**

2. That not **by**, or in connection **with, or because of, works** of any description or deeds of law of any character, moral or ceremonial, legal or ecclesiastical, does a sinner come, or is a sinner brought to Christ and saved, but by unmerited grace alone.

No denomination of professed Christians is entitled to be considered or called evangelical, that does not at least admit, hold vital, teach the above two truths, and whose practice does not accord with them.

It is a flagrant misuse and abuse of the term "evangelical," to apply it to a denomination that either **theoretically** or **practically** deny either of the above saving truths. What shall we say of those that both **theoretically and practically** deny both? It is to be an accomplice of most pernicious error to indorse such as evangelical, which means according to the teachings of Christ and his apostles.

Now in the light of the above axioms and truths, let us inquire for the true relation of baptism to salvation, for I concede, in the out-start, that there is **some**, and, indeed, a **scriptural** and **intimate relation**; but not as "a means to an end," but the evidence visible and proof of an end: not the cause of a certain effect, but the effect of a certain cause— salvation.

Then, 1st.—if baptism is inseparably connected with our salvation as a means to an end, or cause to an effect, then it must be as a means:

(1.) To secure the actual remission of sins; or,

- (2.) To effect the actual cleansing away of our sins; or,
- (3.) To secure our justification before God; or,
- (4.) To effect and secure the regeneration of our moral natures—*i. e.*, the birth from above; or,
- (5.) To secure our living union with Christ; or,
- (6.) To **seal** all the blessings of the everlasting covenant to us,—which is salvation.

There is a process in mathematics, called elimination, by which the number of factors in two equations can be reduced. Let us see how many of the above hypotheticals can be eliminated, disproved, and so dropped out of, as not to encumber the operation.

**I. Baptism is not a divinely appointed means to secure the actual remission of our sins.**

I will make this evident from two considerations:

(I.) It contradicts both of the two great fundamental **vital** truths of Christianity— which all evangelical Christians of every nation admits and teaches—that in connection with, or because of a work, a specific physical act, the remission of sins can be obtained; and more, those who teach this are wont to call baptism **the** law of pardon. If it is only in or by obedience to it sins can be remitted, then it is by a deed of law that salvation is obtained.

It violates the first great truth; because the sinner not being allowed to baptize himself must depend upon the will and physical assistance of another, as the administrator of baptism, thus exalting him to all intents and purposes into a real priest, a mediator between the sinner and God, for there is no other name given among men by which baptism can be administered, except the minister or official servant of a church; and if baptism brings the sinner into saving relations to Christ, or the efficacy of

the blood of Christ to the soul, the administrator, by whatsoever name called, or in whatsoever habits dressed, he is a **real priest**.

But the **express letter** of the Word of God also condemns this theory, since it positively teaches that by and through faith alone the remission of sins are secured and enjoyed.

"To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name **whosoever believeth** in him **shall receive remission** of sins."—Acts x: 43.

This was the gospel preached by all the prophets when they preached the plan of salvation, and it was this doctrine that all the saints of the Old Testament believed, and by which they were saved before the rite of water baptism was originated. Nor was there any rite in the Old Testament by which the actual remission of sins was in that age connected. There is, there never has been but one way of pardon, one plan of salvation, and that has been by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with the above declaration of Paul in his sermon in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost demonstrated then and there, and before the eyes of Jews and Gentiles, that the remission of sins and salvation were not depending upon the physical act of baptism. Let us read on:

"While Peter yet spake these words, *i. e.*, 'that whosoever believeth on Him shall receive the remission of sins),' the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"—Acts x: 44-47.

All these, the first converts of the Gentile world, were actually pardoned and regenerated before they were baptized. There can be no cavil about this, on the part of any who are willing to bow to the clear and positive teachings of God's word.

But this forever decides that remission of sins is not secured through baptism as a means to an end, a cause for an effect.

I might pause here and multiply the clear, obvious statements of Scriptures until it filled pages.

Christ promised salvation to the believing, the unbaptized, thief upon the cross. Say not "he could not have been baptized, and, therefore," etc., but **believe** the great fact of the Gospel that Christ never promulgated heaven, never revealed but one act by which remission could be obtained, and that is through penitential faith on the Son of God; therefore the thief could be saved while nailed to the cross, otherwise he could not have been saved; for without remission of sins there is no salvation.

"John the Baptist baptized his subjects to secure for them the remission of sins." I answer, not for the actual remission of their sins did he baptize any, nor did he ever teach that baptism was a, or **the**, condition of salvation. If we know certainly what he taught, in one sermon, we know he did not teach differently at any time. By turning to John iii:35, we find his very words:

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things unto his hand. He that *believeth* on the Son *hath* everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth in him."

Christ taught the same doctrine:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John iii14-17.

**2. Baptism is not a sacrament in and by which our sins are actually cleansed away.**

In all the Old Testament there was no typical atonement without the blood of sacrifices—

And all the blood of beasts, On Jewish altars slain, pointed to the blood of Christ that was to be shed for the **actual** remission of **all** sin—the "**fountain** that was to be opened for sin and uncleanness." Therefore when we enter the new dispensation, the first thing that greets our eyes is the rent veil and the open mercy-seat, over which we read:

**"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."**—I John i:7.

There is not, therefore, a sin for baptism to wash away, since we come to the blood first. The baptismal cleansing cannot be **real** but **declarative** only, since it does nothing towards the actual cleansing away of sin.

Nor can it be said that it is **through baptism** we reach his blood but through **faith**. Paul is very clear on this point;

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation **through faith in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him that **believeth** in Jesus."—Rom. iii: 23.

### **3. Nor is baptism an act or sacrament by or on account of which we obtain justification before God.**

The word of God everywhere teaches that our justification is not conditioned upon our **works**—by deeds of law of any description whatever, or the grace of God is made of none effect—and how much less then to make it depend upon a deed or transaction which we are unable to perform, but must secure the consent of third parties—a church or priest—to do for us, thus making our justification before God depend upon the **will** and **act** of others, as well as our own, which is subversive of the whole plan of salvation. Faith, and

faith alone, independent of all overt acts, does this, and consequently secures our salvation.

Let this question be forever put to rest by the clear and explicit teachings of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, in which he emphasizes the fact that the saving righteousness of Christ is bestowed through faith in Christ, without any deed of law whatever, whether it be the law of baptism or of circumcision.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. \* \* To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. \* \* Therefore we conclude that a man **is justified by faith without deeds of law** [any law] \* \* seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith. \* \* Now to him that worketh [seeks justification by baptism] is the reward not received of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly; his faith is counted for righteousness. \* \* Therefore it [salvation] is by faith that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. \* \* Therefore, **being justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—Roms. iv and v chap. "Therefore we conclude that *a man is justified by faith without deeds of law*."—Rom. iii:28.

To faith, as the medium of justification, nothing can be added, or the whole scheme is destroyed.

"Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace."—Gal. v: 4.

How then can baptism be required except as the profession and evidence of this?

The work of Christ is the only **efficient**, and faith the only **instrumental**, agency in our salvation. Neither baptism, nor any rite or ordinance of religion is a means in order to this end:

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."—Rom. x: 4-11.

It is perverting the plan of salvation to its utter subversion to teach that baptism is the law of pardon and justification before God.

#### **4. Nor is it in, or by, baptism that we receive the promise of the Spirit.**

This is a cardinal doctrine of the Campbellites—that the gift of the Holy Spirit is conditioned upon baptism, and that no one is justified by God's Word to hope for the promise of the Spirit, except through water baptism.

But the scriptures teach us that we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, and not through baptism: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."—Gal. iii: 14.

If by the gift of the Holy Spirit is meant remission of sins, or regeneration of heart or justification unto life and salvation, then from the scriptures we learn that no one ever received the gift before pardon and regeneration,

etc., had been enjoyed; for believers in Christ, and **believers only**, ever received the "baptism" or "the gift of the Holy Spirit:"

"In whom **after that ye believed** ye were sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise."—Eph. i: 13. This regeneration Paul explains by indicating its results, and tells us clearly by what means it is wrought in us: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **even when we were dead in sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."—Eph. ii: 1-7.

"Now if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things [of the flesh, as above enumerated,] are passed away; and behold, all things are become new."--2 Cor. v: 17.

This is the work of the Spirit operating from above, and not through physical media, dependent upon the will of man—the administrator of baptism, be he minister or priest.

It is the Spirit of God that quickens, begets within us the divine life, and renews our souls in the likeness of Christ. This regeneration is not a change of state—merely professed relations—but the renovation and regeneration of our moral natures; and, I again emphasize it—it is not effected in, and by, the act of baptism as a means, any more than it was through the bloody sacrifices or ablutions under the legal dispensation, "Not all the outward forms on earth,

Nor rites that God has given,

Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,

Can fit a soul for heaven.  
The sovereign will of God alone  
Creates us heirs of grace,  
Born in the image of his Son,  
A new, peculiar race.  
The Spirit, like some heavenly wind,  
Breathes on the sons of flesh,  
Creates anew the carnal mind,  
And forms the man afresh.  
Our quickened souls awake and rise  
From their long sleep of death;  
On heavenly things we fix our eyes,  
And praise employs our breath."

**5. Baptism is not the means by or through which we are regenerated or born again, as all the Protestant, as well as Catholic creeds do teach.**

Christ, in his explanation of the new birth to Nicodemus, denominates spiritual regeneration a birth **from above**, and not from **below**.

"Verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born—*ανατηεν*—not again— but **"from above"** he cannot see, comprehend, understand, even the nature of "the kingdom of God," *i. e.*, Christ's visible, though **spiritual** kingdom on this earth. That he evidently referred to his visible earthly kingdom,—the qualifications for entering which Nicodemus came that night to inquire,—we learn, I. From the fact that John thus denominates it when he announced its approach (Matt. iii: 18); the kingdom of heaven 1. has approached, and, 2. From Christ's use of the phrase (Matt. iv: 17), also (Luke xvii: x) the

"kingdom of God is **among**—not within—you," and even in this same conversation, "for if I have told you **earthly things**, and ye believed not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" Thus clearly implying that this kingdom, though heavenly in its origin, was located upon the earth. By being "**born from above**," Christ taught the ruler of the Jews, and every inquirer of the way of salvation in subsequent ages, that it was not through earthly agents, as **human priests**, or ministers, in administering church rites, or sacraments, and the use of **earthly elements**, as water, or chrisms, that the regeneration of the heart could be effected, but alone through the direct agency and efficient workings of the Holy Spirit—that power which brought Christ alive from the dead—that the soul of a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins can be quickened and made spiritually alive.

The phrases "kingdom of heaven," "kingdom of God," "kingdom of God's dear Son," "kingdom of Christ," all refer to the self-same thing—Christ's visible kingdom on this earth, consisting of all his true churches.

## **6. Nor is baptism appointed to secure our spiritual union with Christ, by which we become the children of God.**

Ritualists, who have perverted the whole plan of salvation, to the subversion of the souls of men, hold and teach that baptism is the first act in which a sinner can meet with Christ, or be united to Christ; and, therefore, the sinner is directed to the river, pond, or pool, as his first act, and his first step toward Christ; and they teach that by baptism he is literally introduced into Christ, and spiritually united to him. This is placing **water** before **blood**, and making the baptizer—be he Protestant, or Catholic, or Campbellite--**a human priest**—a mediator between the sinner and the Savior.

This doctrine is abhorrent to the Word of God, which everywhere teaches us that we become the children of God by becoming one with Christ, God's Son; and that the **nexus**—the uniting link or act—is **faith**, and faith only—a mental operation, and not a physical act.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."—Gal. iii: 26.

By no other way, then, did anyone ever become united to Christ, and become a child of God, in virtue of his union with Christ, since all become Christ's, and the children of God, by faith alone—no act of the creature is necessary to be added to faith, and certainly much less an overt act of a third person cannot be necessary; since this would be making our filial relation to God depend upon the will and pleasure of a sinful man, or men.

**7. Nor does baptism in any way introduce us into, or secure for us the grace of God, by which we receive remission of sins and salvation.**

If this were true, then would it be true that the grace of God was dependent upon our merits—upon works of righteousness that **we** may do by the will and assistance of others— which doctrine is dishonorable to God, and destructive of the whole scheme of salvation by grace. But what saith the Scriptures?

"By whom also we **have access by faith** into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. v: 2.

"In whom we have boldness and **access** with confidence by **faith** of him."—Eph. iii: 12.

**8. Nor is baptism a seal, or the seal, of the Covenant of Grace, that not only offers and applies, but confirms, all the blessings of that covenant to us.**

It is most absurd, if not profane, to teach that any conceivable physical act performed by man is the **Seal** of the **Covenant of Grace**—a **spiritual** covenant; and the more so to say it has two or more seals. This is also to profane the office-work of the Spirit, by virtually committing it to fallible men, thus teaching that man—a priest—could do the work which a gracious God committed alone to the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit is the **Sealer**, and **Christ's likeness**, left upon the character as the result of the Spirit's sealing, is the image and superscription of the seal itself.

"In whom [Christ] also after that ye believed, **ye were sealed** with that Holy Spirit of promise."—Eph. i: 13.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit by **whom** ye are **sealed** unto the day of redemption."—Eph. iv: 30.

Now, having shown from the harmonious teachings of the Word of God that baptism is not a **means of remission**, or the, cleansing away of sin, or of **justification** or **regeneration**, or **union** with Christ, or a **seal** of the Covenant of Grace, how can we understand the passages quoted at the opening of these pages, in which baptism **seems** so intimately connected with remission and salvation? It seems to me that Peter, who uses one or two of the most plausible, is the one to explain them, which, we think, he most clearly does. He says:

"The like **figure** whereunto **baptism** doth now also save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,) but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

From this we learn, at least, two things—

(1) That baptism does not **produce** a good conscience—for one must have been produced before baptism in order for the rite to answer or satisfy its demands. Therefore baptism does not secure the remission of sins, and a conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ.

(2) That the rite of baptism was appointed, not to be a sacrament of salvation, but a **figure**, and a **figure** only, whether we consider it as related to repentance, to the remission of sins, or to regeneration.

Whatever it is said to do, it **does figuratively,—declaratively**; and can do nothing, confer nothing really. If we read "baptism of **repentance**," we

must understand that it is an act **professing repentance**—declaring one in the exercise of repentance.

If it is the "baptism of the remission of sins," or to "wash away sins," it still is declarative of the remission of sins enjoyed, and figurative of sins actually washed away by the blood of Christ.

If we read the "**bath** of regeneration," we must understand it as the outward evidence and sign of the existing fact.

This is the pass-key to all the passages quoted by those who teach that baptism is an, or **the**, efficacious means of, and necessary to, salvation—joined to faith in Christ—on the part of an adult; but efficacious and essential to salvation **without** faith or consciousness on the part of infants.

Now, it must follow that baptism is connected with faith in our salvation declaratively only. It is a visible expression or declaration that faith exists; it simply expresses or professes a saved state. By faith we receive Christ and all the blessings that flow from a union with him; and in the act of baptism we confess Christ, and avouch our allegiance to him as our Savior and Lawgiver. It is in no sense a **seal**, but simply a sign of grace received, and a union formed, the visible and appointed fruit or evidence of a loving faith.

Baptism not alone does this; good works—all outward obedience—do it also. For without obedience our faith would be reckoned a dead faith, because, without the inseparable sign of life—**growth**.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him."—James ii: 14.

They evidence that we are believers—that faith in, and union with, Christ does exist; but the observance of outward rites did not produce the faith, nor effect the union. In the same way a verbal confession of the sinner is joined with faith:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—Rom. x: 9, 10.

"Confession with the mouth," says Carson, is not less necessary, then, than belief with the heart, though in different respects. They are equally essential, only for different purposes; the one is required to own or authenticate the other; the one is the spirit, the other is the body—the visible form of the churchman. It is not strange, then, that we should find baptism joined with faith in the commission; its omission there would surprise us. Baptism is the appointed mode of confessing Christ: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." It is the great public act by which we assume His name, and subscribe ourselves His servants; and it is the declaration of Christ to us and the world that our sins are washed away; and thus we may be said to declaratively wash our sins away. It is our badge of discipleship; in its waters we "put on Christ"—openly avow our interest in, and our dependence on, Him. Primitive believers were known as such by their baptism—not soldiers, not recognized as Christians, until baptized; and, without this, they would not have been recognized as disciples, or followers, or friends, of Christ. Here, also, to the eye of others, we take our stand among the disciples of Christ. Previously possessing the substance—the spirit we put on the form, the body, the clothing of Christianity—our baptism authenticates our faith, declares us believers; it says, in symbol, we are Christ's; it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace; and hence can belong only to such as possess that grace, since its observance is designed to attest the reality and present existence of that grace. To place baptism upon a **sinner**, or a nonbeliever, or an unconscious infant, is to pervert the ordinance, and to teach a falsehood, which, if the person or child so baptized should believe, would insure the loss of the soul.

Illustration: In the Episcopal office, every one received into that organization is required to confess and affirm, that, in baptism, although it was administered to him when an unconscious infant, and asleep in his nurse's

arms, without knowledge or volition, he was made an "heir of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Now, with the Word of God to guide us, we say every one of all baptized into that communion, implicitly believing that statement, and depending upon it for salvation, will inevitably be lost ; for no living infant or adult, without volition, ever was made an heir of God, a member of Christ, or an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. And we ask the thoughtful Christian to examine each of the Protestant Confessions, and decide if their teachings were implicitly believed by those baptized in infancy, if they would not be forced to conclude that their salvation was secured to them when their parents had baptism administered to them in unconscious infancy as the "**sacrament** of salvation," or "**seal** of the covenant of grace?"

It must be evident to all that the position we occupy as Baptists, touching the relation of baptism 'to faith, does not necessitate the conclusion, that, in every case, there is an absence of salvation where there is an absence of baptism, as we are forced to conclude from the position occupied by Catholics, and Protestants, and Campbellites, who teach that it is the seal of the covenant of grace, or the appointed sacrament of salvation, or the law of pardon. Many will doubtless be saved who were never baptized. They confessed Him with their mouths, and honored Him with their lives; and they were accepted of Him, as was the thief. But all these are saved without baptism, as, in other circumstances, they could be without good works, nay, without verbal confession. Yet the two latter are joined with faith in our salvation. Good works, a verbal confession, and a baptismal profession, are none of them **agencies**, or even **instruments**, in our deliverance; but merely its declaration and evidences. In this relation alone are they required by God; and they are required only as opportunity of obedience is offered, and as light, in order to obey, is possessed. Good works are declared essential to a living faith (James ii:17); "Even so faith, if it bath not works, is dead, being alone."

And a verbal confession is required; and yet the thief was saved without the former, and who will say that he would have been lost had he not been able to express himself in the hearing of others,—that his secret reliance and trust in the Savior would not have been accepted? May we not say the same of baptism as associated with faith in preceding salvation! **When it is not understood**, or when **opportunity of observing it is not enjoyed**, its absence is not the absence of salvation.

But if baptism is the law of pardon, the divinely appointed means of remission, or the seal of the covenant of grace, then no one can be saved where there is no church or priest to administer it.

I submit here an illustration I submitted to Mr. A. Campbell in a written discussion had with him in 1853-54. He had said: "I affirm, then, that the first institution in which we can meet with God is the institution of baptism." "Remission of sins cannot be enjoyed by any person before immersion." "Before we are justified in Christ, live in Christ, fall asleep in Christ, we must be introduced or immersed into Christ."

Since Mr. Campbell has given us an illustration, I will suppose one in turn:

A Chinese father, taking a boat of tea from the remote interior to Canton, received a copy of the Bible from our missionary there. On his long voyage home, he read the wondrous book; and his heart, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, was deeply affected by its truths. He read it in his family; and within a few months, all his household embraced the faith of Christ, and that happy father rejoiced, believing on him with all his house.

One month after this, the fever prostrated the eldest daughter, and was rapidly hurrying her to the grave. She called her father to the bedside, and asked him if she might, in this last hour, trust this new religion in death;—if trusting upon the merits and promises of Him who died for sinners, and bore their sins in his own body on the tree would suffice to appease God's violated law on her behalf; and if she might hope for a place in those heavenly mansions of our Father's house on high.

"Yes, my daughter," said the distressed father, "without a doubt. This new Bible is true; we have felt its truth in our own hearts; it has proved its authenticity to us, that it is indeed from the great Father above. The Savior of the Bible says, 'Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out ;' and, 'He that believeth on him is not condemned ;' and That 'whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' Do you believe on him, my child?"

"Oh, yes, father! I can, I do wholly, fully lay my soul on the blood and righteousness of Jesus my Savior only—on Jesus only; but, father, I have done, and I can do nothing."

"Hear, then," said the father, as he wiped away the tears of mingled joy and sorrow from his eyes, "hear what this Bible says to such: Christ is the end of the law [of all law, my daughter, and works are of the law] for righteousness to every one that believeth' not worketh, but believeth. And hear the reason, my child, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.'"

"'Sure to all the seed' it reads, father, and to the seed which is of the faith of Abraham; but how may I know that I am of this seed, and am an heir according to this precious promise, that is sure, because it rests not in works, but in grace? and that word grace —grace—how sweet that word is to me now, father! all the books of the temple contain no word like it; grace, favor, free gift. The books of Buddha talk of works, works, works. Could I but know that I am of the seed?"

"The apostle answers your question, my child: 'And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Will not that solve your doubts?" "Yes, yes! how beautiful, how glorious, how sweet these precious words and teachings to my soul! I never appreciated them so fully before. I feel that I am Christ's: my spirit, my all rests upon him. But does it

not tell how I became Christ's, and a child of God? Read it now to me, father, read it now!"

And the old man read through his tears, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and bowed his head upon the sacred book.

There was silence for a moment; and he heard soft whispers stealing from the couch, the tears were slowly trickling from the half-closed eyes of the dying girl, and a sweet smile was playing over her features as she whispered: " That's it—that's it: a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus; and then heirs according to the sure promise."

"And there are other passages, my child, shall I read them?" said the father. "Oh yes! they are so precious; they just meet my case; they fill my soul so completely; read them." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "There, father, that's enough—enough," she faintly whispered. "My soul is more than satisfied. Blessed Savior!" and she looked up as if to see him above her couch—"Blessed Savior, through thee I come to thee."

And the whispers were hushed; and the family gathered around the couch. The eyes, though glazed, were still upturned and full of light; the lips were parted, and a smile of unearthly sweetness illumined her features: **She had gone to Jesus.**

This is an illustration of salvation by faith alone. Will Mr. Campbell deny that that humble, believing child was regenerated, justified, sanctified, adopted, and saved—saved, too, according to the plan of salvation? He will not do it—he dare not do it in the face of that declaration of Christ himself; "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

But the Scriptures afford no ground for any one to hope for salvation who has the light and will not use it—who cares not to know what Christ requires of him, and who has an opportunity to be baptized as Christ was, and will not take up his cross and follow him. We have no right to say that such a

one is a child of God; he does not give us the evidence of it: for by their fruits, not professions, we are to know them. "But this is no more," says Carson, "than denying salvation to the Antinomian, or to those who, through fear or shame, refuse to confess Christ before men." I cannot think him safe whose course, whatever be his profession, is a course of sin and willful or willing disobedience. Christ says: "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light:" and, "If a man love me, he will keep my commandments." To such the apostle says: "Wilt thou not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" which is equivalent to saying, it is no faith at all, just as a dead man is no man at all, only the form of one. I cannot think him safe who will not, for any reason, confess Christ before the world; to him the Savior says: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny"—refuse to own. I cannot think him safe who, with every opportunity of knowing his duty, and who has right views of the duty, and no real hindrance to his or her observing it, is yet living in neglect of the ordinance. Let such hear these awful words of Christ: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke ix:26). Solemn words! uttered not to frighten, but to warn.

Do parents, or relatives, or friends deter you? "If any man love father, or mother, or husband, or wife more than me, he is not worthy of me." He that is ashamed not of my person merely, but of **my laws**, of him will I be ashamed. Yet how many who call themselves Christians, or cherish the hope, are exactly in this case with respect to baptism! They are willing to bear the name of Christ, because to do so involves no reproach; they are more respected for this than they would be to disown him: but it is not so in coming out before the world, and designating and honoring by your acts his ordinances, and his despised church; and this the sinful neglecter of baptism sees. He or she knows, that, to submit to the rite Christ appointed, and to follow him in it, is to expose himself to scorn and contempt—is to bear the cross after Christ—is to offend family or friends.

Let such hear the words of Christ: "Of him **will I be ashamed.**" Such will he reject in abhorrence. Remember that Christ is **King**, and is to be received as King as well as **Savior**. "How can you be his friends if you do not admit his **rule**? It is vain to boast that you trust his **Cross** if you do not reverence his **Crown.**"

This refusal on the part of a professed disciple to hear the voice and obey the command of the Master for personal considerations and the assurance of salvation, is not consonant with the gospel scheme. That scheme, indeed, saves merely by grace, through faith - saves without the least merit on the part of man; but does it save **rebels**? does it license **contempt of divine authority**? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Will the Christian desire to do so? Is the gospel a doctrine of licentiousness? is it sent to open the flood-gates of error? to beget sin? To warrant us to serve our own wills and notions, fancies and conveniences? Nay, nay, but to subdue them—to renew our natures, and make us obedient to God.

The gospel knows no one, however high in profession, who does not love and obey the commandments of Christ; and they wholly mistake it who suppose themselves saved in willing or willful **disobedience.**

Ignorance of the law, when they have it, and have sense to understand and opportunity to obey it, will not avail; nor will the plea of sincerity in their error. Hear the Savior to such: "Not every one that saith **unto** me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth** the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Rejecters of immersion! ponder these things. The institution you rightly understand, or it is in your power to understand it; you may know, without a doubt, how Christ was baptized; your conscience is convicted. If you knew that you were going to the judgment tomorrow, and your salvation

depended upon your being baptized as Christ was, and as he has commanded you to be, you would not be at a moment's loss; you would, this day, be "buried with him by baptism;" you would be "planted in the likeness of his death;" and yet you will not obey. Are you not, then, rebels against Christ, and consequently exposed to his wrath? You are willing to own his **person**; but you reject and deny his **word**, and dislike his **law**. Will he not reject and deny you before his angels? You knew your Lord's will; but you refused to do it; and do you hope to escape being beaten with many stripes? You may do many things in Christ's name; but this being all, may he not profess unto you, "**I never knew you?**"

Let me, in all affection and earnestness, as one who loves your everlasting happiness, as one who would be faithful to his mission, beg and entreat you seriously and prayerfully to think on these things. Will you not, as you love your own souls, and as you hope you love Christ, carefully examine the New Testament and see what Christ requires of you as the **act of baptism**. Do not fail to do it—do not refuse to do it, and still hope to be saved, for you have no right to hope for salvation. Not because there is any merit in the act, or any grace conferred by baptism *per se*, but because such aversion to do the will of Christ should be an all-convincing evidence to you that your heart is not right in the sight of God—that you are as Simon Magus was, "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Think, I beg of you, can you be saved while you openly contemn the authority, and reject the counsel of God against yourself? Your neglect of baptism, and union with the church of Christ, will not, on its own account, condemn you; but it certainly will as indicative of the state of your heart. Your obedience will be taken as evidence against you, and thus will be your death. "If ye love me, ye will keep my words."

Your flagrant and inexcusable neglect of divine law declares you the enemy of Christ. You are willing enough to confess Christ in a way that will not expose you to opposition or reproach, but the cross you are unwilling to bear. Can you, then, be his disciple? "And he that taketh not his cross, and

followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Does not this cross of Christ try you, and find you wanting?

***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."***

Didst thou, dear Savior, suffer shame,  
And bear the cross for me?  
And shall I fear to own thy name,  
Or thy disciple be?  
Inspire my soul with life divine,  
And make me truly bold,  
Let knowledge, faith, and meekness shine,  
Nor love, nor zeal, grow cold.  
Let mockers scoff, the world defame  
And treat me with disdain;  
Still may I glory in thy name,  
And count reproach my gain.

---

BOGARD PRESS

4605 North State Line

Texarkana, AR-TX 75503

-----

COPYRIGHT, 1881, BY J. R. GRAVES, MEMPHIS, TENN.

-----

201862

ISBN 0-89211-134-8

# ARE YOU A FRIEND OF JESUS?

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—John xv: 14.

BELOVED, it is the highest honor in the world to be called the friend of Christ. There is no title surely that excels in dignity that which was worn by Abraham, who was called the "Friend of God." Lord Brooke was so delighted with the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney that he ordered to be engraved upon his tomb nothing but this, "Here lies the friend of Sir Philip Sidney." There is beauty in such a feeling, but yet it is a small matter compared with being able to say, "Here lives a friend of Christ." O wondrous condescension, that he should call me "friend." If I am indeed a true believer, not only is he my friend, without which I could have no hope here, or hereafter; but he hath, in the aboundings of his grace, been pleased to regard me as his friend, and write me down in the honored list of intimates, who are permitted to speak familiarly with him, as those do between whom there are no secrets, for their hearts are told out to him, whilst he hides nothing from them, but saith: "If it were not so, I would have told you." Beloved, in what a light this sets obedience to Christ's commandments. I cannot help, at this early moment in the sermon, noticing how the doctrine of our text transfigures obedience, and makes it the joy and glory of life. How precious it is, for it is a better seal to friendship than the possession of the largest gifts and influence. Christ does not say: "Ye are my friends, if ye rise to a position of respectability among men, or honor in the church." No; however poor you may be—and those to whom he spake these words were very poor— he says: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Obedience is better than wealth, and better than rank. Jesus values his friends, not by what they have, or what they wear, but by what they do.

I. Let us come to the subject more closely, and notice, first, that-

**OUR LORD HIMSELF TELLS US WHAT OBEDIENCE HE REQUESTS** from those who call themselves his friends. True friends are eager to know what they can do to please the objects of their love. Let us gladly hearken to what our adorable Lord now speaks to the select circle of his chosen. He asks of one and all obedience. None of us are exempted from doing his commandments. However lofty, or however lowly, our condition, we must obey. If our talent be but one, we must obey: and, if we have ten, still we must obey. There can be no friendship with Christ unless we are willing, each one, to yield him hearty, loyal service. Let it go round, then, to all of you upon whom the name of Jesus Christ is named. If enrolled among the friends of Jesus, you must be careful about your own personal obedience to his blessed will. Forget not that even to the queen, standing on his right, in gold of Ophir, the word is given: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

It must be **active obedience**—notice that. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Some think it is quite sufficient if they avoid what he forbids. Abstinence from evil is a great part of righteousness; but it is not enough for friendship. If a man can say: "I am not a drunkard, I am not dishonest, I am not unchaste, I am not a violator of the Sabbath, I am not a liar," so far so good; but such righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, and they cannot enter the kingdom. It is well if you do not willfully transgress; but if you are to be Christ's friends, there must be far more than this. It would be a poor friendship which only said: "I am your friend; and, to prove it, I don't insult you, I don't rob you, I don't speak evil of you." Surely there must be more positive evidence to certify friendship.

The Lord Jesus Christ lays great stress upon positive duties; it is: "If ye do whatsoever I command you." At the last day he will say: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." In

that memorable twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew nothing is said about negative virtues; but positive actions are cited and dwelt upon in detail.

We are clear, from the wording of the text, that the obedience Christ expects from us is **continuous**. He does not say: "If you **sometimes** do what I command you—if you do it on Sundays, for instance—if you do what I command you in your place of worship, that will suffice;" but no, we are to abide in him, and keep his statutes even unto the end. I am not now preaching works as the way of salvation, but as the evidences of fellowship, which is quite another thing. We must seek in every place, at all times, and under all circumstances, to do as Jesus bids us, out of a cheerful spirit of reverence to him. Such tender, loving subjection as a godly wife gives to her husband must be gladly yielded by us throughout life if we are his friends.

This obedience must also be **universal**. "Ye are my friends, if ye do **whatsoever I** command you." No sooner is any thing discovered to be the subject of a command, than the man who is a true friend of Christ says: "I will do it," and he does it. He does not pick and choose which precept he will keep, and which he will neglect, for this is self-will, and not obedience. I have known some professors to err greatly in this matter.

They have been very strict over one point, and they have blamed every body who did not come up to their strictness, talking as if that one duty fulfilled the whole law. Straining out gnats has been a very leading business with many; they have bought a choice assortment of strainers, of the very finest net, to get out all the gnats from their cup, but, at the same time, on another day, they have opened their mouths and swallowed a camel without a qualm. This will not do; the test is: "If ye do whatsoever I command you." I do not mean that little things are unimportant; far from it. If there be a gnat that Christ bids us strain out, strain it out with great diligence; do not let a midge escape you, if he bids you remove it. The smallest command of Christ may often be the most important, and I will tell you why. Some things are great, evidently great, and for many reasons even a hypocritical professor will attend to them; but the test may lie in the minor points, which

hypocrites do not take the trouble to notice, since no human tongue would praise them for so doing. Here is the proof of your love. Will you do the smaller thing for Jesus, as well as the more weighty matter? Too many say: "I do not see any use in it; I can be saved without it; there are a great many different opinions on the point," and so on. All this cometh of evil, and is not consistent with the spirit of friendship with Christ, for love pleases even in trifles. Is it Christ's will? Is it plainly a precept of his word? Then, it is not yours to reason why, nor to raise any question. The reality of your subjection to your Lord and Master may hinge upon those seemingly insignificant points. "**Whatsoever** he saith to you, do it." Only by an earnest endeavor to carry out the **whole** of his will, can you live in happy friendship with him, and be indeed his friends.

Note well that this obedience is to be rendered as to Christ himself. Put the emphasis on the little word **I**: "Ye **are my friends**, if ye do whatsoever **I** command you." We are to do these things because Jesus commands them. Does not the royal person of our Lord cast a very strong light upon the necessity of obedience? When we refuse to obey, we refuse to do what the Lord himself commands. When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Redeemer, is denied obedience, it is treason. How can rebels against the King be His Majesty's friends? The precepts of Scripture are not the commandments of man, nor the ordinances of angels; but the laws of Christ, and how dare we despise them? We are to act rightly because Jesus commands us, and we love to do his pleasure; there can be no friendship without this. Oh, for grace to serve the Lord with gladness!

To close this first point, it appears that our Lord would have us **obey him out of a friendly spirit**. Obedience to Christ, as if we were forced to do it under pain and penalties, would be of no worth as a proof of friendship; every one can see that. He speaks, not of slaves, but of friends; he would not have us perform duties from fear of punishment, or love of reward; that which he can accept of his friends must be the fruit of love. His will must be our law, because his person is our delight. Some professors need to be

whipped to their duties; they must hear stirring sermons, and attend exciting meetings, and live under pressure; but those who are Christ's friends need no spur but love. "The love of Christ constraineth us." True hearts do what Jesus bids them without flogging and dogging, urging and forcing. Constrained virtue is spoiled in the making, as many a piece of earthenware is cracked in the baking. The wine of our obedience must flow freely from the ripe cluster of the soul's love, or it will not be fit for the royal cup. When duty becomes delight, and precepts are as sweet as promises, then are we Christ's friends, and not till then.

II. Having thus set forth what kind of obedience Christ requests, I now notice, in the second place, that our Lord leads us to gather from this sentence that—.

### **THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY HIM ARE NO FRIENDS OF HIS.**

He may yet look upon them, and be their friend, by changing their hearts, and forgiving their sins; but, as yet, they are no friends of his, for a man who does not obey Christ, does not give the Savior his proper place, and this is an unfriendly deed. If I have a friend, I am very careful that, if he has honor anywhere, he shall certainly have due respect from me. If he be my superior, I am anxious that he should not think me intrusive, or imagine that I would take undue advantage of his kindness. He will be higher in my esteem than in the regard of any one else. He who is truly Christ's friend, delights to honor him as a great King; but he who will not yield Him his sovereign rights, is a traitor, and not a friend. Our Lord is the Head over all things to his Church, and this involves the joyful submission of the members. Disobedience denies to Christ the dignity of that holy Headship, which is his prerogative over all the members of his mystical body, and this is not the part of a true friend. How can you be his friend, if you do not admit his rule? **It is vain to boast that you trust his cross, if you do not reverence his crown.** He who does not **do his commandments** cannot be Christ's friend, because he is not of one mind with Christ; this is evident. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? True friendship exists not

between those who differ upon first principles, and there can be no points of agreement between Jesus Christ and the man who will not obey him; for he, in fact, says: "Lord Jesus, thy pure and holy will is obnoxious to me; thy sweet and gracious commands are a weariness to me." What friendship can be here? They are not of one mind; Christ is for holiness, this man is for sin; Christ is for spiritual-mindedness, this man is carnal-minded; Christ is for love, this man is for self; Christ is for glorifying the Father, this man is for honoring himself; how can there be any friendship, when they are diametrically opposed in design, object and spirit? It is not possible.

He who **obeys not Christ**, cannot be Christ's friend, though he may profess to be. He may be a very high and loud professor, and for that reason he may be all the more an enemy of the cross—for when men see this man walking according to his own lusts, they cry out: "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth," and they attribute all his faults to his religion, and straightway begin to blaspheme the name of Christ. Through the inconsistent conduct of our Lord's professed friends, his cause is more hindered than by any thing else. Suppose you and I had some very intimate associate, who was found drunk in the street, or committed burglary, or theft, should we not feel disgraced by his conduct? When he was brought before the magistrate, would you like to have it said: "This person is the bosom friend of so-and-so?" Oh, you would cover your face, and beg your neighbors never to mention it. For such a fellow to be known as your friend would compromise your name and character. We say this, even weeping, that Jesus Christ's name is compromised, and his honor is tarnished among men, by many who wear the name of Christian, without having the spirit of Christ; such cannot be his dear companions. Alas! For the wounds which Jesus has received in the house of his friends. When Caesar fell, he was slain by the daggers of his friends. In trust, he found treason. Those whose lives he had spared, spared not his life. Woe to those who, under the garb of Christianity, crucify the Lord afresh, and put him to an open shame. Nothing burns Christ's cheek like a Judas kiss, and he has had many such.

Those that obey him not, cannot be owned by Jesus as his friends, for that would dishonor him indeed. Time was—I know not how it is now—when, if any man wanted to be made a count, or to get an honorable title, he had only to pay so much at Rome into the Papal exchequer, and he could be made a noble at once. The titles thus purchased were neither honorable to those who gave nor to those who received them. Whatever his pretended vicar may do, our Lord himself sells no dignities. The title of "Friends of Jesus" goes with a certain character, and cannot be otherwise obtained. Those are his friends who obey him—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." He grants this patent of nobility to all believers who lovingly follow him; but on his list of friends he enters none beside. Do you not see that his honor requires it? Would you have our Lord stand up and say: "The **drunkard** is my friend?" Would you hear him say: "That **fraudulent** bankrupt is my intimate companion?" Would you have Jesus claim friendly companionship with the vicious and profane? A man is known by his company; what would be thought of Jesus, if his intimate associates were men of loose morals and unrighteous principles? To go among them for their good is one thing; to make them his friends is another. Where there is no kinship, no likeness, no point of agreement, the fair flower of friendship cannot take root. We may, therefore, read the text negatively: "**Ye are not my friends, if ye do not the things which I command you.**"

III. Our third observation is—

**THOSE WHO BEST OBEY CHRIST ARE ON THE BEST OF TERMS WITH HIM.**

"Ye are my friends," he seems to say, "and live near me, enjoying practical, personal friendship, and daily intercourse with me, when you promptly obey." Some of you know, by personal experience, brothers and sisters, that you cannot walk in holy converse with Christ, unless you keep his commandments. There is no feeling of communion between our souls and Christ when we are conscious of having done wrong, and yet are not sorry for it. If we know that we have erred, as we often do, and our hearts break

because we have grieved our Beloved, and we go and tell him our grief, and confess our sin, we are still his friends, and he kisses away our tears, saying: "I know your weakness; I willingly blot out your offenses; there is no breach of friendship between us: I will manifest myself to you still." When we know that we are wrong, and feel no softening of heart about it, then we cannot pray, we cannot speak with the Beloved, and we cannot walk with him as his friends. Familiarity with Jesus ceases when we become familiar with known sin. If, again, knowing any act to be wrong, we persevere in it, there cannot be any happy friendship between us and our Savior. If conscience has told you, dear brother, that such a thing ought to be given up, and you continue it, the next time you are on your knees you will feel yourself greatly hampered; and when you sit down before your open Bible, and hope to have communion with Christ, as you have formerly enjoyed it, you will find that he has withdrawn himself, and will not be found by you. Is there any wonder? If sin lieth at the door, how can the Lord smile on us? Secret sin will poison communion at the fountain head. If there is a quarrel between you and Christ, and you are hugging to your bosom that which he abhors, how can you enjoy friendship? He tells you that sin is a viper that will kill you, but you reply: "It is a necklace of jewels," and, therefore, you put it about your neck. Do you wonder, that because he loves you, he is grieved at such mad behavior? Oh, do not thus bring injury upon yourself! Do not thus pour contempt upon his wise commands.

Some Christians will never get into full fellowship with Christ, because they neglect to study his word, and search out what his will is. It ought to be a serious work with every Christian, especially in commencing his career, to find what is the will of the Lord on all subjects. Half the Christian people in the world are content to ask: "What is the rule of our church?"

That is not the question; the point is: "What is the rule of Christ?" Some plead: " My father and mother before me did so." I sympathize, in a measure, with that feeling; filial reverence commands admiration; but yet, in spiritual things, we are to call no man "father," but make the Lord Jesus

our Master and Exemplar. God has not placed your conscience in your mother's keeping, nor has he committed to your father the right, or the power, to stand responsible for you; every man must bear his own burden, and render his own account; search ye the Scriptures for yourselves, each one of you, and follow no rule but that which is inspired.

Take your light directly from the sun. Let Holy Scripture be your unquestioned rule of faith and practice; and, if there is any point about which you are uncertain, I charge you, by your loyalty to Christ, if ye are his friends, to try and find out what his will is; and, when once you are sure upon that point, never mind the human authorities, or dignities, that oppose his law. Let there be no question, no hesitation, no delay. If he commands you, carry out his will, though the gates of hell thunder at you.

You are not his friends, or, at any rate, you are not so his friends as to enjoy the friendship, unless you resolutely seek to please him in all things. The intimacy between you and Christ will be disturbed by sin; you cannot lean your head upon his bosom, and say: "Lord, I know thy will, but I do not mean to do it." Could you look up into that dear face—that visage once so marred, now lovelier than heaven itself—and say: "My Lord, I love thee, but will not do thy will in every point?" By the very love he bears to you, he will chasten you for that rebellious spirit, if you indulge it. It is a horrible evil; holy eyes will not endure it. He is a jealous lover, and will not tolerate sin, which is his rival.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." O beloved, see to this! Under all the crosses, and losses, and trials of life, there is no comfort more desirable than the confidence that you have aimed at doing your Lord's will. If a man suffer for Christ's sake while steadily pursuing the course of holiness, he may rejoice in such suffering. Losses borne in the defense of the right, and true, are gains. Jesus is never nearer his friends than when they bravely bear shame for his sake. If we get into trouble by our own folly, we feel the smart at our very heart; but if we are wounded in our Lord's battles, the scars are honorable. For his sake we may accept reproach, and bind it

about us as a wreath of honor. Jesus delights to be the Companion of those who are cast out by kinsfolk and acquaintances for the truth's sake, and for fidelity to his cross. They may call the faithful one fanatic, and enthusiast, and all such ill-sounding names; but over these there is no need to fret, for the honor of being Christ's friend infinitely outweighs the world's opinion. When we follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, he is responsible for results; we are not.

"Though dark be my way, since He is my guide,  
'Tis mine to obey, 'tis His to provide."

The consequences which follow from our doing right belong to God. Abhor the theory, that for the sake of a great good you may do a little wrong. I have heard men say, ay! and Christian men, too: "If I were strictly to follow my convictions, I should have to leave a post of great usefulness; and, therefore, I remain where I am, and quiet my convictions as well as I can. I should lose opportunities of doing good, which I now possess, if I were to put in practice all I believe; and, therefore, I remain in a position which I could not justify on any other ground." Is this according to the mind of Jesus? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? How many bow in the house of Rimmon, and hope that the Lord will have mercy upon his servants in this thing? We shall see if it will be so. We may not do evil that good may come. If I knew that to do right would shake this whole island, I should be bound to do it; God helping me, I would do it; and if I heard that a wrong act would apparently bless a whole nation, I have no right to do wrong on that account. No bribe of supposed usefulness should purchase our conscience. Right is right, and must always end in blessing; and wrong is wrong, and must always end in curse, though for a while it may wear the appearance of surpassing good.

Did not the Devil lead our first parents astray by the suggestion, that great benefit would arise out of their transgression? "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods," said the arch-deceiver. Would it not be a grand

thing for men to grow unto gods? "Certainly," says Eve, "I would not lose the opportunity. The race which is yet to be would blame me if I did. I would not have men remain inferior creatures through my neglect."

For the sake of the promised good, she ventured upon evil. Thousands of people sin because it seems so advantageous, so wise, so necessary, so sure to turn out well. Hear what Christ says: **"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."** If you do evil that good may come, you cannot walk with him; but if your heart is set toward his statutes, you shall find him loving you, and taking up his abode with you.