

Understanding

Baptism

by
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INTRODUCTION

As a child, I often heard my parents “discuss” religion. My mother was a Baptist, as were my grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, and cousins on my mother’s side. A frequent topic of discussion in our home was baptism and what role—if any—it played in the process by which one becomes a Christian.

The positions of my father and mother were clear-cut and diametrically opposed to each other. My father believed that baptism was an essential, integral part of the Biblical plan of salvation. My mother insisted that baptism had nothing to do with salvation—that one was saved by faith only and that baptism occurred after one was saved.

As a young child, I did not know who was right. Distressed and perplexed at the disagreements between my parents, I was determined that I would study the matter for myself and come to a decision based entirely on the Scriptures.

Through the years, I have studied this topic intensely and extensively. My conclusion is that the Bible is remarkably clear concerning the role and significance of baptism. In fact, I never cease to be amazed that anything so clearly taught can be so confusing to so many.

I ask only that the reader lay aside all prejudices and preconceptions (to the best of his ability) and consider objectively the material presented on the following pages. Then humbly accept any truths that are made evident. I have tried to be as simple and uncomplicated as possible in my manner of presentation.

THE BIBLICAL ORDER

The Bible speaks of several baptisms: fire, water, Holy Spirit, suffering, etc. This discussion is of only one of these: water baptism. It is the only one ever commanded and the only one administered by man.

Throughout this study, attention will be focused on one basic

question: is baptism a part of the process by which one is saved, or is it an action that occurs *after* one is saved? The view of most denominations is that baptism is *not* a part of the conversion process, but rather occurs *after* one is saved.

In addressing this question, I have compiled a list of all the scriptures where both baptism and being saved (or words to that effect) are mentioned together. Certainly the Lord knew what He had in mind. Surely He would direct the Holy Spirit to see to it that the facts are presented to us accurately and in the right order. Please note the consistency in these verses.

1. Mark 16:15-16:...believe...be baptized.....**SAVED**
(The order is unmistakable; salvation is after baptism)
2. Acts 2:37-38: ..Repent..be baptized..**FORGIVENESS**
(Receiving forgiveness is the equivalent of being saved. There is no mistaking the order here.)
3. Acts 22:16:.....be baptized.....wash away sins.
(“Wash away sins” is the equivalent of being saved.)

I have asked denominational friends when Saul was saved. They consistently answer that he was saved on the road to Damascus. There can be no doubt that he believed and “accepted Jesus” at the dramatic appearance of the Lord to him there on the road. But was he saved there?

It should be noted that at the time of Jesus’ appearance (Acts 9:6) he told Saul to “...go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” Note the word “must;” he was not referring to something optional.

In the city, Saul continued in his blindness, fasting and praying for three days before anyone brought him instructions. If the “pray-Jesus-into-your-heart” people are right, Saul would have been thoroughly saved by now, having believed, accepted Jesus, and prayed earnestly.

But he was not saved yet. His sins were still unforgiven. How do we know? Because when Ananias came to him he told him to "...Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name." "Washing away" sins is a figurative term referring to receiving forgiveness, which is what happens when one is saved.

So if Jesus was right (and surely He was) and if Ananias was right (and as Jesus' messenger, surely he was), Saul was *not* saved on the road to Damascus. There was one more thing that he "must" do in order to have his sins forgiven, and that was baptism. How unmistakably clear!

4. Romans 6:3-4:...(buried in) baptism...(live a) new life.
(first baptism—*then* the new life in Christ.)

There are two possible conditions of man: "in Christ" refers to being saved; one who is out of Christ is lost. Therefore one can say that the process by which one becomes saved is the process that puts one in Christ.

So what is the process? Is it faith only? Is it prayer? Is it praying Jesus into one's heart? In verse 3 above, Paul says that one is "baptized into" Christ. How can one be "baptized into" Christ if he is *already* in Christ? Impossible! How can one "walk into" a room if one is already in that room? How much clearer can the Scriptures be?

5. Colossians 2:12:...baptism...raised with Christ.
(Similar concept to Romans 6:3-4. The raising signifies beginning a new life as a Christian. Again, baptism is first.)
6. Galatians 3:27:...baptized...into Christ
(Here Paul repeats the message of Romans 6:3. In both these passages it is evident that the very act of entering Christ is directly bound to baptism.)
7. I Peter 3:21:.....baptism.....saves us.
(Many people have argued at length to show that this verse does not mean what it says. But after all the deep theological explanations have been made, one fact remains: if one is saved *before* baptism, Peter was wrong! Saved

persons cannot be saved; only the *lost* can be saved.)

These passages are the only ones that mention baptism and being saved in the same verses. *Without exception*, baptism always precedes the condition of being saved or forgiven. Can the unprejudiced mind read all of these passages and still contend that salvation precedes baptism?

Some time ago I read a publication in which a writer claimed that he had found a scripture in which salvation precedes baptism. (Apparently he was reacting to accusations that his teachings did not harmonize with the Biblical order of baptism and salvation.) But alas, we shall see that he was mistaken.

The events to which he referred are recorded in Acts 10. This is the beginning of the ministry to the Gentiles, occurring at the house of Cornelius. Verse 44 records that the Holy Spirit came on the listeners. Then in verse 48, Peter ordered that they be baptized.

Nothing is said about salvation or forgiveness of sins in this passage. The writer to whom I referred *assumed* that these Gentiles were saved because the Holy Spirit came upon them. But they were not saved. How do we know? Simply this: in chapter 11, Peter recounted to the leaders in Jerusalem the events at Cornelius' household. According to verse 4, he "explained to them precisely as it happened."

Look carefully at verses 11-14. Cornelius quoted the angel who had told him to send for Peter, of whom it was said, "He will bring you a *message through which* you and all your household will be saved." Salvation was to come through the message. Without the message, they would not know how to be saved.

But look at verse 15! "As I *began* to speak the Holy Spirit came on them" He had not delivered the message, he had only begun to speak. Since salvation depended upon delivery of the message—and since he had not delivered the message—they could not have been saved.

(One might ask why there would be this extraordinary out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on unsaved persons. The answer becomes evident

as one reads chapters 10 and 11. This miracle, along with Peter's vision of the sheet and the animals in chapter 10, had the special purpose of convincing Peter, those with him, and later the Jerusalem leaders that indeed it was God's will to offer the gospel's blessings to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.)

So the events at Cornelius' household do not signal a contradictory exception to the order of baptism and salvation. The Scriptures are perfectly harmonious—as we would have a right to expect them to be.

THE GREAT REENACTMENT

There are many interesting contrasts between the Law of Moses and the gospel system. The former was full of all kinds of ceremonies: sacrifices, washings, burning of candles and incense, etc. But the New Testament provides only two items that could be called ceremonies. Interestingly, both have their bases in the events of the same three-day period.

These two ceremonies are the Lord's Supper and baptism. Jesus explained that the Communion was to memorialize His suffering and death—the mutilation of His body and the shedding of His blood. We understand that in partaking of the Communion we are not only rekindling appreciation of the Lord's gift to us, but also symbolically reenacting the actual events of Jesus' life.

In giving instructions about baptism to the apostles, Jesus did not explain the nature of the symbolism involved. But Paul explained it to us in Romans 6. He said (verse 4), "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Fascinating! So baptism is a reenactment of Jesus' burial and resurrection. Note the parallel:

Jesus: Died..was buried..resurrected to life.

We: Died (through sin)..buried (in baptism)..raised to a new life.

How graphic! What a dramatic reenactment of what the Lord did! In every conversion there is a symbolic reenactment of Jesus' burial and resurrection.

But look carefully at the analogy. Jesus' new life began *after* His burial and at the time of His emergence from the tomb. And that is what Paul said that we do. He said the "new life" begins after the reenactment has been completed.

But if one is saved (and therefore has begun the new life) *before* baptism, the whole analogy is destroyed. Not only that, but Paul has misstated the time at which the new life begins.

But of course the analogy is valid, and Paul did *not* misstate the time at which the new life begins. His illustration is in perfect harmony with every other passage that relates to the salvation process.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

Ah, the thief on the cross! It has occurred to me that this poor fellow would "turn over in his grave" if he had any idea how many people have used him as an excuse to avoid baptism or to pervert the role assigned to it by the Lord in the salvation process.

Curiously, I have never heard anyone say, "I want to be saved like the paralytic (in Matthew 9:2) or like the woman in Luke 7:36-47." Both had their sins forgiven by Jesus. There were no requirements to repent, to pray, to be baptized—or anything. Why not be saved like one of these?

The notion seems to be prevalent that the Lord has provided us with a smorgasbord of salvation plans. It is as though he is saying, "I gave the apostles My plan of salvation (Matthew 28:18-20), but if you don't like this plan, pick out one you like from the days of My earthly ministry."

This, of course, is nonsense. Jesus explained (Matthew 9:6) that He had the authority to forgive sins. And of course He had the authority to set whatever conditions He chose—or none at all—in granting this forgiveness. The thief on the cross falls into the same

category as the two persons mentioned above: they all were forgiven during Jesus' earthly ministry under conditions totally unrelated to the plan He gave to His apostles to be administered after his death.

We have no trouble understanding that a person is free to do as he likes with his own property while he is alive, dispensing whatever he likes to whomever he chooses and under whatever conditions he chooses (just as Jesus dispensed forgiveness of sins). When that person dies, however, a whole new set of rules goes into effect. That property can then be acquired only by the persons specified in that will. And that is not just according to contemporary laws and customs. The exact same principle is spelled out in the Scripture which says, "...a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living." (Hebrews 9:17)

So *that* is why the thief on the cross could be forgiven without baptism. The instructions to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20) were part of that will of Jesus which went into effect *after* he died.

What it comes down to is this: a person who wants to be saved like the thief on the cross faces a real challenge. He must figure out some way to be transported back in time to the days of Jesus' earthly ministry, before the instructions of Matthew 28 went into effect, and see if Jesus will make a special case of him. Maybe in science fiction, but not in reality. One is much better off just following the example of the 3,000 on Pentecost (Acts 2) and *every other* recorded conversion after that date.

So when one says that he wants to be saved like the thief on the cross, he really has no idea of the change that occurred when Jesus died—or else he hopes the person he is addressing does not know the difference.

SALVATION: BY FAITH...OR BY WORKS?

One of the most common objections to considering baptism as part of the conversion process is this: "Salvation is by faith and not by works, and since baptism is a work, it could not be a condition of salvation."

It is really amazing that baptism is referred to as a "work." If there ever was such a thing as a "non-work," baptism would have to be it. In baptism, all a person does is...well...just stand there. The work, what little there is of it, is actually done by the one doing the baptizing.

In our part of town there is a church quite active in community outreach. On various occasions some of their members have come to my door inviting me to their services. I always engage them in conversation, commending them for devoting time to reach out to others. I always tell them that I would love to be a part of their fellowship, but that I cannot conscientiously do so as I believe that they do not follow the scriptures in telling people how to be saved.

This always leads to a discussion of baptism and the inevitable objection that baptism is a "work" and that people are not saved by works.

But note the irony. On the brochure which they leave with me, they list the steps to salvation according to their doctrine. The last step is to pray, asking God for salvation! What strange reasoning! By what sort of logic does one conclude that submissively allowing oneself to be baptized is a "work," but actively praying for salvation is not a work? (Besides that there is this question: if three days of praying did not result in the salvation of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22, why should one think that prayer will get the job done today? If Saul had to get up from prayer and be baptized to "wash" his sins away, why should one think that the same requirement is not binding today?)

But what does the Bible teach about faith, works, and salvation? It has been said that "you can make the Bible say anything." The statement refers to the possibility of taking a scriptural statement out of context, making it seem to say one thing when in fact it is saying something quite different.

Paul said (Romans 3:28), "...A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." In Ephesians 2:8-9 he said, "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

With these principles we must blend the words of James, “You see that a person is justified by what he does, and not by faith only” (2:24). Then in verse 26 he said, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead.”

What are we to conclude? Do Paul and James contradict each other—undermining our faith in the integrity of the Scriptures? Why does one say that faith without works is dead?

It is apparent that either they are contradicting each other, or else they are discussing quite different matters.

This is an example of enlightenment being provided by the context. Reading extensively in Romans (and elsewhere in Paul’s writings) we learn that much of his time was consumed in dealing with a common mistake in the contemporary Jewish mentality. Even the Jews who had come to believe in Jesus frequently were fiercely loyal to Mosaic law and traditions and, conditioned by centuries-old ways of thinking, continued to measure their right-standing with God by their faithful obedience to the provisions of the law of Moses.

Paul understood, of course, that this thinking was alarmingly wrong. It destroyed the grace concept, as well as the faith principle. And it certainly diminished the significance of Jesus’ sacrifice.

So when Paul kept emphasizing that salvation was by faith, and not by works, he was referring to the “meritorious” works of the Jews; that is, the works by which they hoped to *earn* salvation. (And of course if salvation is earned through meritorious works, it would not be by grace—nor could it be considered a gift.)

Reading James, we understand that he is dealing with a totally different mentality—almost opposite, in fact. He says (2:15-16), “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well-fed!’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” Unlike the mentality that tries to merit salvation by good works, these people were “dyed-in-the-wool” converts to the “faith-only” concept. They seemed to think that faith was all they needed to please God.

But James tried to correct their unbalanced view of faith and works. He said (2:18), “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.”

In other words, James was referring to “demonstrative” works as opposed to meritorious works to which Paul referred. James understood that faith and works are inextricably linked, and that the necessity of works in no way diminishes the efficacy of faith.

Interestingly, both Paul and James cited the example of Abraham in their explanations. This, along with many other examples, is cited in the classic chapter on faith, Hebrews 11.

And what a marvelous illustration of the balanced relationship between faith and works! In reading through the chapter, one almost gets the impression that it is a chapter on works! It relates the awesome accomplishments of so many of the heroes of the Old Testament. And yet it is really a chapter on faith.

Now this question: what about these works in Hebrews 11—are they meritorious, or are they demonstrative? Were these people commended simply because they had faith—or was it because they, like James, demonstrated their faith by what they did? Does the fact that they demonstrated their faith by works diminish the efficacy of their faith? Obviously not.

Come to think of it, there is no biblical example of anyone—ever—receiving God’s commendation or blessing for an undemonstrated faith!

In view of these explanations, surely we can understand that baptism has nothing to do with the meritorious type of works that Paul eliminated from the salvation process, but is rather a demonstration of faith, totally consistent with what God has *always* required of everyone whom he has ever told to do anything.

YES, BUT...

Those who try to eliminate baptism from the conversion process have periodically come up with a number of arguments which they

believe support their position. Sometimes the appeal is to emotion rather than logic. Sometimes it involves the use of a scripture out of context. We will consider some of the most common objections.

A. *Foxhole, the Desert, and Grandmother*

One of the scenarios I used to hear is this: a soldier in battle is crouching in his foxhole when he decides to devote his life to God. He prays to God for salvation, but before he has opportunity to be baptized, he is killed by a mortar shell.

Another: a man is lost in the desert, dying of thirst. He decides he wants to be saved and asks God to save him. Before he gets to water, he dies.

Grandmother (or some other dear relative): There is this dear relative who was a godly person all of her life. If there ever was a person who lived the Christian life, surely she was such a person. But she never was baptized.

Regarding each of these, this emotionally charged question is asked, "Do you mean to tell me that a just God is going to send this person to Hell?!"

These questions should be recognized for what they are: efforts to establish by human emotions that which cannot be established by the Scriptures.

In a battle between emotion and logic, logic does not stand a chance. A valid response to these arguments goes something like this: "For sake of argument, let us assume that God in his infinite mercy might look at these situations and make an exception to the plan that he has established (surely none of us would presume to tell God how to handle his judicial functions), but what does this have to do with you? You are not in a foxhole, nor in a barren desert, nor handicapped by a lack of explanation of the scriptural purpose of baptism. What would your excuse be for disdainning God's clear-cut instructions?"

This response will reveal whether the person is really concerned about the unfortunate ones to whom he refers, or whether he just wants to be argumentative.

B. *Disdain for Water*

When I was young, my father used to listen to a number of religious programs on the radio. Sometimes a preacher on one program would get into a series of arguments with another preacher on another program. They would engage in running battles over a period of time. One of the topics was baptism. I remember hearing baptism referred to scornfully as "water salvation." There were references to "being saved above the high water mark." It was said that "there's nothing in the water that saves you."

One of the fascinating aspects of Bible study is seeing how God works in observable, traceable patterns over the span of many centuries. The multiple foreshadowings in the Mosaic era (and earlier) of crucial aspects of the Christian system are awe-inspiring confirmations that God's handiwork is on display in the scriptures—that man could never have planned or produced such a profoundly interwoven set of principles, concepts, and events.

Certainly baptism is a prime example of God's repeated revelations of His way of doing things. Note the historical link which God has established between water and deliverance.

- 1) By water God delivered Noah from his wicked generation (Genesis 6-8). Peter himself compared this with baptism (I Peter 3).
- 2) When God delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt (Exodus 14), he brought them through water (the Red Sea and the cloud).
- 3) When the Israelites left the wilderness to be delivered to the Promised Land, God brought them through water (Jordan River).
- 4) Many of the ceremonial details of the law of Moses required washings with water. Without these washings there was ceremonial uncleanness.
- 5) When Naaman the leper (II Kings 5) sought healing—deliverance from leprosy—he was told to dip seven times in the Jordan River, after which the leprosy would be gone. When one asks what there is in the water of baptism that saves, the answer might well

be “the same thing that was in the Jordan River that healed Naaman’s leprosy.” And the person who asks that question displays the same mentality as Naaman; he made the same objection to the waters of the Jordan River. But to Naaman’s credit, he listened to reason and mustered up enough faith to follow God’s instructions. Today’s scoffers would do well to learn from the example of this ancient Syrian general.)

Early in his ministry, Jesus unmistakably linked water and salvation (the new birth). In John 3:5 He said, “No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” Every passage that we have seen is in perfect harmony with this principle.

C. Isolated Passages

Some have seized upon the wording of certain passages to argue for short-cut plans of salvation, again violating contextual principles. For example, there is the promise that those who “call on the Name of the Lord” will be saved (Romans 10:13). Paul said (Romans 10:9), “...If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Again, speaking to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31) Paul said, (in reply to the jailer’s question about what he must do to be saved), “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household.”

Are we to view these as alternative ways to be saved—more entrees on the aforementioned smorgasbord of salvation plans? Or rather do all of these refer to the same plan of salvation, simply referring to key aspects of that plan, depending on the needs of the person(s) addressed as they existed at that moment? Not only do these passages not mention baptism, but they also say nothing of repentance. Jesus said (Luke 13:3) that we would perish without repentance. Repentance was first on the list of commands given by Peter to the convicted crowd on Pentecost (Acts 2:38). If the passages cited above are complete prescriptions for salvation, they are for plans not requiring repentance.

One who wants to know the truth must consider not only context, but also information provided by other passages on the subject. For

example, those who urge that the “call on the Name of the Lord” passage means that one can simply pray, “Lord, Lord, save me” and have that prayer result in his salvation need to consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21. Apparently the Lord anticipated just such an erroneous view, for he said, “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he does the will of My Father who is in Heaven.”

As for the Philippian jailer, we note that as soon as the “Word of the Lord” was spoken to him (Acts 16:32-33), he and his family were baptized. According to verse 34, the jailer was filled with joy “because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.” The key to the whole matter was belief. Once he believed in Jesus, the matter of baptism was not a problem at all. Obviously in speaking the “Word of the Lord,” Paul had explained what baptism was all about. And understanding its crucial role he would have no problem being baptized “immediately,” even before they sat down to eat and visit.

There are no short cuts to salvation. There are no bargain basement versions of salvation. God’s plan is simple, consistent, and applies equally to all.

THE REAL ISSUE

The Bible records many conversions, including 3,000 in one day (Acts 2). They *all* involved baptism. There is no evidence whatever that a single person resisted or questioned the need to be baptized. There was no argument about whether or not it was necessary for salvation. So why is there so much confusion today?

That is a good question. Having been involved in a considerable amount of outreach over the past several years, and having observed others similarly involved in outreach, I have made some interesting observations. When people with little religious background are led through a series of lessons leading up to the plan of salvation, and when the Scriptures have convicted them of sin and of their need to be right with the Lord, baptism has never been a problem. Never.

The only time we have found resistance to baptism has been in discussions with people who have been indoctrinated by certain

religious groups which deny that baptism is related to the forgiveness of sins. NONE gets such an impression from the Scriptures—such a notion always comes from other sources.

Again the question: why? Surely the answer is traceable to the Reformation period and the reaction of the reformers—and mostly Martin Luther—to the false teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Particularly objectionable to Luther was the works-oriented system practiced by the Church.

But in his reaction, Luther went to the opposite extreme, insisting on salvation by faith only, tending to discount James' teachings to the contrary. As students of church history understand, a host of modern denominations are direct or indirect spinoffs of the Reformation Movement. Likewise many prevalent denominational doctrines are part of the legacy of Luther and other Reformation leaders. Prominent among these is the baptism-excluding doctrine of salvation by faith only.

So many of the modern heirs to this legacy have become so fiercely loyal to their own organizations that their minds are closed to the possibility of being wrong. Jesus, and later his apostles, faced the same type of problem in the first century. Despite overwhelming evidence of Jesus' authenticity, the Jews fiercely opposed Him and His teachings. This was despite the fact that these Jews were specialists in the very writings which confirmed the truth of who Jesus was. It was a case of having eyes but not seeing and of having ears but not hearing.

What we are getting to is this: in reality baptism is not a doctrinal issue nor a scriptural issue; rather it is a heart issue. The Lord has not made his terms of salvation so complex and confusing that honest seekers of the truth cannot get them straight. The evidence is overwhelming that one whose heart is truly open to the Lord's truth will have no problem at all with baptism. None. Is our top priority to do what the Lord says without questions or arguments, or is it to defend the doctrine of a special group? THAT is the real issue.

WHAT BAPTISM DOES

An interesting—and revealing—study involves seeing what baptism does. For example:

- 1) Baptism is involved in forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
- 2) Baptism is involved in washing away sins (Acts 22:16)
- 3) Baptism is part of the new birth (John 3:5)
- 4) Baptism puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27)
- 5) Baptism initiates one into the new life (Romans 6:3-4)
- 6) Baptism saves (I Peter 3:21)

We must conclude therefore, that if one is saved *before* baptism, he is saved (1) without forgiveness of sins, (2) without having his sins washed away, (3) without being born again, (4) without being in Christ, (5) without experiencing the new life, and (6) without...being saved!

Preposterous? Of course. But so is the fact that millions of people have been indoctrinated with this teaching—and promulgate it around the world.

CONCLUSION

What more can the Lord do? He has waved flags, flashed lights, sounded sirens, and rung bells to get our attention. He has shown us that baptism is for everybody (Matthew 28:18-20). He has shown us that it was part of every conversion ever recorded. He has told us that it, along with belief, is required of those who want to be saved. (Mark 16:15-16). He has told us that it is for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) and that it washes away sins. (Acts 22:16)

In addition, He has shown us that baptism is part of the new birth (John 3:5) or, in other words, that it begins our new life in Christ (Romans 6:3-4). It puts us into the one body (which is the Church) according to I Corinthians 12:13, and into Christ (Galatians 3:27).

To help get the idea across, God left us a history of His actions over many centuries prior to Christianity. He has shown us that time

after time He has used water as a vital element in deliverance and cleansings.

But just in case—just in case someone managed to see all this evidence and *still* not get the point—in case someone needed it spelled out in the simplest of terms, God even provided that. He had Peter to just say it outright. BAPTISM SAVES US (I Peter 3:21). Is there a way in which the Lord could have said it more clearly?

POSTSCRIPT

At the outset I mentioned the disagreements between my father and mother. Now for a bit of follow-up information. I suppose I was about 9 or 10 years of age when one day my mother called me to her as she had something to tell me. She said that she had changed her mind about baptism. Her study had convinced her that she had been wrong and that she had decided to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.

That is a day that I will never forget. My mother has been gone from this life for many years now, but she had numerous opportunities to tell others about her experiences and the difficult road she traveled in arriving at the truth. As for the truth about baptism, I often heard her say, “The Bible is so clear that I don’t see how I ever missed it.”

But we have seen how she missed it. It was through an overwhelming loyalty to a set of doctrines which had become an integral part of her very being as a person. The only way out for her—and for all persons similarly entrapped in whatever religious error—involves the same kind of humble openness to God’s message that was required of Saul of Tarsus—and of every other person through the centuries who has had to swallow pride and comply, without reservations, with God’s instructions.

