

The Bulletin

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April 12, 2020

“Your Parents Can’t Make You Go To Heaven”

by Ted J. Clarke

One of the greatest miseries of being a child is being made to do things that a child does not want to do. Eating vegetables, brushing teeth, taking a bath, cleaning one's room, going to Aunt June's, going to school, attending worship and Bible study -- these all rate high on the list of things that many children and teens do not like to do at some time or another.

As children get a little older, they often can see the wisdom of brushing their teeth or taking a bath, and many like going to school, even if it is not because they see the value of a good education. But mom and dad still make them attend church, even after they have complained sufficiently to be exempted from visiting Aunt June. Why? Some young people feel as though they have finally broken the stranglehold parents exercise over children, when they have removed themselves from parental power to make them "go to church."

A number of older people have told me that the reason they do not attend church in their adult years is because their parents made them go when they were children. Most of us know that really is not the reason. The real reason is usually twofold. One, the young person was not made to see the need for attending worship or Bible study as he was growing up, or the child simply did not learn the lessons taught. Two, the young person has grown and has made a decision that he does not need God in his life. His interests are simply not served by religion. In the growing process, the wisdom of eating properly bathing, and brushing teeth made sense, but somehow God was never made as real or as sensitive as those other things? Why?



Well, growing up is more than just getting older and bigger. There is a maturing of the mind (a true sense of seeking for answers to the questions of "Where did I come from? Why am I here? What happens to me when I die?"). When we really grow up, there is a soberness about life's purpose and death's destiny with those who are truly mature. Young people, it is not easy to force yourselves to think about these things, but it is important that you do so!

As you develop and grow older, try to grow in wisdom, too. When you become a young adult, your parents cannot make you do many things they used to do. You may be happy about that, but your parents did what they thought was best for you (Hebrews 12:9-11). There is one final thing that your parents cannot make you do! They cannot make you go to heaven. As much as they would like to see you there, they cannot make you go! That is a decision you get to make. You do not have to go, if you do not want to go! Romans 14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 say that "each one of us will give an account of himself."

Growing up is great! The adult life is a continuing education. There are tremendous and eternal consequences attached to the decisions you make as young adults! Use your freedom to make the right choices for yourselves.

“Taught Wrong And Baptized Right”

Adapted from an article by Wayne Jones

via *The Jackson Drive News & Notes*, No. 14, April 10, 2005.

Under the banners of acceptance and "unity," many in the Lord's church have developed an open door policy with members of the denominational world. Many, by their own admission, have chosen not to "question" a person's claim to salvation or even method of salvation when they leave a denomination to become a member of the Lord's church. Some have even adopted this idea when it comes to denominational baptism. How can this be? Is it possible to be instructed under a false system and to be baptized for the wrong reasons and still be saved as a result? Can a person be taught incorrectly and baptized correctly?

While all of us might be quick with a response that is based on opinion and supposition, we should be careful in answering this question. Our caution in answering will allow us to consider what the Bible has to say on the matter. Does the Bible teach that a person can be taught wrong and baptized right?

First, it must be understood that baptism is not the only step in God's plan to save man. Man's response to God's grace must begin in the mind. Man must realize that he is lost in sin, just like those on Pentecost realized their condition (Acts 2:37). Once a person realizes his spiritual condition, he must also understand that Christ (the only begotten Son of God) is the only source for relief of the burden of sin (Acts 4:12).

Consider for a moment the account of Philip and the eunuch as recorded in Acts 8:26-39. When the eunuch realized that he was lost, he inquired about baptism (Acts 8:36). Philip responded by saying, "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*" (Acts 8:37). If baptism was the only step in the eunuch's salvation, there would be no need for verse 37. However, Philip understood that unless the eunuch understood some things and was convicted of some things, then baptism would only get him wet.

The same is true in the case of the Jews in Acts 2. When those present asked the apostles what they needed to do in order to have their sins removed from the record, Peter's response was two-fold. According to Acts 2:38, Peter told them to repent and be baptized. While baptism is an action that can be seen on the outside, repentance is a step in God's plan for salvation that is primarily mental. When a person repents, he changes his mind based on what he knows about God, His Word, and His Plan for man's salvation. Peter realized that unless these men and women were willing to make a decision to turn from Judaism, then being immersed in water would do them no good.

Peter and Philip realized that baptism was not the only step in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. In fact, both of these men realized that baptism would only benefit those who were thinking correctly. It is for this reason that Peter and Philip took the time to verbally teach their audiences the Word of God. It is the Word that produces faith (Romans 10:17) and is an understanding of that Word that leads us to repentance (II Corinthians 7:10) and then changes how we behave (II Corinthians 7:11; Matthew 3:8).

Perhaps the clearest example of this is found in Acts 19. As this chapter opens, Paul comes to Ephesus and realizes that some of the Ephesians had seemingly been baptized by Apollos after hearing his teaching. According to the latter portion of chapter 18, Apollos was teaching the baptism of John after the baptism of the great commission had become effective. John the Baptizer taught repentance and baptism looking to the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom, the church. However, after Christ had come and died upon the cross for our sins, the apostles went forth teaching that Christ had come and was doing away with men's sins as they believed in Him and were baptized for the remission of their sins.

Apparently, those in Ephesus had been taught John's baptism, which had already fulfilled its purpose on the other side of the cross. They no doubt were sincere in believing what they had been taught and being baptized with the baptism of John, a doctrine that was right, well and good on the other side of the cross. However, at the time it was taught to them it had already been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and was outdated. Paul realized this when those in Ephesus had not even heard of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2) which took place on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. Did Paul say to those twelve men, "Well, as long as you are comfortable with your baptism, we will accept it as well"? No, that was not Paul's attitude at all. In fact, notice what Acts 19:4-5 reveals that Paul did. He taught the truth on the matter and then the men were baptized with the baptism of the great commission having the right and corrected thinking about it. Could those men in Ephesus be taught wrong, John's baptism, but be baptized right? Apparently not.

Has the doctrine of God changed since Acts 19? Has God's plan to save man been divinely altered since the days of Acts 2, 8, or 19? No, dear friends, it has not. God still demands that for baptism to be scriptural and effective, the one who is being baptized must understand why he is being baptized. Incorrect thinking and understanding will lead to an incorrect baptism every time.

May we never provide false hope to someone under the banners of "acceptance and unity."