

Chapter 14

Misconceptions Tacked on to the Gospel

Memory Verse

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (2 Tim. 1:12).

In the rest of this work, I wish to devote our full attention on *leading others to a saving faith in Christ*. I wish to say at the outset that *witnessing* has a great dependence work of the Holy Spirit. It does matter how well we plan our sermon or lesson. It does not matter how well organized it is. It does not matter how articulate we are. It does not matter how well it is delivered or taught. Unless the Lord's Spirit gives life to message or lesson, it will be nothing more the words of the flesh! Similarly, *witnessing rest in the power of the Spirit* and His blessing upon the Word of God. This is more than dependence on the Spirit of God, it is absolute necessity that the Holy Spirit prepare the heart and mind of the unbeliever to hear and to receive the Word of God, salvation.

We may intellectually lead someone to accept the death and resurrection of Jesus as a historical fact, but such acknowledgement maybe nothing more than an intellectual assent, a profession of faith. A profession of faith in Christ is not necessarily indicate that such people possession genuine faith and have the new birth. Intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel is not necessarily a possession of genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

For instance, the Scriptures tell us that demons believe in one God, and the demons also fear the Lord (James 2:19). Yet demons are not saved and neither can they be saved since there is no salvation plan for them. Salvation is only for the

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offspring of Adam's race (Heb. 2:14ff). Everyone that truly repents and places his or her trust in Christ as Lord and Savior is born of the Spirit. This is the promise of God (Rom. 10:13, Acts 16:31). Genuine commitment and trust of faith is persevered by the sovereign work of the Lord. The genuine believer in Jesus is saved from all eternity. Ah, but our assurance of salvation is *not* based upon any enduring quality you or I may intrinsically possess (Heb. 10:36-39; Phil. 1:6, 2:12, 13). It is the Lord that began the work in us. Therefore, Lord alone will accomplish it (Jude 1:24, 25). Many peoples of the world believe in God as demons do. Many people believe that God exist. This is commendable. However, believing that God is does not constitute genuine saving faith in Christ.

We maybe a good church member, but church membership is not salvation in Christ. We may also be a leader in our church or a God-fearing leader in the community, but this does not mean we are saved. We may have even gone through some religious rite such as water baptized, confirmation, catechism, or some theological training, but we still could be void regeneration and the redeeming grace of God. We may be most moral and a strongly believer in the Bible, but this does not mean we are now saved in Christ. To hear some tell it, "I have always believed," the Bible teaches that this untrue (Eph. 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-5). So, a profession of faith does not necessarily mean that we possess genuine saving faith in Christ. Saving faith is a total commitment or trust in Christ who alone is able save us, though faith itself does not save us. We are saved through *the object of our faith*, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our salvation is resting entirely upon Christ's merits and redemptive work. It is our personal trust in His finished work on Calvary that saves us. We are saved by His grace, and we are also sustained by His grace. Yes, we are saved by His grace alone as the song says below.

'TIS ALL TO HIM I OWE'

1. Sin has left its enduring stain.
2. So it's all to Him now I owe;
3. Sin has left its enduring stain.

1. Praise God my Lord who died for me.
2. Sin indeed left its stained resting on me.
3. Oh my friend receive Jesus the Lord.

1. Yes my Savior shed His blood for me.
2. But praise God His blood avails for me.
3. Yes the Savior shed His blood for you.

1. He alone died and arose again even for me.
2. Praise God He has now cleansed even me.
3. Come to Jesus, He alone died and 'rose even for you.

Chorus

The sin debt, yes, I no longer owe;

For my Savior indeed has paid it all.

Now my all to Him I owe, yes even me;

So let me walk in Thy love I have come to know, yes even me.

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While faith and faith alone in Christ save us, the faith that has saved us is never alone. Salvation means *deliverance*. When we are saved, we are *delivered* from *the penalty of sin*. This is the once for all act of God in Christ never to be repeated. The sin debt is fully paid by Christ; this is past and complete. We shall be saved, *delivered*, from the very *presence of sin* in order that we shall no longer be slaves of sin; this is future when we enter into His eternal glory. But for now, the Lord is saving, *delivering*, us from *the power of sin* in our daily lives in Christ; this is present and continual. This is the promise to every genuine believer in Christ. Deliverance from the power of sin or clutches of the power sin over us is an assurance for all who have genuine in Christ. Christ gives us power to change. Christ gives us a thrust to know the Lord and His Word. Christ gives us a new desire. It is a desire to do His will. This is because He has given us a new nature. We are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).

When we witness, we must expect that the Lord will save people, and He will. It is up to each of us to share the gospel, but it is the Spirit of the Lord that save and a give life. As we are faithful to share His Word with others, people will indeed be saved. The evidence of their salvation will be clear. They will have a new desire to walk in faith and obedience to Him. I would not give much credence to someone that professed faith in Christ but showed not desire to know His Word or do His will. As people claim Christ as Lord and Savior, we ought to expect that they will want to change. The transformation is within! We may never notice the change from human eyes. Ah, but Christ will change us "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17 NIV).

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

We must present the gospel of Christ clearly, concisely, and unadulteratedly to the sinner. This means we must first know what is in facts of the central core of the gospel message! Confusion lies in many sincere Christians trying to witness to the unsaved, but they themselves are uncertain what is and what is not part of the saving gospel in Christ. What are the essentials of the gospel to be saved? If we are ignorant of what are the essentials to believe and be saved, we will be ineffective. How can we share that which we are unclear about in our own mind or we plainly do not know? We knowingly or unknowingly preface the gospel with condition that are unwarranted, none Biblical, and may in fact hinder rather than help in sharing the gospel. Sometime it is not the condition to faith we lay out that may hinder our effectiveness in sharing the gospel of Christ. Sometimes it is *the things we tack on* in witnessing.

Once we know the central core of the gospel, we need to know how to share the gospel effectively with the unsaved. There is a definite order in presenting the good news if we are to be effective soul winner. We must know clearly the facts of the gospel. Still, it is one thing to know the central facts, but it is an entirely different matter to share it effectively and see people pass from death unto life through faith in our risen Lord. It is one thing to present the information, but it another thing to

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express it clearly and succinctly as possible. Almost anyone can shoot a rifle, but not everyone can accurately *hit the bull-eye* in what he or she is aiming at with the rifle or pistol. We need to know how to *take-aim* so to speak and effectively lead others to a saving faith in Christ Jesus as Lord.

Lastly, we need to know what is the next step when someone professes Christ as Lord and Savior. That is, now that we have led someone to faith in Christ, what do we do next? It is at this step (after people are saved) that we may fumble the ball as it were. This is because we just do not know what to do next. The next step after coming to faith in Christ is that we must help them to maturity in faith in Christ. This is better known in my mind as *nurturing* people in their faith. If we do not have a well develop and thought-out plan, it is better to just turn the new Christian over to a sound Bible Church that will definitely follow-up and do the nurturing to the best of their ability. It is critical that new Christians *get plugged into* a strong witnessing and teaching church.

It is disastrous when someone fancies himself as sort of proficient in evangelism and kind of a "Jack-leg teacher" to the new Christian. Such *evangelist*, and I use evangelist loosely, are wrong because he is void of an clear, concise, and well thought-out plan including a scheduled training program and lead the new Christian into a sound Bible Church. Even worse he does not encourage them to get into the church. Such "Jack-legged teachers" may be sincere, but in time, it will run a drift or worse run a ground like a *pilotless* ship. They do not know how to chart a course let a lone safely come to port. When asked for help by the new Christian, he is told, "Study your Bible."

Without guidance, training, and fellowship with other Christians in a sound church, this only leads the new Christian discouragement. If the new Christian should venture out on his own to seek fellowship in another church, he may feel unloyal to one that lead him to Christ. The new Christian is in a dilemma with his loyalty, love, and devotion to Christ. He is then in great conflict of soul. Where there is no clear directive and definite plan and follow-up, the new Christian is an easy prey for the world, the flesh, and the devil. Some do follow-up on new Christian, but it maybe just *shooing from the hip*, follow-up without clear plan. New Christians must have the benefit of the *body-life* of the assembly. The importance of the *body-life* of a God-fearing congregation can not be overstated. There are *Long Rangers* out in the community of the redeemed that are used of the Lord. However, we would be very wrong to conclude that since the Lord uses them to lead others to Christ that He is somehow approving of their *Long Ranger* tactics. The Lord blesses His Word not necessarily their method. Most importantly, the community will not be transformed without establishing new believers and new churches. The community must have the benefit of expanding and growing Christian believers maturing and serving in the society.

But some may say, "Frank, you are contradicting yourself." While I strongly think the evangelist is the best to start the nurturing, it is predicated that the evangelist is himself must be sound in the faith and is working through a NT local church. Those that seek only to draw disciples to themselves and stand aloof to the *body-*

life of the total Kingdom of God have missed Paul's meaning in (Rom. 12, I Cor. 12, and Eph. 4). Is the Lord please when we are hopping around from one church to another church but never showing any full commitment to any sound Bible Church? The *Long Ranger* person has no commitment a church.

The *Long Ranger* Christian makes may attempt to justify their anti-church attitude and lack of commitment to a particular assembly by saying, "I have not found a church true to the New Testament." It is like some people that say, "Oh, I will not go to that church because that is where all those hypocrites are." I often feel like saying, "That is all right, we've got room for one more!" If some self-proclaimed *evangelist* (minister) is poor in his theology, it is not because he has the gift of evangelism; he has not been faithful in studying the Word of God. It is better to have the new Christian put on the doorstep of sound Bible Church and adopted rather than to *wing it* on the street void of nurturing and fellowship in the church. While many churches are in poor condition spiritually, the congregations of the saints belong to the Lord. Those who come to Christ by faith in His shed-blood belong to Christ. If the new believer is a Christian, the name Christian means *belonging to Christ* who is the Lord God of all. The new Christian does not belong to the evangelist nor does he belong to an particular church or fellowship or denomination.

Therefore, as we proceed further into this study, what is of the central core of the gospel message? Also, just how do we present the gospel effectively to the unsaved? Finally, what is the next step when someone professes Christ as Lord and Savior?

What is the central core of the gospel message? The *gospel message* of Christ ought to be a simple thing to define, "Don't you think?" It is simple to share with another the core of the gospel! Still, we as Adam's posterity, we tend make simple things much more complex than they really are. The culprit is the *traditions*. Yes, it is traditions that builds up like excess baggage that is collected over the years. The assumption is we tend to give out attention to what our predecessor said rather than "What does the Scripture actually say on the subject?" Do not misunderstand me; traditions can be most helpful for clarity. The traditions however must always be subject to the test and scrutiny of Scripture and never testing Scripture to traditions. The principle must always be:

"Our faith and obedience is to Christ.

Scripture is the measurement Christ has established;

Faith and obedience must be measure by Scripture Christ established."

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Furthermore, it is not sufficient just to quote Scripture as the final test of truth. The principle must be that *Scripture interpret Scripture. Scripture alone must interpret itself.* Scripture stands on it own merit because it is Christ that established the Scripture.

Some study of Holy Writ, Word of God, on the bases of *modern Existentialism*. That is, some approach Scripture purely an on the here and now. To the Existentialist,

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church history has little value. The danger is that we are left to our own conclusion without any accountability. Others interpret from the *experiential*. That is, some interpret the Bible based on the experience of others or their personal experience. This just means Scripture is subjugated to the personal whims and conjectures. Holy Writ is seen from a personal experience that is often void of the Historical and Grammatical setting of Scripture itself. We read our experience into the Bible our meaning, which is *eisegesis*. What if our experience is only an illusion of the flesh or world's view or from the prince of darkness?

Another error on our part is using the *emotional* interpreter. Here we begin to interpret the Word of God by retrieving personal feeling not fact. In this method, we actually are making our own feelings the authority. We are perhaps blind to the concept that the Bible alone is the bedrock of all interpretations regardless of our feelings. The *emotionalist* interpreter is one of the more popular methods used in so-called personal Bible study today. The *emotionalistic* interpretation is spiritually deadly. The *emotionalistic* interpreter is flying solely by the set of ego-centric emotions. Here we does not know how fly by the instrument panel, the Word of God. The assumption is that *if it feels right it must be right*. We assume wrongly our feelings or emotions are being lead by the Spirit of God. The false assumption is that we have the seal of God presence and the seal of His approval. Such *spiritual barnstorming* can lead to a crash in our faith. Those who follow such people will end up ship wrecked in their faith. All three: the existentialist, the experientialist, and the emotionalistic are too subjective; there is a serious danger of superimposing our view into the precious Word of God.

What is in fact the central core of the gospel message? Let us examine some of the things that has been tacked on to the gospel over the years. In the next chapter, we shall consider some of the thing that has been tack on after the gospel. Finally, we will look at what is in fact the central core of the gospel and nothing more and nothing less. If someone is offended by the coming sections, I apologize because I am not seeking to single out any one group, but rather I hope to sharpen in simplicity what is after all the heart of the gospel. Let the Holy Word of the Lord stand on its own merit and stand it will. Let us who are called by grace our Lord Jesus submit to the final authority of His Word.

MISGUIDED ASSUMPTION CONCERN SALVATION

There are numerous things we attempt to tack-on to salvation. Some allege there are things we must do *before* we can be saved. I have selected a few for examples, but I have by no means exhausted the list. Some things that are tacked-on to the gospel are ideas that the carnal mind has conjures up. There is no intention of being offensive to any persons or group. Yet, it is high time we have some spiritual backbone. We need to hold-fast the precious truth of the gospel less we remain silent and become part-takers of other people's sin of ill-advised teaching. Here is one of the ill-advised or fallacy teaching about evangelism: *Get you life in order before come to Christ*. There is a notion inferred that we have to some how get our life in order before we can come to faith in Christ.

Another error in the necessity of salvation, the ability to enter heaven, is that *our good must somehow outweigh our bad*. This kind of humanized theology alleges that our works will be judged before the Lord to see if we made it into heaven. The supposition assumes that *salvation is like a balance ledger book*. Here a person has no assurance of going to heaven. In a sense, it does not matter what we believe about God. Some see *salvation as though a person were balancing a ledger book*. One side are our bad deeds. On the other side of the ledger are our good deeds. Our so-called good works must outweigh our bad deeds.

Still another misconception about salvation is that *we must do some type of penitence or repentance* to be saved. The inference here is that there is the necessity of the sinner "come clean and show remorse." Salvation is seen as washing the outside of the bowl. This third false notion is *tacking on to the gospel is the idea that you must do penitence or show repentance* in order to get saved. The conclusion is drawn that if there is no penitence or repentance we are not saved. Anyone coming with faith will have repentance because repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces godly repentance unto salvation in Christ Jesus and not the carnal flesh. If the oceans were empty and we filled them with tears, this would not get us into heaven.

The last misconception about salvation, unfortunately, brings a storm of bitter debate, controversy, and condemnation by some groups. The error here is that *salvation is incomplete without bathing our sins away in water*. In other words, water-baptism is absolutely necessary to be saved. This is without doubt the most controversial and divisive issue in the Church. This teaching contends the necessity of *the rite of water-baptism to be saved*. Water-baptism is incapable of cleaning the soul; this is the work of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11).

In all four examples above in one form or another, these teachings have tacked-on something in order to be saved. This misguided teaching rips at the fiber and oneness of the Body of Christ, the Church. Such *tack-ons*, however sincere, place an immense stumbling block to those in the world that inquire about faith in Christ our blessed Lord and Master.

Some Assume We Must Get Our Life in Order to Come to Faith in Christ

Some people assume that we have to somehow get our lives in order before we can come to faith in Christ. The unregenerate cannot get their life in order before coming to Christ even if they want to get it in order. They may show some semblance that their life is indeed in order but semblance finds no approval from the Lord of all mercy and grace. The Lord looks upon the inner motive, the heart. To illustrate, some think we have to drop all the vices of life like immorality, drug, alcohol, corruption and a like to be "accepted by the Lord."

In the first place the unregenerate is impotent and unable to clean up his life to the satisfaction of the Lord even if he so desired. This is because we are in bondage to sin (Titus 3:3ff). Secondly, even if we could clean up our life, this would mean we are self-righteous. The Bible says, "All our righteousness is filthy rags" before the Lord (Isa. 64:6). The Word of God says, "There is no righteous, no not one" (Rom.

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3:10). The Christian is saved from the penalty of sin by his faith in Christ and not on the bases of his good works (Gal. 2:20, 21; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:3-8).

Once we are truly born again by His Spirit and saved by His grace, the Lord Himself and not we ourselves will begin a transformation and a change in us (Titus 2:11-14). I do not change my life to get saved. It is once I am saved my life changes by the power and grace of God. Otherwise, we would be teaching erroneously as some do even to this day that we must have good works to be saved. This erroneous teaching goes something like this: *If we will clean up our life the best we can, the Lord will accept us.* The failure is what Paul said of the unbelieving Jews.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:1-4 KJV).

Others See Salvation as One Balances a Ledger Book

Similarly, others see salvation as one balances a ledger-book. One side are our bad deeds. On the other side of the ledger are our good deeds. When the books will be opened, then the Lord will judge each of us by our works. If our good works out-weight our bad works, we made it. If our bad works out-weight our good works, we go to hell. Some say the Bible teaches that we are judge by what is written in the books. Let us then take a look at this passage to see exactly what is saying,

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The judgment is not to determine who is saved and lost. Neither is this a judgment to see if anyone had enough so-called "good works." This is determining the degree or particular status of each unbeliever will have in the lake of fire. The first book, referred to as "books were opened." This is the books that apparently reveal a person's sins and possible their rejection of the gospel. This first set of books demonstrates that we have sinned and justly deserve the wrath of God since no one merits heaven. Paul clearly proves this from Scripture (Rom. 3:10-20). Our Lord said this is the work you must do to have eternal life:

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:29).

It is impossible for the Christian to be judge at the Great White Throne Judgment. This is because we who have believed in Christ have already passed out of judgment into eternal life and will not come into condemnation or judgment (John 3:18, 36; 5:24, 25; Rom. 8:1, 31-39). True, we will be judge as Christians in giving accountability for how we lived and service for Christ. Ah but, this judgment is for rewards of the faithful service not salvation judgment (1 Cor. 3:10-15). When a Christian dies, the Bible says he goes to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:5-8). If we are judged at the Great White Throne as some erroneously assert, how is it that the saints in Christ will judge the world and even the fallen angels? Paul says,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?
Do you not know that we will judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2a, 3a).

No my dear friend, we shall not be judged at the Great White Throne! Secondly, some forget there is another book, "and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*. --if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:12, 15). The unbeliever will be told that his name is not written down in the *Lamb's book of Life*. Since a person's name is not found in the Lamb's Book of Life, this proves he is forever lost. Because his name is not found in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, he is unredeemed. Jesus said,

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:25-28).

The topic of the Lamb's Book of Life could be devoted to a volume in itself and we would still not resolve many questions surrounding it. One thing is clear: only the saved will be in the book of life. Thus we must plead with the sinner to repent and trust Christ as his Lord and Savior. It is only those who personally trust Christ as Lord and Savior are found in the book of life. The other books will determine his level in the lake of fire. That is, the other books reveal his or her degree in the lake of fire. Not all will suffer the same degree in the lake of fire.

We may wonder why God does not just save everyone. I would like to turn the question a round and say it this way: *When we become aware of the holiness and righteous of God in contrast to our utter sinfulness, we shall no doubt marvel that the Lord saves anyone in the first place.* You see, we just do not see ourselves as utterly depravity and our innate open hostile and rebellion towards the Lord. How much less then can we comprehend the majesty of the Lord and His infinite holiness and righteousness? We are presently judging through the eyes sinful and rebellious flesh. How could we ever see the wonders of unsurprising glory of the Lord? Amen, the Lord is merciful, but the mercy is found in Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12). In that Day, the ungodly will have no doubt of God's judgment and why he is sent to the lake of fire. We on the other hand will marvel at His grace and mercy that we were accepted in the Beloved, Jesus Christ.

The Idea of Repentance

Another thing some have tacked on to the gospel is the idea of *repentance*. That is, some try to say we have to have "a tear jerking experience, genuine repentance." The fallacy here is that when we do penitence we move God to look upon us in favor, and the Lord will *come on our terms and bidding*. If we could fill the oceans full with tears of sorrow, what is that to Him? Such nonsensical proposition is bankrupted. It is our trust in Christ as Lord and Savior that will please God (John 3:16-18). Some will say, "But I must have a repentant heart towards God." I say, Amen! But if it were not for His grace, none of us would have a repentant heart before our Maker. Our hearts are most desperately wicked and self-deceptive. The Lord truly knows our hearts (Jer. 17:9).

To make matters even worst, some stand around the penitent person to "spark him on in such foolishness." Some will even tell him to continue to repent "until the light breaks through." I am mocking those who show such contrition toward the Lord. What I object to is laying down such conditions to coming to faith in Christ. People that turn to Christ as Lord and Savior should show repentance. Ah, but we show evidence of repentance because of the Holy Spirit's work in our life. It is not because we initiated our egocentric repentance that we now *earn the right* to come to faith in Christ. In our darken state of unregeneracy, we are blind by our own self-righteousness, the power of Satan, and the ungodly influences of the world. It is not until the Holy Spirit begins to illuminate our hearts and minds that we then begin to turn to the Lord and bring forth true repentance.

I have already said if some one professes faith in Christ but shows no change of attitude or action of their past life I would not give *plug nickel* for such profession of faith. Repentance literally means a *changed mind*. The Holy Spirit and He alone is the One that initiates and cause the metamorphosis or the transformation. In our darkened and unregenerate state, no one seeks that Lord. We are the ones in bondage and blind, and it is the Lord of host that sought us out for His good pleasure. There are millions of people who are penitent about their sin. Yet many penitent people reject the idea we are saved and come to favor before God by faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone. Yes, they wish to come to come to God, but they wish to come to come to God *on their turns*. Even worse, people wish to come to the "god" of their own making rather than turn to the Lord who alone can save (Isa. 43:10, 11; 45:21; Hos. 13:4). They have set up their own terms based upon the *god* of their own. Let us heed Joshua's words (Josh. 24:15). Those will not submit to the standard of His holy Word will perish in their sin (John 8:24). People have "going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3).

The Rite of Water Baptism

Another serious error of fallen humanity and the religious community is the notion and tacked-on that prior to coming to faith and being saved we must receive the rite of water-baptism. Some would have us to believe that water-baptism by the

Church whether sprinkled, poured, or immersed is necessary to removes the filth of sin. Those who hold to this position will contend the Spirit cleanses us from sin, but we must still wash away out sins through the Church by the rite of water baptism. *Traditionalists* have indeed superimposed its will over the plain teaching of the Word of God. Some *Traditionalist* groups have led us to think that their particular sect has the power to save as through their *incantations* are the means of life and death. There is nothing further from the truth. This evil lie still holds millions and millions in bondage even until this very hour!

Please do not read more into my statement than I have said. I am not arguing for some form of water baptismal mode over another here. Some will see water-baptism as a sacrament. Still others will see it as an ordinance or act of obedience. Believe it or not some misguidedly reject any form of water-baptism. Others will argue for pedobaptism (infant baptism). I prefer believer's baptism by immersion. I am opposed to those who teach the doctrine of what has been referred to as *baptismal regeneration* where people claim that no one can be saved unless he has been water baptized and particularly by their sect.

Those who insist on the necessity of water-baptism to be saved say something like this: "We can not be reborn and enter the kingdom of God unless they are water baptized." Water-baptism is so strongly maintained that even if we have truly repented and have cling to Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, we cannot in anyway be saved until we are water baptized. Others will even go so far as to assert that we must also be properly baptized. Still others are so adamant that even the baptism must be done by their sect to be legitimate, all other baptisms are discredited and unacceptable. Others demand that unless the proper mode is cared out, the baptism is invalid!

Since this is not treatise on water-baptism but what is the central core of the gospel to be saved, I do not wish to wonder far from the topic. But let me make this few observation as it relates to the salvation of humanity. First the word baptize does not necessary have anything whatsoever with *water*. Only by examining each text meticulously and ever so methodically can we determine some meaningful Biblical understanding. For example, Jesus spoke of his *death as a baptism* (Mark 10:39). Their is no meaning of *water* here. Paul speaks of the people of Israel be *baptized in the Red Sea* (1 Cor.10:1ff), but there is no water here implied. The Egyptian Army followed Israel, and they were literally water baptized and died. Paul says that there is one baptism necessary to be saved. This is the baptism by the Holy Spirit, which means being *in-grafting* into Christ by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). There is absolutely no reference to water baptism in (1 Cor. 12). Paul not only says we are *spiritually baptized by the Spirit of God*, but we are also *spiritually circumcised by the Holy Spirit of God* (Col. 2:11, 12; Phil. 3:3). Some mistakenly see water baptism nearly every time they see the word, *baptism*; but this is a serious mistake! This is not the teaching of Scripture.

As to water baptism as a means of conveying saving grace in Christ, this is an insult to the Spirit and grace of God. The thief on the cross that believe that Jesus

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was in truth the Messiah the Son of God was genuinely saved by faith in Christ without any rite of water baptism. Our merciful Lord declares to the thief that believes in Him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43). Did you know some who hold to *baptismal regeneration* are very ardent and allege that the thief on the cross *was under the Old Covenant!* Others *baptismal regeneration* alleges that "the thief on the cross was baptized by blood, *martyrdom baptism.*" (His death was a baptism.) Still other maintains that "the thief was water baptized after his death." My friend this is *swallowing a camel and choking on gnat.*

Jesus said that 'he that believe shall pass out of death into life and shall not come into condemnation' (John 5:24, 25). Our Lord did not say *he that believes and is baptized is saved.* The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30). Paul and Silas did not say believe and be baptized to be saved, but they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household' (Acts 16:31). The Scripture declares,

That 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. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Rom. 10:9, 10 NIV).

Therefore we must categorically and unequivocally reject any attempts of anyone trying to argue for any conditions to being saved other than through person faith and genuine commitment in our risen Lord Jesus as Savior. Some will still say, "But there are passages speak of water baptism as related to salvation" (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). The Mark 16 is a very questionable text. It is unwise and questionable *hermeneutics* to build a doctrine on such disputed passage. Even if the text were proven to be genuine, Mark does not teach we must be water baptized to be saved. The last clause interprets itself. Let us look at Mark 16.

<u>The General Statement</u>	<u>Specific Declaration for Salvation</u>
"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16a).	"-but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16b).

A person is condemned for disbelief! The last clause determines meaning here, "but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16b). The text does not say, *he who has disbelieved and refuses water baptism is condemned.* Mark 16:16 is very explicit. A person is condemned for his disbelief. To read baptismal regeneration in to Mark 16:16 is one of the worst forms of eisegesis. (This is reading into the text that which is not actually in the text.) But again, this is a very questionable text since Mark 16:9-20 is not found in two of older Greek text of the New Testament. Therefore, we must be cautious in trying to build a doctrine on such above text.

Now let us consider the apostle Peter's statement in Acts 2. Peter is calling for national repentance on the part of the nation Israel. Peter is addressing Israel nationally (Acts 2:22, 23). Here is Peter's statement.

Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:37-39 KJV).

This is similar to what John the Baptist did (Mark 1:4ff) except now Peter clearly points to Jesus as Israel's Messiah. Peter's statement in (Acts 2:38) is not referring to the conditions for salvation. He is calling for national repentance. He is declaring God's promise of restoration of the nation Israel (compare Acts 2:37-39 to 3:17-26). Still, even if we were to take it in the most literal sense, the text must be interpreted by other epistolary passages in Acts and the rest of the NT. We have already note that in Philippian jailer that Dr. Luke who wrote Acts says faith in Christ is the only condition (Acts 16:31).

Similarly, we must remember, the Holy Spirit was given to Cornelius *before* he and his household *was water baptized*. The giving of the Holy Spirit prior to water baptism clearly declares *Cornelius was already saved BEFORE* he was *water baptized* (compare Acts 10:44-46 to vv 47, 48). The Spirit would not have been given if water baptism was part of the condition to being saved. Water baptism of Cornelius follows his salvation; it did not in anyway precede his salvation in Christ.

Paul repeated the similar incident in Acts 19:1-7. In this insistence, people were rebaptized in the name of the Lord. That is, these people were rebaptized by Paul in the authority of Jesus Christ. This is the same as Matt. 28:18-20; Jesus is giving the disciples authority to baptize. Paul then laid his hands on them to receive the charismata (grace-gift) of God, the Holy Spirit preceded water baptism. Paul rebaptizes them because Scripture says, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit' (Acts 19:2). All these disciples knew was the teaching of John the Baptist. These believers did not know the Messiah come and died for sinners or that there was a Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, Acts must be interpreted in light of other New Testament and particularly to the NT epistles. When the text in Acts 19:1ff is compare to the NT, we immediately realize there is no erroneous idea of baptismal regeneration as a prerequisite to salvation. The cleansing of the person is solely by work of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God.

It is likely some of the early Jewish believers tried to superimpose circumcision to be saved and come under the Abrahamic blessing (compared Acts 15:1ff to Gal. 5:1ff). Therefore, neither circumcision or water baptism is a condition for salvation. Once a person comes to faith in Christ, he ought to be obedient to the command of our risen Lord and be water baptized by a believing New Testament Church. Therefore any attempt to place conditions in coming to Christ for salvation other than genuine faith and trust in Christ as Lord must be refutation. Scripture is plain; we are saved by faith alone in Christ (Rom. 5:1).

Conclusion

The Church has suffers many fractures on such doctrinal issues. I suppose some would advocate remaining silent and say, "Let each go by his own conscience." People will do that whether not there is a stand for the truth. Besides, silence allows the more powerful groups to lord it over others. Let us forever echo Paul's stand in (Gal. 2). People are sheep, and they are easily led unless some will stand and be counted for the truth. We are each going to give an account. The accounting will be sterner for those who are teachers of the Word of God (James 3:1).

However we will not only be accountable for what we said or did not say concerning the gospel, but we shall be judge for the things we added or omitted to the gospel! The Lord will hold us accountable for the thing we should have spoken out on but we did not. Let us follow the example of the apostle Paul and others who willing stood for the truth even at the cost of their lives. The sincerity of most people is not questioned. The problem here is we must not allow misguided or the person in error to defame the blessed name and work of our Lord Jesus and the Spirit of God. Let us stand in love, but let us stand strong and speak out for our Lord.