

The Old Paths

Volume 9, Issue 5

March 31, 2002

“When Am I Ready To Be Baptized?”

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Having been taught the truth concerning the Lord’s plan for salvation (faith, r e p e n t a n c e , confession of faith, and baptism, Acts 2:36-38, 8:35-39, 22:16), some people will wonder when is the right time to be baptized? Perhaps a young person who has grown up hearing sound preaching will wonder, “When am I ready to be baptized?” Others who are older and are impressed by the word of God may wonder the same thing. We find examples in Scripture of those who heard one sermon, they believed one sermon, and obeyed one sermon (Acts 2:41, 8:35-39, etc.). Yet, others, it seems waited for a time before obeying the truth. While we have no lease on life, Jesus certainly taught us the necessity of counting the cost and understanding just what it means to be a child of God (Lk. 14:25-32). Therefore, the question remains, when is it that one ought to be baptized?

When One Should Not Be Baptized

To help us appreciate the importance of this step, let us understand that there are some occasions when one ought not be baptized. One should not be baptized when it is something we are doing merely to please others. Please understand that taking this step and being baptized for the remission of sins will please people, and will of course please

God and the angels of Heaven. Yet, if our purpose for doing this is *merely* to please people, then we ought not take this step.

If we are being baptized merely to be a part of “the crowd,” we ought not be baptized. I know of occasions where some (especially young people) will be caught up in “the moment,” and be baptized just because their friends were baptized. Let us be careful and not be swayed by what others do. This type of mentality is what caused “many” of Christ’s disciples to leave Him (Jn. 6:66).

Another reason not to be baptized is merely because one thinks it is time. Sometimes, we find people pressured into being baptized because the older folks think it’s time. Some children start feeling pressured around 10-11 years old, and then it is really “poured on” them about 13-15. I realize that it is hard sometimes to strike that balance between encouraging a child and forcing them, but we must be careful about that. Just because I might think it is time for someone to be baptized doesn’t mean they are ready. If they are not ready, they’ll never be the Christian they need to be.

Now, in answer to our question, when is the time that I know I am ready to be baptized?

When I Realize The Seriousness Of My Own Sins.

Jesus taught that there are only two eternal destinations for the soul of man. He will either enter into life, or go to destruction (Matt. 7:13-14). The righteous will go into “*life*

eternal,” while the wicked will go to “*everlasting punishment*” (Matt. 25:46). Everlasting punishment or destruction is the consequence of sin. Paul said, “*the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23). James taught the same thing in James 1:14-15. It is sin which separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Therefore, when one realizes that he is a sinner, separated from God, having nothing to look forward to but eternal punishment, this is the time to consider one’s soul and be baptized.

When I Understand That Sin Demands A Sacrifice.

“*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, in order for sin to be cleansed, there must be a sacrifice. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (Jn. 3:16). Christ’s blood was shed, not for the remission of His sins, but for mine (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 3:24-25). He was the sacrifice for my sins (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 7:27, 9:26). When I realize this, and come to grips with what my sin did (Isa. 53:4-6), then I am on my way to knowing when I need to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

When I Understand The Conditions Of Pardon.

What are the conditions of pardon? Some think man has nothing to do. This is wrong. Christ has died for us, and we must respond to the Lord’s invitation in order to be saved (Matt. 11:28-30). In order to be saved, one must hear God’s word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 2:22), believe that Jesus is the son of God (Jn. 8:24; Heb. 11:6), repent of past sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30), confess your faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21). These are the Lord’s terms, and we must come to

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk

Him on these terms, and not our own! The Holy Spirit revealed that Christ *“became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Heb. 5:8-9).

When I Am Ready To Make A Commitment To Put The Lord First.

If one is not ready to put the Lord first in all things, he is not ready to be baptized. Baptism changes one's relationship from being outside of Christ, to being in Christ (Eph. 2:12-13). One changes from being in the kingdom of darkness to being in *“the kingdom of his dear son”* (Col. 1:13). Therefore, in this new relationship, one must determine to put God and His kingdom first. Jesus said, *“but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). We see the extent of one's commitment when we read Christ's words that we must love Him more than family, friends, and even self (Matt. 10:34-38). This commitment to Christ is a lifelong commitment as well (I Tim. 6:12-14; II Tim. 4:6-8). If one is not ready to commit one's life completely to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2), he is not ready to be baptized.

When I Am Ready To Live For Christ.

When one becomes a Christian, he begins living a new life (Rom. 6:4). Paul said, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (II Cor. 5:17). Living for Christ is just that, living for Christ, and not for self! Once one submits to the Lord's plan for salvation, he must be ready to live for Christ and not for self. His body and spirit belong to God (I Cor. 6:20). This is life-long service to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Conclusion

Are you ready to do the Lord's will, and serve Him all the days of your life? This is what is expected of those who are baptized for the remission of sins. Are you ready to say “no” to a life of sin, and “yes” to a life of serving God? When one realizes he is in sin and lost, is ready to deny self and follow Christ, is ready to leave his life of sin and live for Christ, then he is ready to be baptized. Let us help you this morning to put on Christ and be saved from your sin (Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:38).

Promises, Promises

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Me break a promise? Never! I'm a man of my word. Besides, the Bible says all liars will have their place in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

Amen! So how come we sing songs such as *“I want to be a soul winner for Jesus”* with so much vigor and enthusiasm, and then have to coax and plead with people to get them out to do personal work?

The point is, every time we open our song books, many of us make scores of promises we have no intention of keeping. Indeed, I suspect many of us never pay enough

attention to what we are actually saying in the songs to realize what impressive promises we do make when we sing.

If you use the song book, *“Sacred Selections For The Church,”* you have no doubt not only promised to be a soul winner for Jesus, but you have sung out the words *“Here Am I, Send Me”* with enough vigor to persuade everyone that you would really be there next time there was an opportunity to be sent to do personal work.

Then, of course, come the promises to be a worker for the Lord (#114) and to follow Jesus wherever He leads (#186); to surrender all (#98); to do a golden deed for someone each day (#103); and to pray earnestly for your friends to obey the gospel (#104).

On and on we could go, but you get the point. We wouldn't sign a business contract without reading the fine print to see exactly what we were promising to do. Next time you sing a song, read the words carefully lest you promise to do something you have no intention of doing.

Editor's Note: All but two of the songs mentioned above are in our songbook, too. In order, they are: #18, #693, #230, #10, and #204. Yet, the point is still valid. Are we making promises to God that we are not keeping? God forbid! (Read: Ecc. 5:2, 4-6)

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