

The Old Paths

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“Mike Brown’s Conversion”

Jarrold Jacobs

On April 12, 2006, I was first introduced to Mike Brown. Our brother Dale Barnes (currently preaching in Caneyville, KY) had known him for over 10 years, as Mike worked at his deer processing plant in those years. Dale asked me to go with him and to talk with Mike about being baptized because he recently discovered he had cancer (severe), and Dale thought such a visit would get him to thinking about his soul.

We went to Mike’s house around 10:00 a.m. and talked with this kind soul, who was already feeling the effects of cancer. He was thin, and already having “good and bad days,” but this day was a good one (and soon to get better). I met one of Mike’s sisters and after exchanging pleasantries (including learning that we HAD BEEN TO HIS HOUSE IN NOVEMBER, when we passed through inviting people in the neighborhood to church), Dale began to speak. As Dale led the conversation, he asked Mike about his conversion and if he had ever been baptized for the remission of sins. Mike said, “No,” and Dale continued. He read from Mark 16:16 (*“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*), Acts 2:38 (*“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.”), then Acts 22:16 (*“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*), and I Peter 3:21 (*“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*). He wove those verses together, showing how they all pointed to the necessity of being baptized for the remission of sins if he wanted to go to Heaven.

As he continued, Dale asked Mike if he’d be interested in being baptized, and Mike said “Yes.” Dale asked, “When?” and Mike said, “Now!” When asked, “Why?” He said to be forgiven of his sins. Based upon what we had discussed, such questions and answers showed Dale, and me that Mike knew what he was doing and was ready.

His sister stopped us to ask if we thought we should call someone from the Bellevue Baptist church, and Dale answered, “No. This is Mike’s decision, and not theirs. If Mike wants to be baptized, then we will go right now.” Mike again consented, and we all headed over to the church building. Yes, this was a “good day” health-wise for Mike, and was going to get better. Before leaving, we called for Don Barnes to come with us, and he was there in a moment, ready to assist in any way he could.

Upon entering the church building, we talked for a moment and then we discussed who would do the baptizing. I deferred to Dale, but Dale insisted that I do it. We talked some more, and then asked Mike to make the “Good Confession” before his baptism (The confession of one’s faith: *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”*, Acts 8:36-38; Matt. 16:16; Rom. 10:10). Then Mike changed into another garment so he would have dry clothes to wear home, and I put on the waders in preparation for following the Bible pattern where he would be baptized (immersed in water) so his sins would be forgiven. In a few moments, I baptized Mike into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). According to Scripture, he was added to the Lord’s church at that time (Acts 2:41, 47). Before leaving, Don Barnes led a prayer, and then Mike went home, exhausted and happy.

I made a point to see him on Friday (April 14), and he was sitting outside on his porch swing. He was having a good day again, and commented upon how great he felt and how happy he was. He was glad for his baptism, and was glowing as I looked upon him that day. As we talked, I learned that Mike had had a visitor Wednesday evening following his baptism. A Catholic priest stopped by to visit, and upon telling him about his baptism that day, the priest basically said it was fine for him to do, but it wasn’t necessary. Mike said that it was necessary, and referred him to the very passages that Dale had cited earlier in the day. The priest said no more! We talked some more on that Friday, and he told me his plans for being with us in the worship services that following Sunday (April 16).

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

Sadly, Mike would never gather with the saints on earth. His health began to quickly deteriorate. I came to visit him at different times, and to pray with him. One day in April Mike made the point of telling me that he had subscribed to cable just so he could watch our television program (channel 52). He knew he could not assemble with the saints due to his failing health, but also knew he could sit and study from God's word a few nights a week as he watched the program. At different times in the following days, we talked of the day he was baptized, including the final Sunday I saw him alive (May 14, 2006). By this time, Mike was emaciated, but told me he was "ready to go." His girlfriend was present, and I told him (in front of her) how I also knew he was ready, and then recounted the story of the day of his conversion on April 12. He said, "Yes, Yes" in agreement at times, and I then led a prayer before I left. He died on Friday, May 19, 2006, at 3 a.m.

I was asked to speak at the graveside service on Monday, May 22, and told the story of his conversion to those present. They were mostly Baptist people, satisfied that Mike was "saved" at the point of faith alone some 10+ years ago. At the graveside, I recounted the events of April 12, 2006, quoting the passages Dale used concerning baptism, and showed "why" Mike had hope, and that it was due to his following what the Lord said and being baptized for the remission of sins. I concluded by going back to Ecclesiastes and the words of the wise man, "*Fear God and keep his commandments ... this is the whole duty of man*" (Ecc. 12:13).

I did not know Mike for very long, but feel blessed for the time I had with him. This experience has taught me the need for getting to folks and teaching them the truth while we have the chance!! If we had been a week later, perhaps Mike wouldn't have been baptized – due to health reasons – too weak to move, etc. This is my motivation for talking with folks and trying to win more folks for the Lord before it is too late – for me or for them (II Cor. 6:2, "...*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*")!!!

Speaking The Truth In Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Warren E. Berkley

How do you reconcile the teaching of the New Testament on love (as in I Cor. 13), with the requirement to speak the truth with boldness, rebuke sin and discipline the unruly? The answer is, you don't need to reconcile it. It is perfectly reconciled already, because God gave it.

It is His perfect law. There is nothing God give us in His Word that we need to "reconcile" or "harmonize." When we obey what God says about the truth, and we obey what God says about love, that's our response to God.

There is nothing about rebuking sin, seeking legitimate redress, preaching the truth or exposing error that isn't compatible with the love God defines in I Corinthians 13. Nothing about one that cancels the other. Ephesians 4:15 says we are to speak the truth in love. The truth can be spoken, can be applied and obeyed fully - while practicing everything this passage teaches about love. They are perfectly compatible.

To say that another way - there is nothing built into truth that contradicts anything else God has said. There is nothing about love that interferes with our devotion to truth in any way.

Don't let anyone tell you that you obey what 1 Corinthians 13 teaches about love, but that you stop that obedience when preaching the truth or rebuking sin! And let nobody tell you, that because of the teaching on love, you must compromise in preaching the truth. The one sentence answer to all of this confusion is: Speak the truth in love!

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