

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"Why, Doctor, are you not going out to the discussion tonight?" This was the language of Mr. Starnes, who had stepped over to Dr. Stanly's after the assembly had grown impatient.

"No; I shall not go," said the Doctor. "I do not think my presence particularly desired; besides, I am wearied with these new-fangled notions of Scripture---"

"Doctor," interrupted the brother. "You must go. The cause is suffering; it needs defense; and the people will say you are defeated."

"I cannot help it," replied the Doctor; "I hardly think I ought to attend."

"You must, Doctor, you must; the people - all the Christian church will be put to confusion and shame, if you are not present."

There are two passages, '**Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins**' and '**the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us**' these have not even been alluded to yet; and I am sure you can establish our views by them, for I have heard you often. Come, get your hat and cane and follow me: nothing else would be so disastrous to our cause as for you to remain at home. I will go on before, for I did not announce I was coming after you."

The brother was gone and Dr. Stanly was left standing in the middle of the room with arms akimbo, his flagging courage somewhat less dejected because of Mr. Starnes' assuring words. After a little cogitation, during which he stood like a statue, he took his hat and cane and strode hastily toward Mr. Clement's.

"Good evening, Doctor, you are late, sure," said Bro. Jones.

"Am I?" inquired the Doctor, looking at his watch. "I suppose I am early enough for the discussion."

"Yes, Doctor," replied Arthur, "we are just waiting for you to open the discussion and you had best proceed at once."

"Let us open our Bible at Acts 22:16. '**And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord**' Here," continued the Doctor, "we have the language of Ananias to Saul. Saul was a great sinner; he created great havoc in the churches; he persecuted JESUS!"

JESUS met him on the way to Damascus, told him what he was doing and thus plunged him into a world of trouble. He wept over his sins it seems for three days, not knowing how to get rid of them. Ananias being sent by the Lord JESUS came to him and said: '**Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.**' Now before Ananias went to him, Saul had complied with two of the three commands upon which remission or salvation equally depends. He believed when JESUS first appeared unto him; after this he repented; so when Ananias went to him it was only necessary for him to be baptized and wash away his sins. This is surely the meaning of this passage and nothing else can be made out of it without putting it on the rack."

"This language of Ananias to Saul must be understood literally or figuratively," said Mabel. "This washing cannot be literal, for water does not really wash away sin. It is therefore figurative.

It cannot be literal for the following reasons:

1. The blood of CHRIST cleanses from sin. (Zechariah 13:1), looking through the future to the coming of CHRIST exclaimed: '**In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness**' In I John 1:7. '**The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin**' Revelation 1:5: '**Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood**' Revelation 7:14: '**These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb**' With these passages before our eyes we can all see it is the blood that washes sin away. Now, if it is the blood, it cannot be the water; hence the text must be figurative. And Peter tells us baptism is a figure.

2. The HOLY SPIRIT is the administrative agent in washing sinners from the pollution of sin. Paul said to the Corinthian Christians: '**Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, etc., etc., shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God**': I Corinthians 6:9-11. '**Ye are washed**' refers, not to baptism, but to the work of the HOLY SPIRIT in cleansing from sin. Sinners are washed in the name, i. e., in the merit or blood of CHRIST, for it is the blood that washes our sins. And they are washed by the Spirit of our GOD. The blood is the cleansing element:

'There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.'

In this fountain the HOLY SPIRIT washes sinners from all their sins. '**Ye are washed . . . by the Spirit of our God.**'

3. Another proof that the text is simply figurative is the fact that JESUS, three days before this, told Saul that remission or forgiveness comes, not by baptism, but by faith. Acts 26:16-18.

4. Then Paul always taught that it is by faith that men receive the blessings of salvation. He

wrote 14 of the 27 books, or Epistles of the New Testament, and nowhere did he ever say that men receive forgiveness of sins by baptism; but there are just scores of passages where Paul declares that remission, justification, salvation come by faith in CHRIST JESUS."

"I have waited patiently for you to get through," said the Doctor; "and I do not think I ever had evidence till now of so much labor and study to avoid the importance and necessity of baptism. According to your theology baptism is like a fifth wheel in a wagon, of no use and no place for it. Why, anyone can see that more stress is laid on baptism than you lay on it. Neither Paul, nor any inspired writer, spoke as lightly of baptism as you do."

"You wrong me," replied Mabel; "I would not have anyone think for one moment that I think baptism of no use. It has its uses and is important, or I never would have submitted to being led a second time into baptismal waters. But it is possible to make too much of baptism - to put too much stress on it. Some did in Paul's day and some do in our day. You accuse me of speaking lightly of baptism, and it is a wonder you have not accused Paul of the same thing."

Paul thanked GOD he had baptized only a few. Did any Campbellite ever do that? Never! It would be out of all question and reason for you, Doctor, with your views of baptism, to imitate Paul. But before I drop this subject I wish you to note when Ananias went to Saul he did not tell him to repent or believe. Why? Because he had already done both. Ananias told him to be baptized. Now Paul and the Bible everywhere teach that men must both repent and believe before they are baptized. None then can avoid the conclusion that Saul was a penitent believer when Ananias went to him. What then was his condition? The New Testament answers pardoned, saved, justified, a child of GOD, with a pure heart and in possession of eternal life. Hence Ananias addressed him as '**Brother Saul**'; and hence the folly of counting this anything but a formal and figurative washing."

"All of that argument about baptism literally washing away sin," said the Doctor, "is simply beating the air and raising a fog, a waste of breath. The Christian church never dreamed of a literal washing. Sin is not a physical something that can be washed by water like filth. To be baptized and wash away sin is like repent and be forgiven, believe and be saved, i. e.: baptism is the condition on which sins are forgiven and without which there is no forgiveness. This is all we ever did contend for, and this is Scriptural."

"But," said Arthur Manly, "that interpretation is unscriptural, for it has been shown time and again by the Scriptures that one must not be baptized till pardoned, justified and saved. It is strange you persist in disputing this fact proven so clearly."

"But that conclusion," said the Doctor, "is only reached by a false interpretation of the Book. Here is a text telling us plainly how to get rid of sin; it is not a literal washing, but a condition indispensable."

"It seems a light thing to you," replied Arthur, "to contradict the Word of GOD when it is necessary to support your theory."

"When JESUS saw the faith of the palsied man and his friends, He said: '**Son, thy sins be forgiven thee**,'" said Mabel. "There was no baptism about it. And Peter said to Cornelius and his

friends: **'To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.'** Acts 10:43. There was no baptism mentioned as a condition indispensable. Besides I maintain baptism is a washing literal or formal."

"Yes," added Arthur, "it is a formal cleansing of the sin already cleansed by the blood of CHRIST through faith."

"That's so, sure," said Brother Jones; "it's just plainer and plainer to my mind. I think we'd better adjourn this meeting to the church and call all Sterlin' in to hear; for I don't think I ever saw a set of people anxiously to hear, and I really think I'm learnin' more than I ever did in all my born days."

"This text is perfectly clear to me," said Mr. Tibbs. "I've a new idea on baptism, a figurative or formal washing away of sin. That baptism in the light of the Scriptures procures pardon is simply incredible. I am eager to go on with the discussion. What shall we discuss next, Doctor?"

"I am not at all satisfied with the passage under consideration," said the Doctor; "but I pass it and call attention to another plain passage that I think children can understand. It is I Peter 3:21. **'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.'** Let us not say the truth is buried again under a mountain of tropes, shadows and figures. This is a plain, unambiguous statement of a fact, and that fact is that baptism saves us. Not that baptism is a saviour, but a means by which the Saviour gives salvation."

"Let us examine the text," said Mabel; "I think we shall find a meaning different from the one you gave it. We are told that eight souls were saved in the ark—"

"Yes, and we are told that this is the like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us," interrupted the Doctor. "That salvation by the ark was typical of our salvation by baptism."

"Very well," replied Mabel; "let us see how that interpretation will work. You will readily admit that the type must agree with the anti-type in its representation of the thing typified, else there is no resemblance?"

"Certainly," replied the Doctor.

"All right," said Mabel; "now let us see how your type and anti-type agree. You say that in the anti-type - baptism - people are saved by being put into the water, but in the type - the ark - people were saved by being kept out of the water!"

This fell like a thunderclap and created consternation among the Doctor's people. "Besides," resumed Mabel, when the confusion had somewhat subsided, "baptism itself is also called a figure."

"I deny it," said the Doctor; "I shall not allow any more turning and twisting to avoid the proper conclusion."

"My study of this text," replied Mabel, "has assured me that the Greek here implies two figures

alike in signification."

"The text tells us," said the Doctor, with great energy, "that baptism doth now save us. From this it is undeniable that baptism does in a sense save us. Now, we do not enjoy this salvation previous to baptism; but we do enjoy it after baptism. In what does this salvation consist? Peter tells us in another place. He said to thousands: '**Repent and be baptized every one of you... for the remission of sins.**' This salvation then consists in the remission of sins."

"The Doctor is quoting again," said Mabel, "a text we literally took away from him."

"I see," said Arthur, "by examining the Greek that there are two figures, one like the other. This cannot be avoided. What are the two?"

"One," said Mabel, "is the salvation of Noah in the ark; the other is baptism. Both are figures. This utterly makes way with all the Doctor's logic. Baptism saves in a figure; and that which saves in a figure cannot save in any other way. This is just what Baptists have always believed and taught. Peter was without doubt a genuine Baptist like the rest of the apostles."

"What!" exclaimed the Doctor, good-humoredly, "do you mean to monopolize all the apostles?"

"There are some things in the text that are not yet explained," said Mr. Tibbs.

"Well," replied Mabel, "we see in the text,

"1. Baptism is a figure, a picture of salvation. As Noah was saved in the ark by water, so we are saved in baptism pictorially by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead. Without the resurrection of CHRIST there could be no salvation. '**He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.**' We cannot be saved till we believe in our heart that GOD hath raised Him from the dead. (Romans 10:9).

Now as Noah in the ark, floating above the drowned world, was a picture of our salvation by CHRIST, so is baptism. The trouble with the Doctor is that he is pointing to the picture instead of the reality. He is so taken up with the figure he depends on that, instead of the Saviour the figure points to. The children cry for bread and the Doctor presents to them a beautiful chromo-picture of bread and expects that to satisfy the hunger of the children." This amused some, worried some and made the Doctor's ire flash from his eyes. Mabel went on:

"2. The parenthesis sheds light on the passage. It declares baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh, but is the answer of a good conscience toward GOD. Professor F. L. Dupont, a good Bible expositor, affirms '*there is not a passage in the Bible where filth, filthiness, filthiness of the flesh, etc. are used in any other sense than that of moral pollution.*' He quotes many passages to prove this assertion. Now, Peter declares baptism is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, i.e., not the putting away of moral pollution, which is sin!

So baptism does not put away sin. What, then, is baptism, according to Peter? It is '**the answer of a good conscience toward God.**' When one is pardoned, justified, saved, the question arises, will you obey Him who has saved you? His answer is "I will." How does he make this answer?

By baptism.

By baptism he acknowledges his allegiance to CHRIST. The obligation of baptism, like the oath of allegiance, covers his whole life, and by it he professes a willingness to obey and follow CHRIST forever. Baptism is thus the answer of a good conscience. The Bible tells us of a **seared conscience** (I Timothy 4:2), a **defiled conscience** (Titus 1:15), an **evil conscience** (Hebrews 10:22), and a **good conscience** (I Timothy 1:5).

Undoubtedly a Scriptural subject has a good conscience, which signifies a regenerate believing heart. Paul represents the heart of the believer as being sprinkled from an evil conscience. He represents him as having his conscience purged from dead works to serve the living GOD - purged by the blood of CHRIST.

This is the same thing as having the sins washed away, after which they are formally washed away in baptism. Thus I have wrenched this beloved text also from the Doctor's grasp and have shown it supports my view instead of his."

"That's so, sure," chimed the long silent voice of Brother Jones; "it just can't be denied. Stars alive! I'm more and more brought over all the time."

"I am satisfied with this text," added Mr. Tibbs, "and have another in mind I would like to hear discussed. Have you any other passage on your mind, Doctor?"

"Nothing in particular," responded the Doctor glumly.

"Then I would like for you to give us an exposition of Mark 16:16. **'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.'** Then let Miss Clement review your exposition."

"Very well," said the Doctor; "I will tell you what the passage means. My view is a common sense view, one arrived at without any hard digging or nice criticism; hence one that teaches, not only the scholar, but the common Bible reader. This commends my interpretation readily to all unprejudiced minds and proves the Bible to be a book for the common people.

JESUS was now about to ascend to Heaven. He commissioned His apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and He assured them, solemnly declared, that all who believe and are baptized shall be saved. Not he that believeth only; but he that believeth and is - and is - and is baptized. How plain!

Now when salvation is promised to any person, or is affirmed of one, on certain named conditions, it can never depend on fewer conditions, than are named. They are two: belief and baptism. In order to be saved, therefore, it is necessary to both believe and be baptized. The salvation here spoken of is that primary salvation that consists in the forgiveness of sins. Here is my exposition, explain it away if you can, for it upsets your whole theory."

"This I will certainly do," began Mabel; "the salvation of the text is not a primary, or present salvation; but a future final salvation in Heaven. It is the same as that referred to by **'He that**

shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.' Mark 13:13.

Let us suppose you are right in saying it means the present remission of sins. Then it will read as follows: 'He that believeth and is baptized is pardoned; but he that believeth not is damned!' Doctor, it will take more ingenuity than you possess to dodge that absurdity. Such is the ridiculous dilemma changing the future tense into present to support your unscriptural theory throws you into.

Now read the text and see where the stress falls. Does it not fall on believeth? '**He that believeth not shall be damned.**' That is true, for the Book so teaches abundantly. But suppose one believes - will he be damned then? Not if words have any meaning. The plain inference is that he who believes will not be damned. And this the Book teaches as incontrovertibly as that two and two make four.

JESUS solemnly avers that the believer is not condemned, but has eternal life and shall not come into condemnation. John 5:24. So faith is the hinge upon which salvation turns."

"What is the use of a preacher?" exclaimed the Doctor. "There is no work for him in the great plan of salvation, though Paul declares '**we are labourers together with God.**' Let him quit the ministry and go to plowing corn and cotton."

"Yes," replied Mabel, "there is work for him to do; but he must not undertake to do GOD's work. There is no third party upon whom the salvation of a soul depends except to impart Bible knowledge."

"I dispute it," affirmed the Doctor. "Did not the apostles have to go and preach and baptize? Did not they constitute a third party performing a work indispensably necessary to salvation? They did. Now open your Bible and show some one saved without this third party."

"It is easy to do," said Mabel. "Turn to Luke 23:40-43. Was not this penitent thief saved? JESUS in answer to his prayer said:

'Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' And there was no third party. He was saved like every other sinner, by faith in CHRIST - a faith leading him to pray and cling to CHRIST. Now turn to Luke 18:13,14. Was not this publican saved? JESUS declares he went down to his house justified. Will the Doctor dispute it?

Then he and the Master for it. And there was no third party. Where is your unscriptural theory now?"

The Doctor's confusion was woeful and painful at this point. Dismay was written on the faces of his people, while the spectacled man ran his bony fingers through his long locks and seemed to be full of joy.

"I would like you to notice," added Mabel, "that in Mark 16:16, JESUS states both the moral, or Scriptural, and ceremonial.

He tells what is necessary to both salvation and its public profession before men. According to this text and all the New Testament, faith precedes baptism. Now let us refresh our minds by what has already been settled by this discussion.

1. The believer is pardoned, saved, justified, etc., etc. Shall he now be baptized in order to be saved? Not a thousand times not. Hence we believe also.

2. That baptism is a figure - a formal and figurative washing away of sin. This has been abundantly proven. I give on this point an additional passage in Hebrews 10:22,23. **'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.'**

First, the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience. This is done by the blood of CHRIST (Hebrews 9:14), and done when the sinner believes (Romans 3:25). Then our bodies are washed in pure water, in which we figuratively represent that cleansing by a public profession of our faith in JESUS. Cleansed from sin by the blood when we believe; then profess that cleansing by baptism. Now I am confident my position is plain and impregnable, and it laughs at all efforts to overthrow it."

"That's so, sure," said Brother Jones; "I never saw anything' clearer. I declare this is equal to a theological institution. I do believe we will all be real Baptists if it keeps on."

"It is not hard," retorted the Doctor, "for persons to be what they want to be, right or wrong. The more and more I see the people of Sterling are like the Athenians, having itching ears for something new."

"I think it's been shown," replied the brother, "that these things are as old as the Bible and the things we've been a holden are the new. Anywise, I'm just bound to hold on to the Bible, new or old."

"I believe," said Arthur, "that every passage produced so far, bearing on the subject of baptism, and which it is claimed teaches that baptism is essential to remission and salvation, has been so explained as to disclose the fact that it does not teach that doctrine. This is a fact clearly made out to my mind so far. I wish to know if there are any other passages to be examined; and if not do we give up the doctrine of baptismal remission, because it is unsupported by the Scriptures?"

There was a lull of half a minute. All eyes turned instinctively to the Doctor. He could have made a long speech, but he had been beaten so often, routed, driven from his intrenchments and hedged in on every side, that he just mutely curled his mustache and squirted tobacco juice into the grate, unconsciously.

It was amusing at this juncture to see the wry looks and comical movements of the spectacted man. He was evidently trying to avoid notice, but made a most signal failure. He seemed to think a complete victory won and to rejoice at the tumbled and demolished fabric of Campbellism. The silence, which seemed an age, was broken by our heroine:

"Before we give up the discussion I would like to show that persons have been saved in all ages in the same way; that there was not a change of the way of salvation under the Christian dispensation."

"Can that be proven, Doctor?" inquired Mr. Tibbs.

"I think not," was the reply. "If she undertakes that she will give it up before she gets far on the way."

"I would like to try it," said Mabel.

"Let us adjourn the matter till tomorrow night and have a good chance at it," added Mr. Tibbs. "It is something new to me, and if it is taught in the Bible, I wish to learn it."

As the crowd was dispersing the Doctor said to some of his members it was utterly impossible to prove such a ridiculous absurdity. Arthur and Mabel kept their seats while the crowd went out. Only those who have truly loved can conceive how they appreciated being left to themselves. After a little hesitation and palpitation of the heart and reddening of the face Arthur moved a little uncomfortably in his chair and said: "There has been a complete revolution in my views of Scripture since your return home. You have under GOD led me out of the fog of error and delusion and have shown me the true way of salvation. How shall I ever repay you?"

"I am so glad," said Mabel, "if I have done you good. Repay me by teaching some one else the true way." Her eyes were swimming in tears.

"Mabel," said Arthur, his manly chin quivering, "eternity alone will reveal the magnitude of blessing brought me by this discussion. I am under weighty and eternal obligations to you."

He drew nearer as he said this, took her fair hand in his, which clasped it gently, but firmly, as if it never meant to let go, and said in a voice toned down as if he had been touched by zephyrs blown from floral-gardens: "Mabel, I have known for months that I was dependent on you for earthly happiness; But I never dreamed till now that my salvation in a sense depended on you also. I am glad to tell you, Mabel, because I think you will rejoice at it, that not only is my mind changed, but my heart also."

"When," eagerly inquired Mabel, "when did it occur?"

"Last night," was the response. "I have been deeply in earnest since the discussion on the condition of the believer closed. I think I never realized till last night how sinful I was. I was long impressed by some power I cannot describe, overwhelmed by a sense of my sin, afterward by a sense of GOD's goodness to me. After this I was filled with a peaceful, joyful, satisfying sensation that I had never felt before and which I cannot now describe. I believe I have a saving connection with CHRIST which I never had till last night. I am happy, unutterably happy, and I owe it all under GOD to you."

Mabel was choked with feelings of joy. She wanted to speak, but could not trust her voice.

"Now that you have helped me into the way to happiness in eternity, I am wondering if you will

go any further," continued Arthur. "Did it ever occur to you that it is in your power; to wither my hopes, blast my prospects, cripple my powers, and; in fact wreck my earthly happiness, and all with a single word?"

"No," said Mabel softly; "I never arrogated to myself so much importance as to believe I was so essential to anyone's happiness."

"Mabel," said Arthur, "could I be happy without you?" And, enamored with looks of cordial love, he gazed fixedly and fondly into the face of the beautiful girl, while a crimson blush mantled her dimpled cheeks.

"It would make me happy," she said, hesitatingly and with modesty, "to believe I was essential to your happiness."

"Then you may be happy," was the quick and passionate reply; and he caught her to his bosom and -and - but we must ring the bell here and let the curtain fall. It would be unkind and impolite to stay and look and listen longer. Suffice it to say they felt from that hour their interests and destinies were one.

After Arthur was gone Mabel was called into her mother's room to be consulted about her conversion and Christian experience. Her parents were uneasy about their condition, and this conversation only served to alarm them the more and shake again their faith in their salvation. They spent a sleepless night, rehearsing again and again the story of Mabel's conversion and trying in vain to convince themselves that they were true disciples of CHRIST.

After praising GOD for past help and praying for her parents and for future help, Mabel, wearied in mind and body, slept sweetly. **"So He giveth His beloved sleep."**

What jabbering in Sterling next day! As a river grows larger the farther it runs, so did the interest in this religious or Bible discussion. The shop boys, the kitchen maids, the workingmen, the merchants, the lawyers - all had it as the topic of discussion. Many of the better informed disciples would have gladly put down this debate and stopped this street babbling; but people will talk, and the thing went on from day to day.

Jeems and company walked some distance down the street in silence. The silence was broken as usual by George:

"What's your mind now, Mr. Morgan? Is there any - that is to say - any change in your views?"

"Change? Me, George? Me change? I think you don't know me, George."

"Beg pardon," apologized George; "I wus-I-I-that is to say - I wus just tryin' you."

"No, George," continued Jeems enthusiastically, "I'm not changed - I never change! No! 'Yon great rock shall fly from its firm base sooner nor I,' as the poet says. I can't be scared or frightened out uv my convictions uv scriptur. I tell you, George."

Do you hear me, man? - I tell you I can't be moved, I'm firm as a rock, I know, I positively know I'm right! - and yet - and yet" - and he stopped, thrust his hands down deep into his pockets and, looking down on the pavement in a hesitating manner (his wife and George meantime looking eagerly into his face by the moonlight and studying its expression, so quaint and unusual, as if they could not interpret it) - "and yet I'd give the best hide in my vats to be sure uv it."

"Fur course, Jeems," said his wife. And they walked home in silence.

~ end of chapter 13 ~
