

Sailing With Paul

Simple Papers for Young Christians

by Harry A. Ironside, Litt. D.

Author of "*The Mysteries of GOD; Holiness: The False and the True;*
Lectures on Daniel the Prophet; The Only Two Religions;
Notes on the Book of Proverbs; etc. etc.

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Chapter 12

Baptism and Connected truths

Baptism is the initiatory ordinance of Christianity. To fritter away what GOD has said concerning this beautifully expressive ordinance, as some do to-day, on the plea that it did not belong to the special revelation given to Paul, and consequently has no place in the dispensation of the mystery, is to ignore or pervert what our apostle has himself left on record regarding it. It is true that he was not sent "**to baptize, but to preach the gospel.**" If people made more of the servant than they should, he was thankful he had baptized none, save a very few, lest any should say he baptized in his own name. Nevertheless he *did* baptize; and when, for good and sufficient reasons, he did not administer the ordinance himself, he saw that some one else, some one of his fellow-laborers, did so; for even at Corinth it was as the result of his preaching "**many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized**" (Acts 18:8).

Baptism has a wider scope than Christianity, but no amount of sophistical reasoning can eliminate it from Christianity or from the epistles of Paul, which fully set forth the new order. The young Christian therefore should search the Scriptures on this as on all other doctrines and practices, and act before GOD according to what he there finds written.

I do not propose here to enter into a discussion as to the subjects or mode of baptism. I have done that elsewhere (in my booklet "*Baptism: What saith the Scriptures?*"). But it is my present purpose to press upon the reader the distinctive instruction of Paul as to the lines of truth exemplified by, or connected with, baptism unto the name of the FATHER, and of the Son, and of the HOLY SPIRIT. For in the revelation of the Trinity we have Christianity in its essence. The FATHER so loved the world that He gave the Son, who became man, and in the power of

the Eternal SPIRIT offered Himself without spot to GOD for our salvation. This is the grand fundamental truth each baptized one is called upon to defend, if need be, at the cost of his life.

In baptism CHRIST's death is set forth in symbol. He, in amazing grace, because of our sins, bore on the Cross the awful baptism of divine wrath, that we might enjoy forever the living favor of the GOD of all grace. This is pictured as the baptized one is immersed beneath the water. Every baptism is thus a fresh reminder of what we owe to the Lord JESUS, like the communion supper, it sets forth His death: "**Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?**" (Romans 6:3).

Then, secondly, it pictures our death with Him. If He died beneath the judgment of GOD for sin, it was as taking our place; so we, in this ordinance, are "**buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**" (Romans 6:4). For the baptized one to be living a careless, worldly life, while yet enjoying what is called "a good conscience about, or through baptism," is shameful thing. If baptized to death, it is that you should daily own in a practical way that you are through with the world; severed from its follies and all its ways through identification with CHRIST in death, and now living on the resurrection side of the tomb, called to walk in accordance with the new life in CHRIST risen.

Thirdly, baptism answers to a soldier's donning the regimental uniform: "**For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ**" (Galatians 3:27). This is not to say that all the baptized are truly CHRIST's. That would be a grave error indeed. But he who has been baptized unto CHRIST, has thereby taken upon him the badge of subjection to CHRIST. A man being recruited for the army, the moment he signs the articles is a soldier. But the uniform marks him out as such. Even so baptism is the putting on of CHRIST and owning Him as Lord.

Closely connected with this is the fourth proposition: Baptism is for the dead. "**Else what shall they do who are baptized for (or, over) the dead (ones), if the dead rise not at all,? why are they then baptized for the dead (ones)?**" (I Corinthians 15:29). Here it is not baptized for a dead CHRIST, as some would have it; because the word rendered "dead" is plural in each instance. Neither is it a vicarious baptism by living persons on behalf of others who had died unbaptized. This is a foolish and hurtful heterodox notion maintained by Mormons and a few other evil sects. But it is simply that each baptized one, since the first generation of Christians, has been, by baptism, filling up the ranks, taking the place of those who have died in the service of CHRIST. We are *all* baptized for the dead. We have taken their vacated places, and we are now called upon to fight the Lord's battles in their stead. If there were no resurrection this would be folly. We might better enjoy the world while it lasts, knowing that we must soon depart and then eternal unconsciousness follow! But, in view of resurrection, we take the place of CHRIST's soldiers, even though we stand "**in jeopardy every hour**" (verse 30; and note the following four verses)

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (verses 31-34).

And now let me ask you who read these words: Is this indeed what baptism means to you? With many, I know, it is merely a *form*. With others, it is a matter of *duty*, a command to be obeyed in a legal spirit. But to the instructed Christian it is a sweet and precious privilege, setting forth what CHRIST has suffered for our redemption, our identification with that blessed SAVIOUR in His death, and the acknowledgement of His Lordship in the daily life.

If it does not, or has not meant all this to you, your place is on your knees in self-judgment and humiliation of soul, seeking grace to turn in singleness of heart from all that is of the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life - and to yield yourself unreservedly unto CHRIST, as one alive from the dead, who can never forget that the Red Sea of judgment rolls forever between you and the world that crucified Him. He is worthy of your highest, best service. He gave Himself for you, and thereby purchased you, body, soul and spirit, for His glory. Take heed that you do not defraud Him out of the fruit of His bitter Cross.

~ end of chapter 12 ~
