

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Haman's Hang-Up

In the book of Esther we read of a successful man by the name of Haman who allowed his pride to become his downfall--or hang-up. After Esther became queen, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman to a position above all the other princes in his court. Haman delighted in recounting how he had been advanced above the others and how that only he was invited to a special banquet with the king and queen. He even thought, "To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself?" Haman had a bad case of the big-head!

The proud seem to have the least patience with those who fail to recognize their greatness, so Haman was filled with wrath when Mordecai the Jew (Esther's foster father) bowed not down nor did him reverence. At the suggestion of his wife and friends, Haman had a gallows prepared for hanging Mordecai while at the same time, unknown to him, the king was preparing to honor the same lowly Mordecai. Mordecai was honored. Haman mourned. His intent to destroy the Jews in the kingdom was revealed to the king and proud Haman never had held his head higher than when hung from the gallows he had made for Mordecai. As God says, "pride goeth before destruction."

Big heads and proud hearts will always be a hang-up for God's people. To every Haman, God warns, be not proud (Jer. 13:15). Number one on a list of things hated by God is the proud look (Prov. 6:17) and every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 16:5). It is obvious, then, that pride is sin as plainly stated in Prov. 21:4, and often a deceptively subtle sin at that. So much so, that some have been known to pride themselves in their humility! It is as obvious as it is detestable in others, yet seldom detected within self. Therefore, every Christian would do well to search his life often and carefully for such sin.

Too, pride has a lot of promoters that need identifying. One of the more prominent ones is achievement. As with Haman, promotion may promote pride. Almost anything that advances one above others is apt to advance self-esteem as well. Success usually comes

hard; success with humility comes even harder. Especially is this true with financial success. Nothing promotes pride quicker than a little money and material possessions. God warns the wealthy not to be high-minded (1 Tim. 6:17) nor to glory in their riches (Jer. 9:23). Other pride promoters to be wary of are education, nationality, association with the somewhat of society —or almost anything else that would gain the praise and plaudits of the world.

Finally, pride must be viewed as an especially dangerous sin in regard to its effects. Not only does it make men forget God (Deut. 8:14-18), it hinders repentance because the proud are reluctant to admit wrong-doing. It makes saving face more important than saving the soul. Pride not only makes one think too highly of himself, it makes him think too little of the Mordecais about him. It resents reproof and correction (Prov. 15). No wonder, "God resisteth the proud. . ." (Jas. 4:6)

- Dan S. Shipley, via Plain Talk, November, 1973

CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS **(Part 7)**

The purpose of these articles is to present the commands of God with which one must comply in order to receive forgiveness and favor from God. We have given several passages of scripture which reveal the fact that these requirements are the conditions men **MUST** obey. The Lord and His chosen apostles have made these commands very clear in the New Testament. We have shown from the Bible that men must hear the word of God and believe it, repent of their sins, and confess Jesus as Lord and Christ. If one stops here, his sins are not yet removed, because he has not obeyed **EVERY** command that makes salvation possible. If we want to be saved, we must look into God's word and determine what action we must perform to please Him. Does not the giver of salvation have a right to determine how it may be obtained? We hope all of our readers will give diligence to please God in all things and obey every command in His word.

In searching for God's plan of salvation, some have found verses that refer to salvation or forgiveness in which only one of the conditions is mentioned. Because of this, they have falsely concluded that the condition there mentioned is the **ONLY** one that is required in order to receive forgiveness. For example, John 3:16 reads: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." From such a passage many conclude that belief (faith) is all that is required of one in order to have eternal life. This and other passages (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Acts 10:43) are set forth by some to teach that we are saved by faith, meaning that we are saved at the point of faith without any further act of obedience. (We have already

shown in a previous article that this position is false.) The logic is that since certain of these passages do not mention baptism, baptism is not essential to salvation. If this kind of reasoning is true, then we could, by the same logic, turn to a passage such as Matthew 10:32 which says: "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven", and conclude that since faith, repentance, baptism, love, etc., etc. are not mentioned, they are not necessary to salvation! The preposterous absurdity of such a position is obvious. The truth-seeker does not employ such methods in order to salvage favorite theories and pet doctrines or to avoid doing what the Lord has commanded. The truth-seeker will find the truth and obey it, regardless of demands made therein. Let us now give our attention to what the Bible teaches regarding baptism.

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM. It is one thing to have our own private opinion about the importance of baptism, and quite another to let the Bible be our guide. The great commission of Jesus Christ not only shows the importance of baptism, it teaches that baptism is a condition of salvation for men in this present age: "... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:18b-20). "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.'" (Mark 16:15b-16). When Jesus commanded His disciples to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them", did He merely have reference to an option that could be observed if it were convenient or desired on one's part? The Lord was not mentioning trivial things, but things that were always to be included when making disciples. According to Matthew 28:18-20, disciples are those of any nation who observe ALL THINGS that the Lord has commanded (they recognize His authority), and this includes baptism. The importance of baptism is further seen from Mark 16:15-16. In this passage the Lord refers to a certain "he" that "shall be saved." The "he" that "shall be saved" is the "he" that "has believed and has been baptized." If salvation is to be obtained, both of the conditions on which it is based must be obeyed. Thus, baptism is essential to salvation; baptism is in fact very important.

WHAT IS BAPTISM? If we would obey the Lord's command to be baptized, we must know precisely what is being commanded. Where can we go to find the meaning of "baptism"? Who can reveal to us what the Lord had in mind when He commanded it? In our search for the correct meaning we must rule out present-day definitions which appear in dictionaries, such as Webster's, because of the fact that they are bound to provide definitions of words as they are being used during the time that these dictionaries are written. Noting that meanings of many words change over time, it should not be surprising

that "baptism" today means something different from "baptism" some two-thousand years ago. So, the use of a modern dictionary may lead us to believe something that is not scripturally accurate. The term "baptism" may be defined according to its primitive meaning when Jesus used it to indicate His will, or it may be defined in accommodation to present usage, which is a modern ABUSE of the New Testament term. For an accurate, scriptural definition of the term, we will not consult such writers, nor will we consult authors whose works reflect the beliefs of the religious group to which they belong. We must find out what the Lord and His inspired apostles meant by the term. We must learn what idea was conveyed during the time they used the word, and also observe what individuals did when they were commanded to be baptized in New Testament times.

(a) What did the term "baptism" mean at the time the Lord commanded it? Because the Greek language was used in the writing of the original text, it would be helpful for us to consult dictionaries that give definitions of the Greek language. The English word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptidzo", which was the word approved by the Lord to indicate the act required by Him of those who would become obedient to His will. The word "baptidzo" primarily and literally means to DIP or IMMERSE. All of the Greek lexicons (dictionaries) that I know of give this as the meaning of the term. Therefore it is correct to point out that when the people of the New Testament times heard the command to be baptized, they understood it as a command to be immersed. Is that demonstrated in their actions?

(b) What did individuals DO when they were commanded to be baptized in New Testament times? That they understood the Lord's command to be baptized as a command to be immersed can be proven by simply observing what those in New Testament times DID after they were commanded to be baptized. When we read in the Bible of a command being obeyed, we must conclude that the command was understood! They knew what was required of them, and they submitted to it. For example, consider the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:36-39: "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' [And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'] And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing." Please note the progressive steps in this account. First, "they came to some water", which is a logical move leading to the act of immersion. Secondly, "they both went down into the water," where baptism took place. Both the baptizer and the one to be baptized must go into the water for the act of immersion to take place. Thirdly, "they came up out of the water" after Philip baptized the eunuch. Both the baptizer and the one baptized must come up out of

the water in the case of immersion. If this language does not express immersion, then we must consider it beyond the power of language to express the concept. The language of the New Testament clearly expresses acts wholly incompatible with the notion that baptism was sprinkling or pouring, but perfectly harmonious with the concept that Philip IMMERSED the eunuch.

- Gary Smalley

> "People with tact have less to retract!"

> "The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us!"

> "I was not put here to "find myself," but rather to serve God (Eccl. 12:13)!"

> "You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him!"

> "We don't change the message, the message changes us!"

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)