

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305
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February 15, 2026

Volume 46, # 07

The Immediacy of Baptism Is a Lesson Itself

The subject of baptism is one of the most thrilling of all Bible subjects. Yet, due to the diverse teachings that exist today about baptism, it sometimes loses its thrill in the midst of discrepancy. While the Bible clearly teaches the essentiality of baptism in order to obtain salvation from sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16), many religious groups today teach that baptism is not essential to be saved. If that is true, then why were individuals so quick to be baptized in New Testament times? Let's look at it.

On Pentecost, about three thousand souls were baptized "THAT DAY" (Acts 2:41). Why does the Bible even include that detail? What difference does it make to tell us what day they were baptized and how soon after hearing the gospel it happened? Those Jews likely did not come prepared to be submerged in water that day, so why do it THAT DAY? The Bible answer: Because it was essential "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized beside THE ROAD in a DESERTED PLACE (Acts 8:38). The man was traveling home from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by chariot and was in an unpopulated (and likely unfamiliar) location. Why did he get baptized after hearing one sermon? Why didn't he wait until he got home to invite family, friends and witnesses? Why did they STOP everything to be baptized? The Bible answer: Because it was essential for "rejoicing" over his salvation (Acts 8:39).

The Philippian jailer was baptized IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT (Acts 16:33). The Bible tells us that Paul and Silas were praying and singing in an inner prison at midnight (Acts 16:25). Why does the Bible tell us the time? What possible difference could that have? They taught the jailer and his household the gospel (Acts 16:32), and "the SAME HOUR of the night . . . immediately he and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:33). Why not wait until morning light? Why go through the trouble of a middle-of-the-night baptism? The Bible answer: Because it was essential to be "saved" from sins and "rejoice" (Acts 16:30, 34).

Ananias asked Saul of Tarsus why he was WAITING to be baptized (Acts 22:16). What an interesting question to ask. So, why did Ananias ask this question? Why didn't Saul wait to go back to Jerusalem and gather the biggest crowd possible to witness this persecutor being baptized? The Bible answer: Because it was essential to "wash away sins" (Acts 22:16). That cannot wait!

In every way possible, the Bible affirms in clear language that baptism is an absolute requirement in order to be saved from sins. If it wasn't, all of these examples could have waited for another day or another location. Let's allow the Bible to do the teaching and for us to do the obeying.

- David Sproule

Be Very Careful!

Ephesians 5:8-14 emphasizes the importance of walking in the light, as opposed to darkness (9), which manifests itself in goodness, righteousness, and truth. Paul tells them they were to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (11). Verses 15-16 then admonishes, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

What does it mean to walk circumspectly? The Greek word translated "circumspectly" (NKJV) is also rendered by such terms as "accurately," "carefully," and "diligently." The NASB says, "Therefore be careful how you walk." Paul wanted the Ephesians to be very careful and act as wise people instead of fools, since they were living in perilous times.

Why do Christians need to be so careful? It is because of the possibility of a child of God falling from grace. Paul knew even he could miss heaven. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, he said, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (Note also 1 Corinthians 10:12, Galatians 5:4, 2 Peter 1:5-11, Hebrews 3:12-14, 5:4-6; Revelation 3:6.) As Christ told the church at Smyrna, it is necessary to be "faithful unto death" to obtain the "crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Thus, our eternal salvation is at stake.

A driver, due to carelessness, may drift off the highway and have a wreck. Similarly, Christians can drift off the road to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). The book of Hebrews encourages people not to stray. Hebrews 2:1 warns, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."

Today, we often see people suffer due to carelessness. However, the ultimate consequence of neglect will be to miss heaven (Hebrews 4:1). Christians today need to

be very careful. Do you want to go to heaven? If so, remember Paul's admonition when he told us to be wise and very careful, as we live in dangerous times, surrounded by evil.

- Mike Johnson, via Seeking Things Above

Quotes . . .

In our efforts encourage people to believe and obey the Gospel of Christ, which is the truth of God in His plan to bring all mankind into fellowship with Him by submitting to it, more and more people refuse to listen. Many are advocating that the individual is free to devise his own belief system, and he will be acceptable to God by creating his own standard. This is, of course, in direct opposition to the precepts that God has already declared and established: "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." – Jeremiah 10:23. Concerning the notion that every person is free to set his own "truth," notice this quote:

. . . "truth" is changed (or is brought into existence) by the mental states of thinking minds. According to the position of at least some of the advocates of this view, the individual is absolute in that whatever he holds "authentically" is truth for him! Or, it might be said that they hold that whatever seems to be true to an individual is true for that individual. The basic tenet is "be yourself" or "do your own thing." According to these thinkers, there is no objective (absolute) truth to which men must conform in order to be in right relationship with God. Given this view, the espouser must reject the Bible as the absolute, inspired, inerrant, and authoritative word of God. The espousal of this view leads one to substitute his own feelings in place of the Scriptures. It leads him to regard those feelings as the only "authority" (used in a very loose sense) which he should recognize. Such a view has monstrous implications for religion (including morality). . . . he accepts the view that neither he nor anyone else really has any obligation to study and obey the Bible. It is clear that if there is no absolute authority, then codes of morality (and so-called obligations of religion) are nothing but mere human invention. And, if such be the case, then no one can say (at least not with any authority) that adultery, murder, or any other work of the flesh is sinful. Further, given this view, it would also follow that no one has any obligation to be baptized into Christ (as the Scriptures teach: Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:26,27; Acts 2:38), to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24; 2 John 9-11), or to live the true Christian life (as set out in such passages as: 2 Peter 1:5-11; Philippians 1:20-27; Revelation 2:10; Luke 9:23, 24; 14:26-33; Romans 12:1, 2).

- Thomas B. Warren, via The Spiritual Sword, April, 1974, p. 4.

Witnesses Chosen by Christ!

Jesus said to His specially chosen apostles, "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8). These men were ideally positioned for this great work!

What are some characteristics of an ideal witness?

(1) **TRUTHFUL.** They were men who maintained a good conscience before a holy God (Example of Paul in Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:7). They were prepared by the power of the Holy Spirit, who provided the message (Matthew 10:19-20). None had a reputation of dishonesty.

(2) **CREDIBLE DEMEANOR.** They displayed humility, not uncontrollable anger, even under cross-examination (cf. Acts 24:10-21; 25:7-8; 26:2-23). They were never rattled, but blameless and harmless, lights in the world in the middle of a crooked generation (Philippians 2:15). They never exaggerated or skewed any testimony; they were men of integrity. They remained calm, polite, and respectful, avoiding arrogance and arguments with the hardened Jews (cf. Acts 13:44-46, Paul and Barnabas at the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia). They were not biased or incompetent; their testimony was reliable because it originated with God. They did not speculate or guess.

(3) **CONSISTENT TESTIMONY.** Example: Paul preached the same gospel in every place (1 Corinthians 4:17). The gospel plan of salvation was consistent & never showed any revisions based upon personal reactions, status, rank, nationality, wealth, religious affiliations, lodge memberships, etc. (cf. Galatians 2:6). The gospel was not designed to change (cf. Galatians 1:6-10). They were devoted adherents to the doctrine of Christ. No one ever had a successful case against them on the basis of having an inconsistent message (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 3:16). Had they changed the message, the unbelieving enemies of Christ would have quickly exposed the discrepancy and made the most of it. Were first century disciples so brainless that they could not rely on what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20)?

(4) **UNDERSTANDABLE.** They knew how to secure the attention of an audience by speaking clearly and loudly, or relating to their interests (cf. Acts 22:1-2). They were able to explain their observations accurately (cf. Luke 1:1-4). They were able to avoid or deflect unnecessary conflicts (2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9).

(5) **CONFIDENT.** A witness tells what he knows. They knew their message was true, so they devoted their lives to the work of making disciples (Matthew 28:19), appealing and

persuading others to come to the very same belief (Acts 26:12-29). Many who heard their testimony compared it with what they already knew to be true (cf. Acts 2:22). When speaking to the Jews, they maintained their confidence by appealing to the common ground of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 7:2-50; 28:23-28). They forsook all of life's potential benefits to preach an unpopular, but true message (Philippians 3:4-7; 2 Corinthians 11:22-28). They were dedicated to the truth (1 Corinthians 15:15-19), as eye-witnesses of the suffering of Christ (1 Peter 5:1).

The apostles testified with their lives! They understood and lived through the facts. The Lord Himself prepared them and equipped them to bear witness to the truth. They performed their charge with excellence!

- Gary Smalley

* "When you shake hands with the devil, it is almost impossible to let go!"

* "Failure is not the worst thing in the world. The very worst is not to try!"

* "Kindness always pays, but pays most when it is not done for pay!"

* "Everything in the world can be endured, except continual prosperity!"

* "If some men grew physically at the rate they grow spiritually, they would spend their lives in a play-pen!"

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)