

Openness

By Gary Henry

Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon. Now when he was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers . . . Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God” (2 Chronicles 33:11-13).

Hearts need to be “opened,” and sometimes the only thing that will open them is adversity. For this reason, we need to be careful about our attitude toward adversity.

Hardship tends to have a “chastening” effect upon us. If our hearts have begun to toughen up with a spirit of pride or self-sufficiency, the unwelcome pain of some serious difficulty can be a salutary thing. It can soften our hearts and open them up by reminding us of the proper reverence we ought to have toward our Creator, thus restoring our perspective.

Affliction doesn’t always soften the heart, of course. Sometimes it has the opposite effect. Concerning those who lived in his day, Jeremiah said, “O Lord, are not Your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive

correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return” (Jeremiah 5:3). If we have chosen the “victim mentality” as our basic outlook on life, affliction will only make us feel more sorry for ourselves — our hard hearts will only grow harder and more resentful. A time can come when, for all practical purposes, we’ve lost our ability to “hear” the truth even when God is using adversity to get our attention.

Often, however, pain does have a beneficial effect, at least in the long run. Hardship has a way of scratching the shell around our hearts just deeply enough to let in a little of the truth we’ve been resisting, and the result is a more receptive, honest response to the circumstances around us. We’re wise if we allow adversity to have this effect upon us.

There is an important sense in which we are strongest at our most painful moments of weakness. At least this much is true: our greatest opportunities to GROW in strength come when we respond to reminders of our weakness with humility and honesty.



Classes This Week

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| Sunday 5:15 Kid’s Class at the building | Wednesday Noon Ladies ‘Proverbs’ class at the Rouse’s |
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| Sick | | | | May Birthdays 2 - Emily-Anne Rouse 3 - Paula Davis 10 - Ian Norman 11 - Caleb George 11 - Scott Perkins 12 - Daphene Whatley 13 - Jana Hall 13 - Anna Grace Long 15 - Bryce Daniels 16 - Shawna Harris 19 - Madison Seals 22 - Sarah Holliday 24 - Andy Roberts 25 - Chuck Hahn 26 - Fallon Hartsell 28 - Candy Long 31 - Rachel Tolliver | News and Notes ☒ - Let us remember our upcoming VBS (June 24-27) and be letting others know. ☒ - Group meetings tonight! ☒ - Congratulations to our grads! Heath Fowler, Jillian Petty, John Mark Henderson, Allison Chandler, Megan Obert, Kyle Sexton, Leah Northcutt, Kyle Gibson, Art Daves, Haley Hudson, Chris Davis, Shawna Harris, Blake Bagent and Jordan Toombs. ☒ - We want to pray for our students that are graduating and those who are returning home for the summer. You have blessed us during this time we have served the Lord together! |
| Sam Cox (Friend of Anna Stallings) | Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin’s Son) | Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey’s dad) | Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz’s Sister) | | |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd’s Sisters) | Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier) | David Hartsell (Holly and Brad’s Father) | Joan Parker (Aurie Adams Grandmother) | | |
| Emma Hettinger (William Herd’s Mother) | Neal May (Manna Jones’ Mother) | Roger Whatley (Daphene Whatley’s son) | Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman) | | |
| Betty Bradford | Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather) | Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon’s brother) | Sandra Qadeer (Rafia Qadeer’s mother) | | |
| Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley’s Father) | Meredith NeSmith (Jessica Anderson’s Cousin) | Emily Stallings (Anna’s sister) | Madi Wise (Friend of the Roberts’) | | |
| Marty Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd’s Nephews) | Peggy Theis (Timothy Jones’ grandmother) | Toni and William Herd | Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller) | | |

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Volume 4, Issue 26 April 28, 2013

Baptism and the Fellowship of the Saints

By Steve Klein



Thoughts to Ponder

Deliverance can come to us only by the defeat of our old life. Safety and peace come only after we have been forced to our knees. God rescues us by breaking us, by shattering our strength and wiping out our resistance.

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM
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Evangelist and Editor

A few months ago, a preacher from “a church of Christ” in our area had a Baptist preacher as a guest on his radio program. Throughout the broadcast, the former cheerfully referred to the latter as a “brother.” As I listened I thought to myself, “Doesn’t he know any better than that?” “How can he call someone a brother in Christ who has not been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins?” There would have been a time when nearly every true Christian listening would have been asking the same questions. But the times they are a changing.

A generation ago, perhaps only Carl Ketcherside and his fringe of followers would have argued that Baptists and other evangelicals who were not baptized for the correct reason were nonetheless brethren in Christ. Then, such a claim would have been firmly rejected by every sound Christian, and even by the vast majority of those who were not so sound. Now, many are apparently questioning truths they once held dear regarding scriptural baptism and fellowship. They are wondering if it is possible that an individual who thinks he has been saved by faith alone, and has only been baptized because it is commanded, could in fact be saved? They are wondering if baptism which was not performed “for the remission of sins,” could still be effective. And ultimately, they are wondering if fellowship should not be extended to believers who have been baptized for the wrong reason.

F. Lagard Smith, in his recent book *Who Is My Brother?* is currently leading the way in paving this broad path of fellowship. He writes that “despite their misunderstandings of baptism’s purpose — believers who are immersed in order to obey the command to

be baptized might nevertheless be regarded in God’s eyes as saved believers” (128).

A generation ago, any book containing such a statement would have been greeted with cries for correction and demands for debate from virtually every corner of the brotherhood. Now, more than a few are touting it as “a good book” and “a breath of fresh air.” Its author styles himself a “conservative” and is received as such by congregations which view themselves as sound. Times have changed indeed.

What about Acts 19:1-7?

Times may change, but the Scriptures do not. In **Acts 19:1-7**, the Scriptures teach that baptism for the wrong purpose does not save. In that text, twelve men who had been baptized “into John’s baptism” were told by the apostle Paul that “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (19:4). Upon hearing this, these twelve men “were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (19:5). Obviously, a baptism which is not “in the name of Christ for the remission of sins,” will not save.

LaGard Smith does not agree with this assessment. He asserts that the case of the twelve men in **Acts 19** is not applicable to the case of the modern day believer who is baptized for the wrong reason. He says, “Unlike these men (in **Acts 19**, sk), whose faith in God had been claimed through John rather than through Jesus, today’s Baptists, for example, are fully convinced about the necessity of being baptized in the name of Jesus” (127). “The men from Ephesus,” he asserts, “had to be re-baptized, not merely because of misun-

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derstanding about timing and purpose, but because their baptism was not based upon the redemptive blood of Jesus. For those who are baptized in the name of Christ, however, the issue surely must be different" (129).

If LaGard's reasoning on **Acts 19** were correct, he would have the beginnings of a case for fellowshiping every baptized believer, regardless of the reason for their baptism. However, he would still have much to prove. For instance, even if the timing and purpose of baptism were not the issue in **Acts 19**, how does he know that these issues are not of consequence to God? Examples can be given from both Old and New Testaments demonstrating that God often considers the reason someone is complying with his will before he accepts them. God has rejected prayers, fasts, and sacrifices because they were not done for the right reason (**Matt. 6:5; Isa. 58:4**). To prove that God would not also reject baptism done for the wrong reason would truly be a very tough brief to argue.

But the reality is that LaGard is just wrong in his reasoning on **Acts 19**. He doesn't even have the beginnings of a case. The basis of his reasoning is that the twelve men re-baptized in **Acts 19** claimed their "faith in God ... through John rather than through Jesus." This is patently false. The context of **Acts 19** would indicate that these twelve men had probably been taught by Apollos, a man who had been "instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John" (**Acts 18:25**). According to the text, the only thing Apollos did not teach accurately was baptism. He knew "the way of the Lord." Please notice that the phrase "the way" is used seven other times in Acts, and in every other instance it has obvious reference to those who claimed their "faith in God" through Jesus Christ (**cf. Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:26; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22**).

The twelve men in Acts 19 are also called "disciples," and although John the Baptist had disciples (**cf. Matt. 9:14**), every single one of the other thirty-one times Luke uses the term "disciple(s)" in Acts, he plainly refers to disciples of Christ, not John. A disciple is a learner or follower. These men were disciples of Jesus. They followed Jesus' teaching to the extent they had correctly learned it, but they had not been taught accurately concerning the purpose and effects of baptism. But suppose this is not right; suppose these men knew nothing directly of Christ and his teachings and that they only knew what John had said and done. They would still have known that Jesus was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"! That's what John taught (**John 1:29**)! They would have had faith in the redemptive power of Christ's blood! But they had not been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of their sins. They needed to be re-baptized for exactly the same reason people today who have not been baptized for the remission of sins today need to be — in order to be saved!

Can Baptism for the Wrong Reason Be "In the Name of Jesus"?

Read again the quotes from pages 127 and 129 of Who is My Brother? In essence LaGard is saying that those in **Acts 19** had not yet been baptized "in the name of Jesus" but "today's Baptist for example," has been baptized "in the name of Jesus."

This is a glaring error. LaGard is claiming that any person who believes in Jesus, and has been baptized based on that belief, has been baptized "in the name of Christ" or "in the name of Jesus" — it doesn't matter whether that person knows the meaning and purpose of baptism. According to LaGard's reasoning, a person can be baptized not for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:28**), not to get into Christ (**Gal. 3:27**), not to have his sins washed away (**Acts 22:16**) and still have been baptized "in the name of Jesus." As incredible as it seems, F. LaGard Smith simply does not know what it means to do something "in the name of Jesus"!

Jesus makes it abundantly clear in **Matthew 7:22-23** that just because people claim to have done something in the Lord's name, does not mean they have. Many claimed to prophesy in Jesus name whom he never even knew! To do something in Jesus name is to do something he has empowered, permitted, authorized, or asked us to do.

To do something in the name of Jesus also involves doing it for the reason and purpose that he has assigned. If we do not do what he has asked for the reason he has asked, he doesn't accept it. How do we know this is true? Consider other things we are to do "in Jesus name." If someone gives you a "cup of cold water" in his name, "because you belong to Christ . . . he will by no means lose his reward" (**Mark 9:41**). But if someone does that same charitable deed "before men, to be seen by them" he will receive "no reward" from the Father in heaven (**Matt. 6:1**). The reason the charitable deed is done is what determines if it is done in Jesus' name or not.

Similarly, when a church withdraws fellowship from a sinful member "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" they do it "that his spirit may be saved in the day of judgment" (**1 Cor. 5:4-5; cf. 2 Thess. 3:6**). If a church withdraws from someone because it is following the lead of a bully (like Diotrephes) who wants to control everything (**3 John 9-10**), that church has not practiced withdrawal "in the name of Jesus," no matter what it may claim.

To pray "in the name of Jesus" (**Eph. 5:20**) "is not merely to add to one's prayers a meaningless formula, but it is to ask something from God as Christ's representatives on earth, in his mission and stead, in his spirit and with His aim." If I pray selfishly or not according to the will of God, I am not praying in Jesus name, even if I believe in Jesus and say "in Jesus' name, Amen" at the end of my prayer (**cf. Jas. 4:3; 1 John 5:14**).

Yes, baptism in the name of Jesus requires that the one baptized "believes" on Jesus Christ (**Acts 19:5; 8:37**), but it also requires that the one baptized do so "for the remission of sins" (**Acts 2:38**), to "wash away your sins" (**Acts 22:16**), and to "put on Christ" (**Gal. 3:27**). No one who has failed to be baptized for these reasons can possibly be in fellowship "in Christ" with anyone who has.



"They Watch for Your Souls"

By Irvin Himmel

A responsibility may be both awesome and joyful, at times painful yet rewarding. This is the case with the weighty charge for which overseers in the church are accountable.

The Hebrew writers expresses the thought in this way:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (**13:17**).

In the local church, according to the arrangement outlined in the New Testament, elders or bishops are the shepherds that have the rule or oversight of the flock. Paul said, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (**1 Tim. 5:17**). The same apostle admonished the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (**Acts 20:28**). The pastors of the flock must not rule in a manner that is dictatorial, domineering, and dogmatic. Peter warned elders not to be "lords over God's heritage" (**1 Pet 5:3**). "They watch for your souls" is a statement which needs to be pondered, studied, and put into practice.

1. Watching for souls requires leading people in the way of the truth and right. Elders are not to make laws of their own but are to lead disciples in submitting to God's will. They are to inform and instruct, applying the word of the Lord to specific cases, and helping the flock to follow Him who is the chief Shepherd. They are to be "ensamples" to the flock (**1 Pet. 5:3**). Their lives should exemplify humility, sincerity, wisdom, faith, love, and deeds of righteousness.

2. Watching for souls necessitates keen spiritual interest. In some churches of Christ it appears that elders have more interest in watching the finances than in watching for souls. They meet regularly to discuss the contributions, the budget, monetary support for preachers, building costs, etc., but show precious little concern in talking about how to win more souls to the Lord, what to do about sheep that have gone astray or jumped the fence, ways to devote more attention to souls that are in jeopardy, or why discipline is neglected in the church. Elders need to do more than watch the money; they watch for the souls committed to their charge.

3. Watching for souls takes time. Some men are chosen as overseers who either do not have the time or else are unwilling to take the time to do the work for which they are responsible. I am impressed with elders who take time to call on the weak, backsliders, or members who have been overtaken in a fault. Rather than acting disinterested, God-fearing shepherds go after the sheep which axe in trouble. Elders that have time to go to ball games; political rallies, picnics, school programs, etc. but no time to spend warning the unruly, admonishing the weak, and encouraging the fainthearted, should remember that they must give account before God.

4. Watching for souls demands alertness. Shepherds need to know the flock. There needs to be an awareness of the spiritual condition of the sheep. If a sheep shows signs of spiritual sickness or an inclination to waywardness, the shepherds ought to detect it and work on the problem. If grievous wolves are stalking about, faithful shepherds will demonstrate vigilance over the flock. Paul warned the Ephesian elders about grievous wolves which enter, not sparing the flock (**Acts 20:29**). Wide-awake elders are the kind that really watch for souls.

5. Watching for souls reflects faithfulness. Perhaps some overseers have forgotten that the most serious charge given to elders is to watch for souls. One is not faithful as an elder merely because he attends all the services of the church, or all the business meetings, or all the elders' meetings. He is not faithful because he is a good husband and father, nor because he makes an honest living, nor because he teaches a Bible class. An elder who is truly faithful in his oversight of the church must watch for souls. H.E. Phillips observes in his book Scriptural Elders And Deacons, "This is the real purpose for which God ordained that elders be in every church: that each member would be watched and matured in such a way as to bring him into the judgment as a faithful child of God" (p. 211).

Elders have a solemn charge. It is no trifling matter to watch over the souls that make up the flock of Christ. One's soul is his most priceless possession. To lose the soul is to lose everything. Soul-watching sums up the work of spiritual shepherds. No member of the flock should be annoyed if the elders speak to him about his conduct. Good and faithful bishops feel strongly the responsibility that they have to watch for our souls. --- **Truth Magazine - August 9, 1979**

