



May 13, 2007 (Vol. 7)

The Spirit Of Liberalism (2)

Edited

Last week we introduced an example of how some approach the Bible in a loose and less careful way. Let us look at another example of liberalism among brethren:

"CHRISTIANS PARTICIPATE IN TWO GOD-ORDAINED SACRAMENTS THAT CELEBRATE WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US: COMMUNION AND BAPTISM. COMMUNION IS CELEBRATED ON A REGULAR BASIS AND BAPTISM AS A ONE-TIME DECLARATION OF A LIFETIME OF DEVOTION TO GOD. THIS STUDY WILL CONSIDER THE SECOND OF THESE TWO EVENTS: BAPTISM. THE HUMAN MIND EXPLAINING BAPTISM IS LIKE A HARMONICA INTERPRETING BEETHOVEN: THE MUSIC IS TOO MAJESTIC FOR THE INSTRUMENT. NO SCHOLAR OR SAINT CAN FULLY APPRECIATE WHAT THIS MOMENT MEANS IN HEAVEN. ANY WORDS ON BAPTISM, INCLUDING THESE, MUST BE SEEN AS HUMAN EFFORTS TO UNDERSTAND A HOLY EVENT.

OUR DANGER IS TO SWING TO ONE OF TWO EXTREMES: WE MAKE BAPTISM EITHER TOO IMPORTANT OR TOO UNIMPORTANT. EITHER WE DEIFY IT OR WE TRIVIALIZE IT. ONE CAN SEE BAPTISM AS THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL OR AS IRRELEVANT TO THE GOSPEL. BOTH SIDES ARE EQUALLY PERILOUS. ONE PERSON SAYS, "I AM SAVED BECAUSE I WAS BAPTIZED." THE OTHER SAYS, "I AM SAVED SO I DON'T NEED TO BE BAPTIZED." THE CHALLENGE IS TO LET THE PENDULUM STOP SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE TWO VIEWPOINTS. THIS IS DONE BY PLACING IT WHERE IT SHOULD BE: AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS. BAPTISM IS LIKE A PRECIOUS JEWEL -- SET APART BY ITSELF, IT IS NICE AND APPEALING BUT HAS NOTHING WITHIN IT TO COMPEL. BUT PLACE BAPTISM AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF OUR SIN AND TURN ON THE LIGHT OF THE CROSS, AND THE JEWEL EXPLODES WITH SIGNIFICANCE. BAPTISM AT ONCE REVEALS THE BEAUTY OF THE CROSS AND THE DARKNESS OF SIN. AS A GEM HAS MANY FACETS, BAPTISM HAS MANY SIDES: CLEANSING, BURIAL, RESURRECTION, THE DEATH OF THE OLD, AND THE BIRTH OF THE NEW. JUST AS THE STONE HAS NO LIGHT WITHIN IT,

BAPTISM HAS NO INHERENT POWER. BUT JUST AS THE GEM PRISMS THE LIGHT INTO MANY COLORS, SO BAPTISM REVEALS THE MANY FACETS OF GOD'S GRACE. ONCE A PERSON ADMITS HIS SIN AND TURNS TO CHRIST FOR SALVATION, SOME STEP MUST BE TAKEN TO PROCLAIM TO HEAVEN AND EARTH THAT HE IS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST. BAPTISM IS THAT STEP. BAPTISM IS THE INITIAL AND IMMEDIATE STEP OF OBEDIENCE BY ONE WHO HAS DECLARED HIS FAITH TO OTHERS. SO IMPORTANT WAS THIS STEP THAT, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, EVERY SINGLE CONVERT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS BAPTIZED.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE THIEF ON THE CROSS, THERE IS NO EXAMPLE OF AN UNBAPTIZED BELIEVER. THE THIEF ON THE CROSS, HOWEVER, IS A CRUCIAL EXCEPTION. HIS CONVERSION DRIVES DOGMATISTS CRAZY. IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE FIRST ONE TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION OF THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST HAS NO CREED, CONFIRMATION, CHRISTENING, OR CATECHISM. HOW DISTURBING TO THEOLOGIAN TO ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN OF DOCTRINE ONLY TO BE GREETED BY AN UNEDUCATED THIEF WHO CAST HIS LOT WITH CHRIST. HERE IS A MAN WHO NEVER WENT TO CHURCH, NEVER GAVE AN OFFERING, NEVER WAS BAPTIZED, AND SAID ONLY ONE PRAYER. BUT THAT PRAYER WAS ENOUGH. HE HAS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE GOSPEL DRAMA. THE THIEF REMINDS US THAT THOUGH OUR DOGMA MAY BE AIRTIGHT AND OUR DOCTRINE DEAD-CENTER, IN THE END IT IS JESUS WHO SAVES. DOES HIS STORY NEGATE THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE? NO, IT SIMPLY PUTS OBEDIENCE IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE. ANY STEP TAKEN IS A RESPONSE TO A SALVATION OFFERED, NOT AN EFFORT AT SALVATION EARNED. IN THE END, GOD HAS THE RIGHT TO SAVE ANY HEART, FOR HE AND ONLY HE SEES THE HEART." (Max Lucado, sermon on baptism <http://www.maxlucado.com>)

COMMENTS: Note the following characteristics of the spirit of liberalism:

(1) In all fairness to Max Lucado, this is the introduction to a longer document which includes several scriptures. However, this is the main thesis of the document, and is the doctrine that Lucado believed when he wrote this.

(2) Note however, in this particular argument, there is not even one scripture reference given. There is an allusion to the thief on the cross, but it is only an allusion.

(3) Obviously controversial assertions (and Lucado knows this) are made **without** any scriptural backing, or logical argumentation.

Note the following **unsupported assertions**: Christians participate in two God-ordained sacraments (What is a sacrament, Max? It is a Catholic term: are you supporting Catholicism?); baptism is a sacrament; baptism cannot truly be understood by humans (What he means is that because we "cannot really understand it" then we cannot truly say what its meaning is, as the rest of his article shows); baptism is simply a first act of obedience for a saved person; the thief on the cross somehow disproves the necessity of baptism. All of these are statements that are not found in the New Testament, and instead of logically and scripturally demonstrating them, they are simply asserted **without** any evidence.

(4) A bad argument that is easily answered is set forth as a single proof that baptism is not really necessary. The Thief on the Cross Argument is easily answered: the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). A preacher should know better. Yet, ignoring this obvious answer, Lucado insists on repeating the old denominational argument that has been answered over and over by faithful preachers for centuries. As if the thief on the cross could somehow negate all that the New Testament says about baptism (1 Pet. 4:11; Acts 2:38)!

(5) Note again the characterization of those who insist that baptism is necessary for salvation: theologians to ascend the mountain of doctrine only to be greeted by an uneducated thief; though our dogma may be airtight and our doctrine dead-center, in the end it is Jesus who saves (As if Jesus' salvation somehow contradicts or negates, or is unrelated to, doctrine!) (2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 1:10-11).

(6) Note also the dramatic illustrations and smooth speech of Lucado. No one doubts he is well spoken and a savvy writer. But such skill in expression does not help when one departs from the truth (Rom. 16:17-18). Thus, the spirit of liberalism tends toward an emotional, biased, unsupported approach to Bible study. It focuses more on form than substance, style over scripture.

(7) Also, in an effort to be non-judgmental, open-minded, and intolerant,

liberalism often hurls unsupported, caricatured accusations at others, and calls names; as is seen in Lucado's comments about those who appeal to doctrine. In contrast, consider how the Holy Spirit views correct doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6, 13, 16; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 2:1; 2 John 9) and proper judging (John 7:24; 1 Cor. 6:5; 11:31; 14:29).

Lord willing, we will see more next week.

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Jo Miller, Wesley Geer (Life Care 316), **Mag Bumbalough** (Back in room 519, slightly improved), **Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox, Monie Petty** (breathing difficulties), **Dave Poteet** (NHC 225), **Dorris Williams, Robert & Betty England, Ed Williams** (heart blockages), **Joe Smith, Mike Tenpenny, Thelma Klein, DeLeesa Price** (expecting) and **Alisa Fletcher** (expecting), **Kenley Streeval, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet.**

Also, **Reba Jones** (Dorris Williams' niece), **Jackie Tindle** (cancer, relative of the Sims), **Marci Miller** (Alisa Fletcher's mother), **Ocia Bell Jones** (Doris William's mother), **Ruth Williams** (Betty England's niece), **Pauline Hickey, Kitty Mahan** (Kathy Tenpenny's mother), **Dwayne Williams** (Dorris William's son), **Paul Grissom, Carl Williams** (Ed's brother), **Teddy Sims.**

We will be updating our list next week. Please let us know if you wish anyone to continue being on the prayer list.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. May 12, 26
- **Door To Door** - Every Tuesday @ 6pm.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. April 29.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **GM** - Raymond Castillo, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

We Invite You To All Our Services!

Sunday Bible Study	9 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6 pm
Wednesday Bible Study	7 pm

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God's Simple Plan Of Salvation

Faith in Christ (John 8:24; Mk 16:16)
Repentance of sin (Acts 2:38, Acts 17:30-33)
Confession of Christ (Rom. 10:13; Acts 8:37)
Baptism into Christ (Mk 16:16; Rom. 6:3)
Be Faithful Unto Death (Rev. 2:10; Acts 8:22)