

# THE SOUTHWESTERNER



Home of the Southwest School of Bible Studies

Publisher of Christian Worker

Published weekly in the interest of New Testament Christianity by the Southwest church of Christ in Austin, Texas

## A POWERFUL PASSAGE ON BAPTISM COLOSSIANS 2:12 CODY WESTBROOK

Most religious groups that claim to be following Christ practice some form of baptism. Some administer it by pouring or sprinkling, and some by immersion. Some baptize for the forgiveness of sins, and some because of it. With so many opposing doctrines how can we know which is correct? Jesus commanded baptism as part of the great commission in Matthew 28:19, but how can we know which religious group is accurately fulfilling that command? Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:5 that there is “one baptism.” How may we identify it? Since God is the one who commanded baptism, we must let Him define it, and He does so in the New Testament. There are many passages that address this subject, but we will focus on just one—Colossians 2:12—which identifies the *action*, the *work*, and the *purpose* of baptism.

To many people, sprinkling or pouring is an acceptable form of baptism. However, the Bible does not sustain that position. Paul defines the *action* of baptism very clearly as a burial. Colossians 2:12 says that we are “buried with him in baptism.” Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” The fact that baptism is a burial in water is clearly revealed in the definition of the word. The Greek word *baptizo* is defined as “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge” (Thayer). The conversion account of the Ethiopian nobleman is a perfect illustration of biblical baptism. Acts 8:38 says that both Philip and the Eunuch went down into the water. Why would it have been necessary for both men to go down into the water if sprinkling or pouring was acceptable?

Colossians 2:12 also describes the *work* of baptism. Paul wrote, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also

ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God.” Sometimes Christians are accused of believing in a “works based” salvation because of an adherence to the biblical teaching on baptism. There is indeed work in baptism, but it is not ours; it is God’s. What is it that God does in baptism? What is His operation? Scripture identifies two things: (1) He washes away our sins in the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38; Rev. 1:5) and (2) He adds us to the church (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). Notice also that Paul says we must have “faith” in God’s operation. Thus, when a person makes the decision to be baptized they must do so with the understanding of exactly what God is doing—washing away sins and adding him to the body of Christ.

In this passage Paul also identifies the *purpose* of baptism. The larger context of this passage, verses 11-13, tells us clearly that the purpose of baptism is the forgiveness of sins. Verse 11 speaks of “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” and verse 13 concludes the thought by stating,

And you, being dead in your sins  
and the uncircumcision of your flesh,  
hath he quickened together with him,  
having forgiven you all trespasses.

Acts 2:38 says that baptism is “for the remission of sins;” Acts 22:16 says that baptism “wash[es] away [our] sins;” and 1 Peter 3:21 and Mark 16:16 say that baptism saves us. Baptism is not necessary because there is any particular power in water. Rather, it is necessary because it is in the waters of baptism that we come into contact with the blood of Christ, which alone has the power to wash away sins (Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; etc).

Though there has been a great deal of misunderstanding

and false teaching about baptism through the centuries, the fact remains that the Bible teaches that it is a necessary requirement for a person's salvation. Colossians 2:12 is a passage that summarizes the importance and purpose of baptism in a very powerful way. It would serve us well to study and memorize what it teaches that we may continue the effort to save souls and spread the knowledge of Christ for generations to come (2 Tim. 2:2).

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## THE CHURCH STILL STANDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Don Walker '79

When Christ promised to build His church, He promised it would be built upon the rock—Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:13). The church is built upon the solidarity of the Deity and perfection of Jesus Christ. She is a most glorious church because of her relationship with Christ.

The value of the church is seen in the fact that Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). And it is always true that heaven is involved when it comes to the church, for she is in the mind of God even from the beginning of the world and exists as the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:9-11). Holding such a lofty position brings with it a grave responsibility. The church must reflect the same standard of excellence that is associated with our God. The church must stand for excellence.

The apostle Paul wrote,

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9-10).

With Paul's statement in mind, let us turn our attention to The Church Still Stands For Excellence.

Paul's prayer for the Philippians expressed what may be the most important point of this article. As a people of love, we dare not jettison "knowledge and judgment." If we do then we will be ill prepared to recognize, much less approve, those things that are excellent. The charge, "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21), demands an ability to recognize and discern. The Hebrew writer addressed this very problem.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

It is apparent from these inspired words; many have accepted the counterfeit and the sham of manmade religions and the debauchery of a hellish world, because they have no experience in the Word of God. They have not used the Word nor have they labored to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), Therefore, they are ill equipped to "discern both good and evil." With such a deficiency in their spiritual diet, they are helpless to even recognize that which is excellent, much less maintain an ability to make a stand. However, if we immerse ourselves in the Word of God and dedicate ourselves to learning His Word, then we will be well equipped to stand for things that are excellent.

If we invest our time accordingly, we will recognize the excellence of moral purity and take our stand there. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Again Paul advised Timothy, in the context of the selection and appointing of elders, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). As the church which belongs to Christ, we must live in such a way that puts a strong emphasis on that broad line of demarcation that must exist between the people of God and the hellish world. James wrote,

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

John also wrote,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

As the New Testament church our actions and speech must reflect a consistent agreement with that which is excellent.

Second, we will recognize the excellence of doctrinal purity and take our stand there. It is amazing how so many can belittle the word of God and the teachings therein and expect to develop a stronger faith and relationship with their God. Amos asked a powerful question when he asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). This very principle is seen in John's words in his second epistle.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (2 John 9).

Fellowship with God and His Son Jesus Christ is based upon our acceptance of and walking in the "doctrine of Christ." A good commentary on this passage is found in 1 Timothy 6:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Paul maintains the exact attitude John did concerning the necessity of our putting our approval on doctrinal excellence if we desire fellowship with our God. As the New Testament church, our teaching and preaching must reflect a consistent agreement with that which is excellent.

Finally, we will recognize the excellence of a sincere love for the souls of men and take our stand there. Jesus asked these penetrating questions.

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark. 8:36-37).

We are the followers of Christ and, as such, we must also recognize the value of the souls of men.

First we will understand the value of our own soul and strive to maintain that relationship with God that feeds the soul that it may be strong. Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and kills our soul (Eph. 2:1). Therefore, we must avoid sin by overcoming the temptations that are set before us. In so doing we reflect our knowledge of the value of the soul.

Second, we will realize the value of the souls of our brethren. Especially is this true concerning those that have erred from the truth. Paul stressed the attitude and action that righteous men will have concerning the erring.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

Again James wrote,

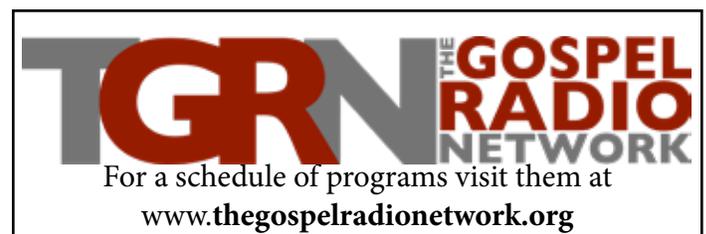
Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (Jas. 5:19, 20).

Such love will not always be easy. In fact, it will at times be very difficult to follow through with that which is so needed. Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:18). There will be times when the excellent way will be to withdraw from the ungodly (1 Cor. 5), and we must take such a stand for excellence if we love our Lord and the souls of men.

Finally, we will realize the value of the souls of those that populate the lost world. Evangelism is certainly the excellent way and that is where we as the Lord's church must make our stand. Solomon wrote, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Pro. 11:30). Jesus commanded such (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24), and in so doing He forever defined it as the excellent way. As the Lord's people, we must recognize the excellence of a sincere love for the souls of men and take our stand there.

Jesus spoke of two ways in which men would walk (Matt. 7:13-14) and each of us must make our choice. As members of the church, we are obligated to stand for that which is excellent. May we ever labor to distinguish the difference and take our stand on that which is excellent as we study our Bibles more and more.

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**Record for the Week of May 5, 2019**

Bible Class ..... 137  
Morning Assembly ..... 209  
Evening Assembly ..... 170  
**Iglesia de Cristo**  
Morning Assembly ..... N/A  
Contribution ..... \$N/A

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**PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:**

**Tom Hanks** is hoping to be released this Wednesday from Rehab.

**Health Concerns:** Lois Ewald, Charles Houston, Debra Johnson, Betty Kellsmurphy, Diana Rodriguez, Clarence Whetstone, Angela Young.

**Shut-ins:** Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

**Others:** Sonny & Lee Barr, Bill Ellison, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cheri Sarten, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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