

IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM.

Before considering what constitutes Scriptural baptism, let us inquire whether it is essential. We have no hesitation in saying that it is indispensable, and that no one will have a part in the "little flock" or be of "The bride, the Lamb's wife" who has not been baptized. Further, we have scriptural proof that all who are baptized shall be saved, that all such shall be in the "first resurrection." Let us hear Jesus' words – "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But Paul is yet more explicit and says: [Rom. 6:3-8.] "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection." Notice that the subject is baptism; and that there is not an if, nor a but, nor any other contingency mentioned than baptism. How important then that we know what it is and understand how it should be performed.

The meaning of the Greek word Baptizo is to bury, immerse, cover up, submerge. Now apply this significance to the word baptized; then associate it with yourself and you find that you are to be buried or submerged. But into what are we to be immersed – into water? No, we answer: Paul tells us that those who are really baptized "were baptized into Jesus Christ." The true baptism then is to be submerged, covered up, or immersed into Christ. If immersed into Christ we lose ourselves; we will no longer do our own will or way, for that will is buried. We have a new will or mind; it is the mind of Christ. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." If we have been baptized into Christ it is that we may be members of His body, the church. And since "He is the head of the body, the church," [Col. 1:18] it follows that the only controlling authority for those who are members of that body is the will of Christ Jesus the head. This is complete immersion into Christ, and who will doubt that if thus dead to self and the world and alive only as a

member of his body, obeying no will but that of "the head," we say who can doubt, that if thus immersed we shall be in his likeness in the resurrection; that if we thus know him, we shall also know the power of his resurrection. [Phil. 3:11.]

But, by what means can one become thus immersed into Christ? Shall we be baptized into Christ by being immersed in water? Not at all; thousands are so immersed who will not be in his likeness in the resurrection. Let us ask Paul into what we must be immersed. He answers (Rom. 6:3) "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

Ah yes; It is a difficult matter to attain to the prize of our high calling. While many, "a great company" (Rev. 7:15) shall stand before the throne in glory, only "the body" of overcomers are to sit with him "in the throne." Rev. 3:21. It is only him that overcometh that "shall inherit all things" and be "joint-heir with Jesus." Not to the "great company" of "the household of faith" is the promise of the kingdom given, but to the "first-born" of the heavenly family – Jesus the head, the "church of the first-born" the body. To this first-born is the promise made: "Fear not little flock it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

This is the prize and all christians are in the race course. All christians in the race shall be saved and shall ultimately reach the goal, if they continue in this pathway. They will all ultimately reach the completeness of the "Divine nature," but it requires the putting forth of every effort in the race if we would win the prize and be found in Him as members of the body of the first-born and "heirs of all things." Therefore Paul exhorts [not the world, but christians] to "so run that we may obtain" [the prize of our high calling]. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset and run with patience the race set before us." They that so run shall **[R133 : page 1]** win the prize – be the Bride – the body. They that run but

do not so run as to win, "suffer loss," the loss of the prize which they would have obtained had they been willing to "lay aside every weight." They shall suffer loss but themselves shall be saved so as by fire. [Coming through "the great tribulation."] Their lives shall be saved but their works shall suffer loss. [Phil. 3:15].

Yes, beloved, it is a prize such as never before and never again will be offered and what wonder if it is very difficult of attainment – if it be "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the kingdom." By being baptized into his death, we are to be members of his body, "therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." But what is it to thus die his death. Is it simply to put "away the filth of the flesh," that is to deny ourselves only such things as are sinful? No, that would not be "being made conformable to his death." "In Him [Jesus] was no sin;" consequently he could not put to death a sinful nature. But while his nature was pure and his every desire was to do things right and proper for him as a perfect man, yet he yielded his rights and will as a natural man for us. For instance as a holy undefiled one he had a right to seek his own ease and pleasure but instead of so doing he was moved with compassion toward the people and went about spending his life for the sinner's benefit, taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses, and on more than one occasion he might have said: "Virtue [power, vitality] is gone out of me."

Yes he went about doing good spending his perfect life powers for the good of sinners because he was full to overflowing of the perfect love. Finally after having thus shared our sorrows and our griefs, He bought us and paid the price of sin [death] for us, that we sinners might be accounted righteous, and therefore have again the right to live. This was the great, grand, culminating expression he gave of his love: When he gave the life upon which sin and death had no claim in order that, in due time the race should go free, from

sin and from death by a resurrection to perfect life. Surely he might have kept this life which he gave. It was not like ours, forfeited; as he himself testified: "No man taketh it from me; I lay it down of myself" – Even now I could ask the Father and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels, but these things to which he had a perfect right he gave up freely.

Now it is his death, that we are to be conformed to. True it will include the giving up of the sins or "filth of the flesh," and the "denying of ungodly lusts," etc., but, thus far it is simply duty. You only give up things you never had a right to, there is no sacrifice in it. If we would be made conformable unto his death, it must be by the giving up of things not sinful and to which you have a right, as men. Jesus did not his own will, but the will of him that sent him, and we should "Let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord." The Father's will as done in Christ Jesus was the giving up of natural things, and comforts, and life, on account of sin in the world. Sin and sufferings are still in the world and the disciples of Jesus most willing to "spend and be spent," to "labor and suffer reproach," making "himself of no reputation," such a disciple most closely follows Him "who has set us an example that we should walk in His footsteps."

When asked of the two disciples whether they might sit on the right and left hand in the kingdom he answered: "Ye know not what ye ask; are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am [to be] baptized with?" Jesus shows what cup he meant when in the garden he exclaimed, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me." He shows the baptism referred to also, that it was not the baptism of John in Jordan, but of death when he says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straightened 'til it is accomplished."

Such, baptized into Christ's death will not make earthly ease and comfort their aim, but will seek to "do good unto all men as they have opportunity especially to the household of faith." Their self-denial and God-likeness will seek to benefit and lift up the physical man, and how much more will it lead to self-sacrifice in order that others may be helped on to the divine life. Thus it was that the apostles spent themselves that they might declare "the unsearchable riches of Christ." It was for this cause that Paul says: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Jesus left a measure of suffering, etc., for his church as his body to complete, or fill up, and Paul was zealous to bear as much of it as possible. Glorious ambition to spend his life in bearing the glad tidings of the "High calling" to those who would receive it. This is the ambition which Jesus both exemplified and commended, saying, "He that would be greatest among you let him become servant of all."

If we thus live a divine life and crucify and ignore the natural life, we shall be considered "a peculiar people zealous of good works," and we will thus be so very different from the ideas of the natural man; that we must needs remember Jesus' words – "Marvel not if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "The disciple is not above his Lord." "If any **[R133 : page 2]** man will be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Self-denial means much, and will never be experienced except as we crucify the human nature with its affections and desires.

We see what it is to be baptized into Jesus' death. Let us inquire whether it is an instantaneous act performed when we first come to Christ and seek admission into "the body" or, a life work? We answer it is both.

When we first come to God through Jesus we covenant with Him that we will take up our cross and follow him through evil and good report, whether it brings the favor or frown of our fellows. Jesus tells us it means the loss of the friendship of the world, the gain of the friendship of God, the loss of worldly honor, the gain of heavenly honor, the loss of earthly life and earthly nature, the gain of the divine nature and the divine image – a spiritual body like unto Christ's glorious body. He illustrated his teaching on the night he was betrayed. He took bread and brake, saying, this is my body broken for you, eat ye all of it. The bread symbolized Jesus as the truth. "I am the truth" – "the heavenly manna." After supper he took the cup of wine saying, This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it. The wine symbolizes the blood and after we have tasted of the truth (bread) and seen that the Lord is gracious he says, Here is the cup of my sufferings and death, drink ye all of it – you must share this cup of sufferings if you would share my glory. "Yes," says Paul, "If we suffer with him we shall also be glorified together."

This covenant of death we make with God when we first come to him and He says He will, from the moment of covenant forward, reckon us dead indeed to the world and sin, although the entire life is to be a time of crucifying, or putting to death up to the time we die actually. God's part of the covenant is, that these who thus die shall have part of the divine nature, and from the moment we make this covenant, He seals it by giving us the Holy Spirit as a guide and comforter; which is an earnest of our inheritance, which full inheritance we shall receive when all the "little flock" have crucified themselves. Notice then that we first covenant to die, etc., and then receive of the Spirit's begetting power giving us spiritual life, whereby we can carry out our part of the covenant.

But as crucifying is a lingering death, so our dying is well expressed thus, It is hard to die in any sense, but it is especially hard to be dead to the world, its opinions, pleasures and wishes, while still in it. In the world but not of it. Separate from sinners. Often will we need to "look unto Jesus the author (and soon to be) the finisher of our faith." We will often need, as Paul said, to "consider Him who endured such contradiction (opposition) of sinners against himself lest (we) be weary and faint in (our) mind." "Be not weary of well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not."

No words that we can use can express so forcibly as do Paul's, the necessity of this immersion into Christ's death. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. [Paul was fitted for a high social and political position, both by birth and education.] Yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win [a position in the body of] Christ, and be found in him," covered with the righteousness of faith. "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection – (experience the same resurrection as Jesus to a spiritual body and immortal life – the first resurrection) and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto THE (first) resurrection." (Phil. 3:8-11.) "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." (Rom. 6:5.)

But while the above mentioned is beyond question the essential baptism, was there not a baptism into water enjoined also and as a type? Assuredly there is. When the new hearers had heard of Jesus' death for them, and of their high calling to share it with him and afterward to share his glory, they made the covenant with God and gave outward expression to it by the beautifully expressive type

of being buried in water, and said by the act we die to the world and earthly conditions and rise to "walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." [R134 : page 2]

I rise to walk in heavens own light,
Above the world and sin, &c.
With heart made pure and garment white
And Christ enthroned within."

The ordinance of water baptism is so beautifully expressive of our hope and covenant, that if there was no divine injunction as to its performance, as there is, we should still feel it a privilege to show forth and illustrate our planting (burying) together in the likeness of his death and our expectation of being in his likeness in the resurrection.

When Cornelius had received the Holy Spirit Peter inquired, Can any man forbid water that these should be immersed? And so we ask, who can say aught against water being thus used as a type of our death? And we might put the question in another form for some: Can any man refuse to thus show forth his death if he has indeed died to the world? We think not. That which hinders many in the public illustration of the death they profess is we fear, generally pride, fear of mental or uttered reproach of fellow disciples and of the world. But dear fellow disciple reflect that these objections to water baptism indicate that the true essential baptism has never fully taken place. You may be partly dead, and have given up part of your own will, but when fully crucified you will say with Him, "I delight to do thy will, O Lord." I count all things but loss and dross that I may win Christ – the great prize.

Let us, dearly beloved, live up to our covenant, and not only bury ourselves and our wills in Christ's, but also keep our bodies under – dying daily until fully delivered into the blessed kingdom – which deliverance we believe to be so very nigh at hand.

[R141 : page 2]

In most situations of life the consciousness of innocence is truly our best shield, and our firmest security.
