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FAITH, BAPTISM AND SALVATION.

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED TO THE BAPTIST CHURCH
IN STURBRIDGE, MASS., LORD'S DAY, P. M.,
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He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.
Mark xvi. 16.

Continued from December CHRISTIAN.

Am I answered: We mean by "salvation" everlasting happiness in heaven, and by "essential to salvation" we mean necessary for all who hear the gospel preached, understand what baptism is, and that it is enjoined upon them and have the opportunity of submitting to it.

Before I answer again I will give you the answer of an aged minister of the gospel, to whom I was introduced at Mentor, on the Western Reserve, in Ohio, when on a visit there in the summer of 1830. Previous to my introduction to him I was informed that he had been a Methodist preacher for about forty years, that he had ever had the reputation of being a good man, but a few months previously he had been immersed. I was introduced to him and he said, "Yes, I have been immersed, and I feel satisfied that I have done my duty. I have thought," he continued, "had the Lord seen fit to take me away before I understood the import of baptism that he would have pardoned my ignorance and misapprehensions on this as on other subjects, for I meant to obey him in all things. But after I was further enlightened and became convinced that nothing but immersion was baptism, and consequently that I was unbaptized, had I refused to obey and died in that state, I think, said he, that the Lord would have cast me off."

Who thinks otherwise? We will say, Who dares to say that this man, or any other person thus enlightened, could disobey the Lord Jesus Christ in refusing to submit to him by baptism and yet be everlastingly saved by him? Not I, my friends, no. To conclude otherwise—to preach otherwise—would be joining the ranks of the adversary. As well might we say that faith, that repentance, or anything else which the Lord has commanded is not essential. As well might we say that we may disbelieve the record which God has given of his Son, that we may live and die impenitent sinners and be saved as to say that any person *knowing* what baptism is, and that it is enjoined for their observance by the Lord Jesus Christ, they refuse to submit to it, call it a non-essential, and treat it with neglect, they cannot be saved, or we see not anywhere in the book of God the least ground to hope for them. Are there any such persons present? I would warn them, as I would warn the infidel and the impenitent sinner, to flee from the wrath to come, for I could not, I cannot, recognize any such as Christians, saints, or as the servants of God. No, such they cannot be, for John the Apostle has said, "And hereby we do know that we do know him if we keep his commandments. He that saith he knoweth him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word in him, verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him."

No, no, my dear friends and brethren, that is a dead faith and good for nothing, and that repentance, too, is of no account which do not move the subject of them right forward in the path of obedience. And the more genuine be our faith and repentance, and the more deep

wrought be the work of grace in our hearts, the less will we feel inclined to alter or in any respect to modify the divine will as expressed in the oracles of inspiration.

When I hear a young convert or an old convert, it matters not which, begin to enquire if anything that the Lord has enjoyed be essential to salvation and at the same time manifest a disposition not to obey, or disposed to do something else as a substitute for what the Lord has commanded, I at once stand in doubt of that convert. I fear, my friends, your hearts are not right in the sight of God. I cannot now preach baptism to you. No, but repentance. "Repent and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you." Except you repent you must perish. Not all the waters of the ocean could regenerate you or wash away your sins, except you repent.

But we have yet another view to take of salvation. If the querist means by it in the interrogation what our Lord meant by saved in his commission to the apostles, what Peter meant by "the remission of sins" and by "saved" in the passage we have given from one of his epistles, where he says "that baptism saves us," which is equivalent to "putting on Christ,"—forming a union with the church or body of Christ—I answer YES, emphatically YES, for nowhere in the New Testament do we read of any unbaptized Christians. The chapter and verse cannot be shown us in the book where it is affirmed of any as disciples of Christ, having put on Christ, being in Christ, and being recognized by other Christians, and in the Church of Christ, till he has submitted to baptism. Therefore, we say, baptism is essential to salvation in this sense, and this is the sense in which we understand the term *saved* to be used by our Lord in his commission to his apostles and by Peter. We understand our Lord, too, in his conversation with Nicodemus, as recorded in the third chapter of John, when he says, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he can not enter into the Kingdom of God," to mean the kingdom or Church of Christ on earth. And so I believe have the Baptists generally understood it. Hence their restricted communion to baptize believers in Christ for which they have been and now are so much reprobated by those who practise sprinkling and pouring, and hold to infant membership in the churches. We pass to some improvement—

And I remark *First*, That this subject addresses itself to every minister of the gospel for his most careful, prayerful and scrutinizing consideration. As under the law the priests lips were to keep knowledge, and the people were to learn the law of their mouth, so under the law of the gospel, they who speak in public for Jesus Christ are of all men the most responsible. "If any man speak, let him speak according to the oracles of God." And "If he speak not according to these oracles there is no light in him."

Our business is to hold up and call attention to the word—to the inspired word and to the teachings of the Holy Spirit contained in this word. We have to do and only to do when standing before the public in the character and professedly discharging the duties of Christ's ministers with the inspired sense of the revelations of the Spirit of God. "He that hath a dream let him tell a dream (saith the Lord by the mouth of his old prophets) but he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully."

I remark *Secondly*, This subject addresses itself to all the professed disciples of Jesus Christ. Our text and context, and the passages of Scripture which stand related to the text, and which being contemplated together tend to illustrate and explain it, are a mirror into which all such may look with profit. By this means may we examine ourselves and ascertain our true character.

What kind of disciples are we? How were we made? What have we experienced? What is our constant experience? What are our hopes? and what is the reason of our hopes? Are we Christians in deed, and were we made such by a rational conviction and a cordial reception of the gospel of Christ, and by obedience to it according to the commission? Is our faith in Christ like that of the primitive disciples, the gift of God being produced in us by the testimony of God, sealed and confirmed by the Spirit of God, and so a divine faith? Or is it an undefinable something of which we have no distinct idea of, which we can give no account as to its nature or its origin? Have we repented, truly repented of our sins, having turned to God with our whole hearts? Is God indeed enthroned in our affections so that His will and not self-gratification is the governing law of all our conduct? Have we seen the odious nature of sin, and hated it and hated ourselves on account of it, because it is against God, against his holy law, and against the interest and happiness of his moral universe? Does our experience make us more and more dissatisfied with ourselves on account of our want of conformity to God, and so stimulate us to renewed efforts to crucify the old man with his affections and lusts, and to bring under our body and keep it in subjection? Have we put on Christ by being baptized into him? "For ye are all the children of God," said Paul to the Galatian Christians, "by faith in Christ Jesus." How so, "For," he adds, "as many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ, have put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." What more? And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

Can you, my brethren, answer all these questions in the affirmative suggested by the application of this subject to you?

If we be indeed the disciples of Jesus Christ, we are Christians and the children of God—sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, we are constituted such by faith, but not faith alone. To them who received the incarnate Word in the primitive age of the Christian church, were given the power or privilege to become the sons of God "even to such," says John, "who believe on His name." But we are not sons yet. How then do we become sons? By being born again—"Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We remark *Thirdly*, and lastly, That the subject addresses itself to all here present, and everywhere wherever the New Testament is circulated, and the gospel of the love of God is preached, who are out of Christ.

All unbaptized persons are out of Christ, according to the teachings of Christ and his Apostles by the dictation of the Spirit of God. How far my friends are you out of Him? Are you at the farthest remove in the ranks of the infidel scoffers? Stop, oh stop, in your mad career to eternal death. The testimony of God is offered to you, confirmed by the demonstrations of the Holy Spirit to produce faith in you. You believe man, the testimony of God is greater. That God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. God has given you the ability to believe by the nature and amount of the divine testimony embodied in the sacred Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit is come, and He is now in the Church, "reproving the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Have you not felt reproved by His sacred influences? O, resist not the Spirit by turning a deaf ear to the divine testimony.

Are you impenitent? Is your heart hard? Do you feel no compunctions for sin? We