

Responding Correctly to the Truth

INTRODUCTION:

1. Recently our class on Romans addressed the first verses of chapter 6 which spawned discussion.
 - A. The verses under consideration were Rom. 6:3-4 which state, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** have been **baptized into His death**?⁴ Therefore we have been **buried with Him through baptism** into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
 - B. What was expressed in that class about these verses were...
 - i. Amazement that Satan could take a command like *baptism* given in such simple language and cause so much confusion to surround it.
 - ii. Thoughts concerning the difficulty of getting people to see past the confusion and obey the truth.
2. It was these thoughts that caused me to think about my subject this morning which has to do with the importance of truth and how God expects us to respond to it.
 - A. And that is what I want to look at today.
 - B. I hope doing this will cause each of us to examine our view of the truth and our response(s) to the truth to assure that we have done so correctly and stand in the good graces of our Lord.

BODY:

- **I. The importance of truth:**
 - A. There is no question that the religious world downplays the revealed truth, despite its importance being displayed in...
 - 1. How the *Spirit's work* was to reveal the truth (Jn. 16:13-14 – “But when He, the **Spirit of truth**, comes, He will guide you into **all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.¹⁴ He will **glorify Me**, for He will take of **Mine** and will disclose it to **you**.”).
 - a. The religious world is enamored with the Spirit but ignores that the Spirit **of truth** was *sent* by God to **glorify Christ** by **revealing the whole truth** given us through Jesus.
 - b. This indicates truth matters to God!
 - 2. How *sanctification*, or being set apart from sin to God, comes through the truth (John 17:17, 19 – “**Sanctify them in the truth**; Your **word is truth**...¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be **sanctified in truth**.”).
 - 3. How *purification of the soul* comes by obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22 – ESV – “Having **purified your souls by your obedience to the truth** for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart”).
 - 4. How being *set free in Christ* comes through knowing the truth (John 8:31-32 – “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;³² and you will **know the truth**, and the **truth will make you free**.”).
 - 5. How a *holy life* requires practicing the truth (Jn. 3:20-21 – “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.²¹ But he who **practices the truth** comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”).
 - 6. How *acceptable worship* is conducted in truth (John 4:24 – “God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and **truth**.”).
 - B. It is no wonder that the apostle John said in 3 Jn. 4, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”
 1. To downplay truth and how we respond to it is to downplay any hope of receiving salvation from sin and of conducting our life in pleasing fashion before God.
 2. Truth is at the center of God’s plan to bring us out of sin and into salvation.
- **II. What does the truth require?**
 - A. To answer this question, I want to look at some biblical cases where individuals were faced with the truth and consider what they had to do to properly respond to it.

- B. Consider **Saul**.
 - 1. Saul had lived his whole life with a “perfectly good conscience” (Acts 23:1 – “Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, “Brethren, I have **lived my life with a perfectly good conscience** before God up to this day.”).
 - a. Saul lived this despite how he...
 - i. Was the “ring-leader” in the stoning of Stephen, a faithful Christian (Acts 7:57-58).
 - ii. Had ravaged the church, putting Christians in prison (Acts 8:3).
 - iii. Believed he “had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” including executing Christians, forcing them the blaspheme, etc. (Acts 26:9-11).
 - iv. Was a blasphemer, persecutor, and a violent aggressor (1 Tim. 1:12-13).
 - b. The point is that Saul’s “perfectly good conscience,” which means he did all these things while sincerely believing he was doing God’s will, did not *justify* his actions or give him the right to reject God’s truth. A good conscience is nothing unless based on truth.
 - 2. Saul was confronted with the truth that he was persecuting **Jesus the Messiah** (Acts 9:3-6).
 - a. To be confronted by Jesus meant being confronted by one he, along with his fellow Jews, *hated* as a heretic and *rejoiced* in his death, thinking he got what he deserved!
 - i. Here Jesus is now commanding Paul’s attention, belief, and obedience.
 - ii. All that Saul thought he knew and believed was right was being challenged!
 - b. What did Saul have to do to respond correctly to the truth?
 - i. He had to **accept** the **truth** his eyes and ears could not deny and **obey**.
 - 1) He did so by going to Damascus to await instructions (Acts 9:8-9).
 - 2) He did so when Ananias instructed him concerning what the truth required by being *baptized* to *wash away his sins* (Acts 22:14-16 – “And he [Ananias] said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to **know His will** and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why do you delay? Get up and be **baptized, and wash away your sins**, calling on His name.’”).
 - ii. If Saul had refused to accept the truth and be baptized to wash away his sins, he would not have been saved and would have lost his “good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21 – “And corresponding to that, **baptism** now **saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an **appeal to God for a good conscience**—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”).
 - c. Responding correctly to the truth requires obedience even when...
 - i. That person has always lived with a good conscience before God.
 - ii. Obeying means rejection by others, persecution, hardship, etc., seeing none of these compare to the glory received by the faithful in Christ (Rom. 8:18 – “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”).
- C. Consider the apostle **Peter** (Acts 10).
 - 1. Peter, like other Christians, preached the gospel only to Jews (Acts 11:19 – “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.**”)
 - a. In Acts 10:1-8 Cornelius, a **Gentile** Centurion, was told by an angel to send for Peter who would tell him the gospel that he might be saved.
 - 2. Peter was confronted with the truth that salvation is not limited to the Jews (Acts 10:9-16).
 - a. When presented in this vision with “unclean” animals and told to “kill and eat” he refused, holding to the clean/unclean distinctions of the O.T. Law.
 - b. Even when reminded that God had purified these “unclean” things, he refused.
 - 3. As Peter pondered the vision, the Spirit commanded him to go with the men who were seeking him “without misgivings,” though he would learn they were Gentiles (10:17-20).

- 4. What did Peter have to do to correctly respond to the truth?
 - a. Peter had to trust God enough to obey...and he did (10:23-27).
 - b. This was hard because God's command went against all Peter had been taught and had practiced his whole life as a Jew!
 - c. Yet, Peter obeyed because God showed him that it was **the truth** that the Gentiles were accepted for salvation (10:28-29, 34-35).
- 5. Responding correctly to the truth required *obedience* even when the truth was contrary to what one has been taught and has practiced their whole life.
- D. Consider **Apollos** (Acts 18):
 - 1. Apollos was a *knowledgeable* and *capable preacher* of Christ, but taught error concerning *baptism* (Acts 18:24-25).
 - a. He knew only John's baptism, which had been done away with when Christ commanded his baptism in the Great Commission (Matt. 18:18-20).
 - b. So, Apollos, like most churches today, preached a baptism, but was **ignorant** and in **error** concerning the truth of Christ's baptism.
 - 2. Apollos was confronted with the truth by Aquilla and Pricilla concerning baptism (18:26).
 - a. Incorrect teaching on baptism required addressing and correcting it, despite how much of what Apollos preached was apparently right!
 - b. This shows **it matters** to God what one **believes, teaches, and practices** about **baptism**.
 - 3. What must Apollos do to correctly respond to the truth?
 - a. Would Apollos and his preaching have remained **in the truth** and acceptable to God if he had refused to listen to the instruction and did not change his doctrine and practice? No!
 - b. A faithful teacher must **hold to the truth** to assure his and his hearers' salvation (1 Tim. 4:16 – "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.").
 - c. Responding correctly to the truth requires *obedience* even when it was just one issue—even when the issue was baptism.
- E. Consider the **disciples in Ephesus** (Acts 19):
 - 1. Paul found some disciples, those seeking to follow Christ, and asked about their reception of the Holy Spirit when they believed (19:1-3).
 - a. Paul learned there was a **problem** with their baptism because it was John's baptism.
 - i. These people **had been baptized**...but with the **wrong baptism**.
 - ii. Again, God cares about baptism—that it must be done in truth.
 - b. John's baptism is no longer valid because it looked in the wrong direction concerning salvation (19:4)
 - i. John's baptism **looked forward** to the **future coming** of the Messiah.
 - ii. N.T. baptism **looks backward** to the Christ who **has already come, died** for our sins, and been **raised** to life (Romans 6:3-4 – "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been **baptized into His death**?⁴ Therefore we have been **buried with Him through baptism** into death, so that **as Christ was raised from the dead** through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.").
 - 2. What did these Ephesians have to do to correctly respond to the truth?
 - a. When the truth exposed the insufficiency of their baptism, they had to be *re-baptized* to conform to the truth (Acts 19:5-6).
 - b. That they had been baptized previously did not excuse them from being baptized again according to the truth!
 - c. Responding correctly to the truth requires **being re-baptized** in order to act in truth and be saved.
- III. What about the truth and baptism today?

- ● A. Most denominations practice a baptism is for *saved* people and believed to be a *sign* of their past salvation—a baptism that *looks back* at one’s *salvation*.
 1. These churches will balk at baptizing you if do not claim to be *already saved!*
 2. So, most people we talk to about baptism believe they do not need it because they are *already saved* by faith alone and **have been baptized** though only *as a sign of that salvation*.
- B. The problem with denominational baptism is that, like John’s baptism, it *looks in the opposite direction concerning salvation* than does N.T. baptism.
 - 1. Quote from Baptist tract.
 - 2. Just as John’s baptism is no longer valid because it *wrongfully looked forward* to a coming Savior that *had had already come*, denominational baptism *wrongfully looks backward* to a *salvation they have yet to receive!*
 - 3. Why? Because N.T. baptism is performed to...
 - a. **Save you**, not because you are already saved by faith only (1 Peter 3:21 – “Corresponding to that, **baptism now saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”)
 - b. **Bring you into Christ**, not because you are already in Christ by faith only.
 - i. Rom. 6:3 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus have been baptized into His death?”
 - ii. Gal. 3:27 – “For all of you who were **baptized into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ.”
 - c. **Receive forgiveness of your sins, to wash away your sins**, not because you have already been forgiven, your sins washed away by faith only.
 - i. Acts 2:38 – “Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - ii. Acts 22:16 – “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name.””
 - d. **Bury you with Christ** so that you can be **raised with Him to newness of life**, not because that has already happened to you by faith only.
 - i. Rom. 6:4 – “Therefore we have been **buried with Him through baptism** into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”
 - ii. Col. 2:12 – “having been **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised up with Him through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”
 - 1) Note how baptism involves faith in the working of God to raise you from death.
 - 2) One who has yet to be baptized has yet to be buried with Christ and put their faith in God’s power to raise them up to a newness of life from their death in sin!
- C. If you were not baptized for these reasons, to correctly respond to the truth demands that you **obey** by being **baptized** or **re-baptized** to come into Christ, be buried with Christ and raised with him, and to save you through being forgiven of your sins (Heb. 5:8-9 – “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, I call on you to respond correctly to the truth by obeying it.
2. Sincerity, long standing beliefs, the changes it requires, what you must give up, or how you have done something similar but for the wrong reason, etc., do not change the fact that the only correct response to the truth is to accept and obey it!
3. Will you accept the truth and come to Jesus in faith, obeying His commands to repent of your sins, confess your faith in Him, and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins that you might be saved?