

THE DEPARTURE OF JESUS FROM THIS WORLD JOHN 13:31–38

Introduction

The death and departure of Jesus from the world was most significant.

- I. Jesus' death brought a threefold glory (vv. 31-32).
- II. Jesus' death demanded a new commandment (vv. 33-35).
- III. Jesus' death revealed a stumbling loyalty (vv. 36-38).

I. *John 13:31–32 Glory of the Death of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' death brought a threefold glory.

1. There was the Son of Man's glory. The glory of Jesus was the cross. Jesus said that He would now be glorified, but His glory was not to be the glory of an earthly potentate. His glory was to be the glory of the cross. It was to be by death that He was to gain the allegiance of men and be exalted as King (See Jn. 12:23-26.) This was true in four senses.
 - a. Jesus was now ready to secure an eternal righteousness for man. He was now ready to take the final step as the Son of Man...
 - as the One who was the Servant of all men
 - as the One who was to secure perfect righteousness by dying as God willed
 - as the One who was to pay the supreme price in obeying God (to die)
 - as the One who was ready to die in obedience to God's will so that God could save man

Jesus became the Perfect and Ideal Man because He was perfectly obedient to God, even in dying. As the Ideal Man, His righteousness and death could stand for every man's righteousness and death. A person just has to believe the fact that Jesus' death covers him. There was glory in being the Son of Man: in being every man's Ideal righteousness and death. The cross glorifies Jesus as the Son of Man. Jesus Christ is the *perfect picture* of a man. Everything God wants a man to be is seen perfectly in Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14; Col. 2:9-10; Heb. 1:3).

Jesus Christ is the *Ideal Servant* of man. The term *Ideal Servant* stresses Jesus' sympathy for the poor, the broken hearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised, the outcasts, the bereaved (Lk. 4:18). Jesus is the pattern, the model, the perfect example of concern and caring. He served other people just like every man ought to serve other people. (See *Justification*, Rom. 4:22.)

John 3:14-15 “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*

- b. Jesus was now ready to make the final sacrifice for man, and He was ready to pay the supreme price to bring about the greatest event in all history: the salvation of man. The cross attracts and stirs men to give themselves to Jesus and to honour and praise Him. It is in the cross that men find their salvation; therefore, the cross is the glory of Jesus.
 - c. Jesus was now ready to triumph over Satan by breaking Satan's power over death and over the souls of men. (See *Evil Sprits*, Mt. 8:28-34; *Judgement of the World*, Jn. 12:31.)
- => Jesus disarmed rulers and authorities, principalities and powers, triumphing over them in the cross.

Col 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

=> Jesus destroyed the devil's work.

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

=> Jesus broke the power and fear of Satan over lives and death.

Heb 2:15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

There is glory in the triumph and victory over Satan, especially over one so powerful and influential as Satan. The cross is the glory of Christ.

John 12:31-32 *“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*

- d. Jesus demonstrated what perfect sacrifice and self-denial, courage and strength, love and compassion really are when He died on the cross. There is great glory in every one of these qualities. The cross is the glory of Christ.
2. There is God's glory. The glory of God was the perfect obedience of Jesus.
- a. God was glorified by the supreme obedience of Jesus dying on the cross. His obedience in dying upon the cross glorifies God.

Jesus prayed for the glory of God (Jn. 12:27-30). He prayed for the Father to glorify His own name. This is significant. It shows a complete *selflessness* on the part of Jesus. It shows that the primary concern of Jesus was to complete His purpose and cause on earth, which was to glorify God by doing exactly what God wanted. How was God glorified? By Jesus' obedience.

God would be glorified in the cross by the *supreme act of obedience* on the part of Jesus. It was God's will for Jesus to die for the sins of men. By dying, Jesus would show that God is the supreme Being of the universe. God is the One who is to be honoured and respected and obeyed. He would thereby be glorified.

God would be glorified in the cross by *men's seeing the love of God* in the cross. God gave His only Son to die *for* men that they might not perish but have eternal life. Some men would see and believe this glorious truth; therefore, they would bow down, surrendering their whole beings to God. They would begin to follow and obey His will, honouring and praising Him for all He had done and was doing for them. The name of God would thereby be glorified by the cross.

John 10:17-18 *“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*

Eph 5:2 *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Heb 5:8 *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*

- b. God's justice was perfectly satisfied on the cross. His honour was restored by the cross, for the evil done against Him was justly punished upon the cross. The cross glorifies God.

Rom 3:25 *God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 John 2:2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

- c. God's love was perfectly demonstrated on the cross. He gave His *only* Son to pay the supreme price *for* man: to sacrifice His life *for* man. The cross glorifies God.

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

3. There is Jesus' glory “in Himself.” This glory is the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation. What is meant by “in Himself”? There are two possible answers.

=> Jesus was asking to be glorified in God Himself: with God's own Person, with His very special presence and power and glory. This, of course, was done when Christ was set upon the throne of God Himself (Rev. 3:21).

=> Jesus was asking to be glorified *in His own Person*: to be infused with a manifestation of God's presence and power and glory. This was done in the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ (Phil. 2:8-11).

Note: Jesus said that God would "immediately glorify" Him.

John 12:23-24 *Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."*

John 17:1, 4-5 *After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."*

ROMANS 04:22

JUSTIFICATION: FAITH, RIGHTEOUSNESS

*This is why "it is credited to him as righteousness." **Romans 04:22***

In simple terms *justification* means that God takes the believer's faith and counts it as righteousness (Rom. 4:3; see Gen. 15:6)

When a person *really believes* that Jesus Christ is *his Saviour*, God takes that person's faith and counts it for righteousness (Rom. 4:3, 5, 9, 11, 22, 24). The person is not righteous; he has no righteousness of his own. He is still imperfect, still sinful, still corruptible, still short of God's glory as a sinful human being. But he does believe that Jesus Christ *is his Saviour*. Such belief honours God's Son (whom God loves very much), and because it honours God's Son, God accepts that person's faith for righteousness. God counts that person's faith as righteousness. Therefore, that person becomes acceptable to God. A person's belief — the right kind of belief — is critical.

Gen 15:6 *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

1 Cor 6:11 *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. □*

MATHEW 08:28–34 EVIL SPIRITS, DEMONS, SATAN

The Bible teaches that there are beings in the spiritual world who are evil just as there are men in this world who are evil. The Bible calls these beings *demons* or *evil spirits*. *Demons* or *evil spirits* apparently have a leader called *the evil one*. He is sometimes called by other names describing the terrible work he is out to do in defiance of God.

Some deny a *force of evil* in an unseen world, whereas the person who accepts the Bible as the authoritative Word of God accepts what the Bible teaches about their presence.

Those who deny evil spirits feel that a civilized and scientific society knows better; it is just too intelligent to accept *evil beings* in an unseen world who have the power to possess, obsess, and oppress men. Three primary reasons lead to this conclusion.

1. The existence of evil spirits in an unseen world cannot be scientifically proven.
2. The behaviour of what is called *demons* or *evil spirits* seems to exist more and to be more marked in unscientific societies that tend to stress evil spirits.
3. The behaviour of those *possessed* is thought to be nothing more than mental illness.

There are huge problems with the denial of an evil spirit behind the seen world. The denial just leaves so much unanswered.

1. How can *mental illness* explain such behaviour as is witnessed so often upon the scene of human history? Consider Hitler and other mass murderers and the many other inhuman atrocities committed against people. Realistically, several facts militate against all inhuman behaviour being assigned to mental illness.
 - a. There is the fact that so many who did so much evil were nurtured in the arms of a mother or someone else who did care. Mental illness points out deviations from healthy rearing. But realistically, the deviations can come nowhere close to matching the terrible atrocities. And the deviation from normal behaviour does not always vary that much until the terrible atrocity is committed.
 - b. A human being who is mentally ill cannot move among sound people for too long without being found out. True mental illness cannot fake that much and that often. Its behaviour deviates often enough that others know that a person is acting extremely abnormal, mentally ill person can be detected and reached out to by caring people.
 - c. A person who is mentally ill cannot move among a large number of sound leaders and convince them all to commit atrocity after atrocity. Realistically, there has to be more than mental illness behind inhuman behaviour that is deceiving (blinding) and so terribly destructive.
2. The claim that *demon-like behaviour* exists more in unindustrialized societies has two faults.

a. Such a claim is disputable, although probably true. But the point is this: a scientific society that is dominated by unbelief is bound to ascribe abnormal behaviour to whatever it feels causes the defect. Therefore...

- abnormal behaviour is always ascribed to mental illness.
- severe abnormal behaviour is marked up as unexplainable or due to a complete diverse (split) personality.

However, claiming that something is unexplainable or coming up with a new name does not do away with reality, the truth of what actually exists. (There is not that much difference between the psychological belief in two complete personalities within a body and scriptural belief which also says that two persons can *possess* a body – the man himself and an evil spirit.)

b. The Bible claims that the evil spirits of the unseen world are highly intelligent and deceptive.

=> When a man thinks he “walks in light” (is enlightened or scientific), the Bible says the evil one fashions himself into an angel of light and uses strategies of light. Therefore, men would naturally call abnormal behaviour by some natural or humanistic term as *mental illness* (2 Cor. 11:14-15; Eph. 6:11).

=> When a person believes in evil spirits and opens his life to such spirits, the evil one uses the strategies of what men call *dark spirits*. □

JOHN 12:31 JUDGMENT OF THE WORLD, MAN, AND CORRUPTION

“Now is the time for the judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.” John 12:31

The world has to be judged...

- judged as being imperfect
- judged as being in some state other than what it should be
- judged as being short of God’s glory and of God’s will

If the world is ever to be perfected, it has to be judged as imperfect. God has to judge the world as less than what He wills. Once the world is judged as defective and imperfect...

- then it can be condemned and destroyed
- then it can be recreated in a perfect form and state of being

This is exactly what Scripture teaches. Scripture says three things about the world having to be judged and recreated in order to be perfected.

1. The earth itself and the heavenly bodies above have to be judged. Why? Because they are imperfect; they have the seed of corruption within. The earth and the world are *running down*, wasting away, failing and dying. Eventually, even if the world were allowed to run long enough, the earth could not sustain life. The Bible says the earth...

- has to be judged because it is not perfect.
- has to be made perfect by being recreated and put into a permanent state. (2 Pet. 2:3-4, 8-13.)

2. Nature itself, the animal and vegetative life of the earth, has to be judged. (Note: this fact is closely aligned to point one above. It is separated only in an attempt to simplify the discussion and to help in understanding the teaching of Scripture.) Nature is imperfect; it has the seed of corruption within. Nature is often beautiful in its sunsets, green pastures, and animal life. But nature is also destructive in its storms, earthquakes, fires, and struggle for survival. The beautiful mockingbird sitting in a tree can be singing its song, and in a moment's time turn into a savage by attacking the worm. Nature is not perfect, not what it should be. It is short of God's glory and short of what God wills it to be. God's will is for *a nature* in which the lion lies down with the lamb, a nature in which all things are at peace and without corruption. In its present condition, nature....

- despite its beauty, can be savage
- despite its peace, can be stormy
- despite its producing good, can produce bad
- despite its being right, can be evil
- despite its enticements, can destroy
- despite its nourishment, can starve

The Bible says that nature has to be judged because it is not perfect. It has to be made perfect, that is, recreated and put into a permanent and perfect state.

Rom. 8:19-22 *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

3. Man (and his world system) has to be judged. Man is imperfect; he has the seed of corruption within. Man lies, steals, cheats, and kills. Man — every man, no matter who he is — has many good moments but he also has many bad moments. Moods,

feelings, thoughts, weaknesses of both body and mind cause man to come ever so short. In addition man ages; he wastes away and dies — and nothing can stop the process. Man is short of God's glory; he is not perfect; therefore, he must be judged. He has to be recreated and made into a perfect creature; he has to be given a perfect and permanent body.

1 Cor 15:42-44 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Cor 15:49-54 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

It is important to note why the seed of corruption is in the world. The world was not corrupted by its own will or act. It was corrupted because of sin (Rom. 8:20). The sin of man brought corruption into the world. As soon as man sinned...

- the world was no longer perfect. It was contaminated, polluted, dirtied, corrupted.
- the seed of corruption, of wasting away, deteriorating, decaying and dying was planted in the world.
- the results of sin fell upon the world as well as falling upon man.

The world had been made for man, for man's dwelling place and enjoyment (Gen. 1:1-3:24). And God gave man a choice: if man chose perfection, his world would remain perfect just as God had created it; but if man chose sin and evil and death, his world would become imperfect, full of sin and evil and death. Therefore, when man sinned and became corrupted, he plunged the world into corruption. All creation became as man, just as man had chosen.

As stated, the world and its physical dimension of being were made for man; therefore, it was bound to suffer the very same fate as man. God had so ordained it. Therefore, when man is saved and delivered from sin and corruption, his world will also share the deliverance of man. The world will be saved and delivered

from sin and corruption. There is to be a glorious day of redemption, a redemption both for man and his world. God will give all believers a redeemed and perfected world in which to live. As God declares, “I am making everything new” (Rev. 21:5)

2 Pet 3:3-4, 8-13 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”...But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. □*

II. **John 13:33–35** *The New Commandment of Love*

Jesus’ death demanded a new commandment. Again, note the reference to Jesus’ death.

1. Jesus said that He was departing, that He would be with the disciples for only a little while longer. This was *the reason* Jesus had to give His disciples a new commandment. He was leaving. There were three reasons the new commandment on love was needed by every generation of believers.
 - a. There are times when believers differ. There is always the danger of becoming critical, judgmental, censorious, and divisive. Remember, the disciples had just been arguing over who should receive the highest positions of authority in Jesus’ new government (See Lk. 22:24-30). They had been struggling against each other and were highly critical and judgmental of each other. They had been deeply divided. The need for a new commandment and a new supernatural love existed then even as it does today.
 - b. There are times when believers feel a keen need for Jesus’ physical presence. Jesus knew this. That is the reason He said that the disciples would seek His presence. True, believers have the Holy Spirit, and He is the all-sufficient Comforter and the abiding Presence of God Himself. But being human, believers need another human presence with them. They need a brother or a sister, a genuine believer who loves them with the supernatural love of Jesus Himself. Jesus knew this, so He commanded believers to love each other. Believers are to meet the needs of each other for companionship and fellowship and for care and concern.

- c. There is the need for some supernatural force to hold the disciples together. Jesus' physical presence had been the cohesive force that had held the disciples together when He was on earth. But once He had gone, His followers would need something else to hold them together. They must stay and serve together in one spirit and purpose. But how? The new commandment is the answer.
2. The new commandment is to love *as Christ loved*. Note several points.
 - a. This is not the old commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself." It is not a human, neighbourly love that is being commanded. This *new commandment* was given to *disciples only*. It is the spiritual love that is to exist between believers as brothers and sisters and as servants of God who minister together.
 - b. The love being commanded is the love of Jesus Himself which is the love of God Himself, the love that can be shed abroad in our hearts only by the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 5:5). It is not the normal physical love among human neighbours which is being commanded by God. It is a spiritual love that is wrought only by the Spirit of God.

Note: the distinctiveness of this love is that it is the love of Jesus Himself that dwells in the heart of the believer. Only the Spirit of God can put the love of Jesus there within the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit can create within the believer the love of Jesus Himself, the very same love which Jesus had while here on earth. The love of Jesus is ...

- the love of *spiritual being*: the love that causes one to hunger after union with God and God's people.
- the love of *spiritual life*: the love that shares the same life with all believers, both abundant and eternal life.
- the love of *spiritual union*: the love that binds and ties believers together in life and purpose.
- the love of *spiritual attachment or fellowship*: the love that shares needs and blessings and joys and sorrows and gifts together.

The Holy Spirit can create within the believer a love that can melt and mould his heart to the hearts of other believers. But note: it is a commandment; therefore, it is conditional. The Holy Spirit *can* create such a love, but believers *have to receive it*. When the love of Jesus dwells in the heart of a believer, several things happen. The believer has a love that *causes* him...

- to bind his life to the lives of other believers
- to tie his life to the same purpose as other believers
- to surrender his will and to be of the same mind as other believers
- to understand and feel with other believers
- to forgive other believers — always

- to sacrifice himself for other believers — always
 - to seek the welfare of other believers before his own
 - to deny self completely
- c. The new commandment is the mark of a true disciple. The distinguishing mark of a true believer is not the normal human love of neighbours, not even the love of brothers and sisters or of husband and wife. It is the spiritual and supernatural love of Jesus Himself that dwells within the life of the believer. By this love shall all men know that a person is a *true* disciple of the Lord.

John 15:12 *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

1 John 4:7-8 *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

III. John 13:36–38 Peter’s Stumbling and Faltering Faith

Jesus’ death revealed stumbling and faltering loyalty. Note what Peter did. He paid no attention to the new commandment Jesus had just given. His Lord had just said that He was going away and leaving them, but Jesus had not been clear. He had spoken in dark, secretive terms. It was this that had gripped Peter’s heart. He must know what Jesus was talking about: if Jesus were talking about some spiritual truth and using symbolic terms or if He were really going to be leaving them.

Now note what Jesus did. He still used the same language: He was leaving, and where He was going they could not follow, not now. But they would follow Him later.

Peter was delving into things he could not yet understand. Jesus was returning to heaven and going back to the Father from whom He had come. He could not say it any clearer than what He had said. The disciples could not and would not understand until after the resurrection and ascension.

Thought 1. How often our curiosity is aroused by the hints of Scripture about future events, the details of which are kept secret — all because it is not yet time for us to fully understand. Just think! If all were revealed, how could we prove our faith? If we walked by sight (seeing and understanding all), there would be nothing to believe.

Thought 2. Note another fact. Peter got distracted and paid no attention to the greatest commandment Jesus had ever given His followers (Jn. 13:34-35). It was the future

event of Jesus' return to heaven that aroused his curiosity. It distracted his attention from where it should have been.

Jesus used the occasion to reveal Peter's stumbling and faltering faith. Peter stumbled for two reasons.

1. Peter misunderstood Jesus' death. Jesus was going to die and arise from the dead and then return to the Father. He had drilled this fact into the disciples for some months now, using words as clear and simple as possible (See Mt. 16:21-28). Yet, they refused to accept His prediction. They thought of God's kingdom in terms of a physical kingdom and government set up upon this earth. They saw the Messiah ruling over all the nations of the earth with Israel as the central capital of the world. They thought in terms of earthly freedom, position, power, fame, wealth, possessions, comfort, pleasure, and satisfaction. They saw the physical and were blind to the spiritual. They did not see...
 - God's concern with eternity and the need for the cross.
 - that man had to be created spiritually: created anew with the very same nature as God in order to live with God.
 - that the cross was God's way for man to be saved: created anew, forgiven, and made clean and acceptable before God. (See 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18.)

Very simply stated, it was the idea of Jesus hanging upon the cross that was going to cause Peter to deny Jesus. Jesus had told Peter about the cross, but Peter had refused to believe it (see Mt. 12:22; 18:1). The fact that human flesh was so depraved that God would have to crucify His own Son in order to save man was just too much to grasp. (See *Cross and Discipleship*, Lk. 9:23; *Baptism and Salvation*, Rom. 6:3-5; Rom. 6:6-7; Gal. 2:19-21; 5:24; Gal. 6:14-17. See Rom. 6:2; Col. 3:3.)

Thought 1. How many make the same mistake about the cross? Misunderstanding the cross and Jesus as the exalted Lord (as opposed to His being just a great teacher) causes stumbling and faltering faith.

1 Cor 1:18 *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

1 Cor 1:23 *But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.*

2 Cor 4:3-5 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

2. Peter's commitment was a carnal, fleshly commitment. It was caused by not knowing himself — his own personal weaknesses or the weaknesses of his human flesh. Peter's

self-image was strong. He saw himself as being above *serious* sin and failure. He asserted with all the confidence in the world that he would die for Jesus before denying Him.

Note several things.

- a. Peter was a strong believer, one of the strongest.
- b. Peter really failed to understand self and the flesh. The one sin that a believer should not commit is to deny Jesus. To die for Jesus rather than to deny Him is the one thing a genuine believer would be expected to do.
- c. Peter believed strongly that he (his flesh) was above serious sin (see Rom. 3:9f; 7:8, 14-18; Gal. 5:19f).
- d. Peter failed not once, but three times, and all three failures were on the same night with Jesus right off to his side (Lk. 22:61).

1 Cor 8:2 The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.

1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Gal 6:3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

Prov 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

Prov 28:26 He who trusts in himself is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom is kept safe. ■

ROMANS 06:03–05 BAPTISM AND SALVATION

*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. **Romans 06: 03-05***

Men have dissected and argued over how a person is “saved” so much that the preciousness, and in too many cases, the truth of the experience has been lost. The result is a confused public. Many people think if they have been baptized and do half-way right, then they are saved and God will never reject them. Others, who are highly disciplined and have reformed their lives, think they are as acceptable to God as anyone else because they do live moral and decent lives. A confused public, including both those within and without the church, is basing their eternal fate upon one or more of the following. They think they are saved...

- by baptism
- by doing good deeds

- by being as good as they can
- by church membership
- by faith
- by repentance

Much of the confusion has been caused by men *overstressing or misunderstanding* one of the truths of Scripture. Too often too many of us have been guilty of abusing Scripture; and once we have taken a strong position, we have been unwilling to back off or to give balance to the whole truth, even when we realized we had gone too far. It is time for us to totally commit our lives to the Lord, to lay aside our *bandwagons* and exhaustively labour to proclaim the whole truth both to the church and to the world. Again, it is time for the truth to be proclaimed, the whole balance of Scripture — time for us to help straighten out the confusion of the public, for many within the church are deceived and are without Christ; and the world cannot come to Christ with a genuine experience until they come as *Scripture dictates*.

In the passage before us an argument rages over the word baptism (v. 3-4). Does “baptism” mean the actual baptism experience of a person, or is it being used in a symbolic or spiritual sense? Those who hold to baptism being essential for salvation say it means the actual baptism experience; whereas those who hold to salvation by faith tend to say it is speaking symbolically and spiritually. And the battle rages on. The great tragedy is...

- many within and without the church have become confused.
- many have never had a true experience of salvation because they have never heard the truth of Scripture.
- many have never heard nor understand the truth of Scripture.
- many have mocked the divisiveness and irrelevance of church positions.

And all with whom we have failed to share the truth are doomed, and we are responsible. Now, note several points.

1. Scripture speaks strongly in unmistakable terms on the subject of salvation — on just how we are saved — and to an *honest and thoughtful mind* it speaks clearly.
 - a. We are saved by *faith*.

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. (see Jn. 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10)

- b. We are saved by *obedience*.

Heb 5:9 And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (see Mt. 7:21; Jn. 15:10; Rev 22:14)

- c. We are saved by *repentance*.

Luke 5:32 “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”
(see Acts 11:18)

d. We are saved by *confession*.

Mat 10:32-33 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.” (see Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Jn. 4:15)

e. We are saved by *baptism*.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Now, in all honesty, what does this show? Is it not that the true experience of salvation is a *whole* experience, a *comprehensive* experience, an experience that involves the *whole life* of a believer? Is salvation not a past and a present and a future experience? (See *Salvation*, 1 Cor. 1:18.)

What Scripture declares is that salvation is looked upon as the *whole* experience of a truly *born again* person. When Scripture speaks...

- of believing in Christ, it means a person who repents, confesses, obeys and is baptized.
- of obedience to Christ, it means a person who believes, repents, confesses and is baptized.
- of repentance toward Christ, it means a person who believes, confesses, obeys and is baptized.
- of baptism in Christ, it means a person who believes, repents, confesses and obeys.
- of confession to Christ, it means a person who believes, repents, obeys and is baptized.

Now note a most critical point: just because a person professes and does some of these things does not mean the person is saved. Just because a person...

- professes faith,
- lives a moral and good life,
- is baptized,
- claims to live as Jesus taught,

...does not mean he is saved. The power of salvation is not in these things, not in profession and moral goodness and baptism and the teachings of Jesus. The power to save is *in Jesus Christ Himself*, in believing that He is the crucified Saviour, the Son of God Himself who has the power to save.

The point is this: Scripture speaks of the true believer in different ways at different times, any one of which means that he is saved. Scripture says that a *true believer* is a person...

- who believes.
- who obeys.
- who repents.
- who confesses.
- who is baptized.

Each of these terms is *inclusive*, that is, sometimes Scripture uses each term to include the others. The present passage says that believers who “were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.” Paul is using the symbolic meaning of our baptism experience to picture our “death” and “resurrection” with Christ. He is not saying that baptism is the “substance” that has the power to “place” us into Christ. Only God has that power. Paul is saying that the baptized person (as a person who believes, repents, obeys, and confesses) is the person who is *placed* into the death of Christ. Our baptism experience is being used as an inclusive term, not as an exclusive term or in an exclusive sense.

2. Among the believers in the New Testament, faith and baptism were not so much two experiences as two parts of one experience (F.F. Bruce. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*. “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 136). A person who genuinely believed was *baptized*, and a person who was baptized *was to be a genuine believer*. To be “baptized into Jesus Christ” did not mean “to be baptized *without faith*” and to “believe in Jesus Christ” did not mean to believe *without being baptized*. Scripture definitely indicates this. Therefore, *when Scripture speaks of baptism*, it means that baptism is for a genuine believer: a genuine believer is baptized, and a baptized person is to be a genuine believer. There just was no such thing as a *genuine believer* who was not baptized unless he was providentially prohibited, and there was no such thing as a *genuinely baptized* person who was not to be a true believer.
3. Scripture definitely teaches that the power to make a person acceptable to God, to place a person into Christ is not in the water of baptism, but *in Christ*. For example, this is the whole point of Romans up to this point, the whole teaching of justification. If the power to save is in water, then what do we do with the thousands who have been baptized and live like the devil himself, the thousands who show no changed life at all?

The power is definitely in Christ; Christ is the One who saves. And He saves the person who believes, not the person who is baptized. This is clearly evident from the *unholy lives lived by so many who have been baptized*.

However, as mentioned in point one, the person who truly believes does repent and he does turn from his old life to follow Christ. He does what Christ says,

and the first commandment is to follow Him in baptism. Baptism is the very first act, the very first proof that a person believes and repents.

There is another way to see the connection between faith and baptism or between our union with Christ and baptism. The power to save — to make a person acceptable to God — is not in the waters of baptism, but in Christ; therefore...

- not everyone who is baptized is saved. Their unbelieving and unholy lives prove the fact.
- Everyone who is saved will be baptized immediately as an *act of belief and obedience* in Christ. The person will be baptized unless he is physically unable.

4. The physical symbol is never the truth itself; it is a picture of the truth. No physical substance has the power to bring about anything spiritual. The whole physical world and everything in it passes away, including water. Physical substances can symbolize spiritual truth, but they cannot be the cause or the power to bring about the spiritual reality. If a physical substance such as water baptism had such power, it would mean that the spiritual reality had its basis in the physical and material which passes away. And if the basis passes away (water baptism), then the substance (spiritual salvation) itself would also pass away. Another way to say the same thing is this: the physical can never penetrate nor create the spiritual; it is the spiritual that must penetrate and create the physical. Philosophically, we must always remember this or else we doom ourselves and cause thinking men in the world to mock us. Why? Because the philosophical and thinking men of the world know that if we are saved by water (the physical and material), then we are doomed; for no physical substance can impart something it does not have, an eternal quality (eternal life, salvation, forgiveness of sins). Only the spiritual — only God and His power — can impart the spiritual quality of eternal life and salvation and forgiveness of sins. God can impart spiritual salvation and then say, “Immersion in water is a picture of what I do for you. And if you really believe in Me, then the very first evidence of your faith is for you to be baptized.”

5. Practical experience tells us that belief and baptism are *separate acts* involved in salvation, yet they are both involved. They are both involved in the sense that baptism is an immediate act of obedience and repentance. A true believer should be baptized, and no true believer will fail to be baptized unless he is providentially stopped.

=> Example one: a believer flying across country leads a person to truly trust Christ to save him. The plane crashes and the new believer is killed before he can be baptized. He is not doomed to hell. Scripture teaches no such thing. To say he is doomed is to say that the power of salvation is in the waters of baptism and not in God’s Son. In fact, to say such is to dishonour God’s Son, to take the love and

power and grace that belongs to Him and to ascribe it to a physical substance. If the new believer truly believes within his heart, truly honours God's Son by trusting Jesus to save him, God accepts that man. God accepts the man because he honours God's Son, and God will do anything for any man who honours His Son. The man is thereby accepted by God, accepted because he honours God's Son by believing and committing his life to Him.

However, the man who reaches the ground and is not baptized as soon as he can make arrangements is not genuine. His faith is suspect, for he is not putting God first in his life. He has not turned to Christ *ready* to obey and live for Him. The man who truly believes is the man who is not only ready to obey Christ, he *does* obey and live for Christ.

=> Note another example. There are masses of people who live in arid and desert countries where thousands are starving and dying of thirst. What about them and baptism? What if a missionary leads some to Christ? Are they to be immersed when there is so little water and multitudes are dying of thirst? The point is clear, not only in the teaching of Scripture, but in the love of God and in practical terms. A person is justified *by faith*, but he is to be baptized immediately, as soon as he possibly can. Why? Because he is genuine, he does believe in the Lord Jesus, loving Him and wishing to obey Him in all things and thereby fulfilling all righteousness. However, his salvation does not depend upon baptism; it depends upon God's dear Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. □