

Is Baptism Essential For Salvation? (No. 4)

By Casey Head

Three weeks ago, Mr. Trent Moody wrote a letter to the editor in which he raised many objections to the necessity of baptism. Since I have been looking at the various objections to baptism in this series of articles, I would like to use this article to respond to Mr. Moody.

The point was made in Mr. Moody's article, "There is no work whether it be a work of the flesh, a work of merit, a work of righteousness, or a work of obedience that can save you." Notice how Mr. Moody's point (regarding works of obedience) contradicts the Bible. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey them." Also, 1 Peter 1:22 says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." Romans 6:17 adds, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." According to these passages, obedience saves us, purifies our soul and frees us from sin. Obedience is necessary for salvation!

In the fifth paragraph of Mr. Moody's article, several false statements were made regarding Acts 2:38 that I want to address at this time. The point was made that the Greek phrase "be baptized" is in the indirect passive imperative and therefore does not have the same force as the direct command of "repent." First of all, Greek grammar does not distinguish between indirect and direct! Second, baptism is passive NOT because repentance is more important than baptism, but because repentance is something that one actively does while baptism is something that one submits to by the hand of another (which furthers the notion that baptism is not a work of merit). Also, in the case of repentance, Peter was speaking to all that were present, but in the case of baptism, he was speaking of those who would repent (hence the "change in force"). In no way does this lessen the necessity of baptism.

Finally, Mr. Moody raised another very common objection to baptism- 1 Cor. 1:17. Paul says in this verse, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." We must understand that Paul was *not speaking against* the necessity of baptism here, but rather the carnality of the Corinthians (notice vv. 11-13; they were dividing into sects based on who baptized them, which Paul condemned). After all, Paul did baptize many of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:14-16). He also taught the necessity of baptism in many of his epistles (Rom. 6:3-8; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). And certainly, he obeyed the command of Christ in the Great Commission to baptize (Mt. 28:19-20). Context is the key to understanding 1 Cor. 1:17.

If you have any questions about this article, or if you would like to meet for a private Bible study or a public discussion, please contact me. My phone number is (828)467-1463. My email address is NCBibleQuestions@yahoo.com and my mailing address is P.O. Box 401, Spruce Pine, NC 28777.