

will ought to realize that he should do those things that are right because they are right. The religion of Christ does not encourage people to do all they think they can "get by with." Rather it teaches that those who are the Lord's disciples are to become good in their hearts (Matt. 15:18-20). Jesus shows the heart to be the wellspring of actions: evil proceeds from the heart (Mark 7:20-23), so should goodness. God has commanded those who desire to be His children to change their hearts (Rom. 12:1-2) and to become godly in their manner of life. God said, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:16).

As disciples, our goal ought not to be abstaining from evil only because we are afraid of punishment but rather to be holy even as God is. James 1:13 cites the supreme

goodness of God: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God;' for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." Verse 14 shows that temptation comes because of lust, inordinate desire, which entices one to sin. God is so completely good that evil is not an enticement to Him, He is not even tempted by it. Since temptation comes because one is drawn by his own desires toward that which entices, then the impossibility for God to be tempted must mean He has no desire for anything that is evil.

Can you think of something you once practiced which was sinful but that you have now discarded? If so, you are becoming more like God. How great to be able to reach a state where you have no desire to

sin.

Just how far have you gone toward real goodness? What do you do when you think no one is looking? What would you do if you could hide your deeds from the Lord? Surely honest answers to these questions will help each of us evaluate ourselves properly. Our answers will enable us to see the progress we have made as a Christian and to realize more fully that our own goodness is very meager and that great challenges are before us and, with deep humility of our own unworthiness, that we must seek God's abundant love and grace to help us be the kind of people we ought to be, the kind He would have us be. The secret to good character is a converted heart. ~

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Bible Class for all ages \_\_\_ 9:00 AM  
Morning Worship Service \_\_\_ 10:00 AM  
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# NAVARRE MESSENGER

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by H. E. Phillips

"Does baptism wash away past unlawful marriages?" That is the subject assigned to me for this special issue. I first heard of this idea many years ago, but not much was said about it until the last few years. Some men have always done what they wanted to

do, regardless of what the Lord said. Any practice that transgresses God's word and involves a lot of people will somehow be "justified" by those who want to continue in it. A complicated research program will begin amassing "evidence" to prove that the Bible does not mean what it obviously teaches. Thus, justification is found to do that which God's

word does not allow.

The Nature of Marriage

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). In the beginning God instituted marriage and regulated it by his word. He did not plan for marriage to be dissolved except by death. Marriage is a physical, fleshly union; it

is not a spiritual union. They are no more twain but one flesh (Matt. 19:6). Death ends all marriages (Rom. 7:3). Baptism has nothing to do with our marriage, but it is essential to our spiritual bond in Christ.

Adultery and fornication are sinful just as lying, stealing, murder and idolatry are sinful. These sins are equally applicable to those in Christ and those in the world. Jesus taught that divorce and remarriage results in committing adultery. If a man puts away his wife for fornication, she is guilty of sin (adultery). If he puts her away for any other cause and marries another, he commits adultery; and he causes her to commit adultery. Any man who marries that one who is put away, commits adultery, and there is no exception clause (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:11, 12; Lk. 16:18). Any twist or perversion of Scripture that contradicts, modifies or invalidates these plain statements of Jesus is false doctrine.

Now some are teaching that baptism "washes" away all previous unlawful marriages, and the one with whom he/she is married at the time of baptism is the scriptural spouse for the rest of their lives. There is no way that can be true.

#### What Is Baptism?

The New Testament teaches that baptism is a condition for the forgiveness of sins. Peter and the other apostles told the multitude of people on Pentecost to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Ananias said to Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be

baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The only thing that baptism "washes" away is the past sins of the penitent believer! Baptism does not provide for forgiveness of future sins - sins not yet committed.

Baptism does not change any human relationship on earth. It changes man's relationship to God. We are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27); into the one body, which is the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22,23). Baptism saves us (1 Pet. 3:21). In baptism we are made free from sin, and become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16,17).

All deeds, words and thoughts that are sinful before baptism, are equally sinful after baptism. If a man and woman should engage in sexual sin before baptism, that same act is as sinful after baptism. One who engages in prostitution cannot continue in that sinful conduct after baptism. He/she cannot continue the practice of any sin (Rom. 6:1-18). In like manner, one who puts away his/her spouse for any cause other than fornication, and marries another, commits adultery; and who-soever marries the put away one commits adultery. Now if that is an adulterous relationship before baptism, it is an adulterous relationship after baptism.

#### Faith Is Essential to Scriptural Baptism

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew and Greek (Rom. 1:16). The gospel is addressed to all nations alike, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). That means that all men

are amenable to the law of Christ, which is the gospel. Hearing the gospel produces faith, which is essential to be baptized (Rom. 10:17).

#### Repentance Is Essential to Scriptural Baptism

Repentance is a command of God for all men, Jew and Gentile alike (Acts 17:30). One must repent before he can be baptized (Acts 2:38; Lk. 24:47). All men must repent or perish (2 Pet. 3:9). Godly sorrow for sin leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7: 10). The knowledge of the goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). The judgment of God causes men to repent (Acts 17:30,31; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Repentance is a function of the will that resolves to abandon all sin and diligently pursue the will of God. It begins with a knowledge of sin and the conviction that one is a sinner. It is a sincere regret for sin; a resolution to stop sinning now - a reformation of life and a restoration of all things possible to righteous conduct before God.

True repentance does not ask what price is to be paid; there is no desire to save face; no self-justification. The worth and value of past deeds and present standing are worthless. His sins become loathsome and repulsive. He is willing to do anything God requires of him, no matter how painful. Only God's word will produce true repentance.

A man and woman who are in an unlawful marriage must repent before they can be baptized. What will repentance require of them before they can be scripturally baptized? They must cease

the sinning, which means to dissolve the adulterous marriage. Their sin is adultery. John the Baptist told Herod, who had married his brother Phillip's wife, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mk. 6:17, 18).

Some argue that "adultery" in Matthew 19:9 is the act of marrying and does not refer to sexual sins. That is not so! Jesus said if a man "looks" on a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery already with her in his heart (Matt. 5:28). That is not marriage; it is the act of sexual sin in the heart with the spouse of another.

If baptism washes away unlawful marriages, and makes them right,

what about the man who is married to two wives at the same time, may he keep both of his wives after he has been baptized? If not, why not? Which one should he keep, since he had both when he was "baptized"? Does repentance demand that he put away one wife? If unlawful marriages are made right by baptism, why would not the homosexuals who "marry" each other be made right by baptism so that they could continue to live together? Would you baptize two homosexuals who intended to continue living together? The further down this road one goes, the more unbelievable it becomes. Baptism will wash away polygamy and homosexual mar-

riages. It is no wonder that the advocates of this unholy doctrine claim that aliens are not amenable to the law of Christ. If the alien is not amenable to the law of Christ, he is not a sinner. Where there is no law, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15). Sin is the transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4). If he is not under the law of Christ, he does not sin and does not need baptism, and there is no need to talk about what his baptism will wash away. Marriage is not a function of the church, and baptism does nothing to marriage. ~

Guardian of Truth - January, 1990

## Character Matters

by Gene Taylor

Many people are willing to take a chance on others never discovering their wrongdoings. Many of these, however, are caught and punished for their misdeeds. Others get by with evil works because they are able to fool people all the days of their lives.

Others refrain from doing things which are wrong because they know society does not approve of those things. They are afraid to take the chance of being discovered in their evil schemes by the public. As the standards that are acceptable to the majority vary,

though, so will the standards of such people. Just think of what is practiced now in the way of immorality that does not even cause an eyebrow to be raised that would have provoked the strongest kind of censure just a few years ago. One who allows society to establish his standards will never be anything but an advocate of the status quo.

Still others who would be willing to take the chance of doing many things which are evil even though they might be apprehended by society are deterred by a fear of God. Anyone who has any knowledge of the Bible knows that it

reveals that all sin will be found out and judged (Eccl. 12:14; 2 Cor. 5: 10). Numbers 32:23 states, "...and be sure your sin will find you out." Hebrews 4:13 speaks of the same thought when it says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Those who refrain from doing that which is wrong because they know it would displease the Lord are to be commended. However, God desires more than fear. Surely the person who has trained himself to follow the Lord's