

Lesson 13 – Baptism

Everyone who has been justified by faith ought to have a concern about how to live in a way that honours the Saviour. In Lesson 12 we learned that the Holy Spirit has circumcised us so that we are no longer in bondage to the flesh. We will now study more about what God has done for us, and how we should respond to this blessing.

Abounding Grace

All of us developed many sinful habits before being saved. We should find our habits changing after our salvation as we come to understand the blessings we have in Christ. However, most of us will have at least one or two areas of sin that seem to have a hold on us. We may feel like we have tried many times to stop sinning in a certain area, but we seem to be helpless against its power over us. The following verses are very important to keep in mind: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). You may feel as though the power of sin in your life is great, but God's grace is greater. You must believe God when He says that you can have victory over sinful habits in your life. You cannot do this by your own efforts, but with God's grace you can live a triumphant life!

Grace and Works

Many religions teach that salvation comes about by God's grace plus our own efforts to be good. We have seen in earlier lessons that this is false. Others recognise that salvation is by grace alone, but then they teach believers a system of living that puts them under the law rather than under grace. This, also, is a false teaching. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). This verse contains a clear principle that must be remembered. Grace and works are mutually exclusive. When someone puts works into grace, he cancels the grace. If we say that salvation is by grace plus our efforts to be good, we are in fact teaching salvation by works. Grace is gone. As believers, our salvation and our daily walk are by God's grace. Anyone who mixes works with grace is teaching false doctrine and cancels grace.

Grace Motivation

We have learned in previous studies that salvation is by grace, not works. It is important to understand that our life as believers is also to be lived by grace. Many people criticise those who teach grace by saying things such as: "If you teach grace, people will think it is all right to sin since they won't lose their salvation anyway." Some will even say that those who teach grace encourage people to sin even more. Paul, the apostle was accused of this very thing. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just" (Romans 3:8). We, like Paul, will be accused of tolerating or even encouraging evil when we teach grace. However, we must be faithful to God's Word despite what people may say. Grace does not lead to careless living, but instead motivates us to live in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Romans 6

The sixth chapter of Romans is the foundational chapter in the Bible on the subject of how believers are to live today. Lessons 13 and 14 will focus on this chapter. The first verse says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Some people may think in the following way: "If I sin only a little, God's grace is greater than my sin. If I sin even more, God's grace is even greater to forgive my sin. The more I sin, the greater God's grace will be to forgive my sin. Therefore, it is all right to continue in sin because it shows even more the abundance of grace that God gives."

Verse two of Romans chapter six gives the answer to the question. "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2). Shall we continue in sin to magnify God's grace? Paul's answer is "God forbid." Don't even think of such a thing! Such thinking is completely contrary to God's Word. We are not to continue in sin. We are dead to sin. Death means separation. We are completely separated from sin.

Baptised into Jesus Christ

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6:3). The first issue in living victoriously is to know something. Paul says, "know ye not?" Don't you know that we have been baptized into Jesus Christ and His death? Too many believers are concerned about what God wants them to do, but they haven't taken time to learn (to know) what God says in the Scriptures. It is vitally important that each of us know that we are baptised into the death of Jesus Christ. Before seeking more understanding of what this means in our daily living, we must take time to briefly study what the Bible says about baptism.

It is commonly taught that the Greek word that is translated "baptism" means "to immerse in water" or "to sprinkle with water." In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Notice that there are three different baptisms mentioned in this verse. There is baptism with water, baptism with the Holy Ghost, and baptism with fire. Two of these baptisms have no connection with water! There are at least seven different kinds of baptism in the Bible and most of them have nothing to do with water. Let us look at two more examples.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). These verses refer to events in Exodus 13-14. God divided the waters in the Red Sea and Israel walked through the sea on dry ground. According to the verses quoted above, Israel was baptised when they walked on the dry ground. There was clearly no water involved in this baptism.

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Jesus Christ had already been baptised with water (Luke 3:21). Yet he speaks of a future baptism in Luke 12:50. This is a reference to His death on the Cross. His crucifixion is said to be a baptism, but he was not immersed in water nor sprinkled with water on the cross! We can therefore conclude that the word "baptism" does not mean "immersed in (or sprinkled with) water."

In the Bible, the word "baptism" carries the idea of being placed into something or being identified with something. When Israel walked through the sea on dry ground, they were placed into the leadership of Moses. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, He was identified with our sin and the death that sin brings. Romans 6 tell us that we are baptised into Jesus Christ. This is a work of the Holy Spirit and has no connection with water. The Holy Spirit places us into Jesus Christ. We are identified with His death. In other words, God counts the death of Jesus Christ to be payment for our sins. This is true for every person who has been justified by faith. [In lesson 14, we will continue our study in Romans 6.]



Review Questions Lesson 13 – Baptism

True or False

1. As long as we know that we will go to heaven, we should not care about how we live in this life.
2. Salvation is a combination of God's grace and our attempts to be good.
3. Romans 6 are written mainly to teach us how to be saved from hell.
4. God does not want us to continue in sin.

Multiple Choice

5. The word "baptism" means:
 - a. immersed in water
 - b. sprinkled with water
 - c. infant baptism
 - d. placed into or identified with something
6. Jesus Christ was baptised:
 - a. with water
 - b. when He died on the Cross
 - c. by Moses
 - d. as soon as He was born
7. Before we were saved we:
 - a. developed many sinful habits
 - b. were seeking God with all our heart
 - c. were basically good
 - d. pleased God in many ways

Fill in the Blanks

8. No matter what people say, we must be _____ to God's Word.
9. We are not to continue in sin because we are _____ to sin.
10. Matthew 3:11 mentions three different kinds of _____ .