

BAPTISM

Chapter Six

Understanding Our Threefold Salvation

Another point of confusion regarding baptism is the failure to see the word “save” in the Bible in the context of its use in the threefold sense of salvation. The word “save” does not always refer to being saved from Hell. There are three aspects of salvation in the Word of God (I Thessalonians 5:23-24). The believer must understand these three aspects of salvation and determine to which aspect of salvation the context of a Bible text is referring. The three aspects of salvation are:

1. Salvation of the believing sinner’s *soul* from Hell “by grace through faith” – this aspect of salvation is positionally complete “in Christ (Colossians 2:10-15)
2. Salvation of the believer’s *life* (or *spirit*) through practical sanctification – this aspect of salvation is a supernatural working of the Holy Spirit throughout the believer’s life (Romans 8:9-11; I Thessalonians 5:23-24)
3. Salvation of the believer’s *body* through glorification (Romans 8:28-30; II Thessalonians 2:13)

These three aspects of salvation are all positionally complete the moment we respond in faith to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Scofield Reference Bible gives us an extensive note on the **trichotomy** of man in I Thessalonians 5:23. The theological significance of the **trichotomy** of man in our understanding of various Bible texts is critical to the proper interpretation of those texts regarding these three aspects of a believer’s salvation.

“Man a *trinity*. That the human soul and spirit are not identical is proved by the facts that they are divisible. Heb 4:12 and that soul and spirit are sharply distinguished in the burial and resurrection of the body. It is sown a natural body (soma psuchikon= ‘soul-body’), it is raised a spiritual body (soma pneumatikon). 1Co 15:44. To assert, therefore, that there is no difference between soul and spirit is to assert that there is no difference between the mortal body and the resurrection body. In Scripture use, the distinction between spirit and soul may be traced. Briefly, that distinction is that the spirit is that part of man which ‘knows’ 1Co 2:11 his mind; the soul is the seat of the affections, desires, and so of the emotions, and of the active will, the self. ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful’ Mt 26:38 see also Mt 11:29; Joh 12:27. The word transliterated ‘soul’ in the O.T. (nephesh) is the exact equivalent of the N.T. word for soul (Gr. psuche), and the use of ‘soul’ in the

O.T. is identical with the use of that word in the N.T. (see, e.g.) De 6:5; 14:26; 1Sa 18:1; 20:4,17; Job 7:11; 14:22; Ps 42:6; 84:2. The N.T. word for spirit (pneuma) like the O.T. (ruach), is trans. 'air', 'breath', 'wind,' but predominantly 'spirit,' whether of God (e.g.) Ge 1:2; Mt 3:16 or of man Ge 41:8; 1Co 5:5. Because man is 'spirit' he is capable of God-consciousness, and of communication with God Job 32:8; Ps 18:28; Pr 20:27 because he is 'soul' he has self-consciousness Ps 13:2; 42:5-6,11 because he is 'body' he has, through his senses, world consciousness."¹

Failure in determining to which aspect of salvation a particular Bible text refers can cause great confusion. This is certainly true of the statement in I Peter 3:20-21. As we read this text, we must ask ourselves a few simple questions. Was Noah and his family already saved from eternal condemnation prior to their entering into the ark? Is the text referring to the salvation of their souls from Hell or the salvation of their lives from drowning in the floodwaters?

“⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹ These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (Genesis 6:8-10).

The statement that “Noah was a just man” is not referring to Noah’s own personal righteousness giving him merit with God. This statement refers to Noah’s justification by God “by grace through faith. This is clarified in Hebrews chapter eleven. The *Pulpit Commentary* gives us this clarification of the text:

“[B]etter ‘justified’ or declared righteous, being derived from the Piel form of the verb (Furst). ‘Evidently the righteousness here meant is that which represents him as justified in view of the judgment of the Flood, by reason of his faith, [Heb 11:7] (Lange).’”²

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

The phrase “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” refers to the salvation of Noah’s family. Although it was the work or action of preparing the ark

¹ *1917 Scofield Reference Bible Notes*, SwordSearcher Software 6.1

² *Pulpit Commentary*, SwordSearcher Software 6.1

that saved his family from the destruction of the flood, it was his faith that acted upon God's revelation that saved his family from destruction. The work was the outcome of a faith that simply manifested an already existing way of living. The "ark" was simply *typical* of Christ. Noah had already trusted in the provision of which the "ark" typified long before he ever began building it, otherwise he would never have built it. Therefore, his faith, and the salvation from the flood it procured, was already his possession embryonically before the "ark" ever came into existence. Therefore, Noah's "saving of his house" is the salvation of their lives through sanctifying obedience. Noah and his family's souls were already saved. Because they were already people of faith, they acted in sanctifying obedience that separated them from the rest of the world and led them to safety in the ark. This is the same context that we find in I Peter 3:18-4:11.

“3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) {*avowal of consecration to God after inquiry, having repented and turned to God and now making this public proclamation of that fact by means of baptism*³} by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. 3 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*: 5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. 6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. 7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. 8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 9 Use

³ Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. VI* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House) page 120

hospitality one to another without grudging.¹⁰ As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.¹¹ If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (I Peter 3:18-4:11).

Therefore, as we read I Peter 3:18-4:11, we must understand that an *already saved* man and his *already saved family* entered into the ark by faith. We must then understand that in I Peter 3:20, the phrase “eight souls were saved by water” is not referring to the point of their salvation from Hell or from condemnation. In fact, the word translated “saved” in the KJV is not from the Greek word *sozo* (sode'-zo), used everywhere else to refer to the salvation of the soul. The word translated “saved” in I Peter 3:20 is from the Greek word *diasozo* (dee-as-odze'-o). The idea of this verb is *to rescue, to escape from harm, or to keep safe*. This is the way it is translated in Acts 23:24, 27:43, 44, 28:1 and 4. The meaning is that their lives were rescued from drowning in the floodwaters.

If we read the context of I Peter chapter three, it becomes obvious that the context of the text is about sanctification (I Peter 3:15), not salvation from Hell. The context of sanctification begins in chapter one and continues to the end of the epistle.

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied” (I Peter 1:2 - CONTEXT).

“¹³ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:13-16 - CONTEXT).

“¹ Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ² As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: ³ If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. ⁴ To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, ⁵ Ye also, as lively stones, are built up

a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Peter 2:1-5 - CONTEXT).

“¹⁹ For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. ²¹ For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ²³ Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: ²⁴ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Peter 2:19-24 - CONTEXT).

“¹⁴ But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: ¹⁶ Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. ¹⁷ For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (I Peter 3:14-17 - CONTEXT).

This leads us to the statement in I Peter 3:21, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) {*avowal of consecration to God after inquiry, having repented and turned to God and now making this public proclamation of that fact by means of baptism*⁴} by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The phrase “like figure” refers to water baptism as a *type* of the *real thing*. The *real thing* is Holy Spirit baptism, which refers to the supernatural act of God in removing the *saved-by-faith* sinner from the cursed family of Adam and supernaturally *regenerating* and *rebirthing* that *saved-by-faith* sinner into the *New Genesis* (“the regeneration, Matthew 19:28).

Just as the family of Noah was separated from the condemned family of Adam and the cursed first creation, all believers are separated from the curse by Holy Spirit baptized into the *New Creation*. Water baptism is a physical portrayal of a believer’s understanding of his *New Creation* “in Christ” and his

⁴ Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. VI* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House) page 120

understanding of his responsibilities of that *New Existence*. Therefore, water baptism is “the like figure” of Noah and his family being saved by water. The picture, or type, is the *believer* being separated from the curse by regeneration “by grace through faith” and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Faith and salvation precede the *baptism* both actually and typically. Therefore, water baptism is a physical portrayal of both *now* and *then* realities of the believer’s *New Existence*. In other words, there is a *now reality* to the believer’s spiritual baptism that connects that believer to a *future reality* Eschatologically - glorification and ultimately to citizenship in the New Heaven/Earth, the final state of the *New Genesis* “in Christ.” The now aspect of a believer’s spiritual baptism connects him to all the responsibilities of his *New Existence* as a *Believer-Priest*.

Obviously, the context of the statement in I Peter 3:18-4:11 is practical sanctification and the salvation of a believer’s new life from being wasted in being enabled to bring God glory through his *New Existence* (not merely the salvation of his soul). The context regards practical sanctification in the supernatural enabling through yielding to the indwelling Christ (Romans 6:11-13). This is why we have the metaphorical use of the phrase “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” in I Peter 1:2. This metaphor connects to the Old Covenant *sprinkling* in the typical sacrifice for the sanctification of Old Covenant believers. The sacrifice of Jesus and the shedding of His Blood is the *actual* sacrifice by which New Covenant believers receive this sanctifying “cleansing. This is what is referred to in the *actual* sense of cleansing, rather than the *typical* sense, in the first chapter of I John. This *sanctification cleansing* is intended to restore “fellowship” with God resulting in the filling/overflowing of the Spirit and the supernatural enabling of the believer “for the work of the ministry.”

“¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; ² (For the **life** was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that **eternal life**, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)³ That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, **that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**⁴ And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.⁵ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.⁶ **If we say that we have fellowship with him**, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and

just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (I John 1:1-10).

Almost all Reformed theologians see the “confession” of I John 1:9 referring to the salvation *confession of sin* (there is not salvation *confession of sin*, although Calvin appears to make some form of distinction⁵). Some Reformed theologians refer to Bible texts on the *sprinkling with blood* as justifications for infant sprinkling (calling it infant baptism). The shedding of the Blood of Christ provides for both the remission of the penalty of all a believer’s sins in the propitiation of God’s wrath AND for sanctifying forgiveness that restores the sinning believer to fellowship with God. Both of the salvation of the believer’s soul from Hell and salvation of the believer’s life through sanctifying cleansing are both exposed in Hebrews chapter nine.

Roman Catholics make a false distinction in seeing some sins as *venial* and others as *mortal*. For Catholics, *mortal sins* are sins unto *spiritual death* (causing the sinner to lose *spiritual life*), resulting in separation from God, and must be repented of and confessed to a priest before they can be forgiven in order to restore the sinner through the Sacrament of Penance. For Catholics, *venial sins* are lesser sins that are not sins unto death and do not require confession to a priest (although there is considerable ambiguity in Catholic literature defining *venial sins*). *Venial sins* weaken the sinner, but do not cause him to lose *spiritual life*. It is hard for a Bible believer to make these distinctions when we understand that Adam’s sin was simply eating something God that forbade. That simple act of disobedience brought God’s curse upon all of the first creation.

⁵ Calvin, John, *John Calvin’s verse Commentary* (Sword Searcher Software 6.1) Calvin’s beginning comments alludes to salvation, “[H]e again promises to the faithful that God will be propitious to them.” He then goes on to say, “Thus he initiates that a twofold fruit comes to us from confession, — that God being reconciled by the sacrifice of Christ, forgives us, — and that he renews and reforms us.” It is unclear if he understands the differentiation between salvation and the intent of the text as it refers to practical sanctification for “fellowship” with God.