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(Continuation from last week 12/11/13)

The First Church: Worthy Traits

THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH, Acts 2:1-7:60

The First Church: Worthy Traits, Acts 2:41-47

1. (Acts 2:41) Word of God: the early believers were a people who received the Word gladly.

Acts 2:41 (NASB)

⁴¹“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

4. Note that they were baptized: the idea is immediate baptism (see below Deeper Study # 2, Baptism—Acts 2:38 for discussion). Note also the large number: three thousand “were added” to the 120 disciples.

Acts 4:4 (NASB)

⁴“But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Acts 6:7 (NASB)

⁷“The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.”

Acts 17:11 (NASB)

¹¹“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.”

Romans 10:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.”

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

¹³“For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.”

DEEPER STUDY # 2

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸“Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

([Acts 2:38](#)) **Baptism**: is the outward sign, the immediate sign of repentance. It is the physical sign that a person is identifying with Christ. It is the immediate sign that a person is to show before the world that he is really repenting and is now going to obey and live for God.

Baptism and repentance are both.....

1. outward signs.
2. signs that have to do with behavior.
3. signs that show the world that a person is turning his life over to God.

Repentance is a command to change one's life. Baptism is a command, the very first command to follow Christ. Baptism is the first command given to those who are repenting. The person who is really repenting must be baptized. He must give testimony to the world and confess to the world that he is repenting by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (cp. [Matthew 28:19-20](#)). Baptism is not an option. It is as much a command as repentance.

[Matthew 28:19-20 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

[Mark 16:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

[Acts 2:38 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁸“Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

[Acts 10:48 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴⁸“And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.”

[Acts 22:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

Now, note a critical point that is often overlooked and neglected. Just because a person changes his life (repents) and is baptized does not mean he is saved. A person can change his life by the power of his own will, by discipline and self-control, by his own effort and works. And he can very simply request to be baptized. Many people have and will continue to do this. Many live what society calls a good, upright, and moral life and they have been baptized. But there is more to being saved than merely changing one's life and being baptized. **What is it?** It is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit:

It is the essential of faith, of believing “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

A person who truly believes and really trusts Jesus does repent and is baptized. But just because a person lives a disciplined and controlled life (repents) and has been baptized does not mean he is truthfully trusting Jesus as his Savior.

True faith—the inward work within the heart, the inward work of really believing in the name of the Lord Jesus—is the one absolute essential for being saved.

Now note another critical point that is also overlooked and neglected.

1. Just because a person says he believes in Jesus does not mean he is saved. A person can say and claim anything, and that person can be baptized. But profession and baptism do not save a person any more than a changed life and baptism save a person.

There is more to being saved than professing faith and being baptized. What is it? Again, it is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit.

2. It is the basis, the essential of *repenting* and of doing the very first act of repentance, being baptized.

There is no faith *without true repentance* and there is no forgiveness by God *without trusting or committing* one's life to God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the very first act of following Jesus is that of repenting and being baptized. A person who honestly believes' in Jesus Christ will do what He said, repent and be baptized.

This is what Peter was saying in this passage. He did not mention faith, but he was not omitting faith nor eliminating belief in the Lord Jesus as essential to salvation. The rest of Scripture cannot be ignored in looking at this verse just as this verse and others like it cannot be ignored by the passages that stress faith alone. Common sense tells us that a person who truly believes something acts upon that thing. *Behavior follows true belief.* But similarly, common sense tells us that behavior can be changed by raw effort and discipline. A person can change because he thinks he should change and not because someone else demands change.

Paul stressed the same point in that classic passage of his ([Romans 6:3-4](#)), and the point is very significant. A believer (**true believer**) is said to be "**baptized [immersed] into the death of Christ.**"

Romans 6:3-4 (NASB)

³ "Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized** [immersed] into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Now note what Paul has just said: when a person is baptized, he is “**baptized into His [Jesus'] death**” in the same way he is immersed (identified) into the resurrection of Christ. Baptism is an act by which one identifies with Christ. He counts himself as having died *in* Christ's death and as having risen *in* Christ's resurrection; as living and moving and having his being *in* Christ even as Christ lived and moved and had His being in God. Christ's death and resurrection and life becomes the believer's death and resurrection and life. The believer treats and judges himself as having been “**crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**” ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ “**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**”

In conclusion, history has shown that this point needs to be stressed and re-stressed.

1. A person can repent, change his own life and be baptized (**by his own effort and works**) without ever trusting Christ, without really believing in Christ.

2. But a person cannot trust, cannot really believe in Christ without repenting and following Christ in the very first act of repentance, that of being baptized. True faith and honest belief always mean that a person repents and is baptized. To believe is to follow (**obey**) Christ and to be baptized.

Hebrews 5:9 (NASB)

⁹ “**And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.**”

John 3:36 (NASB)

³⁶ “**He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but [*ho apeithon*], he who does not obey] the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**”