

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Just Keep It Simple

If you are a sports fan, you know that the NFL season is heading toward the “big game,” that is, the Super Bowl, after which the season will be over. Now, while the playoffs are going on, football conversations dominate the airways on sports radio. The other day I was listening to a former Super Bowl winning coach talk about the subject of analytics. Analytics, which have become very popular in sports today, especially in professional baseball and basketball, seems to be infiltrating football now as well. It has to do with the “method of logical analysis.” In sports, it has to do with the analyzing of numbers. Things like shooting percentage in basketball, pitch count in baseball, and various play calling methods in football, are things that are critically analyzed. Coaches and general managers learn from the numbers things that dictate what kind of offenses to run and defenses to play, and even what kind of kids to recruit or players to draft. There is so much to analyze in sports that things can get rather complicated. Still, for whatever reason, analytics have become a big deal in all major sporting leagues. Of local interest, the Cleveland Browns have just hired chief strategy officer, Paul DePodesta, who specializes in analytics, indicating that they may begin to lean more heavily upon this new approach. For the record I think they have made a great decision, and with the hiring of Hue Jackson as coach, I believe Browns fans are going to see a big difference in the team soon. But, there are some opponents of analytics too. There are “old school” coaches who think the new emphasis on analytics is misplaced, and believe that the numbers are much ado about nothing. The aforementioned coach is one of those “old school” coaches, and when asked about analytics, he said, “For me, I think it is best to just keep it simple.”

I wish people would do that with the word of God. Just keep it simple. There are a lot of false teachings in the religious world today because people take simple passages of scripture and turn them into something more complicated. Never has this been more true than with passages commanding one to be baptized. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Mark 16:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

What does this passage mean? Well, if you just keep it simple, it is quite obvious, isn't it? Jesus is telling us that we must believe in Him and be baptized in order to be saved. Over the years, I have heard people say, regarding this passage, “Jesus really didn't mean that.” Next comes a long, complicated explanation of what Jesus was really saying. JUST KEEP IT SIMPLE! There is no deep meaning behind those words. Jesus meant what He said, and said what He meant. If you want to be saved, you must believe and be baptized.

1 Peter 3:21 (ESV)

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

What does this passage mean? It means what it says. Baptism now saves you. This doesn't mean that baptism saves all by itself. There are many other passages in the Bible that speak of other things that save. However, that baptism is a part of God's plan to save is abundantly clear from Peter's statement. JUST KEEP IT SIMPLE! So many refuse to do that. One commentary, insisting that we are saved before baptism, says, *"Baptism symbolizes our participation in Christ's burial and in His resurrection. It symbolizes the cleansing of our sin. It symbolizes our regeneration but does not automatically convey it. It symbolizes our sanctification, our being anointed by the Holy Spirit. It signifies our adoption into the family of God, all of which occur the second we have faith"* (R.C. Sproul, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary). That's saying a whole lot just to deny a simple statement in scripture, isn't it? Why not keep it simple? "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you."

What is true about passages dealing with baptism, is true with the Bible as a whole. Don't outthink yourself. When the Bible says something in plain, simple language, just keep it simple and accept it.

Don

Let the Church Be the Church

George DeHoff , from 1965, via the Paris Ave Reminder

The business of the church is to preach the gospel of Christ. It exists for this purpose. Without the gospel men are lost. The gospel is God's power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16). There is nothing else which the church does, that is not secondary to preaching the gospel. There is nothing else the church does, but what some other organization is doing the same thing, and sometimes doing it better. If the church is not going to conduct a militant campaign of preaching the gospel, it might as well go out of existence. And that is what it will do unless it preaches the gospel. It is not the business of the church to operate colleges, soup kitchens, relief kitchens, summer camps, youth centers, entertainment bureaus ball teams, and such like If the church goes into the entertainment business in an attempt to reach the people (reach them with what?) men of the world will say, "That's real Christianity." But if the church preaches the gospel, men of the world will become displeased-that is the purpose of gospel preaching; to cause them to become displeased with their condition and to become Christians. Every inch of the ground which we now occupy has been gained by gospel preaching, by a campaign of teaching the facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, and promises to be enjoyed. Every Christian should teach, preach, dispute, confute, rebuke, exhort and whatever else is necessary to get men to see the Truth, and to know the difference between Truth and error. This is the work of the church.