

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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How We Live Really Matters!

Last Sunday was what the sports world calls "Super Sunday" because the Super Bowl game was played. I really thought the Carolina Panthers would win the game, in fact, I didn't think it would even be close. However, as the saying goes, "That's why they play the game." Upsets in sports happen all the time, and certainly, last week's big game was considered somewhat of an upset. It was nice to see Peyton Manning, the quarterback of the Denver Broncos, winning the Super Bowl in what most likely will be his last football game. Peyton has conducted himself well throughout his career and has been a good ambassador for his sport. His comments after the game, though, were interesting and reflected how the majority of people in the world feel about their relationship with God, that is, those who do indeed believe in God. In one breath, Manning said he was going to hug and kiss his wife and kids, drink a lot of beer, meaning he was planning to get drunk while celebrating his team's victory, and thank the Man upstairs (referring to God) for the victory.

While it is nice to hear someone publicly acknowledging that there is a God to Whom we all ought to be thankful, it continues to amaze me how many people don't have a clue about what it takes to please Him. Most people believe that they can involve themselves in almost any activity, even that which God condemns, such as drunkenness, and still be pleasing to God. One reason so many people are going to be lost in the end (and this is just one reason out of many), is because they truly believe that it doesn't matter how they live their lives because, after all, God wants them to be happy. Let me make three observations about this.

First, the Bible clearly teaches us that it matters how we live. Paul reminded the saints at Corinth about this.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (ESV)

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

John had something to say about our living as well. He tells us that if we claim to have fellowship with God while we walk in darkness, we are lying (1 John 1:5-6). Instead, we must walk in the light to have fellowship with God (ver. 7). To walk in the light is to live according to the high standard of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). Yes, how a person lives does matter. Our manner of living will be what is judged in the last day (2 Corinthians 5:10). Just believing that God exists, isn't enough.

Second, how many people feel about having a relationship with God, especially the idea that they can live any way they want and still please Him, is the residual effect of false doctrine. Why do so

many think that how they live from day to day really doesn't matter? It is because they have heard all their lives that a person is saved by faith alone. The necessary conclusion of such a teaching is that we can live any way we want and still go to heaven. Advocates of that popular doctrine may not think that a person should sin. They may teach their disciples not to sin, but in the end they cannot connect one's living with his salvation because their major premise is that only one thing is necessary—faith. They might even argue that if a person has the right kind of faith, that is, saving faith, he will not live in sin. This of course is true; but, the only kind of faith that saves is an obedient faith (James 2:17-26). Thus, faith alone has never saved anyone. Leaving the impression that it does is exactly what causes so many people to sincerely believe that their soul is safe while they do things that are contrary to the will of God, like drinking a whole lot of beer after a Super Bowl victory.

Third, the thinking that we can live any way we want and still inherit the kingdom of God, isn't restricted to those who have accepted the faith only doctrine. Even those of us in churches of Christ, who deny that particular false teaching, can live our lives as if we believe it. Let's remember that just being a member of the church does not save us. When we obeyed the gospel, we entered the race (Hebrews 12:1), but we must run according to the rules. Paul said, *"An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules"* (2 Timothy 2:5). The rule book is the Bible, and if we are going to make it to heaven, we must live our lives by it.

Don

Peter's Simple Answer

Allen Dvorak

The truth must have hit them like a ton of bricks. They had rejected the very Son of God and clamored for the release of a known murderer rather than see Jesus freed. As the apostles affirmed that this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ and had been raised from the dead, the gathered crowd became agitated. "What shall we do?" was the question that they asked.

The answer given was simple. "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The question of what to do to be saved has been asked countless times over the intervening centuries. What answer would you give?

Relatively few people today would respond to that question exactly as the apostle Peter did on the Day of Pentecost. Why not? Despite Peter's comment that the purpose of baptism is the remission of sins, most people today feel the need to "explain away" baptism. Water baptism cannot be necessary for salvation, we are told, or salvation would be a matter of works. It is never good Bible study to deny what the Bible plainly says! Salvation is by the life of Christ (Romans 5:10). It is through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:5); it is according to the divine mercy that we are saved (Titus 3:5). The "implanted word" (NKJV) is able to save us. We could continue this train of thought by noting the critical part that the blood of Jesus plays in the forgiveness of sins and thus our salvation (Ephesians 1:7). Most people would agree that faith, grace, mercy, the word of God and the blood of Jesus are critical elements of our salvation. The apostle Peter wrote, "There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 3:21; NKJV). While Peter affirms that the real significance of baptism is that it represents the "answer of a good conscience," he clearly states that "baptism saves us." No one would argue that man can be saved by his faith apart from the mercy of God or divine grace. Why, then, do folks resist the idea that water baptism is necessary for salvation?

We cannot be saved in our sins. Yet water baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Does that not say that water baptism is necessary for salvation? No one can be saved outside of Christ, i.e., without a spiritual relationship with Christ. Yet we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Does that not say that water baptism is necessary for salvation? Rather than deny what one part of God's word says in preference to another, we should try to understand how all these parts work together.