The Church:

How Do We Enter the Church Part 2

Introduction

Two weeks ago, we started our look at the church by answering the question: what is the church? It is something that belongs to Christ and is for all. Everyone can and should contribute to the church and no one should forsake it

Last week, we answered the question: how do we enter the church? We saw that we need to hear the word, believe in Jesus Christ, and repent of our sins. We also found in the Scriptures that we must confess Christ and be baptized.

This morning, we will continue to look at how we enter the church – this time with our focus on baptism. We briefly touched on it last week, seeing that it is indeed a required step, but many often dismiss this step. And so, we spend some further time looking at the importance of baptism before moving on to other aspects of the church in future lessons.

Isn’t Faith Enough?

**John 1:12-13; 3:16-17; 6:28-29**

* Many would point to these verses and say “see: faith only” believe and be saved; the required work is to believe in God and His Son – believe in Jesus
* It is true these verses call out believing in the Son who was sent here to save us, but what does it mean to believe?

“believe IN Christ”

2 definitions (Webster’s):

1-“to hold to be true, unwaveringly”

* Are we to believe that Jesus’ existence is true? In regards to John 3:16, verse 4 tells us that Jesus is talking to Nicodemus
* There would be no need to tell Nicodemus to believe He existed, as Jesus was right there talking to him

**James 2:19**

* Even the demons believe – the demons believe and tremble – that is, they not only believe in God and His existence – they believe in what He is capable of – they believe in who He is – the demons believe in Jesus and believe in His claims – and yet that belief will not help them

2-“To trust in or rely on”

* This is an important part of the definition for us as Christians for belief
* Of course we still need to believe in Jesus’ existence and believe in His claims, but we also need to trust and rely on those truths – we must be rooted and firmly founded on Jesus
* Thinking back to John 3 and Jesus talking to Nicodemus, Jesus wasn’t telling Nicodemus to believe that He exists, but to trust in what He says – and that involves doing what He says
* Ex. Trust game where person falls backwards over edge to be caught by friend

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

* Of course, as this verse clearly points out, we are saved by God’s grace through our faith – we need that faith – that trust in God and His Son – in order to be saved
* We cannot earn our salvation – there are no works that we can do that would remove our need for Christ’s sacrifice – there is nothing we can do, such that we say “hey, look at what I did – I saved myself” – it can’t happen
* But this does not mean that we don’t have to do anything – it doesn’t mean that we don’t have to act
* Just because an action doesn’t earn us salvation, doesn’t mean that it isn’t required
* No works earn us salvation - like loving God and not stealing – these don’t earn our salvation, but they are still commands that need to be followed

Baptism is Required (it is one of those commands that need to be followed)

**Matt. 28:19-20**

* How were the disciples supposed to go out and make more disciples of Jesus?
* They were to baptize them – baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
* Baptism is a clear requirement to being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ

**Mark 16:16**

* We see belief and baptism are both required – they go hand in hand in being saved
* Some may point to the latter part of the verse not mentioning a lack of baptism with the condemnation there, but that’s because without belief there is no point in baptism and with true belief there will be baptism
* Put food in mouth and swallow to receive nutrients, will not receive nutrients if you don’t put food in mouth
* Is swallowing not actually required? Of course it is

**Acts 2:37-39**

* When asked what should be done to make things right – what to do to be saved – did Peter say to “belief and that’s it”
* No, he said to repent and be baptized – they were to be baptized for remission – or forgiveness – of sins – it’s listed as a step required to receive salvation – not something after the fact
* And we also see that this is necessary for ALL
* Some might try and say that this step was only for people at that time, but Peter says in verse 39, that this promise was for everyone – to all who would come to the Lord

But Grace and Faith…

**Rom. 3:21-31**

* righteousness and salvation do come through grace and faith; it is the avenue by which we receive salvation
* Why would we act without faith? Instead it is faith that causes us to act
* v.27-31 talks about not boasting in works; we don’t boast about what we have done, but what Christ has done – and that is still true even with baptism as a necessary step in salvation

**Rom. 4:1-8 (v.2-3)**

* So what about these verses here? There is a lot of talk of faith and it seemingly points to faith: yes and works: no
* Surely this looks to rule out baptism as necessary – verse 5 speaks of not working, but believing – Abraham was justified by faith and not works
* But is this the full story here? What kind of works is this talking about?

**James 2:21-22**

* We find here that justification comes by works AND faith – we read that Abraham was justified by works
* But wait – didn’t we read the opposite in Romans? Is the Bible contradicting itself? Is God contradicting Himself?
* Of course not, instead, in Romans it appears to be the old law that is referred to as the works
* 3 different works:
* works of law (Gal. 2:16 says, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.* – not justified by works of the law
* works of merit (earning salvation-Eph. 2:8-9 says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.* – not justified by works of merit
* works of faith (**James 2:24** – justified)

**Rom. 5:1-2**

* Jesus provides us a bridge – a means to escape sin and cross over into righteousness - and faith is the access pass – the passport that allows us to cross over, but we still need to walk across – we still need to take action and put in work and effort to move ourselves along the path that Jesus has provided

The Importance of Baptism

**Rom. 6:3-4**

* To be a disciple or follower of Christ, we need to actually follow Jesus – we must follow in His footsteps and emulate Him, being righteous like He is righteous
* And that even applies to sharing in His death and resurrection
* Jesus died for us and was raised up and lives
* Through baptism – through that water burial, we put our old sinful person to death and rise up with a new, renewed life

**Rom. 6:5-6**

* We need to be crucified with Jesus; how? – through baptism

What About Those Not Baptized in the Bible?

**Rom. 7:6**

* What about Old Testament followers who weren’t baptized?
* We are under a new law – the old law, or old testament, had different rules and laws set up to follow
* We are not under that same law, so we can’t use them as an example for how we are to be saved today
* Christ’s church did not exist under the old law, so if we want to learn how to enter the church, we can’t be looking in the Old Testament, let’s stick with the New Testament that was brought about through Jesus

**Luke 23:39-43**

* What about the criminal on the cross?
* Could have been baptized already – we know the criminal rebuked Jesus earlier, but that does not mean that He was not a believer already – even Peter forsook the Lord earlier – who is to say that this person wasn’t a follower of Jesus, but was disheartened to see Jesus on the cross next to Him and expected Jesus to come down from the cross, but over time came to His senses and appealed to Jesus – of course, this is purely guess work
* A more concrete answer, is that the new law was not in effect yet when Jesus told the thief who would be saved – Jesus had not yet died and His church was still not in effect
* Thus the rules for entering the church were also not in effect

Conclusion

**1 Peter 3:21**

* Answering the call isn’t just by mouth – it isn’t just “accepting Jesus into your heart” – it is through baptism
* Baptism is the answer of a good conscience
* Baptism, alongside faith, saves us from our sins

**James 2:14-26**

* In the end, we must be faithful and obedient and limited obedience is really just disobedience