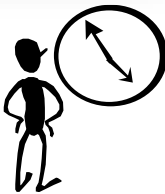


Inside this issue:

<i>A Question and an Answer About Water Baptism</i>	1
<i>Balance in Sound Preaching</i>	2
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline: Seriously Committed</i>	5
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

A Question and an Answer About Water Baptism

By Wayne S. Walker

Quite a few years ago, more than twenty in fact, the congregation with which I was then working had a “Dial a Bible Message.” People could call the number and listen to a short recording on some Scriptural topic. The machine that we used allowed the caller to leave a message, so we invited listeners to ask any Bible questions which they had. The following question was called in to the Dial a Bible Message, and the answer that I gave to it follows, with some additions. I thought that it might make for interesting and informative reading.

Question: Is there any virtue in water? Answer: It is difficult to know exactly what is intended by this question. The most logical assumption is that it has reference to baptism, since many who object to the teaching that baptism is essential for salvation often say that there is no virtue or power in the water to forgive sin. Before we can answer the question, we need to look at a couple of plain facts from the Bible. First, Jesus Himself commanded baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). He gave it a connection with salvation, saying in Mark 16:16, “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*” Can anyone be saved without doing what Jesus commanded us to do to be saved?

Next, the Bible makes it clear that baptism is a part of God’s plan for washing away our sins. In Acts 22:16 Saul of Tarsus, who became better known as the apostle Paul, was told by a God-sent preacher, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (cf. Acts 9:17-18). Even though he

was already a penitent believer, Saul did not have his sins washed away on the road to Damascus or while he was fasting and praying for three days, but only after he arose and was baptized. This tells how he called upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:13). He later wrote that his conversion serves as a pattern for everyone else (1 Timothy 1:15-16).

It is quite obvious to anyone who reads the New Testament that water does have a role to play in God's scheme of redemption. In describing the new birth, Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven"* (John 3:3-5). After Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, the eunuch asked, *"See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"* (Acts 8:36-39). The same apostle Peter who told the Jews on Pentecost, *"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), said after preaching to the household of Cornelius, a Gentile, *"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"* and then commanded them to be baptized (Acts 10:47-48). Paul wrote that the church is cleansed *"with the washing of water by the word"* (Ephesians 5:25-26). And the Hebrew writer tells us that before we can draw near to God we must have *"our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"* (Hebrews 10:22).

So in answer to the question, no, there is no virtue in the water. The water itself does not save. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves us by the power of God (Romans 5:8-9). However, baptism is said in the Bible to save because it is the divinely ordained means by which we come into contact with the blood of Christ to be saved by God's grace, being baptized *"into His death"* (Romans 6:3-4). This is what the apostle Peter had in mind in 1 Peter 3:21 when he wrote, *"There is an antitype, namely baptism, which now saves us—not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* The virtue of baptism is simply in our obeying God and approaching Him with a good conscience for salvation.

Balance in Sound Preaching

By Dudley Spears

One of the definitions of balance is, "A harmonious satisfying arrangement or proportion of parts or elements, as in a design. An influence or force tending to produce equilibrium; counterpoise." Paul wrote the Philippians, *"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand"* (Philippians 4:5). Preaching sound doctrine involves preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). The whole counsel of God is the sum

of the individual parts and preaching all of it means knowing and proclaiming it all. The letters of Paul to Timothy and Titus serve as the major resource material for preachers and preaching. Timothy was to hold fast to the form of sound words (II Timothy 1:10) Titus was to limit his speech to that which becomes sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). The word “become” suggests that which is suitable and proper. Vine tells us that a thing that “becomes” another is that which is “conspicuous among a number” of things, a thing that becomes “eminent” and is “distinguished by a thing,” hence, “to be becoming, seemly, fit.”

Timothy and Titus were first-century preachers and were to pass the mantle of responsibility on the faithful men with the ability to teach others (II Timothy 2:2). Paul urged the Philippians to imitate his model of life and preaching (Philippians 4:9) and warned the Galatians that preaching other than that which he preached would be spiritually fatal (Galatians 1:8-9). Thus every preacher stands under the divine mandate to proclaim the whole counsel of God in words that are suitable and fit for sound doctrine.

The accomplishment of such preaching requires a preacher to exercise some judgment. A prayer for a sound mind under the control of wisdom that comes from above (II Timothy 1:7; James 1:5-6; 3:17) is always in order for anyone who accepts the duty to teach the word of God. The balance that must be maintained in preaching the gospel is the sole responsibility of the preacher. Balance not only pleases the Lord it gives stability to God’s people. Unbalanced teaching causes the church to become off-balance and sometimes misdirected.

It is easy in preaching to become inordinately occupied in preaching one particular topic to the exclusion of others. Jesus condemned the Pharisees, not for paying tithes of mint and anise and cummin, but rather for having omitted the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23). Probably the most difficult part of effective preaching is selecting the right proportions of truth to proclaim at the appropriate time and to the right people.

Balance in Proclaiming the Word

“I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (II Timothy 4:1-2).

Balancing the preaching of the gospel is a solemn charge which involves reproving sin, rebuking the sinner, and exhorting with longsuffering and teaching. Nearly all preaching must be negative, as unpalatable as that may be to some. The first two elements in Paul’s charge are negative. Much the same way a valiant prophet was told he was *“to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant”* (Jeremiah 1:10).

Preachers are to be instant *“in season and out of season.”* The American Stand-

ard Version renders "instant" as "be urgent" which literally means "to stand upon," "be present," or "be at hand (instant)." It is a military metaphor as when one is told to "stand by." A "stand by" condition is one waiting for orders. This is being urgent "in season." It has reference to waiting for the right opportunity or the right moment. Preachers are to be ready when the opportunity to preach the word of God comes. One who is "standing by," may see the need to force a situation and actively seek the opportunity to preach. He is urgent out of season. It is sometimes necessary to make things happen and create an opportunity. Preaching a balanced gospel means always being ready to take or make the opportunity to preach the word. Someone has said, "There is no open or closed season for the preaching of the gospel, not at least in the sense that in the closed season it must not be preached. Preachers are not shooting ducks or deer; they are telling men the words of life."

The balance of the gospel is shown in the duties of preaching: Reprove, Rebuke, Exhort.

It is two-thirds negative and one-third positive. Balance in "*handling aright the word of truth.*" "*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling*" (II Timothy 2:15). Preachers have the responsibility of delivering truth, in the right proportions that are right and appropriate to each and every situation. There is in the verb "rightly dividing" an implication involving cutting or severing. Thus the King James renders the original word "divide." There are a number of interesting possibilities.

"The picture may be that of a mason 'squaring' his bricks; a plowman cutting a straight furrow; or a man making a road straight to its destination. The thought is suggested that in the preaching of Christ in any one given sermon it is not the great slabs of truth that should be passed on, roughhewn from the quarry of the gospel. The preacher should give one brick at a time rightly proportioned and fitting in easily with the bricks which have already been given. Or he should move confidently over the territory of gospel truth, not turning to the right or to the left away from the gospel into vain speculation or myth. A series of sermons should be understandable in language, coherent in themes, and should have an aim." [Ronald Ward, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, Word Books, Waco, TX, 1974].

"The image here seems rather to be that of a man cutting the word of truth into its right pattern, the standard provided being the Gospel. This is practically involved in the vaguer rendering given by the Revisers, 'handling aright the word of truth'." [Cambridge Gr. N.T. Ed].

J.H. Benhard., D. D. James Macknight: "Strive to present thyself to God, an approved unashamed workman who rightly divideth (distributed the doctrine of the gospel) the word of truth."

Philip Dodderidge: "Some think here is an allusion to what the Jewish priest or

Levite did, in dissecting the victim and separating the parts in a proper manner; as some were to be laid on God's altar, and others to be given to those who were to share in the sacrifice. Others think it refers to guiding a plow aright, in order to divide the clods in the most proper and effectual manner and make straight furrows. But perhaps the metaphor may be taken from the distribution made by a steward, in delivering out, to each person under his care, such things as his office, and their necessities required."

S.T. Bloomfield: "'We praise even those husbandmen, who cut the furrows straight; so also the teacher is to be commended, who follows the canon, or rule of the Divine Oracle.' According to this view, '*the spiritual workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,*' is he who wanders not to the right or to the left, but goes forward directly in the path of truth, who at every step takes for his rule the revealed word of God."

One cannot "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the word of truth and not teach the importance of knowing where to locate God's instructions to us in this (Jay and time and show why His instructions to the Jews of olden days do not apply to us today. "Handling aright," or "Rightly dividing" the word of truth is used in the Septuagint of making straight or directing a person's path. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths, and "*The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way*" (Proverbs 3:6; 11:5). Handling the word aright is the divine remedy for false teaching that strives about words, which "*distract men's minds and divert them from the substance of the Gospel.*"

Rightly dividing the word involves the distribution of the truth. A fully fed church is a growing, active, and fruitful church. Rightly dividing the truth is the balance of preaching the whole counsel of God.
