



**IS BAPTISM JUST AN OUTWARD SIGN OF AN INWARD CHANGE?**

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There is a perception held in society today that suggests baptism is merely an outward sign of an inward change. This view holds the position that baptism is non-essential in regard to salvation; yet, God’s Word declares baptism to be commanded, symbolic, and essential.

First, in **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus gives four basic commands: “Go” [to those who need salvation], “Teach” [the conditions to be saved], “Baptize” [those who believe the gospel], and once again, “Teach” [how to continue faithfully]. Jesus shows that baptism is associated with the process of being converted. In **Mark 16:16**, Jesus declares that both belief and baptism are essential for salvation, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”



Those who believe God’s Word know they must be baptized to be saved. And they know they cannot be scripturally baptized without first believing. Salvation requires both belief and baptism; yet unbelief is enough for a person to be lost. Jesus says, “but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (**John 3:18**). God has laid out a process for us to follow in order to be saved, and it is essential for us to adhere to His conditions.

*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city (**Revelation 22:14**).*

Second, in the days of Noah, the earth was full of wickedness and disobedience. Yet

Noah obediently prepared the ark and met God’s conditions in order to be saved.

*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**).*

Noah represents a picture of how God saves us when we follow all of His commands, including being immersed in baptism for the remission of sins. Baptism serves as a covenant before God that we are willing to be faithful to His will in hope of salvation. When we arise to walk in newness of life, we symbolize Jesus’ resurrection upon the first day of the week. Without Jesus’ resurrection, salvation is impossible; therefore, our baptismal resurrection from a watery grave is essential for our salvation.

*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered (**Romans 6:17**).*

Though man has fallen short in the past, we have to make the choice to repent of our past deeds and obey our Father’s will. Jesus says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (**John 3:3**). Baptism is more than just an outward sign of an inward change because baptism symbolizes the only way that any of us can have the opportunity to be saved.

This topic is scripturally foreign to many because we are not baptized out of a mere formality, but rather, because it is God’s will. God’s Word establishes a process of hearing the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**), believing what we have heard (**Mark 16:16**), repenting of past wrongdoing and turning entirely to God (**Luke 13:3**), confessing Christ as the Son of God (**Matthew 10:32**), being baptized “for the remission of sins” (**Acts 2:38**), and remaining faithful unto death (**Revelation 2:10**).

Sundays at 6:30 AM



**October Topics**

**10/4 Sermon #1269**  
The Bible and Suicide

**10/11 Sermon #1268**  
Love and Hate

**10/18 Sermon #1270**  
God in the Hands of  
Angry Sinners

**10/25 Sermon #1271**  
“Does Scripture  
Authenticate Inspiration?”

# OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

Failure to meet any of these commands does not warrant an assurance of salvation. To have that assurance, a gospel subject must complete ALL of them because only then does God grant salvation. And His commands for obeying the gospel are completed in baptism, according to the scriptures.

## CULTIVATING THE HEART

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If you are like me, you have heard Jesus' Parable of the Sower preached many times over the years. To be sure, the beautiful simplicity of Jesus' first parable offers deep insight and meaningful instruction. At the conclusion of many lessons on this parable, the speaker asks, "Which of the soils are you?"



This important question should give each of us cause to take an honest look at ourselves. In fact, hopefully we can all honestly answer that we are one of the 'good soils' that will yield a crop, *'some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'*

Another significant question is: What is to be done about the bad soil? What about those with whom you have shared the gospel and are trying to convict of their need for the saving truth of God's word? What if they do not have a heart that is willing to yield and to accept the truth?

How about the wayside hearts, the rocky hearts, and the thorny hearts? What is to be done? Must we accept that they are doomed to be lost? When our Lord chose the metaphor of seed and soils, He knew how adequately and how profoundly this parable demonstrates the reality of men's hearts and the challenges of sharing the gospel. The profoundness of Christ's example becomes obvious when we examine the important question, *"What is to be done about the bad soils?"*

When a gardener is given a hard, rocky, weed-covered patch of ground and is told to make a garden out of it, what must he do? He must pull out the weeds, dig out the rocks, and break up the hard ground. Why? Because even concrete has dirt underneath!

Any gardener knows that the labor of clearing the rocks and thorns and preparing the soil is vital in order to increase the chances of success for any seed he sows. And, so it is with hearts: we must be willing to work to prepare the soil of each heart we encounter. We must take the time to clear the rocks, weeds, and packed earth. We can't expect success if we simply toss them around and move on, hoping to hit some good soil.

Perhaps we may question whether changing someone's heart is even possible, relegating that responsibility to the individual. Yet, God's word shows time and again that change is possible.

*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).*

*Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear (1 Peter 3:1-2).*

These verses remind us that we can effect change in the hearts of those around us. We can, and we must. Consistent obedience, love, patience, and kindness are the tools that help soften the hearts of the people we encounter. Scripture has provided us with the gardening tools to help us cultivate good soil in the heart.

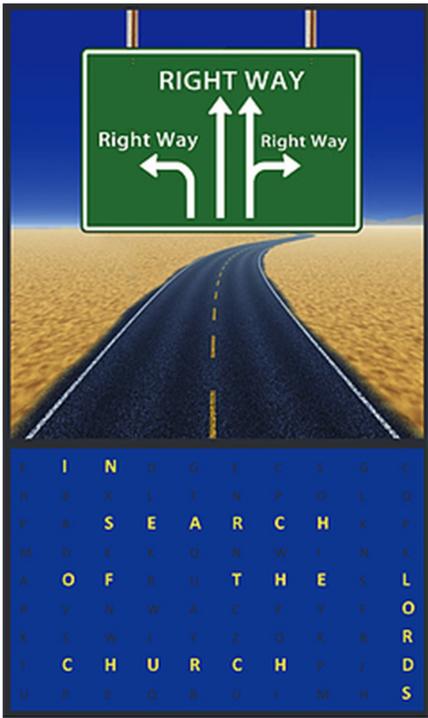
These tools are also beneficial in 'cutting away the thorns' that Jesus refers to as the 'cares of this life.' This instruction is not only for new seeds being choked by the thorns. It can be for a plant that has grown, matured, and even flowered. If left unattended, even such mature plants can be overgrown. Numerous times in scripture, we read about the Christian duty to bear up under the strain and difficulty of life. Refreshing our roots with scripture and cutting away the thorns better ensures our success in our spiritual walk.

May we be encouraged to read the Parable of the Sower with fresh eyes. When reading, ask, "Which soil am I?" Then, ask, "Am I willing to do the hard work of tending my own heart and the hearts of those around me?" In **Matthew 9:37**, Jesus says, *"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few."* The work of cultivating good soil in the heart is demanding work; however, it is a work to which we are all called.

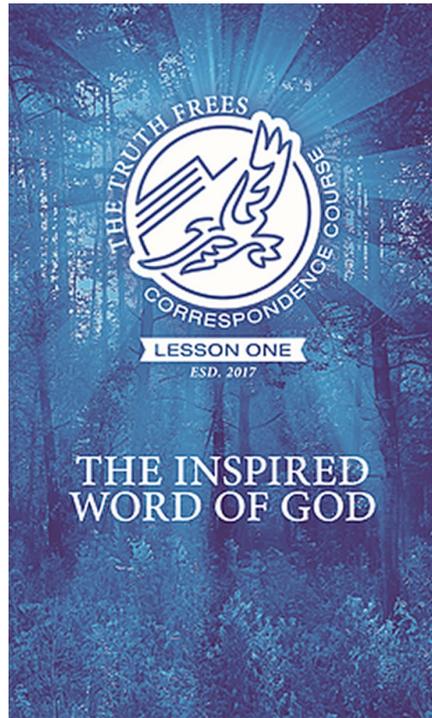


## FREE RESOURCES

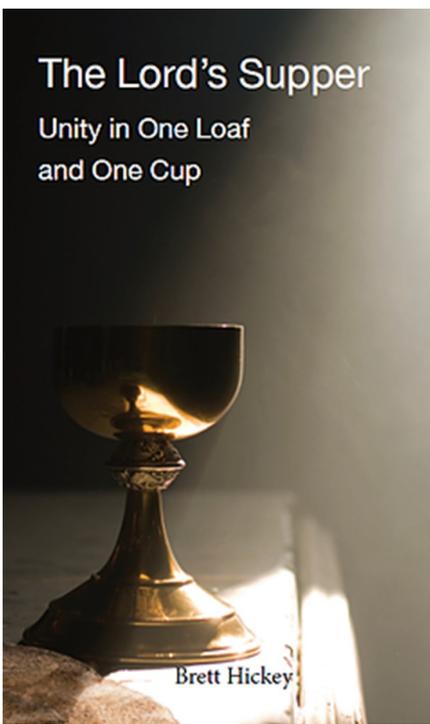
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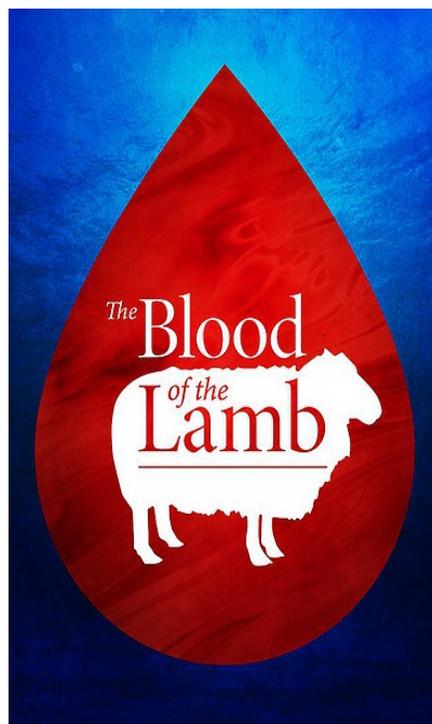
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