

SPIRITUAL FAILSAFES

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God always knew there would be those who would attempt to steal His offer of salvation through Jesus Christ from others by perverting His Word. So, He stored in His word FAILSAFES upon which those prepared to obey Paul's instruction to Timothy could rely— *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15).



A FAILSAFE is something designed to prevent or counteract a possible source of failure. God's Word is a FAILSAFE against false teachers who would arise and try to change what the Word actually teaches.

In the case of baptism, the practice of sprinkling or pouring had, by the end of the sixteenth century, largely superseded the correct practice of immersing. By merely transliterating the Greek verb (inventing the neologism 'baptise' to which the semantic value of sprinkling could then be attached) rather than translating it into a useful English word like dip, immerse, or submerge, the translators of the King James Version helped the priests perpetuate this deception.

Notwithstanding this ongoing attempt to pervert Scripture, anyone for whom the Word of God is a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path could still adduce that baptism is immersion and that it is, at the same time, symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. All of the examples in Acts involved candidates entering a body of water, being completely submerged therein, and re-emerging from it into newness of life.

As well, Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:12 explain the symbolical and spiritual meaning of the act as just such a re-enactment. Even though the Greek word had only been transliterated

and a false meaning of sprinkling assigned to the new word, this new practice could never correspond to scriptural baptism—because the act of sprinkling violates the symbolism.

It is exactly the same with the Lord's Supper. Our Lord Jesus was well aware false teaching would arise, saying the use of separate wafers and individual cups was both permissible and advisable on the grounds of hygiene. So, He stored for those whose zeal for His word made them worthy candidates for His kingdom not only the approved examples in the synoptic gospels and 1 Corinthians 11 but other passages explaining its symbolic and spiritual value.

These passages teach that the Lord's Supper attests to the uniqueness of the covenant established by His blood. This covenant is embodied, represented, and symbolized in the one cup that each member of the assembly is to share, irrespective of outward material factors such as state of health, wealth, age, social status, or ethnic origin. The Lord's Supper also attests to the uniqueness of the one body of the Lord Jesus Christ that was sacrificed for us. This body is symbolized by the one loaf of bread that we are to share.

1 Corinthians 10:16 teaches that our sharing in the one bread, from which each of us is to break off a piece, and in the cup of blessing containing the fruit of the vine, from which each of us is to sup, is the approved form for our communion in the body and blood of Jesus.

With respect to the cup and the fruit of the vine specifically, some argue that the figure of speech of metonymy accounts for most references to the cup in the accounts of the Last Supper in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians 11. For proponents of this view, the vessel is to be understood as representing its contents, the fruit of the vine, and it is immaterial whether one or multiple cups are to be used in observing the Lord's Supper.

I would be surprised, however, if up to ten percent of persons who have read the New Testament would know the meaning of the word metonymy—or the term's equivalent in other languages. That is not to say they would

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JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

not recognize instinctively when the figure is being used. I find it highly unlikely that this or any other figure of speech is being used in the Bible in a way that subverts the ordinary meaning of language as used by the vast majority of people. Once one needs to explain that a figure of speech such as metonymy is being used and to justify an arcane interpretation of its usage, then one is in my opinion on dangerous ground.

In Mark 14:23, the word ‘cup’ means simply cup and the sharing of its contents is to be done by drinking from it, just as the verse states and not by first pouring said contents into other, curiously unmentioned, cups. Any other interpretation seems to undermine the doctrine of the all-sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Just as sprinkling does not embody the figure of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but immersion does, so individual wafers and/or individual cups do not embody the figure of the unity of the local assembly in the body and blood of Jesus, but one loaf and one cup do. These scriptures are FAILSAFES against any attempt to alter the truth of the revealed Word.

PAUL WASN'T SENT TO BAPTIZE!

A.K. Richardson | Cave City, AR

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect (1 Corinthians 1:14-17).

When it comes to understanding a statement in the Bible properly, context is everything! Concerning this passage, apologist Matt Slick, host of CARM radio, says, “If baptism is necessary for salvation, then why did Paul downplay it and even exclude it from the description of what is required for salvation? It is because baptism is not necessary for salvation” (<http://carm.org/is-baptism-necessary-salvation>).



This conclusion is an abuse of context. Paul *explicitly* states the reason he is “thankful” for not having baptized any of the Corinthians is that he didn’t want anyone to accuse him of baptizing in his own name (1 Corinthians 1:15). Paul had enemies who wanted to undermine his influence, and he did not want them to have an opportunity to charge him with the attempt to gain his own disciples.

The context reveals the reason they might come up with such a charge. The Christians at Corinth had formed factions under the names of various preachers, including Paul. In rebuking them, Paul asks, “*Were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” Then comes his reason for being thankful for not having baptized them: “*Lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name*” (verses 11-15).

If Paul’s opponents had caught wind that some of the Christians at Corinth were professing to be “*of Paul*,” then they likely would have accused him of baptizing in his own name. In reality, Paul had not baptized many of them at all; thus, the potential accusation of his adversaries could hold no water. This is the reason he was thankful.

Paul’s statement has nothing to do with the importance of baptism in relation to salvation. Slick asserts that Paul “downplayed” baptism; but, in truth, Paul downplayed the *administering* of baptism by his own hands among the Corinthians—not baptism itself. Paul does *not* say he is thankful that none of them had been baptized, but that he himself had not been the one to baptize them. This teaching, then, is not about the importance of the role of baptism role.

Paul continues and says, “*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel... .*” Those who think, as Slick does, that this statement means Paul separates baptism from the gospel plan of salvation are misunderstanding his point. Again, he is not talking about baptism itself but the *work of performing it*. Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel; and He was not concerned about whether Paul was the one who administered the baptisms.

Slick asks the reason Paul excludes baptism from what is required for salvation. The answer is—he doesn’t! In fact, when actually writing about baptism itself (and not the baptizer), Paul is clear that baptism is a necessity. For example, he says:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:11–12).

Paul connects the removing of our sins with being buried with Christ in baptism. It is in baptism that Christ “circumcises” the sin from our souls (this action, of course, brings forgiveness).

It is sinful to rip scripture from context to support a preconceived belief. Paul does not “downplay” baptism anywhere, but rather he teaches its purpose and necessity in the salvation of our souls.



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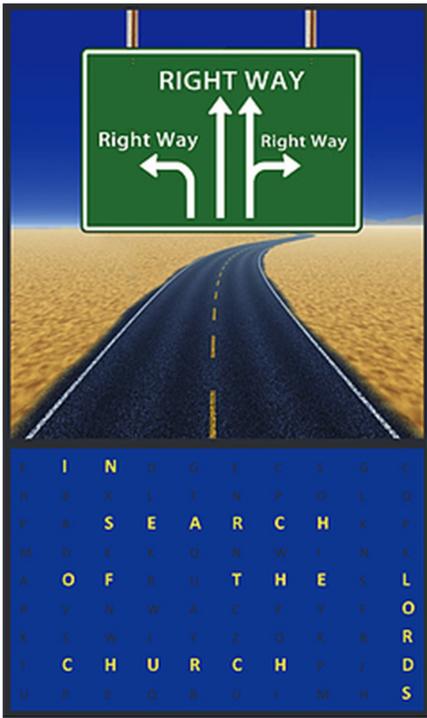
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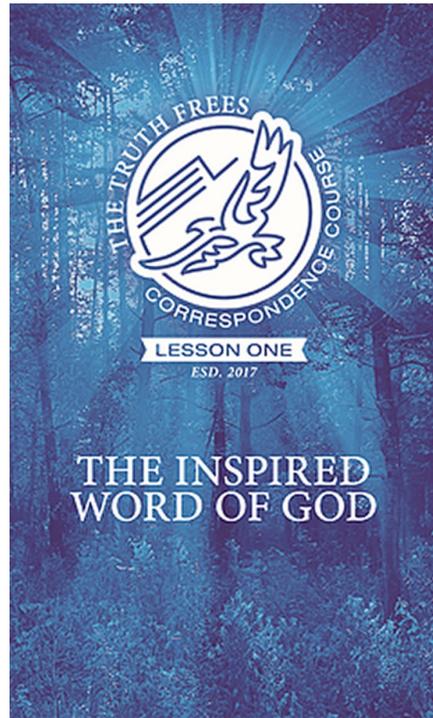
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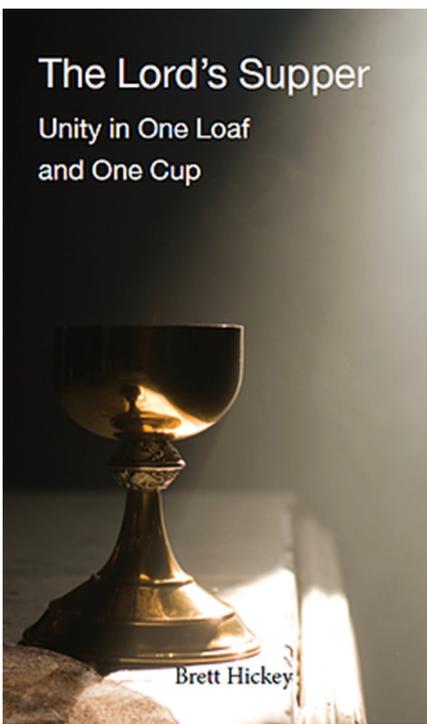
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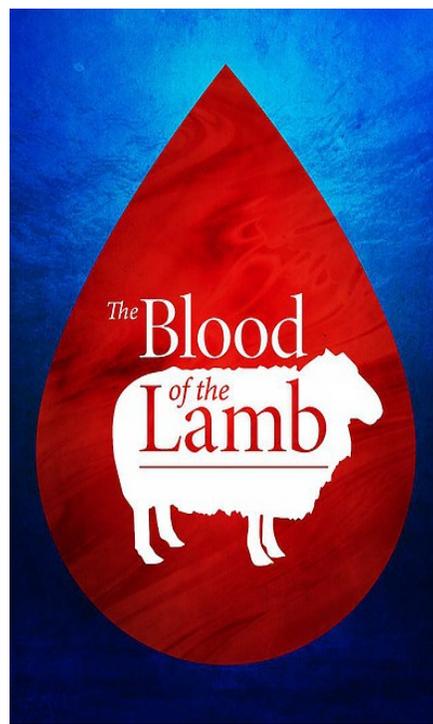
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