

Baptism by a Non-Christian

By Paul R. Blake

(I received the following question by email from a dear brother in Ohio) "What qualification (if any) must one possess before he can baptize others? In a worst case scenario, what if a person wanted to be baptized, but was in a place with only non-Christians?"

Good question, Brother! In the case of the person being baptized, we know that he or she must do so from the heart; that is, they must believe and repent from the heart, and make the confession by mouth. When he is being baptized, he must do so with the intent that he is being baptized for the remission of sins and that he will arise a new creature in Christ. Similarly, the person doing the baptism must do so with the intent that he is baptizing this one into Christ for the remission of sins. Please note that he is doing so in the name of or by the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I do not believe one who is outside of Christ can pretend to be acting by the authority of Christ.

In Acts 19, Jewish exorcists attempted to do something in the name of Jesus, and they not only failed, they were punished. *"Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, 'We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.' Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?' Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified"* (Acts 19:13-17). I would certainly fear for both the one outside of Christ trying to baptize by the authority of the Lord, and for the one who is placing his hope of salvation on such a practice.

I have heard the argument that states that since at least one of the apostles had to be unbaptized when he baptized the others, it is possible for non-Christians to baptize others in the name of Christ. That is based on limited and uninformed human reasoning; God's word is silent on the matter. We cannot generate a doctrine based on what God did not say about the matter.

However, I have faith that if one truly wants to be baptized, Provisionally, God will see to it that it gets done right. This is a matter of faith. When the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized, God supplied the baptizer (Philip) and the water in the middle of a desert region. Based on the promises of God and His examples of Providential care, I believe that when one wants to become a Christian, a baptizer and sufficient water will be available, and if not in the immediate area, then in the near future. I cannot imagine that one who hears the gospel for the first time and wants to be saved will be killed before having the opportunity. However, I would not suggest that one who has on multiple occasions rejected the gospel would have the same level of mercy and protection.

Finally and more to the point, it has been my experience that over the years men can make up a lot of hypothetical situations that appear to void or create conflict with commands of the Lord. In truth, I believe such situations exist only in the minds of brethren or as some sort of religious urban myth. I do not believe they actually exist or have happened. And, if they have happened, so what? God is all wise and all knowing. He will figure out how to handle that matter according to His infinite wisdom. Regardless of what exceptions that we can think up in our own minds for others, they have NO bearing on us or the people we teach, and most importantly, they do not void the direct command of the Lord. We still need to believe, repent, confess and be baptized for the remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ.

Have you noticed how such questions seem to convey a false air of importance and serve no purpose when it comes to edification? These questions clog up Bible classes using time better spent on what God has revealed in His word. If brethren persist in dwelling on such

questions, offer them a question of your own. *“How does answering hypothetical questions edify us?” “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless”* (Titus 3:9).

Andy Rooney’s Reflections on Life

- I've learned that the best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.
- I've learned that when you're in love, it shows.
- I've learned that just one person saying to me “You've made my day!” makes my day.
- I've learned that having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.
- I've learned that you should never say no to a gift from a child.
- I've learned that no matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend to act goofy with.
- I've learned that sometimes all a person needs is a hand to hold and a heart to understand.
- I've learned that love, not time, heals all wounds.
- I've learned that the easiest way to grow as a person is to surround yourself with people who are smarter than you.
- I've learned that everyone you meet deserves to be greeted with a smile.
- I've learned that no one is perfect until you fall in love with them.
- I've learned that opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you miss.
- I've learned that when you harbor bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.
- I've learned that one should keep his words soft and tender, because he may have to eat them someday.
- I've learned that a smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.
- I've learned that when your newly born grandchild holds your little finger in his little fist, you're hooked for life.
- I've learned that everyone wants to live on the top of the mountain, but all the happiness and growth occur while you're climbing it.
- I've learned that walks with my father on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.
- I've learned that we should be glad God doesn't give us everything we ask for.
- I've learned that money doesn't buy class.
- I've learned that it's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.
- I've learned that under everyone's hard shell is someone who wants to be appreciated and loved.
- I've learned that to ignore the facts does not change the facts.
- I've learned that when you plan to get even, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.