

Back to the Basics 101

1 Corinthians 2:1-8

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

In July 1967 I surrendered to God’s call on my life to preach the Gospel. I didn’t know much scripture and less about the ministry, but I knew what God had called me to do. Linda and I sold our home and moved to Graceville, Florida to attend Bible College. Linda worked in the College Preschool Department, drew no salary but applied what money she earned toward my tuition. And so our journey began.

Through the years God began to show me the amazing truth about this thing called “preaching.” “Preaching” is not just standing in some pulpit and telling people about biblical truths – “Preaching” is a cry from the heart, a passion that burns like an “eternal flame.” “Preaching” is not an apology, but a bold declaration planted in one’s innermost recesses by the power and Person of the Holy Spirit! “Preaching” is the urgency of the Master Himself ringing out through His yielded vessel. “Preaching” requires its hearers to do something – they must repent or reject – the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

I have been the pastor of this church for over 32 years and through those years I have tried to teach the basic truths that will impact your life for the kingdom of holy God. Even though I preach some pretty practical series that deal with living the Christian life, sometimes I need just to go back and review the basics of salvation,

baptism, and church membership. So, for the today and next Sunday we are going to look at what I have simply titled “Back to Basics 101 & 102.”

Why do I feel the need to back up and take another look at the basics? The answer is simple: Mountain Grove is a growing church, reaching people from diverse religious backgrounds – Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Lutheran, etc. Therefore the goal of this two-part series is to cause us to look past our denominational doctrines and discover what the Bible actually teaches.

Today, I want to take you back to probably the best-known Bible verse in all of Scripture, and it reads like this in the Greek, “For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” The world has offered various philosophies as to why Jesus Christ came into the world, but the real answer is found in 1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...”

There is no need to speculate for Jesus Himself said in Matthew 20:28, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Luke 19:10 tells us, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Salvation is a tremendous word. The Greek word translated “salvation” is the word “soteria” and it means much more than just being saved, it carries with it the idea of “deliverance, preservation, soundness, healing, and safety.” Therefore, salvation speaks of all the redemptive acts of Jesus Christ concerning us – grace, forgiveness and sanctification, etc.

All of that sounds good, but what does it mean to be saved? Let me put it another way – What does it really mean to be a believer in Jesus Christ? I want to answer that question by looking at what the

Bible says in Galatians 3:26-28 says, “For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same - we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ.”

What does it mean to be a Christian? I am convinced that most people live their entire lives without knowing *why*. They exist year after year with no idea of *why they live* or *God’s purpose for their lives*. The most basic question a person can ask is, **“What is the meaning of life?”**

What is the answer to the question, “Why am I here?” It is found in Jeremiah 31:3 where God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love!” **God made me to love me!** Listen to what we have been told in Ephesians 1:4-5, “Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ...*because of His love*. God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children-this was God’s pleasure and purpose.”

We were created to have a personal relationship with God and to all of the rest of God’s creation! This makes us special, as seen in Genesis 1:27-28, “So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said...live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge.” 1 Timothy 6:17 reads like this, “God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

When we *know and love God*, and *live in* harmony with His *purpose for our lives*, it produces tremendous *benefits* in our lives:

What, then, is the problem? The problem is simple: **Man has a desire to rebel and to ignore God’s principles for living.**

When Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden, they did so by rebelling against the known Word and Will of God for their lives. In other words, they deliberately *disobeyed* His commands for their daily living.

Therefore, Adam and Eve developed the first attitude that says, “Look out for #1. Do your own thing.”

The Bible calls this attitude SIN. Sin brought about the need for man’s salvation. Sin is like a genetic disease that, once introduced into the human race, affected everyone thereafter, as seen in Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” **The “one man” here is Adam.** His sin poisoned the human race. Every man, woman, and child since Adam was born a sinner, as seen in Romans 5:19, “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.”

Sin goes deeper than merely an association with some distant relative. Sin has contaminated our very nature. David put it this way in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” **Man is born with an inclination toward evil, a bias away from good.** If you don’t believe me, ask any preschool worker or kindergarten teacher. Children never need a lesson in being bad. **It comes naturally.** Granted, some are worse than others. But each child in his or her own way eventually demonstrates a defiant self-centeredness willing to challenge any and all authority.

When our relationship to God is not right, it causes problems in every area of our lives - marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.

God created us with the capacity and desire to worship. Therefore, Jesus said this in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me!”

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself, as seen in Philippians 2:5-8, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of

men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

If any other way could have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come and die. The Way is a *person*!

Jesus has already taken care of your sin problem! Romans 6:23 says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him, as seen in Romans 5:8, “God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.”

Listen carefully, if you have never been saved, God has already done His part to provide your salvation and to restore your relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for *each of us to individually accept* what He has done for us.

What does God want you to do? If you have never been saved (born again) this is what the Bible says God requires:

Confess that God has not been first in your life and ask him to forgive you of your sins. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.”

Believe in your heart that Jesus died to pay for your sins and that he rose again on the third day, and is alive today. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Eternal life is God’s free gift of salvation. Don’t try to earn it. Ephesians 2:8-9 simply says, “For by grace are you saved, through faith - and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Allow Jesus Christ to come into your life and be the Director (“Lord”) of your life. John 1:12-13 says, “To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who believe this are reborn! - not a physical rebirth...but from the will of God!”

You can take these steps by praying a simple prayer of commitment to God:

Father,

Thank you for making me and loving me, even when I’ve ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow you from now on. Amen.

Romans 10:13 says, “Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Now, the next step in the life of the believer, after salvation, is that of baptism. There is lots of confusion about the subject of *baptism* because different denominations teach a number of different things about *baptism*. Therefore, it is our desire in today’s study to clear up some of the confusion surrounding this matter of *water baptism*.

Question #1: Why should I be baptized?

First, we should be baptized to follow the example set by Christ. Mark 1:9 says, “At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.”

Second, we should be baptized because Christ said to do it. In Matthew 28:19-20, “Jesus said, Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have

commanded you.” Baptism is the first step of obedience in your Christian life.

Third, we should be baptized to demonstrate that I really am a Christian. Acts 18:8 says, “...many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized.”

Question #2: What is the meaning of baptism?

First, baptism illustrates Christ’s death and resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 says, “Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He rose again.”

Second, baptism illustrates my new life as a Christian. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun.”

Baptism does not make you a believer; it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not save you; only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a *wedding ring*; it’s the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

Question #3: Why should I be baptized by Immersion?

First, because Jesus was baptized that way. Matthew 3:16 says, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.” Please hear me on this – baptism by immersion is not a *Baptist* thing, it is a *Christian* thing. Jesus gave us the example.

Second, every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion. Look at the example in Acts 8:38-39, “...then Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...”

The word “baptize” means to immerse under water. The Greek word “baptizo” means, “to immerse or dip under water.”

Third, baptism best symbolizes a burial and resurrection! It shows that you have *died* to self, been *buried* with Christ, and *raised* a new person by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Question #4: Who Should I Be Baptized? Every Person Who Has *believed* in Christ. Acts 2:41 says, “Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized” Acts 8:13 says, “Simon himself believed and was baptized.”

Question #5: When Should I Be Baptized?

As soon as you have believed and have an opportunity. Acts 2:41 says, “Those who believed...were baptized that day!” We will baptize on any day and at any time during the day.

If you have never been saved, why not today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Thank You for the Cross and thank you for your grace. And, most of all, thank you for my salvation. In Jesus’ name. Amen.