

With so much emphasis on baptism in the New Testament, people sometimes wonder what they can expect to follow baptism. If our sins are “washed away” in baptism (Acts 22:16), what if we sin again after baptism? Will we need to be baptized every time we sin? This question seems silly to some people; but to others it is a very real concern. In order to answer this question, we need to review some of the things we have seen in previous Bible Talks.

For instance, we must never forget that our salvation ultimately depends upon God’s Grace and not our good deeds. Paul said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). The “Grace” of God (that is, His “undeserved favor”) provided the only sacrifice which could take away our sins. Peter reminds us that we were redeemed “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (I Peter 1:19). You see, I do not depend upon my own righteousness for salvation; but upon the righteousness of Jesus -- the only one who never sinned. Paul taught that God “...made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21).

Somehow, in the mind of God, the righteousness of Jesus serves as sort of a spiritual umbrella of righteousness over my life. Paul explained that “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). If I am “in Christ,” then my sins are hidden in the righteousness of Jesus. The words of a sacred song express this thought well:

I’ve been covered over by the robe of righteousness that Jesus gives to me;
I’ve been covered over by the precious blood of Jesus and He lives in me.
What a joy it is to know my Heavenly Father loves me so He gave to me my Jesus
Now when He looks at me He sees not what I used to be, but He sees Jesus.

Do you understand this point? This is the precious privilege of being “in Christ.” My sins are “covered over” by the righteousness of Jesus and are not seen by God when I am “in Christ.” But it is baptism which puts me “into Christ” and allows me this privilege (Galatians 3:27). Because of Christ and His redemptive work, mankind has the opportunity to grow and mature, even while making mistakes. Our sinful nature is not conquered in a day. Paul said, “There is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10); and he bemoaned his own sinful nature in Romans 7:15-19. Even after baptism, we shall continue to sin on a daily basis. But one who is “in Christ” has the blessing of being forgiven every day and is continually cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Of course, we understand that after baptism we should strive to be pure in thought and deed; but if we sin, the apostle John reminds us that “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 2:1). John also taught that “if we **Confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). There is an example in Acts 8 which helps us to see how this process works. Shortly after being baptized, a man named Simon again fell into sin. In Acts 8:22, Peter explained to Simon what should be done in the event of sin after baptism. He did not say to be baptized again, but said, “Therefore **Repent** of this wickedness of yours, and **Pray** the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.” Do you see the procedure? If we **Confess** our weaknesses, **Pray** for forgiveness, and **Repent** of our wrongs, Jesus will plead our case before the Father and continue to cover our sins with His blood (I John 1:7).

However, the scriptures also teach that Willful, Continual sin will not be forgiven. In fact the Hebrew writer said, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27).

God will not allow us to use the cloak of Christ as an excuse to continue in willful and unrepentant sin. But for those who love God and who strive to be disciples of Jesus, a confident

assurance can be found “in Christ.” John said that those who “believe in the name of the Son of God ... may know that you have eternal life” (I John 5:13). The Lord allows His people the freedom of choice to decide for themselves if they want to remain “in Him,” but Jesus promised that “no one shall snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). **Confession** of sins, combined with **Repentant Prayer**, will keep us under the canopy of Christ’s atoning blood.



Bible Probe

WHAT IF I SIN AFTER BAPTISM?

116

1. Do you think a person can do enough good deeds to merit salvation? (Ephesians 2:8-9)

2. According to II Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 8:1, we can “become the righteousness of God” only in _____ (whom)?

3. How does one get “into Christ” where this righteousness can be obtained? (Galatians 3:27)

4. What is the only price which could be paid to redeem our souls to God? (I Peter 1:19)

5. In I John 1:7, the word “cleanses” is a word of continuous action in the Greek. What assurance does this give you concerning your own salvation?

6. Can we have assurance of salvation after conversion? (I John 5:13; John 10:28)

7. Who will plead our case before the Father when we sin after baptism? (I John 2:1)

8. After baptism, will we be forgiven of Continual, Willful, Unrepented sins?
(Hebrews 10:26-27; Romans 6:1)

9. After baptism, what three things are required to be forgiven of consequent sins?
(I John 1:9; Acts 8:22)