

## *First Things First (Sin & Death)*

David Halbrook

Most complex questions begin to be answered by returning to first principles. There are few events in life that raise more questions than death. Understanding death begins with sin.

**Sin is lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4)** Any decision, inward or outward, that is outside of God's law is sin. Decisions are not inherited, but by the teachings and traditions of man, people today believe that we inherit Adam's sin. Learn first things: *the son shall not bear the guilt of the father* (Ezek.18:20).

**The wages of sin is death** God warned Adam and Eve that death is the result of sin (Gen. 2:16-17). The prophet Ezekiel told Israel *The soul who sins shall die* (Ezek. 18:20). The apostle Paul said *The wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23). We all deserve this death—separation from God.

**No escape from death without God** *What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?* (Ps. 89:48) This is not only true of physical death but once separated from God (because of a lie, sexual sin, etc.) you cannot return to God without His help. No man-made religion nor kind deed can remove sin, but there is hope! Learn of it in our next article: *first things* about life.

Editor's Note: If all religious people were in agreement on the "first principles" of sin, the road to unity in Christ would be far less complicated. That will not happen on a large basis overnight, but some people's mind can be quickly turned when they see how simple the subject is in Scripture. Use our *Arkansas Weekly* article to begin or continue that conversation with someone.

### Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, new Christians among us, and Ben Calderon (who, with our help, preaches among Spanish-speaking people in Conway) is having hernia surgery at the end of this month.

*Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.*

church of Christ—Quail Valley  
4104 E. Harrison St.  
Batesville, AR 72501  
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:  
David Halbrook 569-4491

# The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*  
church of Christ--Quail Valley

May 17, 2015  
[WWW.QVCOC.COM](http://WWW.QVCOC.COM)

## *Are You Happy?*

Aric Russell

Are you happy with your life? Think about that question again. Are you happy with your life? If you said no, let me ask you, what would make you happy? Most, if asked this question, would give answers like, "More money would make me happy", or "better health", "better education", "more friends" "popularity", etc., would make them happy, they claim. However if we ask the people who currently have the money, better health, better education, and that are popular, how might they respond? Might they respond by saying that the things they have been striving after have not made them happy? Has it ever occurred to us, that maybe there is something that would make us happy? Something that is not of this world, but rather, it is from God the Father.

Proverbs 16:20 says, "*He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.*" Please notice in this passage that what God lists as things to make men happy are not always on man's list! There is no talk about things of this present world making us happy. Notice again it said he who heeds the word wisely will find good. If we listen and apply the scriptures, the words of God, we will find good in our lives. Also, notice again that this passage says he who trusts in the Lord, happy is he. Again, the things of this world are ruled out. Money, health, education, and popularity are not going to make us happy, ultimately. Rather, trusting in God, and listening to what He has to offer us, will bring true happiness. Now, I am not saying that health, education, money, and having friends are bad things. They are good in their place. Yes, we need money to support our families. We need to stay healthy and take care of ourselves. We need to be educated in order to teach others. But, we must remember that no matter what, we must serve God first. (Matt. 6:33)

*(continued inside)*

I Timothy 6:7-8 teaches *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”* Understand friend, this world shall end. When Christ comes again, He will destroy this earth. Knowing that the things we have will all be gone, and that we can not take anything with us, shows us why it is important for us to lay up our treasures in Heaven, and not on this earth. (Matt. 6:19-21).

I ask you again, “Are you happy with your life?” If not, I encourage you strive for the things that will make you happy. Do not strive for the things of this world, but things of the Father. Be at peace with God, and allow the God of peace to rest in your heart. (Col. 3:15)

---

## *Baptism and Grace*

*L. A. Stauffer*

The Old Testament tells the story of Naaman, an honorable man in the nation of Syria and captain of the army. But it also says that he was a leper. In one of his battles against Israel, Naaman had conquered a Jewish girl whom he had made a servant to his wife in their household. One day the Jewish maiden suggested to her mistress that if Naaman could be with the prophet in Israel, he would be healed of his leprosy. At the servant girl’s suggestion Naaman came to see the prophet and was met by one of his messengers who told him to dip in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. Enraged by such a strange idea, the honorable captain rejected the command. Later he was persuaded by one of his own servants to obey the command. After dipping the seventh time in the Jordan River, Naaman was healed (2 Kings 5:1-14).

Does anyone read this account and believe that Naaman merited or earned this gift of healing from God? Does anyone deny that the captain was healed by the gracious will and blessing of God? The goal of this event was to display God’s power and convince Naaman “that there is a prophet in Israel” (1 Kings 5:8). It was not to pay a debt or fulfill an obligation to Naaman for traveling from Syria to Israel and on to the Jordan to dip seven times. The prominent soldier was made whole by God’s grace—contingent, of course, on obedient faith.

How could anyone read this story and believe that men who obey God to be baptized have earned the forgiveness of sins? Why would they not agree that a baptized believer, in the same way as Naaman, is saved by grace? Does God owe a man salvation because he walks to the front of an auditorium or even ten miles to a river to confess Christ and be baptized? It takes a rather unusual kind of reasoning to

draw this conclusion. The sense in which the Bible speaks of salvation by works is that God owes it to man as a matter of debt if man keeps God’s law perfectly. Otherwise, “Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them” (see Rom 4:1-8; Gal 3:10-11).

But no man, other than Jesus, has lived perfectly under God’s law. “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” and His perfection (Rom 3:23). This means that all men by works are under God’s curse and, as Naaman, must come to God’s prophet to receive cleansing. The prophet of God today is Jesus (Heb 1:1-2; Acts 3:22-23) and all who come to Him must believe and be baptized. Jesus Himself said: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

The man who walks into the waters of baptism does exactly what Naaman did. First, he believes both the promise and command of God. Secondly, he submits to God’s will and obeys him. This is what Paul in the epistle to the Romans called the “obedience of faith.” He tells the recipients of this letter both at the beginning and end of the letter that the scriptures were revealed to bring the “obedience of faith” to all nations and that he was commissioned as an apostle to teach all nations the “obedience of faith” (see Rom. 1:5; 16:26). When he proclaims in this letter the gospel as God’s power “unto salvation to everyone that believes” (Rom. 1:16), he has no intentions of eliminating obedience to baptism or of teaching the reformation theology of “faith alone.”

But someone might ask: what does being dipped in water have to do with forgiveness? And what, they could also ask, did dipping in the Jordan River seven times have to do with being healed of leprosy? The connection is that men manifest before God the “obedience of faith” when they keep His commandments. And men who by faith are baptized obey God’s command and receive His promise of forgiveness (see Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

But beyond this, note that baptism puts believers into Christ: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ”—who Himself is the “gift” of God’s grace (Gal 3:26-27; Rom 5:15). And, secondly, those “who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death”—where His blood was shed (Rom 6:3-4). When sinners by faith are baptized into Christ and into His death, they come to the cross—the ultimate expression of God’s grace (Eph 2:13-18). It is in Christ Jesus that sinners are redeemed and forgiven by the riches of God’s grace through the blood of Jesus (Eph 1:7).