

on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden. One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists His will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God...?' (NIV)

Let's also read Hosea 2:23.

"And I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, 'Thou art my people;' and they shall say, 'Thou art my God.'" (KJV)

Paul reached back to some historical examples about the Jews (or Israel) and Gentiles to explain that God is ultimately in charge of *everything* — that His power is sovereign. The Jews apparently believed that God was indebted to them and *owed* them salvation. Paul explained that God owes man nothing. Unfortunately however, the Jews prejudice against Christ caused them to reject His system of righteousness (Romans 9:30-33). Failing to teach the necessity of water baptism because we believe that to do so *restricts* God is an assumption that *we* have the power to deny God His divine right of choice. We have no such power! He gave us exact instructions as to the way we are to access the shed blood of His dear Son. He even commanded us to tell others about that way of salvation (Matthew 28:18-20). To believe that *we* have the *power* to *confine* or *restrict* God is like a vessel complaining against the one who made it (Romans 9:20-21). Who among us has the *arrogance* to *actually believe* that s/he has the power to restrict what God can or cannot do *because* of what s/he teaches? This argument is the height of arrogance. Are *any* of us willing to tell God that He *cannot* show mercy to whomever He chooses? Are you? Not me! I believe that God has charged me to tell others that the way to access His Son's blood is through burial in the watery grave of baptism. Past that — it's not my call. It's *God's* divine choice — and nothing *I* do or say can ever take that away from Him! But *I will* continue to teach others that burial in the watery grave of baptism *is* essential for salvation. I'll teach that because that's what the Scriptures say!

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Have a joyous holiday season.***

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DILIGENCE

"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11

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Five Reasons To Teach That Water Baptism Is Essential For Salvation

The last two issues of *Diligence* have discussed the significance of the blood of Christ and how the Scriptures instruct us to access that redeeming blood by being buried in the watery grave of baptism for the remission of our sins. In addition to the reasons we've already discussed in the previous issues, there are several more reasons that simply cannot be denied when we look further into God's Word. In this issue we'll discuss five of those reasons. Let's begin with the **first** by looking at a very familiar Scripture — Matthew 28:18-20.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (KJV)

Since these were the final words that Jesus spoke to those of us who would believe in Him, we might call these words our "marching orders" or in other words — what it is that He expects us to do. He *could* have said; "Go ye therefore and show the love of God to all of those with whom you associate. Teaching them to love God and their neighbor." He didn't *say* that! In His *parting* words, He chose instead to tell us to "...*teach all nations baptizing them*...."

Some say that there are only two commandments given to us in the New Testament. Those two being "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and the second being to "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt. 22:37 & 39). We must realize that these words were spoken by Jesus in response to an effort by the Pharisees to *trap* Him into saying that one commandment was more important than another. So when we read these words of Jesus *in context*, it is evident that He named these two as the *greatest* commandments because it would be completely impossible to *keep* them without understanding the others. How could we possibly love God with all of our heart, soul and mind without having any desire to know exactly what it is that He expects of us in order to love Him in such an all consuming way? So while these are certainly the *greatest* commandments, they are not the *only* ones since obedience to them requires an understanding of all that He tells us to do in order to serve Him.

Furthermore, if we teach that because Jesus said that these two are the *greatest* commandments, they are therefore the *only* commandments, then we *deny* that Matthew 28:18-20 is a *command* given by Jesus Himself. Who among us wants to be guilty of teaching that the Great Commission doesn't apply to *all* of us? Do you? Not me! I'm going to teach that He did in fact tell *me* to "go and teach and baptize." I'm going to *teach* that, because that's what the Scriptures say.

A **second** reason to teach that burial in the watery grave of baptism for the remission of sins is essential for salvation is the account of Saul as told by Paul himself in Acts 22:1-16. We recall that Saul had quite a "spiritual experience" on his way to Damascus. After which, he was told to go to Damascus and wait there for Ananias to come to him. You can read the rest of that account in Acts 9:1-18. Sometime later however, after being arrested in Jerusalem, Paul was defending himself before an angry crowd and was telling them about the encounter he had experienced on that road and how Ananias had come to him in Damascus. He then told the crowd that Ananias spoke these words to him:

"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16 NIV)

If we teach that salvation is possible as the result of some "religious experience or feeling" rather than at the moment of our burial in the watery grave of baptism, then we would have to say that Saul was saved *before* his sins were forgiven. I doubt that *any* of us can tell of a "spiritual experience" that would rival that of Saul's, yet it clearly did not wash away his sins. This Scripture above is *very* clear that Saul's sins were forgiven *when he was baptized*, not when he had the "spiritual experience" on the road to Damascus. So can we really teach that the Scriptures say that we can be saved *before* our sins are forgiven? Can you? Not me! I'm going to teach that burial in the watery grave of baptism *is the act* that saves me and provides remission for my sins because that's what the Scriptures say.

The **third** reason is a lesson from the Old Testament. In II Kings 5:1-13, we read about Naaman, a commander in the army of King Aram. He was a highly respected and great man — but he had leprosy. We don't have space to tell the whole story here, but he went to Elisha to be cured of his leprosy. We'll pick up the account there:

"So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.' But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?' So he

turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'! So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.'" (II Kings 5:9-14 NIV)

Accepting that water baptism for the remission of our sins is essential for salvation, is very similar to this story of Naaman. It's such a simple thing to do. Do we really want to be like Naaman and demand some *great* thing to do? How about you? Not me!! I'm going to teach that the simple act of water baptism is what washes away my sins and saves me because that's what the Scriptures say.

The **fourth** reason to teach that water baptism is essential for salvation is that every conversion example listed for us in the New Testament mentions that the person(s) was baptized. There was a chart enclosed with issue 14 of *Diligence* (available on line — web address listed at bottom of page 4) that listed cases of conversions as told in the book of Acts. Without exception, baptism was mentioned in *every* instance. The consistent inclusion of water baptism in those conversion accounts *shouts* of its necessity. We won't take the space here to list again each of those instances. We recommend that you go on line if you wish to review the "Case Studies of Conversions" chart that was enclosed with that previous issue. With such overwhelming evidence that water baptism was *always* a part of the conversion accounts listed in the New Testament, is there any way that we can deny its necessity? Can you? Not me! I'm going to teach that it *is* indeed, essential for salvation because that's what the Scriptures say.

A **fifth** reason to teach that water baptism is essential for salvation is the desire to not fall victim to errant reasoning that is circulating through the churches of today. There's a popular argument currently being used to substantiate that we *cannot* teach that water baptism is essential for salvation because doing so "confines" or "restricts" God. This argument says that if we *insist* that the Scriptures teach that one *cannot* be saved *without* the benefit of being buried in the watery grave of baptism for the remission of sins we in fact, make it impossible for God to save those who have *not* been immersed in the water of baptism. Those who subscribe to this argument *against* the necessity of water baptism generally jump to that endless list of hypothetical discussions. Discussions such as — what if a person is *on his way* to be baptized and gets hit by a truck and killed? Or what if a person in some remote country never heard the gospel? Or on and on and on. Let's look at Romans 9:14-20 to begin our discussion of this belief.

"What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend