

preaching, but to the message proclaimed. Taking the philosophy-religion at its word, Paul says that God showed His power by taking that which they called foolishness and saving the world thereby (v.27). Thus by choosing that which the world despises, God has brought to nothing that which the world adores (v.28).

Carried out to its practical conclusion

philosophy-religion says, "But of us are ye in yourselves who of nature are made unto us wisdom, and unrighteousness, and rebellion, and destruction." But God through Paul reveals, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (vv.30f.).

MORE THAN SINCERITY

July 19, 1959

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism."—Acts 19:3

To understand the opening verses of Acts 19 we must look at the closing verses of Acts 18. Apollos was probably a young man who had never seen John the Baptist. Being mighty in the Scriptures (18:24) he was familiar with Isaiah 40:3 quoted by John the Baptist as referring to his own ministry. From some disciple of John he had heard and believed that John was the herald of a new era of God. On that basis he had received John's baptism (18:25). In Ephesus Apollos said nothing about Jesus, but only of the things of the Lord [Jehovah] (18:25), until two Christian disciples "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (18:26). They told him of the ministry of Jesus as the anointed one of God for salvation. Henceforth in Corinth, having himself "believed through grace," Paul helped other Christians by expounding his knowledge of the Old Testament, showing that Jesus is the Christ (18:27-28).

Apparently Apollos had made some converts to John's baptism prior to his own experience of faith in Jesus. For when Paul arrived in Ephesus he found twelve men who knew only John's baptism. He proceeded to preach to them

a full gospel, in which they believed and upon which basis they were baptized.

This incident serves to point up the fact that sincerity alone in your religion is insufficient for your salvation. These twelve men, like Apollos, were sincere in their faith. But it was without sufficient knowledge, and, therefore, faith in the wrong thing.

How often have you heard the statement that it does not make any difference what you believe so long as you are sincere in it? Our scripture proves the utter falseness of such an idea. Therefore, let us follow this incident as we consider, first, the evidence of salvation; second, the essence of salvation; third, the experience of salvation.

First, note the evidence of salvation. Paul asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost [Spirit] since ye believed?" (19:2). This is a bad translation. In Greek both "received" and "believed" are in the same tense (aorist). Thus they refer to the same event. Therefore, it should read, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Hence Paul did not speak of belief as at one time, with a subsequent receiving of the Holy Spirit, or as in modern terminology a "second blessing."

Repeatedly throughout the book of Acts we see the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit coming upon believers as a tangible evidence that they had been saved. Therefore, Paul's question, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Do you have evidence that you have been saved?

This is a question to which countless millions seek an answer. One of the largest requests from you for a sermon was with respect to "Present Tense Salvation" on John 5:24, telling how to be saved and know it. Such assurance is the work of the Holy Spirit. In the first century He came upon believers in tangible, outward signs which they could understand. With no basis of understanding otherwise, the Holy Spirit accommodated His manifestation to their need. But since the first century there is no authenticated evidence of such. Instead the Holy Spirit gives His witness in our hearts. He inspired the New Testament which sets forth plainly the requirements of salvation (cf. John 3:16-18; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:10; Eph. 2:8-10). When we comply with these conditions of repentance and faith, God seals us unto salvation and gives "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Cor. 1:21; 5:5; Eph. 1:13f.). In I John 5:9-10 we read, ". . . this is the witness of God which he hath testified in his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness [Holy Spirit] in himself . . ." As to your assurance, depend not upon your feelings or conduct of the moment. Be certain that you have believed on the Son of God. In that conviction the Holy Spirit testifies that you are a child of God.

To Paul's question the men in Ephesus replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." They did not deny having believed. They simply knew nothing of the Holy Spirit. The import of this is that they *had believed* and sincerely so. But their belief, like multitudes today, was in the wrong thing. Hence they, like many of you, had no assurance of salvation.

Second, consider the essence of salvation. Paul questioned further, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" Literally, on what basis were you baptized? Their reply, "Unto [on the basis of] John's baptism." The word "baptism" refers not to the act but to the meaning of their baptism. For what reason were they baptized?

This suggests an examination of John's baptism and its meaning. Actually the preaching of John may be divided into two distinct sections. Since Luke records the fullest account of his preaching, let us turn to his Gospel for a moment. In chapter 3 he begins by setting forth John "preaching the baptism of repentance" (v.3). This preaching he declares as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy (40:3-4) of the forerunner of Christ and of the Kingdom of God. The second distinct message (Lk. 16f) tells of Him who will baptize "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In between these are practical exhortations as to the conduct of those who would be ready to receive Christ and His Kingdom (vv.10-14).

Since the men of Ephesus knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, apparently they heard from Apollos only the first part of John's message. They had believed it, and submitted to baptism as an evidence of their willingness to become a part of that Kingdom. They had heard a gospel, but only a partial one. They had believed as far as they knew, but it was largely with regard to moral reformation. They knew nothing of Jesus as Saviour or of the new birth and of the Holy Spirit's seal unto salvation. Their faith ended with the baptism of repentance from sin, but it knew nothing of the death, resurrection, and mediatorial reign of Christ.

Would that I did not have to make the following statement! But I believe that there are multitudes of people in our churches who are not Christian in the New Testament sense of the word. They know John's baptism and no other. Honestly and sincerely they have followed the light as far as they see it.

But half-gospels, rites, and ceremonies have blinded them to the fuller light that is in Christ.

Have you been baptized with John's baptism of willingness to be a part of God's Kingdom, with no dynamic whereby you may become such? Is your baptism simply based upon your desire to be a better man? Have you mistaken John's words to the multitude—be charitable (Lk. 3:11), be honest (v.13), be peaceable and law abiding (v.14)—as the means of salvation rather than as an evidence of salvation? Have you sought baptism because it seemed to be the popular thing to do, or that your parents were church members, with no thought of repentance or of any saving knowledge of Christ (vv.7-10)?

Have you been baptized with John's baptism without looking beyond the watery grave to what Christ requires of you (vv.16f)? Or was it simply upon a superficial knowledge of the gospel with no concept as to what Christ has done for you?

New Testament baptism has two distinct meanings. It is a symbol of what Christ has done for your salvation—namely, His death, burial, and resurrection. It is a symbol of what you have done with respect to Him and what you intend to do for Him. It is a symbol of your death to your old life and your resurrection to walk in a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4). It is these two things and nothing more!

These can be symbolized in baptism only by immersion. Otherwise baptism loses its meaning. No Baptist has ever written a Greek lexicon. Yet no lexicon defines baptism other than as immersion. The Greek Orthodox Church immerses to this hour. They know the meaning of their own language! Baptism by pouring or sprinkling did not exist until the third century after Christ. In the thirteenth century sprinkling was adopted as the official form of baptism in the Roman Catholic Church. I have seen many cathedrals in Europe built prior to that time with baptisteries used for immersion.

Therefore two things are essential for New Testament baptism—its mode and its meaning. Change its meaning and the mode is empty. Change the mode and it loses its significance. It was when the New Testament meaning was lost that the mode was changed. When men changed the meaning of baptism from symbol to sacrament, or as necessary for salvation, the mode gradually underwent a change, reaching its consummation in the thirteenth century.

The Greek New Testament knows a baptism of believers only as a symbol and not as a means of salvation. Baptism was administered only to those who consciously had made an expression of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Thus there is no infant baptism in the New Testament.

Why have we dwelt so long upon this matter? It is in order to emphasize that no matter how sincere you may be, if your belief be in a partial or perverted gospel, then, like the men in Ephesus, you have no assurance of salvation. The essence of salvation is faith not in good works or in a rite or ceremony. It is faith in what the death, resurrection, and mediatorship of Jesus Christ—and in Him alone.

Third, note the experience of salvation. Paul said, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus." He preached unto them a full gospel. Hearing it "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Note that it does not say *re-baptized*. They had never been *baptized*, only dipped in water. They had used the correct mode but not the correct meaning. Our Baptist forefathers were called Anabaptists or re-baptizers. Those coming to them who had been sprinkled for salvation either in infancy or adulthood were immersed *after* they had become believers in Christ through a personal faith. They, like Paul, did not re-baptize. They simply administered New Testament baptism to those who for the first time had become qualified subjects for

baptism. Baptism itself does not save. It merely says in symbolic language that one has been saved by grace through faith.

So Paul did not begin by asking these men, "Have ye been baptized?" He asked, "Do you have assurance of salvation?" Discovering that they did not because of an insufficient experience, he led them to know the true essence of salvation. Then when they believed in Jesus, and only then, did he baptize them. It was then that they received the Holy Spirit as an evidence of their salvation.

In conclusion, trust not in an inade-

quate knowledge of the plan of salvation. Rely not upon good works, rites, or ceremonies—no not baptism itself. But turn in repentance and faith to Jesus who alone can save. Profess your faith publicly. Symbolize it in the New Testament baptism that you may know that you have been obedient to the first command which our Lord gave to the Christian. Then go on growing in grace, knowledge, and service for Christ. Thus you shall have an abiding assurance of the joy of your salvation—not through an ordinance, but by the peace of God which passes all understanding through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

MORE THAN PROSPERITY

July 26, 1959

"For a certain Demetrius . . . brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, *Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth*"—Acts 19:24-25

Ephesus, the center of the worship of Diana or Artemis, the goddess of fertility and sex, was a city of wickedness and wealth. John in exile on Patmos may well have drawn his description of wicked Babylon from Ephesus where he lived for many years. It was a city of "the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls . . . fine linen . . . purple . . . silk . . . and scarlet . . . all manner vessels of ivory . . . wheat beasts . . . sheep . . . horses, and chariots, and slaves, and *souls of men*" (Rev. 18:12f., author's italics).

For two years Paul labored there, "so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). Toward the close of this ministry he described it as an open door of opportunity with "many adversaries" (I Cor. 16:9). From Acts 19 we learn that the open door was the

opportunity to preach the gospel in this center of wickedness. The chief adversary was entrenched wealth. Thus Ephesus stands as a cardinal example of our theme that a city needs more than prosperity. With all her wealth Ephesus was still a pagan city of sinfulness and luxury. The poet might well have had her in mind when he penned,

"Ill fares the land, and to
hastening ill a prey,
Where wealth accumulates,
and men decay."

This is true whether it be a nation, a city, or a man. No matter how poor or how rich you may be, you still need Jesus. And, like Ephesus, your wealth, whether great or small, may be your greatest obstacle on the way toward eternal life. Therefore, with Ephesus as our example, let us consider, first, the deification of wealth; second, the delusion of wealth; third, the dedication of wealth.

First, note the deification of wealth. It was in the month of May when all of Proconsular Asia gathered in Ephesus to worship the goddess Diana. Apparently Paul's evangelistic work was successful.