

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH “AFTER BAPTISM, THEN WHAT?”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Welcome to our series of lessons on faithfulness. These lessons are designed to encourage us to never ever give up, to always remain true to Jesus, and to find true purpose and meaning in the kingdom of Christ. In teaching someone the Gospel, there is no doubt about the importance of baptism. It is correct to stress that baptism is essential, because over and over again in the New Testament, such is the teaching and preaching of Jesus and His followers. Think about it. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” In the first Gospel sermon in Acts 2:37-38 when the Jews were cut to the heart and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?,” they were asking, “What can we do to overcome sin?” Peter said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” New Testament preaching emphasizes that baptism is essential to salvation. It is something we do because God said for us to do it.

But in our efforts to stress the essentiality of baptism, we also need to tell people what to do after they have been baptized. This lesson, therefore, is titled, “After Baptism, Then What?” Suppose a person has obeyed what God commanded regarding baptism. A person has heard the Word, believed in Jesus, repented in order to change his life, and is willing to confess Christ before men and be baptized in water. After a person obeys God in baptism, then what must that person do? It is just as important to tell people that baptism is essential to salvation as it is to tell people what to do after they come out of the waters of baptism. A new babe in Christ (one who has just obeyed the Gospel) should never be left to fend for himself. He needs to know—now that he is a child of God and has obeyed the Gospel in baptism—what he needs to do with his life, and what God requires of him. So, let’s think for a few moments about what a child of God must do after baptism.

Once a person has obeyed what God has said in regard to baptism, in order to be a faithful child of God a person needs to realize the high calling and privilege of being a child of God. A person must realize what an honor and blessing it is to be a child of God the Father Who created all things. In Isaiah 62:1-2 the prophet wrote concerning the honor of the name God gave us,

“For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name.”

God is talking to His people, and He says that this will be a glorious thing. The Gentiles will see it, and God’s people will be given a new name. In understanding what to do after baptism, we need to realize that we wear a new name. It is the most wonderful honor and privilege in the world to be called a Christian. Notice the words of Acts 11:26—“And when he had found him [Saul], he [Barnabas] brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole

year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” It is an honor and a privilege to wear the glorious name, “Christian.” The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:9 that we have been called out of darkness so that we “may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Matthew 5:16 says that we now have the honor and privilege to be a light unto the world. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” We wear the only name that can glorify God on this Earth—the name Christian. The Bible says that this means that our purpose, then, is to live every day for Jesus—whether we eat, drink, or whatever we do, when we take upon ourselves the name of Christian, we are to do all “to the glory of God.” Here’s why it is such a wonderful privilege to wear that name. Christians, and only Christians, are partakers of the heavenly calling—the calling that comes from God through the Scriptures, and that gives our lives real meaning and purpose. In Hebrews 3:1 we read, “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.” We have the privilege of partaking of the heavenly calling—what God had planned from Genesis 3 when sin entered into the world, and what worked down through the scheme of history throughout the Bible, through David, Joshua, and other great men and women of the Bible. God has now completed that, and the heavenly calling is the calling of the Christian. Paul said, “If then you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Do not set your mind on things of this earth, but rather on things above” (Col. 3:1-2). This is why we must be faithful unto death, and must never give up on the Christian walk. We have been called to live lives of glory, virtue, and honor. We are to put on the fruits of the Spirit—love, kindness, mercy, goodness, and gentleness. And we are to put off the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 22). We are to crucify the old man (Col. 3:9), and we are to take up the new man.

Here is what is wonderful. Along with being called with virtue and glory, we get a second chance. The Bible says that if anyone is in Christ, he is “a new creation,” and that “old things have been washed away; behold all has become new” (2 Cor. 5:17-21). The slate is wiped clean. All that we have done before is in the past. We must put those things behind us so that we can now live a life of holiness to God. So what must we do after we obey God in baptism? We need to realize the high calling of what it means to be a child of God. We need to determine to live every day faithfully before Jesus. It is sad that some are willing to endure for only a short time. We need to endure always in the Cause of Christ. In fact, to be saved we must endure to the end. In Matthew 24:13 Jesus said, “He who endures to the end shall be saved.” The end means that we must never ever give up on Christ and Christianity. Revelation 2 tells us we must determine that—no matter what comes our way, no matter what happens, and no matter what trials we face—nothing is more important to us. We must make up our minds to never ever give up on Jesus. If we make that our mindset, then when problems and troubles arise, it will not be nearly as difficult to deal with them.

Look at the words of Revelation 2:10, and consider what some of those Christians were going through. “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” What kept these Christians going? They already had determined that in difficult circumstances they would follow Jesus. Their motivation was that if they would not give up, then God would take care of them. The same is true for us today. In Luke 9:62 Jesus said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” When we grab ahold of Christianity, we must continually look ahead. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the

sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1-2). When we become children of God, we must fix our gaze on Jesus and the prize, and determine never to give up. Does that mean we will not sin? No. That is not what I’m saying. Does this mean that there will never be times when we get down or grow discouraged? No, because there will be. But if we determine after baptism that, no matter what, we are going to live faithfully, then we will have an easier time because we will have a clearer purpose and mindset to take us through the difficulties of this life. We need to have the attitude of Paul. If there is one person we can look up to during the trials and troubles of life, it is the apostle Paul. He came out of being a zealous Jew who was against Christ and Christianity (to the extreme!). He came out of that, obeyed the Gospel, and immediately began to teach others about Jesus. He went from place to place, as the Book of Acts tells us, preaching Christ to the people and showing from the Scriptures that He was the Messiah. What did the people do to Paul? They stoned him, mocked him, laughed at him, and ran him out of various cities. How did Paul feel about faithfulness? Look at 2 Timothy 4. If there is a passage that can encourage us today to be faithful, sure it is verses 6-8 of this passage.

“I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. “

Paul asked, “What is my life like?” He said, “I’ve already been poured out as a drink offering. I’m here, and I know my departure is near. But I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, I have a crown of life laid up for me.” What is required of us? We must realize what an honor and privilege it is to be a Christian, and determine ahead of time to be faithful unto death—no matter what comes.

Then there is this. We also must realize that in being faithful unto death and understanding what to do after baptism, one of the greatest things a person can do to grow and overcome sin is to shun evil companions. All of us have had people in our lives who were bad influences. When we obey the Gospel, some of those people can still get back into our lives if we let them. The best advice, then, is to shun those evil companions. The psalmist said, “Happy is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord” (Psalm 1:2). We do not want to sit where we once sat or walk where we once walked. We do not want to be in the path of sinners, but want to stay away from that. To overcome sin and be faithful unto death, after baptism we need to shun ungodly influences with which we were once involved. In 1 Corinthians 15:33 we are told, “Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good morals.” As a child of God, we must do our best to develop good morals, good Christian principles, and good standards. What is something that can prevent that? It is evil companions. People in the world who do things that are ungodly can corrupt our good morals. So, we must shun those people. We must be aware of worldly minded friends. Our strongest friendships and associations must be with God’s children. Ephesians 2:16-19 says that we are the family of God. In 1 Peter 2 we are told to walk in the footsteps of Christ. We are to come out of the world and not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). We need to make friends of God’s children. As the song says, we must “help those who are weak.” One of the best pieces of advice I can offer is that if you have obeyed God in baptism, if you want to grow, and if you want to do God’s will, then find someone who is a member of the church where you attend. Grab hold of that person, and encourage him to do the same. Both of you—the stronger brother and the one who has recently obeyed the Gospel—can then encourage one another to continue to do God’s will. As you look throughout history, one of the things that caused God’s people so many problems was an asso-

ciation with those in the world. God told the Israelites when they went into the Promised Land, "Do not have any association with these heathens. Wipe them out and completely get rid of them." Their failure to do that caused great problems then, as well as in generations following them. It is always the case that when God's people have close associations with those in the world, it will be harder and more difficult to live a faithful life for Jesus every day.

Also, consider that after baptism, one of the things on which we need to focus is making sure that we avoid questionable places. We must avoid places that, in our minds and within the principles of Scripture, might be viewed as questionable. The Bible teaches that we are not to be friends with the world, or those who are in the world. In James 4:4 we are told, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." This does not mean that we will not have neighbors or others around us who are not Christians and whom we consider to be friends. It means that we cannot be closely tied to the world, and then claim to be faithful to God. We cannot pursue the desires and passions of the world. In 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 we are told, "Come out from among them and be separate. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." We have been called out of the world. Here is the reason why. In 1 John 2:16-17 we are told, "All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." We must stand up with moral courage and not get involved in questionable practices or be where we ought not to be. We must stand for something, and we must draw a line somewhere. Too many people will never stand for anything, and never will draw that moral line. Christians cannot be like that. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 we are told, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." We need to prove that things are right or wrong, and then we must have the courage to stand behind our decision. When we prove something, then we can stand on that which is good while abstaining from that which is evil.

Let me make this point practical for you. Here are some things that we need to avoid after baptism. A Christian would not want to be caught dancing or in a dance hall. That kind of revelry and licentiousness is not authorized for a child of God (Gal. 5). It's actually condemned by the lustful desires that such movements of the body create. In Galatians 5, the words for revelry, licentiousness, and lasciviousness are used to give us an image of what dancing (and other similar movements of the body) would be like. You would not want to go to a place where that is the passion and desire of people who are present. A Christian would not want to be caught in such a place. You would not want to go to honky tonks, beer joints, and places like those. How could you be a faithful child of God and go to places like those where alcohol is served, where people go to have a good time, and where lust, desire, and passion are the main courses on the menu? You do not want to go places like that. You do not want to gambling places either. Casinos and gambling halls (even those in places like gas stations with gambling machines) are places from which Christians should abstain. The Bible never authorizes gambling. Gambling always causes people problems. You should not want to be found in a liquor store. Even if it was the only place you could go, you still should not want to go there. You should not be found in places where immodesty is rampant. How could a child of God—after having obeyed the Gospel and knowing what the Scriptures say about modesty (1 Tim. 2) and how we are to dress with propriety and in a godly way (1 Pet. 3)—put on a two-piece bikini and go down to the beach. You need to avoid places like beaches and mixed swimming. You need to abstain from those kinds of things. You should not be found watching movies or television shows, or

listening to music, that promote ungodliness by using ungodly language or exhibiting filth. After baptism, avoiding questionable places is one of the things that Christians need to do. We must prove everything. We must stand up for something. And we must not be involved in these types of things.

Here is something else that can help you greatly. After baptism, one of the things you need to do is to attend all the services of the church. You need to be sure that every time the doors are open, you will be there to learn, to worship God, to have fellowship, and to find encouragement by the preaching of God's Word. In Hebrews 10:25 we are told, "Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." We are not to forsake the assembly. Christians in the first century were assembling to encourage one another. And when we today assemble on the first day of the week, Christians are not to forsake that assembly. Someone might say, "The word 'forsake' means 'to abandon,' and as long as I do not keep missing church, then I'm OK." But the same word is used in Matthew 27:46 where Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Did God abandon Christ? No, it was a temporary, one-time forsaking. The same principle applies to missing the assembly. You can forsake the assembly by just missing one time. We need to realize that the command is for us not to stop attending with the saints. Look at the encouragement we receive by being present to partake of the Lord's Supper. That ought to motivate us to live every day for Jesus. The singing of the songs ought to be uplifting and encouraging. The preaching of the Gospel should help us to live a straight and narrow life. Giving teaches us what life is about, and how we need to give with a purpose. The prayers that we pray to God also encourage us. What would anyone want to miss out on something like that? Because of the benefits we receive, we should not want to do anything that might cause us to miss out on those benefits.

But we also need to realize that if we want to be faithful and remain true to God after baptism, we must have an earnest desire to go home to Heaven. We must realize that this world is not our home. We are not citizens here. More than anything, we must have a desire to go to Heaven. Ask yourself if, more than anything, you want to go to Heaven. If you do not, then you do not have your priorities correct. The Scriptures say that we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul viewed himself as being between a rock and a hard place. He wanted to stay and help the Christians, but he also wanted to go home to be with God. That needs to be our mindset and mentality. More than anything we must be faithful so that we can go home and live with God someday. Romans 8:18 encourages us to be faithful to God—no matter what. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That passage clearly teaches that Heaven will be worth it all! But we must have the desire. We must want to go to Heaven and be with God more than life, money, lust, passion, or anything else. Revelation 21:3-4 gives us an image of Heaven as a place where there will be no more sorrow, no more death, nor more crying, and no more sin. All the former things will have passed away. We need to have the desire to be clothed with a heavenly home. Paul said that if this tent (our body) is destroyed, we have a building from God that is a house "not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens." Don't you want to go to that place? In 1 Corinthians 15 we see Heaven described as a place where we will put off the immortality of the body and take upon ourselves immortality. It is a place where we will be changed, and where we will not have to worry about corruption. It is a place where we will be with God forever. Our true citizenship is in Heaven, "for which we eagerly wait for the Lord Jesus" (Phil. 3:20-21).

Think about it right now. After baptism, what is your life like? You are like a wayward traveler who is on a long journey and is trying to get home. Have you ever been on a long journey? Maybe you go a long distance on business. But the whole time you wish you were home. Perhaps you don't like the place where you had to go, but you had to be there. The entire time you are thinking about home, and you are making plans for when you get there. You are preparing to make the journey as easily as you can. More than anything you want to go home, see your family, and be with your friends. You want to be in an area that is comfortable to you. This life needs to be like that. We must be like that weary traveler who, more than anything, wants to go home to be with God.

If that is your mentality, you will do your best to make it home to Heaven. When sin enters in, you will make it right with God. Today if you have not obeyed the Gospel, we want you to know that God loves you more than you can imagine. The Bible says that God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). God loved us so much that He gave His Son to die on the cruel cross of Calvary for us (Jn. 3:16). God has shown us the way of salvation. The Scriptures teach that a person must be willing to hear the Word of God. In Romans 10:17 we are told, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." To be saved, we must listen to what God says in the Bible. Once we realize that the Bible is our only authority, we then must believe in Jesus. John 8:24 says that unless we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we will perish in our sins. Having believed in Christ, we then must be willing to repent. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Once we have changed our minds and our actions, then we must confess the name of Jesus before men. Romans 10:10 tells us, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Having made that good confession, we must be baptized in water. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism does "also now save us." Jesus said that unless a person is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven (Jn. 3:3-5). If you have done those things, and have obeyed what God says regarding salvation, we hope that all your life you will determine to "be faithful unto death" and realize what a privilege it is to be a Christian. We hope you will determine to never ever give up, that you will shun evil companions, avoid questionable places, and make it your earnest desire to go home to Heaven to be with God. If that is your attitude, our hope and prayer today is that you will never change that attitude, and that you will be motivated and challenged every day to live faithfully to the Gospel of Christ. Our hope and prayer today is that if you are not a child of God, you will obey the Gospel. And if you are child of God, we hope that after baptism you will remain faithful unto death."

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “AFTER BAPTISM, THEN WHAT?”

1. What message did Christ send Christians through the apostle John in Revelation 2:10?
2. According to Acts 22:16, what role does baptism play in a person's salvation?
3. According to 1 Peter 3:21, how important is baptism in a person's salvation?
4. According to Mark 16:16, what will happen to a person if he or she is not baptized?
5. In Isaiah 62:2, what did God promise His people?
6. According to Acts 11:2, what “new name” did God give His people?
7. What, according to Christ's statement in Matthew 5:16, are Christians to do?
8. According to Hebrews 3:1, Christians are partakers of something. What is it?
9. In Matthew 24:13 Jesus said that something will happen to those people who endure to the end. What is it?
10. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, what happens when a person becomes a Christian?
11. What was Jesus trying to get across to us in Luke 9:62 (“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”)?
12. What important message did Paul present in 1 Corinthians 15:33?
13. What does 2 Corinthians 6:14 command Christians not to do?
14. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, what did God tell His people to do?
15. In 1 John 2:16-17 we see three things listed that are “not of the Father, but of the world.” What are they?
16. According to James 4:4, what is “friendship with the world”?
17. In 1 Thessalonians 5:22, what did Paul command Christians to do?
18. What does Hebrews 10:25 admonish Christians **not** to do?
19. What does Matthew 6:33 admonish Christians **to** do?
20. In your own words, how would you express the message of Romans 8:18 (“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”)?
21. According to Philippians 3:20, where is a Christian's true citizenship?
22. According to the Bible, what five things must a person do to be saved from sin?