



# The Letter

## THAT WAS NEVER ANSWERED

**THE LETTER THAT WAS NEVER ANSWERED** (Now over ten years later, and the letter still goes unanswered):

*THE SWORD AND STAFF* is a religious paper devoted to the restoration of simple, undenominational, New Testament Christianity and does not cater to any denominational position. The Scriptures are simply taken at their face value and expounded as such. In the course of the paper being published, samples are sent out. A sample copy fell into the hands of the Baptist minister whose letter appears first below. The second letter was written by the editor of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. The whole discussion hinges around an article that appeared in the sample paper which was received. Simply stated, the article concluded that ACTS 2:38 meant what it said. The Baptist minister disagreed with this. We will let the readers judge as to which letter presents the truth of God.

### ACTS 2:38

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).”

*“IF your BAPTISM is essential for Salvation or remission of Sins, then the man who performs the Baptism is just as essential in God’s Plan of Salvation as Jesus Christ. Since a person can’t baptize themselves, having to depend on another to do it for them or to them, the one performing the rite is co-equal with Jesus Christ, meaning that the Bible is not true and Romans 5:9 should have said, Justified by His blood and water Baptism; Ephesians 1:7—Redemption through His blood and*

*water. Baptism; Ephesians 2:14 should have said, We are made nigh by the blood of Christ and water Baptism; Colossians 1:14 should have read, Redemption through His blood and water Baptism; Hebrews 9:22 should read, Without shedding of blood and water Baptism is no remission of sins. I Peter 1:19 should have read, With the precious blood of Christ and water Baptism. Revelation 7:14 should have said, And have washed their robes and made white in the blood of the Lamb and wa-*

*ter Baptism. Revelation 12:11 should have read, And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and water Baptism (HOGWASH!).*

*"Mr. Gibbons, What you need is to get saved by Grace through faith, and that not of yourself, but the gift of God, Not of Works (baptism, etc.). Do me a favor and take our name off your mailing list. I'll stand on God's Word."*

*Rev. Lee O. Meadows  
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DEAR MR. MEADOWS:

It will not be necessary for me to remove your name from our mailing list. It was never added. What you received was a sample copy as it was so marked.

In reference to your "letter," in all honesty, sincerity, and humility, I believe your reasoning has jumped the track somewhere. You have rather pointedly expressed your position (and I get the impression, with contempt). If you will **take the time to read this**, in all kindness I wish to express my humble understanding. We need a little less heat and a little more light. Trying to defend unscriptural denominational positions usually produces a lot of heat (controversy) but not much light.

I gathered from your writing three things that stand out in your opposition to the idea that baptism is for the remission of sins. (1) If baptism is essential, that involves another person in a man's salvation (you said that would make him equal with Christ). (2) If baptism is essential, that means the various N.T. writers should have said so every time they mentioned the blood (justified by the blood and baptism, etc.) (3) You negate Acts 2:38 and say that baptism could not be essential because it is a work. If you will be kind enough to read it, I will now comment on these things.

(1) You implied that baptism could not be for the remission of sins because

it would involve someone else in another's salvation (someone to baptize him), thus making him equal to Christ. Now Mr. Meadows, do you really believe that? Paul said (and you did say you would stand on God's Word), "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21). Do you get the picture? It ties a lot of knots in your argument. God has ordained to save the world by the "foolishness of preaching." Who does the preaching? MAN, of course. That involves another person in a man's salvation. Paul further said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. 4:7).

(2) You said Romans 5:9 should have said, "Justified by His blood and water baptism" (as well as the other references) if baptism is for the remission of sins. Now Mr. Meadows, are you ready for the conclusion of your "logic"? The N.T. mentions many things as saving us (having to do with our salvation), I hereby list a few. We are saved by GRACE (Eph. 2:5), JESUS (Matt. 1:21), BLOOD (Rom. 5:9), THE NAME OF CHRIST (Acts 4:12), GOSPEL (I Cor. 15:1-4), LOVE OF THE TRUTH (II Thess. 2:10), SAVE YOURSELVES (Acts 2:40), FAITH (Acts 16:31), REPENTANCE (Acts 17:30), CONFESSION (Rom. 10:9,10), BAPTISM (I Pet. 3:21), CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD (Rom. 10:13), LIFE OF CHRIST (Rom. 5:10), THE WORD (Jas. 1:21), WORKS (Jas. 2:14, 17, 20, 24, 26), DOCTRINE (I Tim. 4:16), HOPE (Rom. 8:24), and ENDURING TO THE END (Matt. 24:13). Just because we don't find every one of these things mentioned in a single verse does not mean the ones omitted are excluded from being essential to salvation. All Scripture must be taken if we are really going to stand on God's Word, and the Bible must be understood in the light of itself. Your kind of argument would contend that if faith were essential, Rom. 5:9 would have to read,



“Justified by His blood and faith.” We are not ready for such an illogical conclusion, are we?

We are saved by the grace of God (unmerited favor), but I believe we must accept Christ before we can be saved, don't you? Otherwise, it would be a matter of universalism (everyone would be saved as they are) or predestination. I believe that man is a responsible, free-moral agent before God, don't you? I don't believe that man is a machine or robot.

Having truly trusted and genuinely repented of our sins, we must be baptized for the remission of sins—to get our sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Romans 6 teaches that we are baptized into the death of Christ. Rev. 1:5 states, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” If we are baptized to get our sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and the blood of Christ is the only thing that washes sins away, then the blood of Christ, spiritually speaking, is applied in the obedience of baptism. We are baptized into his death to get the benefits of his death. Then Paul says in Romans 6:5, “For IF we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

MR. MEADOWS, have you been baptized for the remission of your sins?

(3) Finally, you relegate baptism to a position of human works (not I), thus discarding it as a part of the plan of salvation. Evidently you have Eph. 2:8, 9, in mind. I am enclosing a booklet *Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered* which deals with this under one point. Please read pages 4 and 5. I trust that you will.

#### QUOTATION FROM BOOKLET

Others quote Ephesians 2:8, 9, trying to sidetrack baptism by calling it a work, and salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” Here is the full quotation. “For by grace are ye

saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast.”

Here we see the two “sides” of salvation—“For by GRACE are ye saved through FAITH.” The word GRACE means unmerited favor; here especially on the part of God toward man. We don't deserve salvation but God has offered it to us. So, everything associated with God may be summed up under grace. Then, there is man's side—“through FAITH.” Man's whole relationship to God is based on faith. Faith is the mainspring of every action. The inspired writer didn't say “faith only,” but he did say faith. This correctly sums up man's side of his dealings with God.

Now the “rub” supposedly comes when it says, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” This is applied by those who deny baptism as they pinpoint it as a work.

Well, what is the answer to this objection to baptism?

The answer is rather simple, as truth is many times. There are two kinds of works mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures, (1) Works of human merit, and (2) Works of faith. Works of human merit greatly characterized the Law of Moses. By this no man had really been justified, according to Paul (Galatians 2:16). The Law of Moses was very much like a firing squad: The wages of sin is death; all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and the soul that sinneth, it shall die. There was no escape. Man's goodness could not counteract his bad side to tip the scales in his favor. Death awaited. But the kind of works taught in the New Testament are works of faith. We are justified by faith as the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins, but it must be an obedient faith. The New Testament knows nothing of the common denominational doctrine of “faith only.” James in chapter 2 of his very practical epistle, having reference to works of

faith, says that faith without works is dead. The only time the expression "faith only" is found in the New Testament is to deny the doctrine of *faith only*. Listen to James 2:24, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *NOT BY FAITH ONLY*."

Good works of human merit can never take away sin or undo the past. It is conceivable that a person could reform and live a good moral life above reproach, approaching above sin, then die and go to hell. His heretofore unforgiven sins would still be upon him. Good works of human merit cannot take away your past sins. Only the blood of Christ can do this, "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Now, how in the world can people who object to baptism apply the "works" argument against it? Baptism is not a work of human merit or righteousness, it is a work of faith. We believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Then we identify our belief in this truth by a personal death to sin, a burial and a resurrection in baptism. Listen to Colossians 2:12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the *faith of the operation of God*, who hath raised him from the dead." And, what about Titus 3:5? "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38 is a parallel Scripture to this. He tells us that baptism is not a work of righteousness.

In fact, baptism is anything but a work of human righteousness, lest any man should boast. According to Acts 2:38 (22:16; Col. 2:11,12), we are baptized for the remission of sins—to get our sins washed away. Does human works do that? No, only the blood of Jesus. So, baptism is not a work of man, but it is God at work as the merits of the blood of Christ are spiritually applied for the sinner then. (*End of*

*quotation*).

You concluded your letter, signing your name "REV. Lee O. Meadows" (after saying, "I'll stand on God's Word"). Without being unduly critical, where is God's Word for this pretentious title, "REVEREND"? The apostles never once used it. In fact, in Paul's letters he calls himself a "bond servant." Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees about such vainglorious titles (Matthew 23:6-12). Holy and reverend is God's name—not man's (Ps. 111:9).

And where is God's Word for the name "BAPTIST" Church? (I speak in humility). The New Testament says that in "all things" Christ is to have the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). Party names are condemned as sinful along with the party spirit (denominationalism) (I Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-5). Who purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28)? Is he not worthy of all the glory?

MR. MEADOWS, much of the content of your "letter" was once my convictions, but a deeper study of God's Word changed them. It is altogether possible that you have not thought about some of these things. Regardless what one may say, these Scriptures are still in the Bible—we will face them in the Judgment. We had better believe and preach them now.

*Sincerely,*

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