

"Re-baptized"

(by Bob Pulliam)

It's a common statement. Many knowledgeable people use it without thinking (knowledge does not always make one a thinking person at all times). Some preachers actually live to hear it, and never give a second thought to a danger that may be attached to it. The statement is, "I want to be re-baptized." And the danger could send people to hell if caution is not exercised.

First we must realize that the idea of being "re-baptized" is wholly sectarian in nature. You can administer sectarian baptism every day of the week, and twice on Sunday. At the same time, such cannot save, and isn't even claimed to do such by it's proponents.

The "baptism" we read about in the Bible is designed to save by the power of God through the intent of the individual. The individual is baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). His action is based on the purpose of his heart. This purpose of heart is what makes baptism what it is.

I oftentimes illustrate this with some boys down at the swimming hole. They get rough and begin to dunk each other under the water. Now we must ask, "What's the difference between being immersed by a friend down at the pond, and being immersed in a baptistry by a preacher?" The only real difference is in the heart of the person being immersed. In one case, horseplay is the attitude of heart. In the other, desire for cleansing by the blood of God's Son is in the heart. The boy in the swimming hole is all wet. The person in the baptistry is wet *and* saved from his sins. This intent, or purpose of heart, is the basic principle behind any obedience rendered to God.

There are cases where one who has been immersed needs to be baptized... Cases where one was doing such to please a friend or spouse, or trying to get attention because everyone else was doing it. But "re-baptized" is not the proper word. You see, he was never really baptized to begin with. He received no greater benefit than one of the boys at the swimming hole who was dunked by a friend. We need to say such an one is being "baptized"! If you were not immersed for the forgiveness of your sins, you were *not* baptized in the Bible sense of the word. You need to be baptized.

There is a danger of misunderstanding with this idea of being "re-baptized". I fear that some believe they can have sins removed periodically without confessing such. "Just be re-baptized," they think, "and you will never have to confess any error at all!" It would be convenient if we never had to face up to our errors. But God has not provided for anything that would allow us to overlook sins.

We all recognize how important it is to take the proper medication for the proper illness. One illness demands one treatment, while another demands a different medicine. Let's suppose for a moment that you have contracted a deadly illness. You know that the only cure for this illness is to take shots every day for a month; but you'd rather take pills. Which do you think you should take? The shots will heal you, the pills will allow the illness to kill you.

"Re-baptism" is a pill for some, taken to avoid the cure which they don't want to take. They may have been laying out of services, or completely fallen away. Rather than embarrass themselves by saying, "I have sinned, I have not been serving God as I should."; they will

instead say, "I want to be re-baptized." How convenient! But the wrong cure will catch them one day. They should have been heeding the advise of the apostle Peter in Acts 8:22 (also Lk 15:11 - 21). Repent and pray for forgiveness. And if your sins are known to others, make your repentance known to them as well. Taking the wrong cure for your soul allows a spiritual illness to reign... and it is eternally deadly! (Rev 20:11 - 15)