

Accepting Christ

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Words are signs of Ideas. It is important then that we ask, "What is the idea conveyed by the words that are being used?" We constantly hear such expressions as "accepting Christ", "total commitment", "a full surrender," and "receiving Christ as your personal Saviour." What do men mean by these terms? I have been listening to denominational preachers for 40 or 50 years and I think I know what they are saying. There was a time when sectarian preachers were constantly making fun of what Jesus said in **Mark 16:16** and what Peter said in **Acts 2:38**. They would refer to my brethren as "water ducks" and "mossbacks". They would laugh at **John 3:5** and say, "only three things are born of water. They are mosquitoes, tadpoles and Campbellites." Of course, Jesus did not say be born of water. He said be born of "water and the Spirit." I am neither a mosquito, tadpole, nor a Campbellite, and I was not born of water. I was born of "water and the Spirit".

In generations past and present, denominational preachers have used special terms to deny that a person is to be born of water and the Spirit and that baptism is for the remission of sins. Their approach to this is by saying you must "accept Christ." By this, they mean you are to skip baptism because they say baptism "is not part of the grace of God..." When they talk about "preaching Christ," they mean you are to disregard "the words of Christ." When they talk about a "total commitment," they skip the commandments of Jesus Christ and "let your conscience be your guide." When sectarian preachers talk about "surrendering to Christ," they mean "avoid" obedience to the gospel of Christ. When sectarian preachers talk about receiving a "personal Saviour," they mean, "Christ comes into the life of the alien sinner separate and apart from obeying the gospel of Christ."

When the evangelist Philip preached Christ, the eunuch asked to be baptized (**Acts 8:35-36**). How can one preach Christ and not tell a man to be baptized? How can one accept Christ and, at the same time, refuse to be baptized? Accepting Christ has always meant accepting what Christ taught. When Peter concluded his great sermon on Pentecost the record says, "THEN THEY THAT GLADLY RECEIVED HIS WORD WERE BAPTIZED" (**Acts 2:41**). The people on Pentecost received Christ by receiving His word. All who rejected Peter's words rejected Christ.

Only those who accepted the teachings of Christ while he was here in person accepted Christ. Like wise, all who come to Christ today must do so by the teachings and instructions by Him given. Christ draws all men through teaching (**John 6:44-45**). When the apostles went out to preach the great commission they were thereby preaching Christ. This was the burden of their discourses. The prophet said "THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD" (**Isaiah 54:13**). Therefore, all who have been properly taught through the living oracles concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and have obeyed those words have come to him.

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Christianity has never changed. Its laws and ordinances are still the same as they were in the first century. It is ridiculous, absurd and sectarian to talk to people about coming to Christ, and leave the impression that they can do so without doing what Jesus taught. To deny that baptism is a part of the grace of God is to deny the Bible. If baptism does not belong to the grace of God, it belongs to the grace of the devil. If you have been baptized, your baptism is either of the grace of God or the grace of the devil.

Suppose you are sick and nigh unto death. Your beloved doctor calls to see you, diagnoses your case and tells you that he is positive he can be of assistance and effect a cure. You rejoice at hearing his words and then he picks up his pen and begins to write. You turn to him and ask, "What is that you're doing, doctor?" The physician replies "I'm writing a prescription suited to your case which you should carefully take according to my instructions."

Then suppose you say, "Doctor, I can have nothing to do with your pills, and powders, I believe in you! I want you personally, but your pills and powders can have no place in my life and cannot be a part nor a means of healing. My confidence is in you.

The physician would likely reply, "He that rejects my remedy, rejects me, and he that has no confidence in what I prescribe as a means of healing, has no confidence in me." (cf. **John 12:48**)

The book of Acts was written to illustrate the laws of the kingdom of God and particularly those that relate to primary obedience. Such examples as the conversion of Saul and the eunuch (**Acts 22:16, 8:35-37**) make the way of obedience so plain that no one but the most prejudiced can fail to understand what to do to be saved.

It should be our custom today to preach with the same vigor and force that was characteristic of pioneer preachers of previous generations. Human nature has not changed and it will ever remain the same. The needs of man are the same and the answer to those needs were revealed in the word of God 2,000 years ago.

As it did for the eunuch and Paul, the blood of Christ still cleanses men today who believe in Christ, (**John 8:24**), repent of their sins (**Luke 13:3**), confess that faith, (**Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10**), and are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (**Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38**).