

## **They Did Not Put It Off**

According to their website, the Willow Creek Community Church holds a baptismal service once per month. An individual has to register to be a part of the service, and only the first 50 registrations are accepted each month. The Westside family church in Lenexa, Kansas, concedes that baptism is a step of obedience, and yet the church holds a baptismal service once per month. These, and many other churches have scheduled baptismal services, usually once per month. How different their practices are to what we read about in the New Testament.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the three thousand who gladly received the preaching of the apostles were baptized. Apparently, that would have been a prodigious task for Willow Creek community church that would have taken them exactly 5 years to accomplish. The three thousand at Pentecost were baptized that day, because the apostles knew something men reject to today, baptism is essential to salvation!

Other New Testament examples also make the point. Philip had the Ethiopian Eunuch stop his chariot on the road at the first body of water to which they came, and baptized him immediately (Acts 8:36-39). When Cornelius believed Peter's preaching of the gospel, he and his household did not wait a month to be baptized, they were baptized, and then they prayed Peter to tarry certain days with them ((Acts 10:47,48). After Paul and Silas had spoken the Word of the Lord to the Philippian jailor, he and all his house were baptized straightway (Acts 16:33). The Greek word from which "straightway" is translated means immediately. When the Lord sent Ananias to Saul of Tarsus in the city of Damascus, Ananias found the soon to be apostle stricken blind and praying. After Saul had his sight restored, Ananias instructed him not to tarry, but to arise and be baptized.

What was it that the preachers in the book of Acts knew that modern day ones do not, that caused them to have the penitent believers to be baptized immediately instead of waiting for a month? They knew that baptism is essential to salvation. Peter declared that by repentance and baptism the three thousand would receive the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Ananias informed Saul that by being baptized, his sins would be washed away (Acts 22:16). How did these men know the essentialness of baptism? The Lord himself taught it. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mk. 16:15,16).

We are not surprised that Willow Creek Community church attaches so little importance to immediate need for one to be baptized. After all their "elders" also encourage all candidates for baptism to be immersed, but they will also allow pouring as a substitute for those who have strong personal reasons. Sort of makes you stop and think, doesn't it. If baptism is performed when one dies to sin (Rom. 6:3,4), and if one waits around a month before being baptized, the smell of the dead stinking sinner who has not yet been buried would be rather strong after about two weeks, wouldn't you say?

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