

Born Again or Repent

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Coming to Repentance

I recently had the privilege of preaching a sermon designed to answer the question, as to whether or not an accountable person, once baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins early on, who then falls away from Christ and turns his/her back on Christ and His church for several decades, needs to be ‘re-baptized’ should they “*come to their senses*” and want to repent and return home to their Father and His house (Luke 15:11-24; 1 Timothy 3:15; hear full lesson at: <http://www.clevelandcoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/474-4-5-15-PM-Should-I-Be-Re-Baptized.mp3>).

During the delivery of that lesson, the definitive conclusion reached, was that no, they didn’t have to be baptized again as long as they were originally baptized for legitimate biblical reasons – and here’s why: Just as with a physical or biological family, once a baby is born into it, they are always a member of it – no matter how they may live their life afterward. Even if, after a baby is born into a physical family, they grow up and go off to live a terribly sinful and contrarian life for a while and then want to straighten out and return home, they don’t have to be physically conceived, carried, and born into the family again! Nicodemus tried that absurd line of reasoning once already – didn’t work then, won’t work now (John 3:4).



Should one be “re-baptized” to repent?

The same exact thing is also true in the spiritual world. Having been previously “*born again of the water and the Spirit*” as Jesus said one must be in order to see and enter the kingdom (or church, or family) of God (John 3:3-5); that is to say, once one has repented, and then by faith been baptized in water for the forgiveness or washing away of their sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 22:16), they have at **that** exact point, been “*born again of the water and the Spirit*” and thus have been born into and become a member of God’s family (Galatians 3:26-27).

But what happens if they then later fall away, or fall from grace (Psalm 101:3; Luke 8:13; Hebrews 3:12, 6:6; Galatians 5:4; And yes one can “fall away,” or “fall from grace” according to the bible: http://www.clevelandcoc.com/?page_id=130)? What happens if they turn their back on God their Father

and go back into the world of sin (2 Peter 2:20-22)? Some might be inclined to exclaim, “Surely they cannot still be considered a child of God in such a sinful state... can they?”

Well, let us first look to the Scriptures for our answer. As we read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, the son takes his inheritance and turns his back and travels away from his home, his family, and his father, and lives a terribly wanton, wasteful, wicked and sinful lifestyle. But despite all that, when he comes to his senses and decides to return to his father, how is he addressed by his father? Verse 24 says, **“For this my son was dead...”** He may have been living a dead and separated in his sins lifestyle, but he was still – and always had been, despite the worst of sins he had been committing and indulging in of late – still his father’s son and a member of the family! Of course his father didn’t approve of his sin! Of course he was acting as a woeful and sinful and awful son! But he was still a son and a member of the family – no matter how terribly an acting and/or erring one!

The same can be readily evidenced from the life of David, the **“man after God’s own heart”** (Acts 13:22) and father of Absalom. Absalom was a sneaky, conniving, treacherous and bloodthirsty son, seeking to take both his father’s throne and life by force (see 2 Samuel, chapters 13-19). But when Absalom was finally killed in battle against his father’s forces which he was seeking to overthrow so as to kill his father as well, what did his father David do and how did he refer to Absalom? **And Joab was told, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.” So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people. For the people heard it said that day, “The king is grieved for his son.” And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. But the king covered his face, and the king cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son”** (2 Sam 19:1-4)!

Some of you may have had children which you raised in the church; children who obeyed the gospel early on but then later turned their backs on the Lord and His church and walked away from both their physical as well as their spiritual families and out into the swine fields of sin. Perhaps it went even further. Perhaps they wound up either incarcerated or incapacitated by their bad choices. Let me ask you a question: Are they still your child no matter what mess they might have gotten themselves into? Or, will they have to be born into the family again should they ever decide to return? No, of course not – they’re still your child! Now, there is no doubt they may have to repent and make some changes just like the prodigal did. They cannot **“continue in sin that grace may abound! Certainly not”** (Romans 6:1-2)! But as to their sonship, they are still sons – even if desperate and destitute ones – and yes, even when in the swine fields. This is why a person who was once born into the family of God by virtue of their being **“born again of water and the Spirit”** when baptized into Christ, in water, **“for the forgiveness of their sins”** and to **“receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38), need not be baptized or born again, **again**, upon their return home, should they have fallen away since. Many will need to make some major changes and commit themselves to some life-altering repentance when they return to their Father’s house for sure. But they are still children of the living God by virtue of the blood of Christ, and have been since their baptism – even if terribly erring and apostate ones in the interim.

Now; what happens if these still-children of God never decide to repent and return to their Father and His house? Well, like Absalom they make themselves enemies of their loving and adoring Father, and will undoubtedly perish in their rebellion. Yes, there will be actual children of God, suffering in eternal hell

(Hebrews 10:26-31). And just like many Hollywood depictions of one-time police officers who turned to crime and were caught and imprisoned amongst those whom they once arrested and convicted, can you imagine the horrors that will be inflicted on those who were once faithful children of God, testifying against the impenitent reprobates whom they will now be spending eternity imprisoned alongside/amongst? Perhaps that's a portion of what the Apostle Peter had in mind in 2 Peter 2:20-22.

Therefore, let us thank God for each and every rebellious member of the family that returns, and pray to God we can reach more of our erring brethren – yes our erring brothers and sisters still – before it's too late!

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