

the Bible was finished, or since the writers of the different books in the Bible have passed away.

It was evidently the design of our Lord in revealing the plan of salvation and in commanding His servants to go forth and proclaim it, to have but one form of doctrine. It would bring the character of our God into a certain degree, I might say, of contempt if He were to leave so important a matter as the salvation of His children to the judgment and imagination of men; if He were to leave men to say this doctrine is essential and this doctrine is non-essential; to say if you obey this you shall have salvation, or you need not obey that, for it is not necessary to salvation. If it was necessary in the days of Jesus and of His Apostles that men should believe in Jesus and repent of their sins, it is necessary today; and no human judgment, nor no human council can do away with that necessity. God is the Being to grant salvation, and He is the Being to withhold salvation, and He is the Being to pronounce the terms upon which salvation shall be obtained. Therefore, as God did make faith in Jesus a doctrine that was necessary for man's salvation, it is still necessary. Though ages may have passed, this has not changed. It cannot be changed. It takes as much to save a man in this generation as it did eighteen hundred years ago. There may be any amount of enlightenment, of wisdom and of knowledge, but however great this may be, it does not affect in the slightest degree the principle that men must believe in Jesus as the foundation of their faith and of their salvation. They must also repent of their sins. No sophistry, no human wisdom, no human device can remove from the plan of salvation the necessity of the repentance of sin; for the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands absolutely that sin must be forsaken, and in order for it to be forsaken it must be repented of. Therefore, if men say that you can be saved without faith and without repentance, or if the whole world should say this, would it affect in the least degree the salvation of men? Would men be saved because the whole world said they could be without these vital principles? Certainly not. God, who grants salvation, and who is the Author of salvation, has placed these principles in His Gospel as essential to salvation.

I believe, however, that Christendom generally admits that faith in Jesus and repentance of sin are essential. But there are thousands, and perhaps millions, of professed believers in Jesus who say that anything beyond this is non-essential to salvation. Of course, there are differences of opinion upon these matters. Still, there are many who pronounce other things unnecessary.

But the Apostles of Jesus not only taught faith in the Lord and repentance of sin, but they said that it was necessary for men to be baptized. I need only allude to one case to show how important some of the Apostles thought this ordinance to be. You remember the visit of Peter to Cornelius, the Gentile, and the miraculous manner in which Peter was led to comply with the request which Cornelius had sent to him. It was contrary to

the custom of the Jews and considered a very improper thing for an orthodox Jew to associate with Gentiles. But Peter, having received a vision in which he was shown that he should not call anything unclean that the Lord had made clean, complied with the request that was sent to him, and went with the messengers to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius and his household, under the preaching of Peter, received the Holy Ghost, and Peter and his companions were compelled to admit that the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost as well as the Jews, and after he witnessed this remarkable and unexpected manifestation, he said to his companions, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Now, I submit that if such a manifestation was witnessed in our day, and by many who call themselves ministers of Christ, according to their teachings they would have said it was entirely unnecessary to use water, or to have the ordinance of baptism administered unto these people, because they had received the Holy Ghost, and that was all sufficient. The very thing that Peter cited as a reason why they should be baptized would now be cited by some modern ministers as a reason why they should not be baptized. It is evident from this that this great Apostle and his companions deemed the ordinance of baptism essential, even though the persons had received the Holy Ghost. If he had not taken this view of this ordinance he would not have required Cornelius and his household to be baptized. But he considered it necessary, and he baptized them.

Suppose a concave of ministers, calling themselves servants of Jesus Christ, should say to their fellow men, "We consider faith in Jesus and repentance of sins essential to salvation, but we do not believe baptism essential to salvation; people can be baptized if they wish, but there is no particular efficacy in it. If you will only come to the cross and cast your sins at the foot of the cross, they will be washed away by the blood of Jesus; and therefore the ordinance of baptism is not essential." Would that decision of theirs change the plan of salvation framed in heaven and taught by the Son of God? Can mortal men prescribe the terms upon which mankind shall be saved and depart from those required by the Lord?

There are many, however, who have done this and who teach the people in something like the language I have quoted, while others say, "Yes, you might as well be baptized, but what way do you wish to be baptized? Would you like to be sprinkled; would you like to have water poured upon you, or would you prefer being immersed?" I have heard it stated that there are many ministers who offer to the converts their choice as to the manner of their baptism. This is not the way that God intended, according to the Scriptures. This is not the plan of salvation as taught by His servants. There was but one form of baptism, and there is but one now. Jesus, the greatest Being that ever stood upon the earth, a Being without sin, went unto

John to be baptized. But John did not say to Him, How will you be baptized, my Lord? Shall I sprinkle you, or pour some water upon your head, or shall I immerse you?" John did not propound any such question to the Savior. Neither did the Savior suggest any such performance to John. But He came to be baptized, and John, realizing his own unworthiness to perform that sacred ordinance on behalf of the Son of God, hesitated; but Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." That was the Savior's expression. He looked upon it as essential. If there was any being that was ever born on the earth that could have dispensed with this holy ordinance, it certainly was the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. But He offered Himself as an example to all the rest of us; offered Himself as a candidate for this holy ordinance to a man to whom God had given the authority to baptize. John had received that priesthood from his fathers by virtue of which that holy ordinance could be administered and its administration be recognized by God the Eternal Father. Therefore, Jesus submitted to the ordinance, and testified to all the children of men that should follow afterwards that it was an ordinance essential to salvation. His disciples taught the same doctrine, and administered the same ordinance unto all who received the Gospel and were willing to enter into the Church of Christ.

After this there was another ordinance that they looked upon as essential in those days. You remember that one of the disciples went to Samaria, and he preached the Gospel there, and it seems that he had authority to baptize, for he baptized the converts; but for some reason he did not administer any other ordinance. John the Baptist did not either. He said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." When the Apostles heard that Samaria had received the word, they sent two of the Apostles there, who, when they came to Samaria, and met with the men and women who had been baptized, laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost. This was an ordinance in the ancient Church, and considered essential to salvation by the Apostles; for if they had not so considered it, they certainly would not have put the Apostles to the trouble of going there to visit the Saints and administer that ordinance to them.

So that we have here, not only faith, not only repentance, but we have baptism, and the laying on of hands, as ordinances in the Church of Christ.

Now, let me ask this of all of you, How can it be expected that where a succession of generations lay aside these important ordinances and say they are not essential to salvation, that the spirit and power and blessing of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost will rest down upon them? It seems to me that any one who would reflect upon this subject would be forced to admit that such a departure from the plan of salvation would inevitably forfeit the blessings that the Lord said should accompany