

The Baptism of Tears

I met a man recently who shared his story with me. Even though his parents were not Mennonites, they had allowed a local Mennonite family to raise him. He became a Christian at age 12 and later married a woman whom he loved, even though she was not a Christian and never went to church with him. Since he didn't want to push her, he just loved her and did his best to show Christ through the way he lived. Through the years, his wife never showed any interest in giving her life to the Lord.

After close to 50 years of marriage, his wife received the news that she had Stage 4 stomach cancer. Although this news was a death sentence, the husband still did not want to push his wife to make a decision. His heart was heavy, not only about her losing her life, but that she would die a sinner. He had prayed for her for nearly 50 years. He was praying for her now.

One morning, he overheard her talking to someone, although no one else was in the house. He heard her say, "God, I know I'm not one of your believers but please help me through this." Since he had never heard her talk to God before, he thought this might be the chance to speak to her about her faith. The next morning, he asked her, "Do you think you are ready to let Jesus into your heart?" She replied, "No, Satan won't let me go!" His heart was pained, but he didn't push anymore and, for the next few weeks, continued to pray.

Four days before their 50th Anniversary, he heard his wife crying. He rushed to her and asked her, "Are you OK? Is the pain getting to be too much? Why are you crying?" She said, "I'm crying because I just gave my heart to the Lord, and I'm not afraid of dying anymore." They both sat there with tears falling from their eyes.

Three days later, the Lord called her home. She passed away one day short of their 50th anniversary. Although she never was baptized, she was at peace with God after all those years.

I told the man that there are many ways people have been baptized in the Bible: with water, through the laying on of hands, and with tongues of fire. Jesus even told the thief on the cross, *Today shalt thou be with me in paradise* Even though he never had received water baptism.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23: 42-43).

Not everyone has the chance to be baptized with water. When someone gives their heart to Christ, the Holy Spirit enters in to guide them, comfort them, and bring them back to God.

Even though she never had the chance to receive formal water baptism, I told my friend that maybe his wife had received the Baptism of Tears.

Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book (Psalm 56:8)?

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief (Mark 9:23-25).

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

When people realize their sin and their need for Jesus, the tears flow. When the Word of God is spoken, it cuts deeply. Our tears are a baptism that shows God how sorry we are and how ready we are to let Christ remove our sins and return us to the Father.

Many times, we resist giving our lives over to God because we don't want to give up our sins. But when we truly see our need for Jesus, it is a wonderful thing to declare our commitment publicly in a local church body with water baptism.

Due to life's circumstances, many things may prevent someone from being able to receive water baptism before his death. If someone at the end of their life cries out at the foot of the cross and surrenders everything to Jesus, the Baptism of Tears will do.

~Will Taylor