

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG213 – The Experience of Baptism

I am so glad you could join us today. I want to welcome you to *Growing in God* with Gary Hargrave. I am your host, and I appreciate you being here. I encourage you to go to our website, which is hargraveministries.org, and check out our blogs and other materials that are available besides the podcast. I think you will find things that will be a ministry to you and that you will enjoy.

During this podcast I am going to talk about this idea of experiencing our beliefs, and I want to talk about the experience of baptism as we move forward. There has been a great focus on the Cross that I have been in personally and sharing with you on this podcast. It is born out of the Scriptures that entreat us to take up our cross daily and follow Him. These were the words of Yeshua to His disciples, and I believe they ring true for us. Born out of this is the idea that we can have experiences with things of God that are even historical, and we are able to bring them up to the present moment and make them alive in our lives, and make them part of our walk with God. So to me it is not just limited to this idea that we take up our cross daily; but I think there are events that deal with the cross, deal with the crucifixion, the resurrection, the death, the burial of Yeshua, and those are things that I believe we should all experience.

I am just going to name some of them: The shame and the suffering that Yeshua had prior to going to the Cross, during His trial; He was beaten, whipped, and spat upon, shamed, lied about – all these were part of the experiences. And I think that these experiences should be real to us; not just looking at the Cross and death on the Cross, but these things that preluded that death were really part of what He went through. And when I think that we are told to take up our cross and follow Him, these are experiences that we must have.

For instance, when we talk about suffering, the sufferings of Yeshua, it says, "If we suffer with Him, we reign with Him." That is not something you can just say by faith: "Oh, I know He suffered, and by faith, I am going to reign with Him." No, "...if you suffer with Him." It is something that has to come out of the realm of faith and into the reality of experience that we are able to have, experiencing what Yeshua experienced for us as He went through this time of the Cross.

So His shame and suffering are certainly a part of it. Beyond that, the actual time of death on the Cross is a part of what we need to be experiencing and carrying, relating to, in our daily life – the time of His actual death, when He died and was buried, taken down off of the Cross, put in a tomb, wrapped in the death wrappings. He was buried. He died like every other human being who had died up to that point in history. That was important, and I think we need to feel that; we need to experience that along with Him. Also, I think the moment of His resurrection is tremendously important for us – we must understand what the Resurrection was all about. It was a very, very powerful event, as was His time being dead. We must remember that while He was in the grave, He was ministering at some point to those souls who had gone before. And following the process of that experience of ministering to those who had been dead before, we realize that even in Matthew 27 it refers in verse 53 to the fact that those whom He had ministered to came out of the tombs. Let me just read some of these verses. It says,

in verses 51-53, “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.”

So we see that Christ did not just die and be put in a tomb; there was a lot going on. As we believe, when you die your spirit is not dead; you remain alive and you go into another state. That is what we see happen with Yeshua, that He died, and during that time of death, He was ministering to those spirits who had gone before Him in death. And in their faith, coming alive to who He was and receiving Him, you could even say that these were the first converts, but they believed in what they were hearing and experiencing through Him at this time of ministry from Him. Therefore, after He was resurrected, it says that they were resurrected and came out of the tombs in resurrected form, resurrected bodies, and they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. So, again, we see that what we talk about in resurrection, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, it is not just hearsay – this was attested to by people who had been dead before; people who were in the city of Jerusalem saw people who they knew, and relatives, loved ones. My gosh, you have Jeremiah and Isaiah walking back through the city of Jerusalem. So, the reality of His resurrection was something that was attested to by witnesses and it was passed on to us. And we know that, and we can believe because of that.

But I also think that we should experience. I want to be there. I want to see what that was for Him to be dead, for Him to be in the grave, for Him to be ministering to those who had gone before in death; then to experience the moment, the power of His resurrection. We realize that the resurrection of Yeshua was so powerful that those who had gone before Him in death were literally pulled out of death into resurrection bodies also, came out of their graves, and began walking the streets of Jerusalem. Boy, imagine being a grave robber at that moment, when you are in one of the graves trying to rob things, and all of a sudden all these bodies start popping out of the graves! My gosh, that would get your heart beating. So, these events that we believe in need to be more than just a faith or a belief that we have; we must find a way to truly experience. And I think that is one thing we have to understand about our faith – our faith is given as lead-in to the experiences that we are to have.

I want to read from the book of James. This passage is extremely important to me, because I think too often the idea of having faith or the idea of believing almost creates a passivity:

“Well, all I have to do is believe. All I have to do is have faith.”

“Well, I have faith He went to the cross. I have faith He was resurrected.”

I think we need something more experientially than that to really give us the anointing and the authority and power in our walk with God that we are as believers to have. So let’s look at James the second chapter, verses 14-26. It says,

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? [So it is a question – can our faith, without some form of works, save us?] If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Here we have this realization that faith comes and leads us into something more. When we have our initial experience of salvation, we say we believe, we become a believer. And that is true. We believe that Christ came, we believe He was born of a virgin, He lived on this earth in human flesh; we believe that he did go to the Cross. We believe the things said about Him in the Scriptures, the works, what He accomplished during that time; and we believe in the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ. We believe all these things at that time of salvation. That is what it is about. We say that we have become a believer. But I think it is interesting that what then follows being a believer is the second step of our salvation, which is baptism, the baptism in water.

Now this is important for a couple of reasons. And I will not focus on other ideas right now, maybe later in another podcast; but what we recognize is that baptism is a work. It is something you do. We have to do this. I want us to read out of Romans 6 about baptism, because we see that it is not just something that we do. We do not just go to the river, or the pool, or whatever, and be dipped by someone into water as just a confirmation that we really believe. It is to be a work that follows our faith; but, it is also to be our faith leading us into an experience. There are experiences that are to take place in baptism. And unfortunately, I personally do not believe we emphasize it enough when we bring a person to baptism, that they really see that something beyond a secondary confession of their faith is transpiring. There are experiences that we are to be having at this time of baptism, which are the next steps in our relationship with God; the building of our faith and our belief system transpires. And if we do not have that, then I think we have to be careful that we are not just being dunked under water and getting all wet. We are to come up out of that water with experiences that are life changing for us; and we did that baptism because of faith. So, again, faith by itself is dead, but it leads us into the works that God has provided for us to activate. And when we do that, we are to experience.

I am saying all of this, and I am trying to get it across, because it is very difficult for people when they are told, like Christ says, "Take up your cross daily and follow Me." They say, "How do I take up the cross and follow Him, it happened 2,000 years ago? I have faith that He died on the Cross." Okay, well, if you have faith, if you believe, then that is going to trigger the works, the activities that are going to allow you to experience what you have believed. So your faith should lead you into a life of prayer. It should lead you into a life with the Word. And as you immerse yourself into the Word, you are going to find that you not only want to believe that Word, you find yourself needing to experience what that Word is saying you are to have in your life as a believer. And the first step of that should be baptism.

I want to read what we should be experiencing through this water baptism that we engage in as believers. Romans 6, starting at verses 3-4, says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" We are literally baptized. We are to experience His death. Now do not take this the wrong way, you are not to kill yourself, you are not to do something stupid; but we have an ability to experience His death. We can live that experience with Him.

You may say, "That is too mystical for me." Well, pray over it. Reach in, what is he saying? This baptism is supposed to initiate something where we literally can, as though we were there, be baptized into His death.

"Therefore we have been buried with Him." We talk about the burial; for me, personally, I really want to have been there during His burial. I want to be there during the hours He was in the grave, to be with Him in what He was doing; because to me, He was not just dead and lying there. Like when we die, we believe that the spirit lives on, that we have a soul and that soul is eternal. And so, He was very busy during that time of His death and during that time in the grave, and I personally would want to be there, okay? In baptism it says that I can be buried with Him – what can I experience? How can the Holy Spirit take me through His time in the grave, that I may experience it as though I were there with Him in His experience? "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." So not only does baptism open the door for us to experience and be baptized into His death, it takes us through that whole time I am talking about – that I wish I could experience on even a deeper level than what I have – of seeing that ministry of Christ to those who had gone before, and to also be there at the moment of His resurrection and experience His resurrection. And do not forget the resurrection of those who were there that believed in hearing Him during those moments in the grave. Then we should have an experience of coming into a newness of life by virtue of the power of the resurrection.

Verses 5-6, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that the old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." This is not talking about future. This is not talking about heaven. This is not talking about after the return of Yeshua to the earth. This is talking about an experience in baptism that we are to have. The old self is crucified with Him. The body of sin is done away. We are no longer slaves to sin. Verse 7 says, "For he who has died is freed from sin." These are experiences that we are to take away from baptism. We are to come up out of the water of baptism with these experiences, experiencing what He went through, an experience on such a level that those experiences also become ours.

Verses 7-14,

For he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." Even so [you could say, "Just like that," or "Just like Him"] consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus [that experience can be ours in baptism]. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourself to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

So, when we as believers have our salvation experience, and we confess Christ as our Savior and we believe in the things of the Cross, and then we go through our baptism experience, and yet we come out and we find that sin is still master over us or we are still struggling with the members of our flesh, then we have to realize that there was something in our experience that was not quite complete. And I think that we can continue to reach in, just as we know that Communion as a sacrament is something that we

can do daily. I believe that it is not just taking bread and wine – again, we are acting; it is a work of faith that has an experience to it, if we reach for that experience. And baptism is the same, that experience is there. You say, “Well, I have to go out, I have to get baptized in water again.” No, if you have been baptized in water... well, fine, if you want to do that, go ahead, if that is what your faith requires. But reach into it by faith. Relive it, bring it up to the present. Go back, do it again on a greater level. That is why we are told to take up our cross daily. I think our salvation daily can grow and become greater and greater as we are able to experience deeper and deeper experiences in the Holy Spirit, in the Word, in our waiting on God, in our meditation before God about what He has provided for us, what He has given us in these events. We should experience them.

I want to read another Scripture, Colossians the third chapter, at verses 1-8. It says, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” We have died in our baptism. Truly, it should be our experience. When these things come up in our lives, we just go, “Nah, sorry, dead to you.” In the Cross, as Paul says, “I was crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to me.” So we are dead, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. But it should not just be a faith; because people, they just go, “I don’t have enough faith.” “Well, I tried to have faith, but then I stumbled again and fell and all of my flesh came back, jumped on my back, and took me by surprise.” No, we should be dead to these things. It should be an experience for us that is so real and so dynamic, and I believe it can be that for us as we reach into God for it. As we reach into the reality and the provision and the promise of baptism that we have, I believe it can be that dynamic that it is life-changing. As it says, “We put on a newness of life” – that is our reality. We have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. We are there with Christ at the right hand of the Father. He says, “Where I am, there you shall be also.” We should be with Him. Our life is hidden with Him in His heart with the Father.

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside.

See, we once walked in them, but we do not anymore, because we experience this reality of baptism. So we want to give ourselves to this.

I do not want to take this on much longer, there are so many Scriptures that just really should impact us; but I want to bless us with a faith. It says in Hebrews 11, “Faith is the assurance of the thing hoped for, the conviction of the thing not seen.” You see, when we have faith, we have not seen; we have an assurance. But that faith is to drive us into the experience that we are to have. And I believe that we can reach into this. We can find ourselves fully immersed in what Christ has experienced, because He did experience it for us. We can live through His shame, His suffering, through the betrayal He experienced; through His death, through His burial, the glory of His resurrection; through His time on earth in a resurrected form, ministering to the disciples and many, many others. We can experience His Ascension to the right hand of the Father, and we can be seated with Him, because our life is hidden with Him in God. And we can be with Him as He begins to rule and reign as Lord, because in that Lordship He will rule forever, and He will return to earth to rule here also.

I bless this to be a living word to your hearts. Amen.