

Baptism

A Biblical Outline Study

Baptism In The Preaching Of The Apostles

INTRODUCTION

1. Shortly before He ascended into heaven, Jesus gave His apostles The Great Commission:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mt 28:18-20)

2. In the gospel of Mark, The Great Commission is worded in this way:

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mk 16:15-16)

3. In both places we notice the mention of baptism...

- a. In Matthew, it is related to the process of making disciples
 - b. In Mark, it is mentioned in connection with salvation
- Whatever the purpose of baptism, it must be important to Jesus, for He commanded it!

4. But one might ask...

a. **What is baptism?**

- 1) Is it pouring, sprinkling, or immersion?
- 2) Is one baptized in water, or in the Spirit?

b. **What is the purpose of baptism?**

- 1) Is it for the remission of sins, or because our sins have already been forgiven?
- 2) Is it to be saved, or a public confession of faith having already been saved?

c. **Who should be baptized?**

- 1) Should infants be baptized?
- 2) Should just anyone be baptized?

d. **Is there ever a need to be "re-baptized"?**

- 1) What if I was baptized as an infant?
- 2) What if I was baptized for the wrong reason?
- 3) What if I have sinned greatly after being baptized?

-- These and many other questions are often asked when the subject of baptism is raised

5. This series is devoted to answering these and other questions related to baptism...

- a. Since it was commanded by Christ, it is certainly worthy of careful consideration
- b. It is my intention to glean from the Bible what is actually taught on this subject
- c. It is my prayer that you will have the attitude of those in Berea - cf. **Ac 17:11**
 - 1) To receive the word with all readiness (i.e., listen carefully with a desire to at least understand, if at first you do not agree)
 - 2) To search the Scriptures (i.e., to read the Bible carefully to see if what I am saying is true)

[In this lesson, we will simply consider how the apostles carried out The Commission Jesus gave them; i.e., to see what they said about baptism in their preaching. We begin with...]

I. BAPTISM IN THE PREACHING OF PETER

A. ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST...

1. In the first gospel sermon, Peter commanded people to be baptized **"for the remission of sins"**
- **Ac 2:38**
2. Upon exhorting his audience to be saved, the response was for many to be baptized - **Ac 2:41-41**
3. Does **"for"** mean **"in order to"** or **"because of"**?
 - a. **Note:** We find the same grammatical construction in **Mt 26:28**
 - 1) Where Jesus said His blood would be shed for many **"for the remission sins"**
 - 2) Clearly Jesus meant "in order to" provide remission of sins, and not "because" remission of sins had already occurred
 - 3) With rare exception, the Greek word (**eis**) means **"into to, unto, for, toward"**
 - b. **Note also: "be baptized"** is joined by the conjunction **"and"** to the command **"repent"** - **Ac 2:38**
 - 1) Both are commanded "for the remission of sins"
 - 2) Just as people were commanded to repent "for" (in order to) the remission of sins...
 - 3) ...so they were commanded to be baptized "for" (in order to) the remission of sins

B. AT THE HOUSE OF CORNELIUS...

1. In the first gospel sermon to the Gentiles, Peter followed up by commanding his audience to be baptized
- cf. **Ac 10:44-48**
2. It is evident that what Peter commanded involved a baptism in water - **Ac 10:47-48**
3. A future study will examine whether the people were saved when the Spirit fell upon them, or when they were baptized as commanded by Peter

[At the very least, we can say that Peter's preaching was in harmony with the statements of Jesus in the Great Commission: Preach the gospel, command people to be baptized. So far the indication appears that it was a baptism in water, and done for the remission of sins. Let's consider now one who was not actually an apostle, but certainly filled with the Spirit...]

II. BAPTISM IN THE PREACHING OF PHILIP

A. TO THE SAMARITANS...

1. Though not an apostle, Philip went to Samaria and **"preached Christ"** - **Ac 8:5**
2. The response to such preaching: **"...when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."** - **Ac 8:12**

B. TO THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH...

1. To this very religious man, Philip **"preached Jesus"** - **Ac 8:35**
2. Though we are not told the content of Philip's sermon, from the eunuch's question we can deduce that it included baptism - **Ac 8:36-38**

[Like Peter, Philip **"preached Jesus"** not only by telling people about Jesus, but also what Jesus commanded. Baptism was an immediate result of such preaching. Is this surprising in light of Jesus' statements in **Mt 28:19** and **Mk 16:15-16**? Let's now consider...]

III. BAPTISM IN THE PREACHING OF PAUL

A. IN THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA...

1. We note that again baptism followed apostolic preaching - **Ac 16:13-15**
2. As evidence that she "gave heed" to the things spoken by Paul, she and her household were baptized!
3. Notice also her comment in **Ac 16:15**
 - a. How could Paul have judged her to be faithful to the Lord?
 - b. By her response to the command of the Lord concerning baptism!

B. IN THE CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR...

1. Paul tells the jailor that he must believe on the Lord to be saved - **Ac 16:30-31**
2. Paul went on to speak concerning the Word of the Lord to him and his family - **Ac 16:32**
3. In response, they were immediately baptized! - **Ac 16:33-34**
 - 1) Evidently the word of the Lord stressed the need to be baptized quickly

2) In fact, in EVERY detailed example of conversion found in the Book of Acts, people were baptized after only one lesson! (see chart below)

C. IN THE CONVERSION OF PAUL HIMSELF...

1. Paul recounts his own conversion to the Lord - **Ac 22:10-16**
 - a. He describes how he was told to go to Damascus, for there he would be told **"all things appointed for you to do"** ("**what you must do**" - cf. **Ac 9:6**)
 - b. One of the things he was told was to be baptized without delay - **Ac 22:16**
2. He was told to be baptized in order to **"wash away your sins"**
 - a. **NOTE WELL:** Despite seeing the Lord on the road to Damascus, having spent three days fasting and praying (**Ac 9:9-11**), he was **STILL IN HIS SINS!**
 - 1) Seeing the Lord had not saved him
 - 2) Accepting Jesus as Lord (cf. **Ac 22:10**) had not saved him
 - 3) Praying and fasting for three days had not saved him
 - b. Not until he was baptized were his sins **"washed away"**! (exactly how we will examine later)

CONCLUSION

1. That baptism played a prominent role in apostolic preaching becomes evident when we compare what is revealed in the examples of conversion...

Mt 28:18-20 EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION Mk 16:15-16

Elements of Conversion in the Book of Acts

Text	Teaching	Believing	Confessing	Repenting	Baptizing
Acts 2:38	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 8:12	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:13	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:37	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 9:5ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 10:34ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 16:14ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 16:25ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 17:32ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>
Acts 18:8	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 19:1ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES

2. In every case of conversion described in detail in the book of Acts, baptism is mentioned...
 - a. Clearly it is was an important theme of apostolic preaching
 - b. G. R. Beasley-Murray, a Baptist scholar, has observed:

"Baptism is...a part of the proclamation of Christ. In an Apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion."

- G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism In The New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p. 393)

3. And what should be proclaimed regarding baptism? In this lesson we have seen...
 - a. That it was commanded **"for the remission of sins"** - **Ac 2:38**
 - b. That it was done to **"wash away sins"** - **Ac 22:16**
 - c. That it involved **"water"** - **Ac 8:36-38; 10:48**

- d. That it was done "**immediately**", with no delay even if after midnight - **Ac 16:25-33**
4. This would certainly suggest that baptism is necessary for salvation...
- But is this a fair conclusion drawn from the "**preaching**" of the apostles?
 - Is this conclusion consistent with the "**teaching**" of the apostles, as found in their epistles?

Our next lesson will examine what the apostles taught in their epistles regarding baptism, as we continue to seek Bible answers to such questions...

BAPTISM IN THE TEACHING OF PAUL

INTRODUCTION

- In our first lesson we saw where baptism played a prominent role in apostolic preaching...
 - In every case of conversion described in the book of Acts, baptism is mentioned
 - As G. R. Beasley-Murray, a Baptist scholar, observed: "**Baptism is...a part of the proclamation of Christ. In an Apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion.**" - G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism In The New Testament, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p. 393)
- And what did the apostles proclaim regarding baptism? We noticed that...
 - It was commanded "**for the remission of sins**" - **Ac 2:38**
 - It was done to "**wash away sins**" - **Ac 22:16**
 - It involved "**water**" - **Ac 8:36-38; 10:48**
 - It was done "**immediately**", with no delay even if after midnight - **Ac 16:25-33**
- This would certainly suggest that baptism is necessary for salvation...
 - But is this a fair conclusion drawn from the "**preaching**" of the apostles?
 - Is this conclusion consistent with the "**teaching**" of the apostles, as found in their epistles?

[In this lesson, we will examine what **Paul** taught in his epistles regarding baptism. Let's start with by noticing what he said about baptism...]

I. IN HIS EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A. BAPTISM IS A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST...

- It is a baptism into the death of Christ - **Ro 6:3**
- It is a burial with Christ into death (His death, we are crucified with Him!) - **Ro 6:4**
- It is done in order that we might walk in newness of life - **Ro 6:4-5**
- It involves crucifying the old man, that the body of sin may be destroyed - **Ro 6:6**
- It thereby frees us from sin as we die to sin, that we might live with Christ - **Ro 6:7-11**

B. NOTE CAREFULLY...

- Paul does not say that baptism "symbolizes things which had already occurred"
 - Many say this is the purpose or design of baptism, often quoting this passage
 - But read the passage carefully; Paul says no such thing!
- But rather, Paul describes baptism into Christ as WHEN such things occur
 - We were buried with Him "**through baptism into death**" - **Ro 6:4**
 - It is in baptism we are buried with Christ into death (His death); we thereby die to sin in baptism
 - We were buried with Him, why? "**That just as Christ was raised...even so we also should walk in newness of life**" - **Ro 6:4**
 - We are baptized in order to rise to walk in newness of life just as Christ did!
- Note also Paul's preface to these remarks: "**as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were...**"
 - What blessings he describes pertain only to those who had been baptized!
 - What of those not baptized? The blessings described would not apply!

[In his commentary on Romans, Martin Luther wrote: "**Baptism has been instituted that it should lead us to the blessings (of this death) and through such death to eternal life. Therefore IT IS**

NECESSARY that we should be baptized into Jesus Christ and His death." (Commentary On Romans, Kregel Publications, p.101).

Though believing that we are justified by grace through faith (and he would say "by faith alone"), Luther understood that salvation by faith did not preclude the necessity of baptism! Why, we shall see shortly; but let's go on to consider what Paul wrote of baptism...]

II. IN HIS EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

A. BAPTISM IS HOW WE PUT ON CHRIST...

1. From **Ga 3:26-27** we learn that baptism is involved in the process of becoming sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus
2. The "**for**" beginning **verse 27** begins an explanation as to HOW we become sons of God through faith
3. Baptism is therefore the means by which we "**put on Christ**", and become sons of God!

B. NOTE CAREFULLY...

1. Paul wrote: "**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on...**"
 - a. "For as many" means no more or no less
 - b. Only those who have been baptized into Christ have really received Christ into their lives!
2. Many teach "receive Jesus Christ by saying the sinner's prayer..."
 - a. But the Bible nowhere teaches that this is how one "receives Christ"
 - b. Rather, one "**puts on**" (or receives) Christ when they are baptized into Christ!

[In his commentary on this verse, Luther concluded: "**Wherefore baptism is a thing of great force and efficacy.**" (Commentary On Galatians, Kregel Publications, p.222). How true, if in baptism we "put on Christ"!

How this is possible without being a form of works-salvation becomes clearer as we consider what Paul taught concerning baptism...]

III. IN HIS EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

A. BAPTISM IS A WORK OF GOD...

1. A "spiritual circumcision" in which sins are "cut away" - **Co 2:11**
2. A burial with Christ, and also a resurrection with Him - **Co 2:12**
3. Made effective "through faith in the working of God" - **Co 2:12**
4. In which GOD makes us "alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" - **Co 2:13**

B. NOTE CAREFULLY...

1. Here we learn that baptism is a work of God, not man
 - a. Just as it was God who raised Jesus, so it is He who makes us alive, having forgiven our sins! - **Co 2:13**
 - b. Our part is "**faith in the working of God**" as we are buried with Christ in baptism - **Co 2:12**
2. God is the "Great Physician", who is cutting away our sins (through the blood of Christ)
 - a. We are simply the patient, who humbly submits in faith to the surgeon's scalpel
 - b. He is the One who makes us alive, that we might rise to walk in newness of life

[Again, this is something Martin Luther clearly recognized, when he responded to those who would call this a kind of works-salvation: "**Yes, it is true that our works are of no use for salvation. Baptism, however, is not our work but God's.**" (as quoted by Jack W. Cottrell in Baptism And The Remission of Sins, College Press, 1990, p. 32-34)

Finally, let's consider what Paul taught concerning baptism...]

IV. IN HIS EPISTLE TO TITUS

A. BAPTISM IS A "WASHING" AND "REGENERATION"...

1. Is Paul talking about baptism in **Ti 3:5**?

- a. The figure "washing" certainly alludes to the baptismal waters
- b. We have already seen where in baptism we are:
 - 1) Raised to walk in newness of life - **Ro 6:4**
 - 2) Made alive by God - **Co 2:12-13**
 - Does this not suggest a "washing of regeneration...?"
- c. Martin Luther and many others understood this verse to refer to baptism
- 2. Thus God saves us in baptism:
 - a. It is a "**washing of regeneration**" - a washing in we are reborn
 - b. It is a "**renewing of the Holy Spirit**" - a renewal in which the Spirit is at work
 - Just as Jesus said: "**...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**" **Jn 3:5**

B. NOTE CAREFULLY...

- 1. This "washing" and "regeneration" does not occur because we have earned it!
 - a. Baptism is not a work of righteousness by virtue of which we merit salvation!
 - b. We are saved by the kindness, love, and mercy of God! - **Ti 3:4-5**
- 2. It is by God's mercy that HE (not we) saves us!
 - a. Which HE does through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit!
 - b. Which HE does when we are baptized into Christ!
- 3. Through such mercy in Christ Jesus, we are truly "**justified by His grace**" - **Ti 3:6-7**

CONCLUSION

- 1. Paul taught that baptism is...
 - a. A burial into the death of Christ
 - b. How we die to sin as we are crucified with Him
 - c. A resurrection with Christ so we can rise to walk in newness of life
 - d. A putting on Christ, thereby becoming a child of God
 - e. A spiritual circumcision in which sins are cut away
 - f. The working of God, whereby we are buried with Christ, made alive as our sins are forgiven, and then raised with Him
 - g. An act of God's grace and mercy, in which we experience a washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit
 - If all these things when one is baptized, how can anyone say that it is not necessary?
- 2. Sadly, **many who say it is NOT necessary...**
 - a. Misunderstand those who say it is necessary
 - 1) Thinking that they believe in salvation by works
 - 2) When they truly believe in salvation by grace through faith!
 - b. Misunderstand Martin Luther
 - 1) Whose coined phrase "saved by faith only" they themselves use so often
 - 2) When he differs with them on the necessity of baptism
 - c. Misunderstand the apostle Paul
 - 1) Having him say things about the purpose of baptism he does not say
 - 2) Failing to appreciate what he clearly teaches about baptism
 - All this, in their zeal to oppose what they mistakenly view as works-salvation!

In his commentary on **Ga 3:27**, Luther wrote:

"This is diligently to be noted, because of the fond and fantastical spirits, who go about to deface the majesty of baptism, and speak wickedly of it. Paul, contrariwise, commendeth it, and setteth it forth with honorable titles, calling it, 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost'. And here also he saith, that 'all ye that are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Wherefore baptism is a thing of great force and efficacy." (Commentary On Galatians, Kregel Publications, p. 222)

Do we deface the majesty of baptism, in our mistaken zeal to oppose what we perceive to be a form of works-salvation?

Or do we, like Paul, commend it by noting his own teaching regarding baptism, and like Luther, appreciate how that by the working of God it can be a thing of great force and efficacy?

Baptism In The Teaching Of Peter

INTRODUCTION

1. In our first lesson we saw where Peter included baptism as part of his apostolic preaching...
 - a. He commanded the people at Pentecost to be baptized - **Ac 2:36-38**
 - b. He commanded the household of Cornelius to be baptized - **Ac 10:47-48**
2. From the accounts in Acts, we saw that for Peter baptism was...
 - a. For the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38**
 - b. An act that involved water - **Ac 10:47**
3. But one might properly ask: was Peter teaching...
 - a. That baptism was for the forgiveness of sins, and therefore necessary for salvation?
 - b. That one is saved by baptism in water?
4. Fortunately, we do not have wonder, for in his first epistle Peter wrote...

"There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Pe 3:21)

[As stated in the KJV, "...baptism doth also NOW save us"! But while teaching that baptism saves us, Peter is careful to explain in what way. Let's take a closer look at the text to see what **Peter** is saying about baptism...]

I. BAPTISM IS AN "ANTITYPE"

A. DEFINING "ANTITYPE"...

1. The Greek word is **antitupon** {an-teet'-oo-pon}, which means "a thing formed after some pattern; that which corresponds to a type"
2. So you have two things that some how relate or correspond to each other; one is a type, the other is the antitype

B. HOW BAPTISM IS AN ANTIPTYPE...

1. In the text, the waters of the flood are the "type", and the waters of baptism are the "antitype" - **1 Pe 3:20-21**
2. In his commentary, Albert Barnes says...
 - a. **"The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation."**
(Commentary on 1st Peter)
 - b. **"The apostle does not say that it corresponded in all respects; in respect, e.g., to quantity, or to the manner of the application, or to the efficacy; but there is a sense in which water performs an important part in our salvation, as it did in his."** (ibid.)
3. Thus Peter was comparing Noah's salvation with our own...
 - a. Remember that Noah was saved by:
 - 1) Grace - **Gen 6:8**
 - 2) Faith - **He 11:7**
 - 3) Water - **1 Pe 3:20**-- Grace was God's part, faith was Noah's part; water was simply an element by which God carried out His plan to save Noah
 - b. So we are saved by:
 - 1) Grace - **Ep 2:5**
 - 2) Faith - **Ep 2:8**

3) Water - **1 Pe 3:21**

-- Grace is God's part, faith is our part; baptism is simply an element by which God carries out His plan to save us through the blood of Christ

[Because baptism in water is somehow related to our salvation, Peter could speak of it as an antitype that saves us, just as Noah and his family were "**saved through water**"!]

How can this be? Aren't we saved by the blood of Jesus? Of course! The answer can be seen as we continue to note what Peter taught concerning baptism...]

II. BAPTISM SAVES THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

A. SALVATION IN BAPTISM IS NOT FOUND IN THE "WATER"...

1. As Peter makes clear when he says "**not the removal of the filth of the flesh**"
2. For indeed it is only through the blood of Jesus Christ one can be saved
 - a. We are justified through His blood - **Ro 5:9**
 - b. We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins - **Ep 1:7**
3. To this Peter would definitely agree - **1 Pe 1:18-19**

B. SALVATION IN BAPTISM IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST...

1. If He had not been raised, we would still be in our sins
 - a. As Paul declares in **1 Co 15:17**
 - b. Without His resurrection, His death would have been meaningless
2. But because Jesus was raised from the dead...
 - a. Those baptized into His death can rise to walk in newness of life - **Ro 6:4**
 - b. Those united together in the likeness of His death (i.e., baptism) can share in the power of His resurrection
- **Ro 6:5**
3. In other words, the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead is what saves us in baptism so we can be "made alive" - cf. **Co 2:12-13**

[By God's saving grace and resurrecting power, then, baptism can indeed save us! Not because of any cleansing power in the water, but because of what GOD is doing at that moment through the blood of Jesus and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (cf. **Ti 3:4-5**).

But notice finally, how Peter teaches that baptism saves because...]

III. BAPTISM IS AN APPEAL FOR A GOOD CONSCIENCE

A. "THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE" (NKJV)

1. A difficult phrase, but it most likely means "**an appeal to God for a clear conscience**"
 2. This is supported by the following translations:
 - a. "the craving for a conscience right with God" (Goodspeed)
 - b. "the prayer for a clean conscience before God" (Moffat)
 - c. "the request unto God for a good conscience" (Rotherham)
 - d. "an appeal to God for a clear conscience" (RSV)
 - e. "an appeal to God for a good conscience" (NASV)
- Thus one is baptized because they desire a clear conscience (i.e., to have their sins forgiven)

B. THIS COINCIDES WITH THE EVIDENT PURPOSE OF BAPTISM...

1. In apostolic preaching, baptized was commanded:
 - a. "**For the remission of sins**" - **Ac 2:38**
 - b. To have one's sins "**washed away**" - cf. **Ac 22:16**
2. In N.T. times people who realized they were sinners were anxious to be baptized as soon as possible – cf. **Ac 8:35-38**
3. Therefore one is baptized...

a. To have a good conscience before God; indeed, to have their conscience "purged" by the blood of Christ – cf. **He 9:14**

b. To have their sins washed away by blood of Jesus and so they can rise to a new life through the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead!

CONCLUSION

1. Does baptism save us?

a. Many say "**Baptism does NOT save us!**"

b. But Peter clearly taught "**...baptism doth also NOW save us**" (KJV)

2. How does baptism save us? According to Peter...

a. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

b. As an appeal for a good conscience!

3. This helps us to understand...

a. Why he commanded it for the remission of sins - **Ac 2:38**

b. Why he commanded it even for those who had in some sense received the Spirit - **Ac 10:47-48**

Yes, through the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead, working in conjunction with our faith in the blood of Jesus, baptism does indeed save those who are making an appeal for a clear conscience!

Is baptism essential to salvation? Let the preaching and teaching of Christ's apostles provide the answer! I believe that when we do, we can see why one should take Jesus' own words with no equivocation:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." - Mk 16:16

It is my prayer that if you have not yet properly responded to the Word of the Lord, you will heed the same words given to Paul:

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." - Ac 22:16

Have you made an appeal to God for a good conscience by being baptized into Christ?

What About The Thief On The Cross?

INTRODUCTION

1. In this series we have already examined baptism...

a. In the preaching of the apostles

b. In the teaching of Paul

c. In the teaching of Peter

2. The conclusion drawn from such sources was that baptism is...

a. For the remissions of sins - cf. **Ac 2:38**

b. Therefore necessary for salvation - cf. **Ac 22:16; 1 Pe 3:21**

-- Which certainly seems consistent with Jesus' own words in **Mk 16:15-16**

3. But invariably someone will say: "**What about the thief on the cross?**" - **Lk 23:39-43**

a. This is the most popular objection to the necessity of baptism

b. Despite all that is revealed about the purpose of baptism in the Bible!

4. The objection can be summarized like this:

a. The thief on the cross was not baptized

b. The thief was saved

c. Therefore, baptism is not essential to salvation!

5. Is such reasoning valid?

- a. Might there be something the objector is failing to take into consideration?
- b. A significant fact that renders the salvation of the thief irrelevant to the issue?

[As we take a closer look at the objection, "**What About The Thief On The Cross?**", let's me first emphasize that...]

I. THE THIEF WAS SAVED

A. JESUS CERTAINLY HAD THE POWER TO SAVE HIM...

1. While on earth, Jesus had the authority to forgive sins
2. He exercised this authority on several occasions
 - a. For the paralytic - **Lk 5:18-26**
 - b. For the sinful woman - **Lk 7:36-50**

B. JESUS CLEARLY OFFERED HIM SALVATION...

1. The thief asked: "**Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**" - **Lk 23:42**
2. Jesus replied: "**Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.**" - **Lk 23:43**
-- None can doubt that Jesus promised him salvation!

[Yet the question remains: Is the salvation of the thief **relevant** to the issue? Consider that...]

II. THE THIEF WAS SAVED BEFORE BAPTISM WAS COMMANDED

A. THE BAPTISM UNDER DISCUSSION...

1. Was commanded **AFTER** Jesus died and arose - **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16**
2. Was a baptism into Jesus' death - **Ro 6:3-4**
-- How could the thief been baptized into Jesus' death, when Jesus had not yet died?

B. THE THIEF WAS NEVER SUBJECT TO THIS BAPTISM...

1. It was commanded **AFTER** he died!
2. Just like Adam, Noah, Moses, etc.
 - a. None of these were baptized
 - b. But they all lived before the death of Jesus
 - c. And like the thief, were never commanded to be baptized!
3. Yes, there was the baptism of John - **Mk 1:4-5**
 - a. But that was preparing people for the coming of Christ
 - b. And it was designed to be replaced by baptism into Christ and His death - cf. **Ac 19:4-5**
-- One might use the thief on the cross to say John's baptism was not necessary, but the argument can't be made regarding the baptism which Christ later commanded!

[The thief on the cross died **BEFORE** Jesus gave His commandment in **Mt 28** and **Mk 16**. Since we live **AFTER** Jesus commanded baptism, how can we use the example of the thief to say it is not necessary? In a similar vein...]

III. THE THIEF WAS SAVED BEFORE THE NEW COVENANT BEGAN

A. THERE ARE TWO DIFFERENT COVENANTS...

1. There was a covenant between God and Israel - **Deu 5:2-3**
 - a. It governed all Israelites, such as Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, the thief on the cross, etc.
 - b. It never commanded people to be baptized!
 - c. It came to an end when Jesus died on the cross - cf. **Ep 2:14-16; Co 2:14**
2. There is the new covenant that is now in force - cf. **He 8:6-7**
 - a. Of which Jesus spoke when He instituted the Lord's Supper - **Mt 26:28**
 - b. Which came into force when Jesus died - **He 9:15-17**

B. WE NOW LIVE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT...

1. We must submit to Christ's authority as expressed after His death
 - a. An authority delegated to His apostles - cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Jn 13:20**
 - b. Who clearly commanded baptism! - cf. **Ac 2:38; 10:48; 22:16**
2. How can we appeal to the example of one who lived under the old covenant?
 - a. Can we appeal to the example of David? (of course not)
 - b. Can we appeal to the example of Isaiah? (of course not) -- Nor should we appeal to the example of the thief, who lived and died before the new covenant became of force!
3. We must heed what Jesus and His apostles taught AFTER the new covenant began!

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, the thief was saved on the cross without baptism
 - a. For which we should be thankful
 - b. For which we should give God praise for His wonderful grace
2. But the thief's example is irrelevant to the issue of baptism...
 - a. He died before Christ ever issued the command to be baptized into His death!
 - b. He lived under the old covenant, which did not require baptism into Christ!
3. The thief on the cross would be relevant **IF**...
 - a. You lived **BEFORE** the command to be baptized into Christ was given
 - b. You lived under the **OLD** covenant
 - c. You were in the presence of Christ and he told YOU "**Assuredly, I SAY TO YOU, today YOU will be with Me in Paradise.**"
4. But here are the FACTS...
 - a. You live **AFTER** the command to be baptized has been given
 - b. You live under the **NEW** covenant, in which baptism has a crucial role
 - c. Christ has commanded YOU (and ALL) through His apostles to be baptized - **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Ac 2:38; 10:48; 22:16**

Rather than depending upon an example of salvation that is nothing similar to our situation today, base your faith and assurance of salvation on the many examples of salvation that were recorded in the book of Acts for our benefit.

Heed the preaching and teaching of Christ and His apostles directed toward YOU!

What About Cornelius And His Household?

INTRODUCTION

1. At this point we are considering objections to the idea that baptism is...
 - a. For the remission of sins
 - b. Therefore necessary for salvation
2. In the previous study we examined the salvation of **the thief on the cross**, noting that...
 - a. He was saved before the command to be baptized into Christ's death was given
 - b. He was saved before the new covenant became of force-- Which makes his example of salvation irrelevant to the issue of baptism
3. Another objection concerns **Cornelius and his household**, which be summarized like this:
 - a. The Spirit came upon Cornelius and his family before they were baptized
 - b. The Spirit falling upon them was evidence that they were saved
 - c. Therefore they were saved before baptism, making it not essential to salvation
4. Is this a proper conclusion to reach?
 - a. Does the evidence in Acts support such a conclusion?

b. Did Peter and the others conclude that the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles was for the purpose of saving them, and therefore they were saved before baptism?

5. There are important questions that must be answered as we consider the events of this conversion:

a. Exactly when did the Spirit fall upon Cornelius and his household?

b. What was the purpose of the Spirit falling upon them?

[As we consider the objection, "**What About Cornelius And His Household?**", let's first take a close look at...]

I. THE ACTUAL SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN THIS CONVERSION

A. THE ANGEL APPEARS TO CORNELIUS...

1. Cornelius, a centurion, is a very religious man - **Ac 10:1-2**

2. The angel appears to him - **Ac 10:3-6**

a. With an announcement that his prayers and alms have been noticed by God

b. With instructions to send for Peter; please note:

1) The angel said, "**He will tell you what you must do.**" - **Ac 10:6**

2) As Peter later recounted, "**...who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.**" - **Ac 11:14**

-- **NOTE WELL: Cornelius would not be saved until he heard words telling him what to do!**

3. Cornelius then sends two servants and a devout soldier to Peter - **Ac 10:7-8**

B. PETER HAS A VISION...

1. While the three men are traveling toward Peter, he has a vision - **Ac 10:9-16; 11:4-10**

a. It involves a sheet descending from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures

b. A voice tells Peter to "kill and eat"

c. Peter objects, for he has never eaten anything common or unclean

d. The voice tells him, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

2. Three times the vision is repeated

C. THE SPIRIT TELLS PETER TO GO WITH THE MESSENGERS...

1. The men from Cornelius arrive as Peter contemplates the vision - **Ac 10:17-18; 11:11**

2. The Spirit tells Peter to go, "doubting nothing, for I have sent them" - **Ac 10:19-20; 11:12**

3. Peter receives the men and takes six with him as they go to Cornelius - **Ac 10:21-23; 11:12**

D. PETER ARRIVES AT CORNELIUS' HOUSE...

1. Cornelius has gathered his family and close friends - **Ac 10:24**

2. Peter deflects an attempt by Cornelius to worship him - **Ac 10:25-26**

3. Peter explains his presence is a violation of Jewish custom, but now understands "I should not call any man common or unclean" - **Ac 10:27-28**

4. Asked by Peter to explain why he was called, Cornelius recounts the appearance and instructions of the angel - **Ac 10:29-32; 11:13-14**

5. Cornelius and his household were ready "to hear all things commanded you by God" - **Ac 10:33**

E. AS PETER BEGINS TO SPEAK, THE SPIRIT FALLS UPON THE LISTENERS...

1. At this point, carefully note the actual sequence of events

2. Luke's record gives attention to the sermon first, and then the Spirit coming upon the Gentiles

- cf. **Ac 10:34-44**

a. But Luke also says that "WHILE Peter was still speaking...the Holy Spirit fell"

b. From this we do not know exactly when the Spirit fell

c. It could have been at the beginning, in the middle, toward the end, of his sermon

3. Peter, however, explained what happened "in order from the beginning" - **Ac 11:4**

a. He describes the events as they happened

b. He says "AS I BEGAN TO SPEAK, the Holy Spirit fell upon them" - **Ac 11:15**

-- **NOTE WELL: We learn from Peter that the Spirit actually came upon the Gentiles at the BEGINNING of the sermon!**

4. With the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles, they began speaking with tongues, which amazed Peter and his Jewish companions - **Ac 10:45-46; cf. Ac 2:4, 6, 8, 11**

F. PETER'S SERMON TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF CORNELIUS...

1. He begins with a full perception that God shows no partiality - **Ac 10:34-35**
 - a. A perception started with the vision of the sheet and unclean beasts
 - b. A perception continued with the Spirit's instruction to go with the messengers
 - c. A perception made clear with the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles - **Ac 11:15-17**
2. Peter then proceeds to proclaim Jesus Christ - **Ac 10:36-43**
 - a. As Lord who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power - **Ac 10:36-38**
 - b. Who was killed, but then raised from the dead and seen by eyewitnesses who knew Him well
- **Ac 10:39-41**
 - c. Who has commanded the apostles to proclaim Him as ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and dead - **Ac 10:42**
 - d. Through Whom remission of sins is offered to those who believe - **Ac 10:43**

G. PETER COMMANDS THEM TO BE BAPTIZED...

1. How could anyone forbid water to those who had received the Spirit just as the apostles did?
- **Ac 10:47**; cf. **11:17-18**
2. So Cornelius and his household were commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord - **Ac 10:48**

[The events surrounding this conversion are certainly remarkable. They evidently were intended to convey important truths. But our purpose in this study is to answer these questions:

- * At what point were Cornelius and his household saved?
- * If not to save them, what was the purpose of the Spirit falling upon Cornelius and his household?

Let's now answer the first question...]

II. THE POINT AT WHICH CORNELIUS WAS SAVED

A. REMEMBER WHAT CORNELIUS WAS TOLD...

1. Peter would tell him "what you must do." - **Ac 10:6**
2. Peter would tell him "words by which you...shall be saved." - **Ac 11:14**

B. YET THE SPIRIT FELL UPON HIM BEFORE HE HEARD...

1. As Peter said, the Spirit fell upon them "as I began to speak"
2. It wasn't until the end of his sermon and afterward that Peter told them the "words by which you...shall be saved."

C. CORNELIUS WAS SAVED AFTER HE HEARD...

1. The "words" by which he would be saved (i.e., the sermon)
 2. What he was told to do
 - a. Such as to believe - cf. **Ac 10:43**
 - b. Such as to be baptized, as commanded in **Ac 10:48**
- Until he heard the words, and obeyed what he was told, he was not saved!

[Since Cornelius and his family were not saved until they heard the "words" by which they would be saved, and told what they "must do", the Spirit falling upon them did not save them, for it came upon them BEFORE they heard the "words" and were told what to do!

But why did the Spirit come upon them, if not to save them? Consider what actually was...]

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRIT FALLING UPON CORNELIUS

A. THE PURPOSE CAN BE GLEANED FROM THE FOLLOWING...

1. The effect it had on the Jewish brethren who were present, and Peter's response - **Ac 10:45-47**
2. The reaction of the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem when Peter told them what happened - **Ac 11:17-18**
3. Peter's explanation at the council held later in Jerusalem - **Ac 15:7-11**

B. THE PURPOSE WAS TO SHOW JEWISH BRETHREN...

1. That God was no respecter of persons - **Ac 10:34-35**
2. That God was willing to grant them opportunity to repent and have life - **Ac 11:18**
3. That Gentiles could be saved in the same way as Jews...
 - a. By faith, repentance, and baptism - **Ac 15:9,11**; cf. **2:38** with **10:48**
 - b. Which faith comes through hearing the word of God - **Ro 10:17**

CONCLUSION

1. While miraculous events surrounded the conversion of Cornelius and his family, their salvation was no different from what we see in other cases of conversion...
 - a. They heard the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. They were taught to believe and be baptized -- Thus they were saved "in the same manner" as all those previously - cf. **Mk 16:15-16**; **Ac 2:38**; **8:12**
2. The purpose of the Spirit falling upon them...
 - a. Was not to show one could be saved without baptism
 - b. But to show that Gentiles were no longer to be considered "common" or "unclean", and could be granted the same opportunities to hear the gospel and be saved by it!
3. One might also ask...
 - a. When the Spirit came upon Balaam to prophesy concerning Israel, did it save him? - **Num 24:2**
 - b. When the Spirit came upon Saul to prophesy, did it save him? - **1 Sam 19:20-24**
 - c. When Caiaphas prophesied, was he saved? - **Jn 11:49-52**
-- The purpose of the Spirit coming upon a person may vary, and one should not assume that one filled with the Spirit at any given time is thereby being saved by the Spirit!

Those of us not descended from Israel can rejoice in what God revealed with the conversion of Cornelius and his household. As properly concluded by the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem:

**"...God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."
(Ac 11:16)**

And when carefully noted, they were saved "in the same manner" (cf. **Ac 15:9-11**) as all others, having their hearts purified through faith when they heard and obeyed the word of God!

Wasn't Paul Sent To Preach, Not Baptize?

INTRODUCTION

1. Another objection commonly raised concerning the necessity of baptism is based upon Paul's statement to the church at Corinth...
 - a. This argument is taken from **1 Co 1:14-17**
 - b. Special note is made of Paul's statement: **"For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." - 1 Co 1:17**
 - c. From which some conclude baptism must not be essential to salvation
2. However, when one takes into account...
 - a. The context of **verses 10-13**
 - b. The context of Paul's preaching in Corinth as recorded in **Ac 18:1-8**
...it becomes apparent that Paul preached baptism, and his comments should not be taken as suggesting it was not essential

[In this study, let's take a closer look at the context in which Paul's statement is found. First, we notice that...]

I. PAUL WAS ADDRESSING A PROBLEM AT CORINTH

A. WITH THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD PREACHERS...

1. They were divided - **1 Co 1:10-11**
2. Their division was a result of "preacher-itis" - **1 Co 1:12**
 - a. They were claiming, "I am of Paul", "I am of Apollos", etc.
 - b. As Paul expounded later, they were thinking too highly of the different preachers
 - 1) Their attitude was a mark of carnality - **1 Co 3:3-4**
 - 2) Preachers were simply fellow servants - **1 Co 3:5-9**
 - 3) Thus they were not to boast in men - **1 Co 3:21-23**

B. IT APPEARS RELATED TO WHO BAPTIZED THEM...

1. As indicated by Paul's rhetorical questions - **1 Co 1:13**
2. E.g., "**Were you baptized in the name of Paul?**"
3. The implication is that those who were baptized were claiming to be disciples of those who personally baptized them

C. WHICH IS WHY PAUL WAS GLAD HE PERSONALLY BAPTIZED FEW...

1. Thankful that he baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas
2. Lest any should say that he was baptizing in his own name - **1 Co 1:14-15**

[So Paul was addressing a problem at Corinth. Are we to construe from this that Paul didn't preach baptism, or didn't think it necessary? To the contrary...]

II. PAUL'S PREACHING HAD RESULTED IN MANY BAPTISMS

A. LUKE RECORDS PAUL'S WORK AT CORINTH...

1. How he worked with Aquila and Priscilla - **Ac 18:1-3**
2. How he reasoned in the synagogues, testified that Jesus is the Christ, and persisted despite rejection by unbelieving Jews - **Ac 18:4-7**

B. LUKE RECORDS THE SUCCESS OF PAUL'S PREACHING...

1. Crispus, ruler of the synagogue, and his household believed on the Lord (and whom Paul personally baptized) - **Ac 18:8**; cf. **1 Co 1:14**
2. But also "**many**" of the Corinthians believed and were baptized - **Ac 18:8**

[Though Paul personally baptized few, his preaching resulted in many baptisms! Baptism must have played a significant role in his preaching. That is one reason why we must not twist Paul's words to the church at Corinth as implying that it was not necessary. As we return to **1 Co 1:13**, we should also note that...]

III. PAUL'S WORDS DEMONSTRATE THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

A. NOTE CAREFULLY PAUL'S REASONING...

1. For one to call himself after Paul (or any other man) required two things:
 - a. Paul would have to be crucified for the person - **1 Co 1:13**
 - b. One would have to be baptized in the name of Paul - **1 Co 1:13**
2. Neither had happened, of course, which is why they should not be calling themselves after men

[But consider what Paul's argument means positively...]

B. TO BE CALLED AFTER CHRIST, TWO THINGS ARE REQUIRED...

1. Christ would have to die for the person (which He did)
2. The person would have to be baptized in the name of Christ!
 - a. Have you been baptized in the name of Christ?
 - b. If not, then you cannot rightfully be called a Christian!

[In the very context of a passage which many use to claim that baptism is not essential, Paul implies one cannot be called a Christian unless they have been baptized in the name of Christ! How then are we to

understand Paul's statement: "**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...**"? The answer is easy...]

IV. PAUL WAS EMPHASIZING HIS ROLE AS AN APOSTLE

A. PAUL WAS SENT TO PREACH, NOT BAPTIZE...

1. As an apostle (which means "one sent"), Paul's role was to proclaim the gospel
 - a. As explained to the Ephesians, he was given the task to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ"
- **Ep 3:8**
 - b. Which he did by inspiration - cf. **Ga 1:11-12**
2. Though his preaching resulted in baptism (cf. **Ac 18:8**), it was not imperative that he do the baptizing
 - a. Others could easily do that task (such as his traveling companions)
 - b. Which evidently happened at Corinth, for while many were baptized, he personally baptized only a few

B. PAUL USED A SEMITIC STYLE OF SPEAKING...

1. Notice the words of Jesus in **Jn 6:27**
 - a. "**Do not labor for the food which perishes**"
 - b. "**but for the food which endures to everlasting life**"
-- Jesus was not saying one should not work, but rather was emphasizing the importance of seeking after spiritual food over physical food
2. Paul used similar style of speaking in **1 Co 1:17**
 - a. "**For Christ did not send me to baptize**"
 - b. "**but to preach the gospel**"
-- Paul was not saying he was not to baptize, but that his role as an apostle to preach the gospel was more important!

C. HOW OTHERS HAVE UNDERSTOOD PAUL...

1. "**That is, not to baptize as my main business. Baptism was not his principle employment, though he had a commission in common with others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it.**" - Barnes (Notes, on 1 Co 1:17)
2. "**According to Semitic idiom, 'not so much to baptize, as...'. The word 'sent' involves the meaning 'made me an apostle'. The primary function of an apostle was 'to bear witness'.**"
- Farrar (Commentary on 1 Co 1:17)
3. "**Baptism was not his principal work, not the main business for which Paul was sent, it was part of his work, otherwise he would not have baptized Crispus, or Gaius, or 'the household of Stephanas,' but preaching was his principle work.**" - Poole (Annotations, 1 Co 1:17)
4. "**...bearing mind Paul's other utterances about baptism, v.17 is to be interpreted in the light of the Semitic manner of laying stress on an issue: Christ sent Paul to preach the gospel rather than to baptize. But this is no depreciation of the value of baptism.**" - Beasley-Murray (Baptism In The New Testament, p.181)

CONCLUSION

1. When one considers all the evidence we have about the situation at Corinth, we learn...
 - a. That many were baptized as a result of Paul's preaching - **Ac 18:8**
 - b. Paul was glad that he did not personally baptize many of them, because of the problem that later arose in Corinth - **1 Co 1:14-15**
2. In the passage so many use to say that baptism is not important...
 - a. Paul was simply emphasizing his role as an apostle - **1 Co 1:17**
 - b. Paul used reasoning which implies the necessity of baptism (to be called after Christ, one must be baptized into the name of Christ) - **1 Co 1:13**

Can you rightfully be called a Christian? Yes, Christ was crucified for you; but have you been baptized in the name of Christ?

Baptism Is A Work, We Are Not Saved By Works!

INTRODUCTION

1. A popular objection to the necessity of baptism involves salvation and works...
 - a. People often say, "**Baptism is a work, and we are not saved by works!**"
 - b. Support for this objection is made by appealing to passages like **Ep 2:8-9**
2. Certainly baptism is a thing done, and as such is a "work"...
 - a. But is it a work of merit, by which one earns salvation?
 - b. Or is it a work of faith, by which one receives salvation?
3. In considering the work involved in baptism, who is truly the one "at work"?
 - a. Is it the man or woman who submits to being immersed?
 - b. Or is it God who forgives and regenerates through the blood of Jesus and working of the Holy Spirit?

[When one carefully considers what the Bible teaches, there is no contradiction between the idea that we are saved by faith and not works, and at the same time saved by baptism. In this study I hope to make that clear. Let me begin by pointing out that...]

I. BAPTISM IS A WORK OF FAITH, NOT MERIT

A. THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF "WORKS"...

1. There are works of "**merit**"
 - a. These are works done to "earn" something
 - b. Those who have done such works believe they "deserve" something; e.g., those who believe they will be saved:
 - 1) Because they kept the Ten Commandments
 - 2) Because they went to church, did good deeds, etc.
 - c. It is these kinds of works Paul has under consideration in **Ro 3:27-28; Ep 2:8-9; Ti 3:4-5a**
 - 1) There is no way we can "earn" or merit" salvation!
 - 2) All the good we might do cannot outweigh even one sin! - cf. **Ja 2:10**
2. There are also works of "**faith**"
 - a. These are things done to "receive" something
 - b. Those who have done such works believe they "deserve" nothing!
 - 1) They understand their obedience did not earn or merit their salvation
 - 2) They understand their salvation rests upon God's mercy and grace, not because God owes it to them!
 - c. Such works can rightly be called "**works of God**"
 - 1) Of which faith itself is called by Jesus - **Jn 6:28-29**
 - 2) Other works of faith commanded by God include repentance and confession
- cf. **Ac 17:30; Ro 10:9-10**
 - d. Though such works as faith, repentance and confession are commanded...
 - 1) They are not meritorious works; we do not earn salvation through them
 - 2) They are works God has ordained we do to receive His salvation
-- When all is said and done, salvation is still by God's grace and mercy!

[What is said of faith, repentance, and confession may also be said of baptism...]

B. BAPTISM IS A WORK OF FAITH, NOT MERIT...

1. Baptism requires faith
 - a. The necessity of faith was emphasized by Jesus - **Mk 16:16**
 - b. Philip made it a prerequisite to baptism - **Ac 8:36-37**
2. Baptism is an act of faith by which one receives (not earn)...
 - a. The forgiveness of sins and gift of the Holy Spirit - **Ac 2:38**
 - b. Union with Christ in His death, raised with Him to new life - **Ro 6:3-4; Ga 3:27**
3. That baptism is not a work of merit is emphasized in **Ti 3:4-5**

a. While God saves us "**through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit**" (an allusion to baptism)...

b. He does not save us by "**works of righteousness**", i.e., by works of merit
-- Thus baptism is clearly is not some work of righteousness done to earn or merit salvation!

[Nowhere does the Bible suggest that baptism is a work of merit, by which God owes us salvation upon the basis of our baptism. Like faith, repentance, and confession, baptism is simply an act of faith by which we receive salvation. And why is this so? Because...]

II. BAPTISM INVOLVES THE WORKING OF GOD

A. GOD IS AT WORK IN BAPTISM...

1. We are buried and raised with Christ "**through faith IN THE WORKING OF GOD**" - **Co 2:12**
2. It is God who does the work, not man! - **Co 2:13**
 - a. Man is dead in his sins
 - b. But God makes him alive, forgiving him of sins-- Thus it is God who saves us, not we ourselves, which He does through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit - **Ti 3:5**

B. THINK OF BAPTISM AS A "SPIRITUAL OPERATION"...

1. An operation in which the "Great Physician" does His work
2. When one needs physical surgery, it requires faith in the skills of a physician to submit to the operating table
 - a. When the surgery is over, have I "earned" or "merited" my healing? No!
 - b. It required both faith in the doctor and a willingness to submit to him!
3. So my faith in God and in the death of His Son for my sins prompted me to submit to the "spiritual operation" of baptism, in which God did His wonderful work of cleansing by the blood of Jesus and regeneration by the Holy Spirit!

CONCLUSION

1. When we understand that baptism...
 - a. Is a work of faith, not a work of merit
 - b. Is a working of God at which time we receive salvation, not earn salvation-- We will not reject the necessity of baptism under the mistaken idea that it is some work by which we try to earn salvation
2. Sadly, many people reject baptism because they see it as something you DO...
 - a. In reality, baptism is the most PASSIVE act of faith required to receive Christ and the blessings He provides
 - b. i.e., "believe", "repent", "confess Christ", are all things we DO
 - c. On the other hand, baptism is something DONE TO US
3. Consider this...
 - a. "Faith," "repentance," and "confession" are all ACTIVE acts of faith on our part
 - b. "Baptism" is but a PASSIVE act of faith in which we submit to the working of God in our lives (cf. Co 2:12)-- To object to baptism because it requires man to "do" something would require one to object to "faith," "repentance," and "confession," for they also require man to "do" something!
4. Even Martin Luther, who coined the phrase "salvation by faith only", understood that salvation by grace through faith did not preclude the necessity of baptism:
 - a. In answer to the question, "**What gifts or benefits does Baptism bestow?**", Luther replied in his Small Catechism, "**It effects forgiveness of sins.**"
 - b. He also wrote concerning the sinner: "**Through Baptism he is bathed in the blood of Christ and is cleansed from sins.**"
 - c. Again, he wrote: "**To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save.**"

d. Responding to those who call this a kind of works-salvation, he said **"Yes, it is true that our works are of no use for salvation. Baptism, however, is not our work but God's."** -- (as quoted by Jack W. Cottrell in *Baptism And The Remission of Sins*, College Press, 1990, p. 32-34)

So to those who say, **"Baptism is a work, and we are not saved by works"**, I would reply:

"Baptism is a work of God, and we are saved by faith in the working of God!"

Have you submitted to the working of God in baptism? If you believe that Jesus died for your sins on the cross, have repented of your sins and are willing to confess your faith in Him as the Son of God, you can receive the working of God in your life today!

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

Conclusion To This Section

When all men's arguments fall, the Bible's teaching on this subject is still the same.

Acts 2:38 still teaches baptism is for the remission of sins:

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Ac 22:16 still teaches baptism washes away sins:

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Mark 16:16 still teaches:

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

1 Corinthians 12:13 still teaches that baptism puts us into the body of Christ:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Galatians 3:27 still teaches baptism puts us into Christ:

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 still teaches baptism puts us into the death of Christ:

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Colossians 2:12-13 still teaches that through baptism we obtain the newness of life:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with [him] through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

1 Peter 3:21 still teaches that baptism saves us:

21 The like figure whereunto [even] baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

The first time the gospel was preached, "**They then that received his word were baptized,**" (Ac 2:41). People today who receive the gospel do the same thing. Friend, if you believe in Jesus Christ, and have repented, i.e., determined that you will live according to His teaching, won't you confess His name before men and be baptized for the reasons HE said while you have opportunity?