

The Relationship between Baptism and Salvation

A Reminder from History

This article is the first in a series of lessons explaining the relationship of baptism and salvation. This is an important lesson for several reasons. Various churches teach many contradictory things concerning baptism and its purpose.

Below we will summarize three different views regarding the place of baptism in relationship to faith and salvation in the teaching of various groups.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

LUTHERAN

EPISCOPALIAN

#1

BAPTISM

#2

SAVED

#3

BELIEVE

PRESBYTERIAN

METHODIST

The Roman Catholic view is that babies are born "guilty" of Adam's sin and therefore doomed to hell. Since they believe that baptism is a sacrament that can take away sin even without belief, they baptize (sprinkle, not immerse) the baby, hoping to free it from eternal punishment should it die. They hope that one day the baptized infant will grow up and be a believer. There is no command or example in the Bible that mentions sprinkling or baptizing a baby. About 90% of believers worldwide have been sprinkled as a baby. However, other churches teach the following:

BAPTIST

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

EVANGELICAL

#1

BELIEF

#2

SAVED

#3

BAPTISM

OTHERS

This view is very common in the United States and denominations that got there beginning here. They teach that baptism, in order to have validity, must come from a believing heart. Therefore, baptism is not for babies. They also teach that baptism comes after a person is saved and is "an outward sign of inward grace". Forgiveness of sins is promised by them the moment a person believes and baptism is said to have nothing to do with salvation or forgiveness. The two views above plainly contradict each other. They also contradict the proper order Jesus gave in Mark 16:16.

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."
(Mark 16:15-16 NIV)*

JESUS

MARK 16:16

#1

BELIEVE

#2

BAPTIZE

#3

SAVED

Do you notice a difference in the order of teaching in the first two groups? What about between Jesus and all these groups? I do see a difference and I am quite concerned. In fact, every time in the Bible when baptism and salvation are mentioned in the same verse, baptism always comes before salvation, forgiveness of sins, and washing away sins. (See Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). It is also interesting to me that baptism was always commanded to sinners who needed forgiveness, it was not for saved people or people who were already Christians.

In this booklet we will take a close look at what the Bible says about our salvation. We will examine what God has done for us and what our response should be. We will see that God's grace and man's obedient faith are not contradictory to each other. One problem we will face in our study is that our traditions hinder our approach to this subject. Many say that "only God" is responsible for salvation and that man is totally passive. Others say that man "must" believe in order to be saved and his salvation is by "faith only". The Roman Catholic Church believes that babies are born guilty of sin, and they are baptized for the purpose of salvation. This is certainly teaching "baptism only", since the child has no belief in God or Jesus. So we see the contradictions in the teachings of men. One says, "God only" saves and another says "faith only" saves. The only verse in the Bible that uses the term "faith alone", says we are "**not** saved by faith alone" (James 2:24). This is a plain statement, yet millions of believers confidently hold the teaching that we are saved by "faith only". Millions of others hold that salvation is not by faith only. Why are men so divided on this subject? Jesus prayed that we might be one in our teaching (John 17:20-21).

Martin Luther, the great reformer, in a reaction to the Roman Catholic Church's teaching concerning salvation by works, translated Romans 3:28 this way:

*"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith **ONLY** apart from works of the law"*

He was so determined to destroy the false teaching of Roman Catholicism he added the word "**only**" to Roman 3:28; but the word is not found in the earliest Greek copies of the scriptures. No other translation I know of adds the word "only" to Roman 3:28.

Luther, confused by the comment of James 2:24 saying that we are "**not** saved by faith alone", solved the seeming contradiction by saying that the book of James should have never been included in the Bible. It is my belief that Luther, in running away from Rome, ran all the way past Jerusalem and the apostles. Sometimes today, people would rather leave verses out of the Bible than deal with them in an honest way. The reading of some verses makes people uncomfortable because they are determined to hold to a particular teaching of a particular denomination or tradition. I pray that we will all be free from this attitude.

In this lesson we are going to read many verses that tie a certain person, a certain action, a certain attitude, with man's salvation. As we study the relationship of God's grace and man's saving faith, it will serve us well to remind ourselves that the Bible does not contradict itself. When we look at the whole picture there will be harmony. I will simply be giving a list of verses that relate to man's salvation. If some make you feel uncomfortable – please don't disregard the Bible's teaching. If you feel discomfort as you read, please examine your present religious beliefs in light of the Bible.

Salvation by Grace through Faith

Salvation is by the grace of God and therefore a gift from Him. It cannot be purchased by money nor earned by us through actions or works.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

God and Jesus made salvation possible. They are the first and the last, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of our salvation. They are the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2; Revelations 1:8). Salvation was “only” possible because of their planning, their love, and their sacrifice. It was up to them to make the full payment for man’s sins. There is nothing in sinful man that allows him to redeem himself. If Deity had not acted for sinners out of love and grace, we could have “worked” all our life and never been restored to fellowship with God. Even our faith, without God’s atoning sacrifice, would have been worthless in regard to salvation. Paul said, “*If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:17). We would do well to remember this principle when we discuss the relationship of baptism to salvation. Baptism would also be worthless without the cross and the resurrection. In fact, its whole meaning is attached to these two events.

*Or don't you know that all of us who were **baptized into Christ Jesus** were **baptized into his death**? We were therefore **buried with him** through **baptism into death** in order that, **just as Christ was raised** from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life**. (Romans 6:3-4 NIV)*

*In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men **but with the circumcision done by Christ**, having been **buried with him in baptism** and **raised with him** through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12 NIV)*

The whole gospel message is centered on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ **died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was **buried**, that he was **raised** on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NIV)*

Baptism not only pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; it involves the **dead** sinner being **buried** and consequently **raised** by the power of God to a new life. This is exactly what we have just read in the previous verses. In the New Testament, baptism is so closely tied with the gospel that Jesus said, “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel, he who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned*” (Mark 16:16).

What Saves Us According to the Bible?

It will surprise many believers that the Bible lists at least 21 items that save us. (If you work at it you can probably find more). You will not find more than one or two listed in any single verse – yet all are intricately connected to our salvation in their own way. To pick out a few verses, emphasize them, and then neglect others would be a tragedy. We will soon see that for anyone to teach “faith only” or “baptism only” is to show great ignorance of God’s word.

1) God Saves!

*So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of **God, who has saved us** and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, (2 Timothy 1:8-9 NIV)*

How does God Save?

2) **BY HIS MERCY**

***He saved us**, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but **according to His mercy**, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5)*

3) **BY HIS GRACE**

*even when we were dead in our transgressions, He made us alive together with Christ (**by grace you have been saved**), (Ephesians 2:5)*

4) **BY HIS LOVE**

*"For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but **have eternal life**. (John 3:16)*

5) CHRIST SAVES

6) **BY HIS LIFE** – see verse under next point

7) **BY HIS DEATH**

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

8) BY HIS BLOOD

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. (Romans 5:9)

9) BY HIS RESURRECTION

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, -- 1 Peter 1:3

10) THE GOSPEL SAVES

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

How does the gospel save?

11) BY WORDS

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

"And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'" (Acts 11:13-14)

12) **BY PREACHING**

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased **through** the foolishness **of the message preached to save those who believe.** (1 Corinthians 1:21)*

for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:13-14)

13) WE NEED TO SAVE OURSELF

*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, **Save yourselves** from this untoward (evil) generation. (Acts 2:40 KJV)*

Certainly sinners cannot pay for their own sins, offer their blood as a perfect sacrifice, or live such a life that will earn a right standing with God. However, if we do not humbly seek God and respond to his grace and all the items listed above – then, all that God has done for our salvation is in vain.

Let us illustrate with this story. A wanted criminal is drowning in the ocean and a rich man sends his boat to help in the rescue. The rich man represents God, the drowning man the lost sinner. The rescuers on the boat represent the teachers of the gospel. They throw him a rope and a life jacket. This represents the gospel, God's plan to save. However, the man must grab the rope and life jacket. This represents man's response to the gospel. Although it is through the rich man's love and grace that the boat and rope is provided – the man must still respond. Although in the most important sense, the rich man, the rescuers, and the rope are responsible for saving the man – he will not be saved unless he "saves himself" by grabbing the rope. After he responds and is saved, he does not boast of his action – but the actions of the rich man and the rescuers. He realizes he has not earned his rescue – it was through the grace and sacrifice of others.

*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will **save both yourself** and your hearers. (1 Timothy 4:16 NIV)*

***Come near to God** and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. **Humble yourselves** before the Lord, and **he will lift you up.** (James 4:8-10 NIV)*

It is God's will that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4). God loved the whole world and gave his son so that all might be saved (John 3:16). However, after considering all that God has done – man will not be

saved unless he responds. That is what the Bible means when it says "save yourself". Below we will list what man's response must be to what God has done. Man is saved

14) BY HEARING AND LEARNING THE GOSPEL

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. (John 6:44-45 NIV)

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 NIV)

15) BY FAITH AND BELIEF OF THE GOSPEL

*"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and **believe in the gospel.**" (Mark 1:15)*

*Therefore, since we have been **justified through faith,** we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1 NIV)*

16) BY REPENTING OF SIN

***Repent, then, and turn to God,** so that **your sins may be wiped out,** that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, (Acts 3:19 NIV)*

17) BY CONFESSING OUR FAITH

*That if you **confess** with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is **with your mouth that you confess and are saved.** (Romans 10:9-10 NIV)*

18) BY CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

*And everyone who **calls on the name of the Lord** will be **saved.** (Acts 2:21 NIV)*

19) BY OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL

*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV)*

*For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those **who do not obey the gospel of God?** (1 Peter 4:17 NIV)*

*This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will **punish those** who do not know God and **do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 NIV)*

20) BY WASHING OF WATER

*who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, **were saved through water**, and this water symbolizes **baptism that now saves you** also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20-21 NIV)*

*Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, **no one can enter the kingdom** of God **unless** he is **born of water** and the Spirit. (John 3:5 NIV)*

*he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. **He saved us through the washing of rebirth** and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5 NIV)*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water** through the word, (Ephesians 5:25-26 NIV)*

*let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having **our bodies washed with pure water**. (Hebrews 10:22 NIV)*

21) BY BEING BAPTIZED

*Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, **"Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"** (Acts 8:35-36 NIV)*

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. **Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved**, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16 NIV)*

*Peter replied, "Repent and **be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus **Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NIV)*

*And now what are you waiting for? Get up, **be baptized and wash your sins away**, calling on his name.' (Acts 22:16 NIV)*

*who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, **were saved through water**, and this water symbolizes **baptism that now saves you** also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20-21 NIV)*

Summary

In summary, the Bible, to the surprise of many people, does mention the fact that we are in some ways responsible for our own salvation. God is the author or originator of our salvation (Hebrews 5:8-9), but the same verse says that this salvation is imparted only to those who obey him.

*Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him** (Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV)*

There is nothing we can do to earn or make God owe us salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is a gift. But the Bible has also made it plain that there are conditions of heart and action that God laid down for man in regard to salvation. If a rich man decides to give his inheritance to his children based on conditions, those conditions don't necessarily eliminate the fact that the inheritance is a gift.

God has offered salvation to all sinners. The fact that all sinners are not saved is not the fault of God. The truth that the majority of mankind is lost does not negate the fact that God is all-powerful and all loving and patient. It only proves the rebellion and ungratefulness of man. Those who don't believe, confess, call, and repent will be lost. What if a man rejects and willingly puts off baptism? What is a patient and loving God to do?

*All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, **acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized** by John. But the **Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.** (Luke 7:29-30 NIV)*

Whatever our theology on baptism – this verse speaks plainly to those who have not been baptized. It places them in very bad company – it lines them up with the Pharisees. If being baptized acknowledges that God is right – what does its rejection tell about you? We have read many verses that say that baptism is “for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38), comes before the promise of salvation (Mark 16:16), “washes away sins” (Acts 22:16), and “now also saves us” (1 Peter 3:20-21). I purposely did not make comments when these verses were quoted earlier in this article. The question is not my theology, but whether God is right. If God is right, a believer should be baptized. Disciples who encourage sincere believers to put off their baptism are ignorantly “rejecting God's purpose for themselves” and others (Luke 7:29-30).

We have listed 21 items that the Bible plainly says are connected with our salvation. We can discuss the importance of each or the urgency of each – but the fact remains that all 21 points are some way connected to our salvation. I don't know all the reasons why most believers accept the first 20 but

reject #21, baptism. It was God our Savior who connected baptism with our salvation. Don't reject his purpose.

In the days of the apostles we see that baptism was an urgent thing to those who believed. It was not a church ordinance set on the church calendar for certain times of the year. Believing sinners responded to baptism in an urgent way when they heard the apostles teaching. If men today are not being baptized in the same way – it is a good indication that the theology of a particular man or denomination is not in agreement with apostolic teaching. Please see the reaction of sinners to the apostles teaching in the first century and compare it to the practice around you today. If it is not the same, then examine yourself.

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:36-38 NIV)*

***Those who accepted his message were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number **that day**. (Acts 2:41 NIV)*

Notice the "same day" response when the apostles taught versus the practice of most modern denominational churches. Have you ever heard of a Billy Graham crusade where 3000 were baptized the same day they believed? They have thousands respond to an invitation to accept Jesus as their personal Savior, but none are baptized that day. What is different about Mr. Graham's teaching and that of the apostles that causes a different result? I have never heard Mr. Graham give Peter's answer to "what must I do" that is found in Acts 2:38. When he tells people to "accept Jesus as their personal Savior" he is **not quoting scripture**. Why does he not feel comfortable quoting Peter's response to those who already believed, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:28).

When the gospel message reached Samaria we see this response to Philip's preaching:

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12 NIV)

Philip was later sent to a man from Ethiopia who was traveling back home from Jerusalem and reading from the book of Isaiah, chapter 53. The Ethiopian was reading about a lamb being led to slaughter and did not understand who the prophet was talking about.

*The eunuch (Ethiopian) asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture **and told him the good news about Jesus**. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "**Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?**" - And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8:34-38 NIV)*

Isn't it interesting that when Philip told him the good news about Jesus that the Ethiopian immediately asked the question, "Look, here is water, why shouldn't I be baptized?" What is it

about Philip's teaching about Jesus that led the man to ask such a question? Is it possible that in preaching Jesus Philip quoted the words of Jesus, "*He that believes and is baptized will be saved, he that believes not will be condemned*"? (Mark 16:16). Why is it that today when men preach the good news about Jesus, men seldom ask, "Why shouldn't I be baptized"? Is it possible that preachers are not quoting the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16? We should also notice that the Ethiopian was baptized the same day that Jesus was first preached to him. It was the same day he believed. Philip did not wait until some more believers were rounded up in the next few weeks to have a baptismal service. Is our practice like apostolic times? If not, how is our theology different from the apostles?

Saul of Tarsus, who later became the apostle Paul, was on the road to Damascus to kill and persecute Christians (Acts 9). After he heard a voice from heaven saying, "Saul, why do you persecute me," he cried out, "Who are you Lord?" After identifying himself, Jesus said, "Go into the city and it shall be told you what you must do." Most people talk about the fact that Saul was saved ON the road to Damascus. However, he did not act like a saved man. He went to the city and neither ate nor drank for three days and nights. It was not until the preacher came and told him what to do that he changed his behavior and began to take food (Acts 9:19). Paul, when he later told about his conversion, gives us the exact words of the preacher. Again, we see the urgency for a believer in regard to the act of baptism.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name. (Acts 22:15-16 NIV)

In the conversion of the Jailor in Acts 16 we see the same thing.

***About midnight** Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" They replied, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved-- you and your household.**" Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. **At that hour of the night** the jailer took them and washed their wounds; **then immediately he and all his family were baptized.** The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God-- he and his whole family. (Acts 16:25-34 NIV)*

Here is a man who just had his first lesson about Jesus Christ. He was not even a Jew who already knew about the God of Israel. He had not been to a series of discipleship classes. It was not convenient for him to be baptized. The time was between midnight and dawn. The apostles were beaten and bloody from their arrest the previous day. Yet, they attended to his baptism immediately. WHY?

The jailor needed to acknowledge that God is right and that he is a sinner in need of forgiveness (Luke 7:29-30; Acts 2:36-38). He had learned about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ when the word was spoken to him. After believing the message, he now wanted to be in Christ and be united with Christ in His death. He wanted to die to himself and put on Christ. He

wanted God's power to remove the sins of his soul. Read the following verses and see more reasons why he wanted to be baptized immediately.

*Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through **baptism into death** in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.** (Romans 6:3-4 NIV)*

*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, **for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** (Galatians 3:26-27 NIV)*

*and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the **removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism,** in which you were also raised up with Him **through faith in the working of God,** who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12 NASB)*

A saved person must have access to the death of Christ. We are baptized into his death (Romans 6:3-4). Who is it that has clothed themselves with Christ? Answer, "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ" (Gal 3:26-27). When does God do his work (his surgery) in circumcising or removing the body of flesh? God's work is done when we are buried with Him in baptism (Colossians 2:11-12). No wonder, when believing people were taught the apostles doctrine, they wanted to be baptized immediately.

I do not mean by bringing these verses to your attention that God has set a time limit between a person's belief and his baptism. He did not do this. However, when the apostles taught about baptism, people wanted to do it soon. They realized it was urgent and important; they did not want to put it off.

Now, I realize that out of the 21 items the Bible says saves – I have spent more time and given more verses in this article on baptism than the other 20 items. However, my readers should not make the mistake of assuming I actually emphasize baptism over the others. When I am among unbelievers, baptism is never mentioned. My emphasis is on the power of God and evidences from the Bible and from nature to bring a person to belief. Among unbelievers I emphasize God's love and the sacrifice of his Son. Without them no one can be saved.

When a person is fully convinced that Jesus died for them, and the person is ready to die to self – then I introduce what the Bible says about baptism. The one that through belief is now dead to self – is ready to be buried with Christ and rise with him to a new life.

If I were teaching among baptized believers I would not emphasize it because they are not in need of such a lesson.

The only other time I would emphasize baptism is when I am forced to do so by those who neglect it. When I see apostolic practices being neglected among believers and new believers not being given all of God's word – I must emphasize the things that are lacking. The emphasis in this article is not because I think baptism is more important than our belief or Christ's death on the cross. Nothing could be further from the truth. Baptism is worthless without the foundation that gives it meaning. Millions of infants who don't believe are baptized and all they get from it is a physical

bath. Many adults may be baptized to impress a girlfriend or please a mate. They may submit to it to join a denomination or prove their loyalty to Christ to others. Immersions (baptisms) of this kind are empty and have no scriptural foundation. I emphasize baptism to those who don't give baptism its proper place in the scriptures.

Baptism is not taking a physical bath; it is seeking a good conscience from God while believing in the power of the resurrection of Jesus.

And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:20-21 NASB)

Baptism is not a work we do to earn salvation, it is not something we do that allows us to boast about our merit and goodness (Eph 2:8-9). In baptism we admit we are sinners in need of God's salvation. We renounce self in our heart (die to self, crucify self) (Romans 6:3-8) then humbly seek to enter into a relationship with Christ's death. We show our belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus when we die to self and allow our self to be buried in the water and rise up to walk a new life.

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