

Timaru church of Christ

You Deserve The Truth Regarding Salvation

Gallons of ink have been used by many to explain away the purpose of baptism in the past one hundred years or so. Now don't get me wrong, these same people will likely affirm the necessity of baptism for it is obvious from the many New Testament passages that state it is a requirement if one wants to go to heaven. Oh, by the way, before we continue, let's be clear here, of the seven types of baptism mentioned in the New Testament Paul states that by the time he writes to Ephesus there is but "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) that is authorised in the name of Jesus Christ. . Just what that baptism is can be determined from the gospel of John: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Now, did you catch what Jesus says to this very religious man? Nicodemus, there is only one way a man may enter God's kingdom and be therefore saved from God's wrath and that is through baptism i.e. "born of water" according to that which the Holy Spirit has given.

"But hang on a minute, my religious leader says, 'faith is all you need to be saved'", I hear you mutter under your breath.

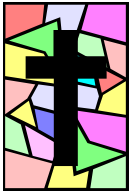
"Further", you say, "My religious instructor says baptism is just a requirement of obedience because I am already saved and that it is like an outward sign of obedient heart, or something like that".

"Besides," you continue, "If baptism is something I need to do in order to be saved, then that would mean I am working my way to salvation, something the apostle Paul said is not true according to Ephesians 2:8-9."

Let's see if these concerns you raise stack up with just what the Bible says.

First, one cannot be saved by faith only, for repentance comes before salvation according to II Corinthians 7:10 "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation". Besides, the only time "faith only" appears in the Bible is found in James 2:24 where he states being justified in other words being saved is "not by faith only".

Second, to say one is saved before baptism is to put the proverbial cart before the horse. There is not an instance anywhere in the New Testament that this occurs. The words of Jesus to the apostles will suffice to prove the point. In Mark 16:16 Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Note that the verbs "believeth" and "baptized" are both in the past tense and as verbs are actions to be in agreement with the subject i.e. in this instance to be "saved" then it follows that baptism is required **before** salvation will be granted. Oh, and just in case you might be thinking, "Well that's just your interpretation" consider the original language (Koine Greek) which is in complete agreement. The word for "believeth" is pisteuō and the word "baptized" is baptizō



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and their tense is aorist meaning one time events in the past. The word for “saved” is sōzō and is in the future tense.

Just one more thing before carrying on, the requirement to believe encompasses more than a simple belief in Jesus for it stands to reason that a range of subjects must be absorbed such as repentance, confession, the church, acceptable worship etc or as Luke records on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 where after absorbing Peter’s sermon he told them what they must do to be saved in verse 38 but it was not until after “ many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:40-41). Those “many other words” imply a range of subjects in order for the new convert to be able to “walk in the light as He [that is, Jesus] is in the light” (I John 1:7).

Third, while it is absolutely true that man cannot contribute anything toward his salvation i.e. “not of yourselves” because salvation is a “gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8), it is equally true that one must make certain to keep this text within the broader context of the apostle’s letter. Read it all and it soon becomes apparent that false teachers were influencing an insistence of keeping the by now defunct law of Moses (Ephesians 2:15) a problem that was widespread throughout the first century probably due to the Jews offence of the Gospel which was sweeping the world. This law required “Circumcision in the flesh made by hands” (Ephesians 2:11) works of which the Jews were boastful of because it showed they were of God as opposed to the uncircumcised Gentile. It follows, therefore, that this is the works Paul was forbidding not the works that one must be actioning in order to obtain salvation otherwise he would stand in direct contrast with none other than Jesus Himself who said that even faith is a work (John 6:29). Now, surely, you will be the last to say one can be saved without first believing. And here is another thing to consider. James actually says, “by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24). He is saying just as Abraham and Rahab the harlot were saved for their respective deeds of faith, so shall we today be saved on the basis of obeying that which God has commanded all men to action if they are to be a part of God’s kingdom.

Graham Walker