

Belief, Baptism, Absolution and the Lord's Supper

(Pastor Kelly Sensenig)

Belief (Centered in Christ alone)

Over 150 references to faith alone in Christ!

"whosoever believeth" (John 3:15-16); "he that believeth" (John 3:18); "And many more believed" (John 4:41); "Now we believe" (John 4:42); "he that believeth on me" (John 6:35); "He that heareth my word and believeth on him" (John 5:24); "He that believeth on me" (John 6:47); "believe in the light" (John 12:36); "many believed on him" (John 12:42); "whosoever believeth on me" (John 12:46); "them also which shall believe on me" (John 17:20); "you that believe" (John 20:31); "that believing ye might have life" (1 John 5:13); "every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16); "them which should hereafter believe on him" (1 Tim. 1:16); "after that ye believed" (Eph. 1:13); "they which have believed" (Titus 3:8); "I believe" (Mark 9:24). "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not" (Acts 28:24); "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28); "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1); "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16); "justified by faith" (Gal. 2:24); "The just (or righteous ones before God) shall live (be made spiritually alive) by faith" (Gal. 3:11; Rom. 1:17)

If one **MUST** be baptized to be saved it becomes **LEGALISM** (works-salvation). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done" (Titus 3:5); "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). The legalists said in **Acts 15:1**, "**Except ye be circumcised** (except ye be baptized, except ye become a member of the church, except ye eat the Lord's Supper, partake in the church sacraments, pass through absolution, etc.) **ye cannot be saved.**"

When grace is mixed with baptism then grace is canceled out and law (works) becomes the way to attain salvation (Rom. 11:6).

Scripture repeatedly confirms that people are *immediately* saved without baptism (Luke 7:37-50; Matt. 9:2; Luke 18:13-14; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:13; Heb. 10:39 - "believe to the saving of the soul").

Baptism follows salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 10:44-48, 16:14-15; 18:8, 12).

Baptism follows forgiveness (Acts 8:12, 34-39; 10:34-48; 16:31-33).

Baptism follows repentance. Only repentance needed to receive forgiveness (Acts 3:19; 5:31; 26:20; Luke 24:47).

The **thief** on the cross had the assurance of salvation apart from baptism (Luke 23:43).

Cornelius and his household, as well as Martha, all had the assurance of salvation apart from baptism (Acts 10:43-48; John 11:25-27).

The **Savior** is not stated to have baptized anyone, a strange omission if baptism is essential to salvation!

The **apostle Paul** was thankful that he baptized only a few of the Corinthians. This is a strange cause for thankfulness if baptism is to be an expression of our faith in Christ or if baptism has saving merit (1 Cor. 1:14-17).

Belief + Baptism + Lord's Supper + Absolution (Centered in man's works)

Misunderstood Texts Clarified

Interpret the unclear verses in light of the clear!

Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3 - "**baptism for the remission of sins**"
*First, this was not *Christian* baptism as we know it today (Matt. 28:19-20). It was a special baptism for the Jews to prepare them for the coming Messiah (John 1:26-29). The water baptism in John's ministry to the nation of Israel was to be a sign, token, and outward expression of their repentance and faith in the coming Messiah and Savior. The baptism was **NOT** connected with their salvation but was the visible *fruit* or outward *testimony* of their faith and repentance ("fruits meet for repentance" - Matt. 3:8). Second, the Greek preposition "for" (eis) can indicate *result* ("because of" and "account of" - Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32). *I take an aspirin "for" (as a result) of my headache - not to create it.* In a similar way, this baptism was a resulting *confirmation* of the believer's forgiveness.

Matthew 3:6 says the Jews came out of the water "**confessing their sins**" (not washing away their sins). This was a *verbal testimony* of their forgiveness and preparation for the King.

Matthew 3:11 - "**water unto repentance**" - *The text does **NOT** read "water unto salvation" but "water unto repentance." Once again, the baptism was a resulting sign and confirmation of their genuine repentance. It was "unto" ("eis" - because of, on account of) their repentance as in Luke 11:32.

Mark 16:16 - "He that **believeth** (*way of salvation*) and is **baptized** (*testimony of salvation*) shall be saved" (*a confirmation/evidence of one's salvation*). *That belief is all that is necessary for salvation is clearly seen in the second half of verse where no baptism is mentioned ("**believeth not ... shall be damned**" (*missing salvation*). Baptism is viewed as a *testimonial, evidence, and confirmation* of the believer's salvation which they already possessed ("**shall be saved**" - *as a testimonial and confirmation of one's salvation*).

John 3:5 - "**born of water and of the Spirit**" - *This cannot be referring to regeneration by water baptism since Jesus did not institute Christian baptism for the Church until later. The Jews themselves did not practice water baptism. Nicodemus would have understood the idea of "water" in relationship to the Old Testament teaching where water is repeatedly seen as a *metaphor for God's cleansing* (Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 36:25).

"**Repent, and be baptized ... for the remission of sins**" (Acts 2:38) *The Greek preposition "eis" means "on account" or "because of" (Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:32) *indicating result - not attainment*. Again, baptism was for the *testimony, confirmation and picture* of one's salvation. The sense would be: "**Repent, (way of salvation) and be baptized for the remission of sins**" (*result of salvation*). This means for the *purpose* of demonstrating, outwardly confirming, validating, giving testimonial evidence of one's repentance, forgiveness, salvation and for providing a *picture* of one's forgiveness (Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Baptism is for those who are already believers (Acts 8:12-13, 36-37, 16:14-15, 18:8, 19:5) **Baptism follows salvation; it does not cause it.** Baptism is an outward testimony of a believer's faith that he has already placed in Christ for salvation (Acts 2:41; 8:35-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 18:8, 19:5; 1 Cor. 1:12-17).

Including baptism as part of salvation would contradict the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4) and would create "**another gospel**" (Gal. 1:6-9). The Gospel is what saves a person. The Gospel message does not contain water baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the practice of absolution (1 Cor. 1:17).

Note: the Bible records that **Simon** was baptized *without* being saved proving that he only wanted to be identified with the power of the apostles and not Christ (Acts 8:13; 21-23). **People can be baptized and not saved!** They can pass through water baptism and bypass God's grace and forgiveness, which is only found through faith in Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a:

Sign to confirm a person's faith, repentance, and salvation was genuine (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)

Symbol (symbolic representation) of a person's cleansing (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16)

Surrender to the cause of Christ and Christianity for those who were already believers (Matt. 28:19-20; 22:16)

Baptism is the **confirmation** of one's salvation (Mark 16:16), a **confession** of salvation (Acts 22:16), and **clarification** of salvation (1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Baptism or the Lord's Supper is NOT a means or CHANNEL to receive grace! Grace is **FREE** (Rom. 3:24)! This is why only **FAITH** in Christ is necessary to receive grace (Eph. 2:8; Gal. 3:26). The **ONLY** thing that God requires for salvation is faith in Christ alone (Rom. 5:1; John 6:47).

Eternal life is said to be a gift (Rom. 6:23) not baptism and the Lord's Supper! Baptism is not an expression of our **FAITH** in Christ but our desire to **FOLLOW** Christ (Matt. 28:19-20 - "baptizing them" and "teaching them" to become obedient followers/disciples or learners of Christ's ways. **Baptism is not necessary for salvation; it is necessary for obedience.**

It's the **blood of Jesus Christ** that washes away sins (1 John 1:7; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) – not water! It's the **blood on the cross** (Col. 1:20) that provides forgiveness – *not a recreation of it mystically, spiritually, or physically in the Lord's Supper*. There is only **one sacrifice** for sin (Heb. 10:12). Christ's sacrifice was **finished** (John 19:30) and cannot be recreated in any way!

"I am the door: (not baptism) by me (not by the sacraments, Lord's Supper, absolution of a Lutheran pastor) if any man enter in, he shall be saved ... (John 10:9).

Jesus said, **"Ye must be born again."** (John 3:7). He did not say "Ye must be baptized."

I don't need **tangible objects** (water, Lord's Supper, rituals, liturgy) to transfer faith to Christ. My heartfelt faith in Christ is enough (Rom. 10:10). Faith is the **"evidence of things not seen"** (Heb. 11:1). "Look unto me and be saved" (Isa. 45:22). A person's faith can rest in tangible objects instead of in Christ alone (Gal. 3:26). **Neither Paul nor the early Christians witnessed to the unsaved through visible and tangible objects** (Acts 8:4-5).

The Lord's Supper: "This do ye ... **in remembrance of me**" (not to find forgiveness through me). Forgiveness is not found through eating but by believing in Christ (Acts 16:31). Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper are said to be "gifts" (Rom. 6:23) or "Gospel things" (1 Cor. 15:3-4) that are given to save a person. It is **Christ alone** that saves a person without any added requirements of liturgy and sacraments (John 3:16).

Acts 22:16 - "arise, and be **baptized**, and **wash away thy sins**" *Paul was already a saved brother (Acts 22:13) so this phrase "**wash away thy sins**" might reveal the **testimonial** or **token** of one's salvation and become the outward **confirmation** of salvation and forgiveness. The phrase "**wash away thy sins**" can also portray the **picture** of what baptism represents – forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14; 2:13; Rev. 1:5). It is the blood of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:9) and the forgiveness we receive through grace (Col. 1:14) that makes us clean. **Grace is found in Christ – not baptism** (Rom. 3:24).

"The like figure whereunto even **baptism doth also now save us**" (1 Pet. 3:21). "**The like figure**" (**meaning by picture**) – This relates back to what Peter started to talk about ("**Christ also hath once suffered for sins**"). *This means that our water baptism looks back to the time when Christ (our ark) was judged for our sins (by God's flood of divine judgment), so we could be cleansed from all of our sins. God's flood (baptism) of judgment upon Christ (our ark) is what saves us. **Baptism pictures this amazing salvation!**

Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27 - *These texts refer to the **baptism of the Holy Spirit** (symbolic baptism) and NOT **water baptism** (ritual baptism). In none of these verses does it say a person is "baptized into water" **since water cannot put a sinner into Jesus Christ!** These verses speak of the work of the Holy Spirit placing believers into a saving union with Jesus Christ. **Water baptism is the picture of Spirit baptism** (Acts 2:41; 5:14).

The verses above should be viewed as a **testimonial and picture** of one's salvation and forgiveness (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:21). They should be regarded as a witness of the **realities of salvation**, such as the forgiveness of sins, rather than the *means* of bringing them about. **Baptism is a symbol – not a sacrament.** Baptism is "**salvation's symbol.**" This means it is a **picture** of one's salvation – not the **way** to salvation. Baptism is the **proof** of a person's salvation but not the **means** or **seal** of their salvation.

Christ's word spoken about baptism or the Lord's Supper does not result in one's salvation any more than His word about "laying up treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:24). His **spoken word** about faith in Christ alone results in one's salvation (John 6:47). Also, it's one thing to declare something **has already happened** (forgiveness - John 20:23); it's another thing to **make something happen** by a declaration (**absolution**). Only God has the authority to forgive sins (Isa. 1:18; Matt. 6:12; 9:6; Mark 2:7; 1 John 1:9).

FAITH + BAPTISM + LORDS SUPPER + CHRIST = JUSTIFICATION (Lutheran view)
FAITH + CHRIST = JUSTIFICATION (Biblical view)

Romans 3:28 - "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by **faith** without the **deeds of the law**"



Since salvation is "**by faith alone in Christ alone**" (John 3:15-16) why does a person need all of the above added requirements in order to be saved – church membership, baptism, Lord's Supper, absolution? These **artificial barriers take away** and **get in the way** of placing faith in Christ alone! They are enemies of the teaching of "grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone" (Eph. 2:8-9).