

Baptism Is NOT For Everyone!

The Bible is clear that baptism in water is commanded. Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter wrote *"There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism"* (1 Peter 3:21). However, it's also true that there are some situations in which people should not be baptized.

In Acts 8:36, the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, *"...What hinders me from being baptized?"* Philip responded in Acts 8:37 by saying, *"If you believe with all your heart, you may."* This shows that there are prerequisites that must be met before baptism.

- First, belief is required. *"So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17)
- Secondly, repentance is required. Paul told those in Athens, *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30)
- Confession of Jesus as Lord is also required. *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Romans 10:9-10)

A person could be dunked in water 1,000 times, but without belief in God, repentance from sin, and confession that Jesus is the Son of God, the only thing accomplished is getting wet. This would exclude babies from being baptized as they have no sin and cannot comprehend belief and/or repentance. This would exclude teenagers who are being baptized simply because their friends are doing it. This would exclude adults who view baptism merely as a way to gain God's favor without true faith and submission.

Unless a person is mature enough to understand the gospel, prepared in heart to serve God, and willing to submit to Christ as king, they are not yet ready for baptism. *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."* (Romans 6:17) If these prerequisites are in place, then a person is ready to be *"buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4)

- by Josh McCord

"He Sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust"

One of the important points that Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount was that God "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Think about that! God's physical blessings are poured out upon all men - even those who ignore Him, deny Him, or openly rebel against Him.

Every day we enjoy evidence of God's goodness. Paul told the people at Lystra that God "left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). James added that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17). Even those who never thank God continue to receive these blessings from His gracious hand.

But while physical blessings are given broadly to all men, spiritual blessings are different. The Lord has made glorious spiritual blessings available, but only to those who obey Him. Paul wrote that God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Notice carefully - these blessings are "in Christ." Only in Christ there is forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), peace with God (Romans 5:1), hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2), and the privilege of being God's children (Galatians 3:26-27). Outside of Christ these things do not exist.

And who are those "in Christ"? The Scriptures plainly teach that they are those who obediently submit to God's will. Jesus declared, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21). The Hebrew writer said Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Sadly, many want the spiritual blessings of God without obedience to His commands. But God has always required obedient faith. Jesus taught that believers must repent (Luke 13:3), confess Him before men (Matthew 10:32), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16). Those who faithfully walk in the light continue to enjoy fellowship with God (1 John 1:6,7).

How thankful we ought to be for God's abundant goodness! Every meal, every sunrise, every breath reminds us of His kindness. But even greater are the spiritual blessings He offers through His Son. May we never be content merely enjoying the rain and sunshine that God gives to all men. Instead, let us seek the far greater blessings reserved for those who faithfully obey Him.

- by Greg Gwin