

THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

A Look at Baptism as a Means of Grace

- 1. Baptism apart from God's Word is simple water only and has no special or magical power.**
 - What gives baptism its power is the promise that God attaches to it. *John 3:1-7; Acts 2:38,39; Romans 6:1-5, Colossians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21*
 - God's Word is the means by which He exercises power on earth. Through His Word, God created heaven and earth. Through His Word, God brings us to faith and keeps us in faith.
- 2. Adult salvation also requires a miracle of God.** *Matthew 19:25,26* No person can claim some great insight or decision that led them to this conclusion. It we are saved, it is all together to God's gracious credit. If we are lost, it is all together our fault (or the fault of previous generations) who rejected God's offer of salvation. *1 Corinthians 1:30,31; Ephesians 2:8-10*
- 3. Everything about salvation rests on faith in miracles.** [Ex. the virgin birth, Jesus' claim to be God's only begotten Son, the resurrection after three days of death.] God is the same today as then. *Hebrews 13:8* It should not trouble us to believe in the miraculous power of baptism. We readily admit that trust in what the Bible teaches concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper is unreasonable, just like so many other Bible teachings.
- 4. Faith is a gift of God and comes by the power of God's Spirit working on the human heart.** No one can boast... no matter how old or how young. Creation of faith is God's work, not man's activity. It is grace that saves. *Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 2:4,5* No where does the Bible teach some nebulous "age of accountability" when God gets serious about complete righteousness. In John 3:3 He says everyone born must be born again... *everyone.*
- 5. Baptism is not the basis of salvation. Personal faith and only personal faith in Jesus saves people.**
 - Baptism is one means by which God has promised to work saving faith by the power of His Word (see point #1 above.) It is not the only way God works, but it is one way.
 - People are saved through His Word without baptism such as the thief on the cross. But we cannot deny the power of God working through baptism. It is something He does for us, not something we do for Him.
 - The passages in point #1 clearly show God's promise to work through baptism on behalf of His people.
- 6. Baptismal faith does not guarantee ultimate salvation. "Once saved always saved" is not a teaching of the Bible.**
 - Judas once believed but, after betraying the Lord, doubted God's grace and hung himself. Proof that Judas was lost is revealed in Jesus' own words in John 17:12.

- The Bible talks about others that have "suffered the shipwreck" of their faith. *1 Timothy 1:18-20.*
- The entire purpose of church discipline is to "restore" those that are in danger of lapsing into disbelief. *Matthew 18:12-20, James 5:19,20*

7. The case of David's infant who died prior to his eighth day of life (When a child would be circumcised) is significant. *2 Samuel 12*

- The New Testament compares baptism to circumcision which occurred on the eight day and was a sign that God lived in a covenant relationship with that person. *Colossians 2:11,12*
- David's words in *2 Samuel 12:23* show us that we must NOT condemn to hell those who are not baptized but who may have experience the power of God's Word in another way. David was confident of his child's salvation.
- I contend this account is another example, like the thief on the cross, where God's Word shows itself powerful also apart from the sacrament. No doubt prayers and Scriptures were read over this child as it languished for seven days before dying
- An even more amazing story is shown in *Luke 1:44* when John who was in the womb of Elizabeth jumped for joy to be in the presence of the Lord. We must not limit God to our understanding of how He works though His almighty Word.
- The catechism does a good job of saying that God has bound us to baptism but He has not bound Himself. But the command for us to baptize "all people" is clear and should be obeyed by faithful Christians.