

New Testament Verses Showing Faith Alone Apart from Water Baptism

Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20

Luke	7:47-50	8:12		
John	1:7	1:12	3:15-18	3:36
	5:24	6:28-29	6:35	6:40
	6:47	7:38	8:31-32	11:25-26
	11:40	12:46	20:31	
Acts	3:19	10:43	11:17	11:21
	13:38-39	13:48	15:5-11	16:31
	20:21	26:17-18		
Romans	1:16-17	3:22	3:25-28	3:30
	4:3-5	4:9-25	5:1-2	9:30-33
	10:4-13	11:20		
1 Corinthians	1:17	1:21		
2 Corinthians	4:13			
Galatians	2:15-16	2:20-21	3:1-14	3:22-25
	5:6			
Ephesians	1:13-14	2:8-9	3:12	3:17
Philippians	3:9			
Colossians	1:4-5			
1 Thessalonians	2:13			
2 Thessalonians	2:13			
1 Timothy	1:3-4	1:16		
2 Timothy	3:15			
Titus	3:5-7			
Hebrews	4:3	6:12	10:38-39	11:6
1 Peter	1:5	1:9	2:6	
1 John	5:1	5:4-5	5:13	

Example of Cross-Reference Path

1 Cor. 1:10-17 and Rom. 1:16, what is the “gospel”? Answer Rom. 1:1-6 and 1 Cor. 15:1-11. Compare Matthew 3:15 with Ephesians 2:8-9, was Christ being baptized to be saved? No, Christ was sinless, he was being baptized as a work of righteousness. What “work” must we do to be saved? Believe (John 6:29).

For further information, write to:

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Notes:

¹Bjornstad, J., *At What Price - The Boston (Church of Christ) Movement*, (Christian Research Journal: Christian Research Institute, Winter 1993), 30.

²Geisler, N.L., and Howe, T., *When Critics Ask*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1992), 406. Highly recommended.

³Bourland, E., Owen, P., and Reid, P., *The Issue of Water Baptism and The (Boston) “Church of Christ”*, (Waltham, Mass.: Waltham Evangelical Free Church, 1986), 39.

⁴*Ibid.*, 40.

⁵*Ibid.*, 42.

Water Works?

Baptismal Regeneration and the New Testament

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Introduction

Baptism is important. All Christians should be baptized to show their full commitment to the gospel message. But some people, however, go a bit further with the whole idea of baptism, deciding that it is absolutely necessary for salvation. The next step of these persons is to say that it is only the baptism offered by their own church, in particular, that saves or at the very least you had to know about the saving nature of water baptism before you experienced it or else it didn't work and you'll have to go through it again. Where will it stop? Why is this wrong?

Memorize and cross-reference the following verses in your Bible. They come up again and again with various groups (Church of Christ, Mormons, The Boston Movement, U.P.C., etc.) and basically come from a faulty method of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation). Not only can it be shown that the 9 verses used to support baptismal regeneration are taken out of context or misunderstood but that there is, of course, an overwhelming affirmation throughout Scripture that it is indeed “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 (NIV)

Verses Used to Support Baptismal Regeneration

Mark 16:16 A) This verse is not in the oldest and most reliable Greek Manuscripts. B) What are all the logical possibilities¹ for receiving salvation? 1. Believing and being baptized. 2. Believing only. 3. Being baptized only. 4. Neither being baptized nor believing. The first half of the verse affirms the possibility of number 1. The second half of the verse denies possibility of numbers 3 and 4. But number 2 is not affirmed or denied by the verse thus this verse cannot be used as proof of baptismal regeneration. C) Further, since other clear scriptures deny number 1, then number 2 must be correct (1 Cor. 1:17).

John 3:5 **A)** In context with the previous verse and the later verse, Jesus seems to be contrasting the physical birth into this world with the spiritual birth needed to enter the kingdom of God. John specifically says “born from/out of water,” and does not use the expression for water baptism, “baptized in water” (John 1:26, 31, 33). **B)** Another view is that it is the Word of God and the Spirit, one entity, that is envisioned here (Eph.5:26, 1 Pet.1:23).² Water as a symbol connected to eternal life appears in the very following chapter (John 4:14). **C)** If this taught that baptism was necessary, then Jesus contradicts what he clearly teaches elsewhere, namely, that it is by faith alone (John 3:16, 36; 5:24, etc.).

Acts 2:38 The word translated “for” is the Greek “εἰς” which is usually translated as “into,” “in,” or “among,” that is, it has many possible meanings in different contexts. The same word in Matthew 3:11 certainly doesn’t mean baptism causes repentance, or that in Romans 6:3 being baptized caused the death of Christ! Just as the English word “for” can take the resultant meaning “because of”, so can the Greek word in this situation, e.g. “I went to fight for love of my country.” Thus the meaning of the verse can be this: “be baptized [because of, or, with reference to] the forgiveness of [your] sins.” In the context of the many other verses in Acts referring to salvation through faith alone, this certainly makes sense.

Acts 22:16 **A)** “When were Paul’s sins forgiven? The passage does not tell us... Note that this verse closely links the washing away of sins with ‘calling on his name.’ This ‘calling’ is clearly possible at times other than water baptism (see Acts 7:59; 9:14, 21), and salvation is promised to those who call on the Lord with no mention of water baptism (e.g. Romans 10:13).”³ **B)** As there is no punctuation in the original Greek text, it is possible that the “calling” is not referring to the act of baptism at all, i.e. only to that part of the sentence coming after the word “and” (καί). In Greek, the word “καί” can indicate the start of a new sentence or thought, a function supported in this case by the words being in the form of commands; “Get up! Be baptized! And, wash away your sins calling on his name!” “Washing” being symbolic of spiritual, not physical, action.

Romans 6:3-7 We are baptized or washed into Christ and into his death, because of this we are raised with him into a new life (John 5:24, Gal. 2:19,20). This verse is not talking about baptism in water (Luke 3:16, Titus 3:5-7). Note the context; Romans chapters 4 and 5, speak of justification, chapters 6 and 7 of sanctification (also, 6:3-10 is the symbol, 6:11-23 the referent).

Galatians 3:27 Again, this is a mistake in the application of the word “baptized.” For the correct understanding read the previous verse, the first part of the same sentence. You might start reading from Galatians 3:21 to make the point even clearer. It is not speaking of water baptism but baptism by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

Colossians 2:12 **A)** Read the warning about depending on human traditions for

salvation in Colossians 2:8. **B)** Circumcision is used in a non-physical sense in the preceding verse (2:11) and performed by Christ. In the same way, the baptism that Christ brings is different than the physical one (see Acts 11:16). Context tells us what sort of baptism is being spoken of. **C)** It is not “faith in God that he will forgive sins at the time of being baptized” that is mentioned in this passage⁴ but it is “faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.”

1 Peter 3:21 **A)** Read from 3:13 to 4:5. We have to understand what the word “save” means in context. Noah was found righteous by God (Gen.7:1), it was not from his own sin that he was saved but from the evil surrounding him and the temptation to lead a similar lifestyle. In the same way, the public declaration that is baptism doesn’t bring us to God but separates the believers from that temptation by demonstrating “the hope that lies within you.” It not only proclaims to the unsaved that the believer is set apart for God, but it is an intimate reminder of the power and authority that is in the risen Lord Jesus (see 1Corinthians 10:13). **B)** If it is thought that the ceremonial washing away of dirt by water cleanses us spiritually from sin, this is specifically refuted⁵, “..not the removal of dirt from the body...” **C)** “[B]ut the pledge of a good conscience toward God,” this is what baptism means, a promise to God of a life devoted to righteousness. **D)** What brings salvation from our own sins is spelled out clearly in a preceding verse (1Peter 3:18). We are brought to God not through any work of our own such as baptism, circumcision, or good works, but through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

James 2:14-26 **A)** Repentance, confession, and water baptism are not mentioned in this passage. In addition, “save” doesn’t always mean to “save from hell” (eg. 1Tim.2:15; Matt.8:25; 27:42). **B)** James 2:26, doesn’t say that a body without the spirit isn’t a body. Faith apart from works is still saving faith, it’s just that it doesn’t do anything useful like help (save) others (Js 2:16), or justify us in the sight of others (2:24,25). We are saved with a purpose to do good works, not saved by doing good works (cf. Eph.2:10 & Js.2:22). **C)** Many suggest that the passage is speaking about salvation before God. Even if this were the case, the point would still be very similar: Good works do not result in a saving faith but a saving faith will result (show/demonstrate/exhibit itself) in good works.

But Salvation is in Christ

John 3:16; Romans 4,5; Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:6-3:4; 1 Corinthians 1:17. Baptism is an outward sign of commitment to, not the fulfillment of, the gospel. It is Jesus Christ who fulfills the gospel (Heb. 12:2).

Logic

It is the gospel which saves (Rom. 1:16). Is water baptism part of the gospel? Paul says no. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul makes it clear that the gospel is distinct from (water) baptism. To make it even clearer we can read the definition of what the gospel is, in Romans 1:1-6; and 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.