

Why Were You Baptized? (Reason #6)

For some believers the question of baptism is troublesome since baptism undeniably appears in the New Testament and it is clearly connected in some way to salvation. For example:

He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. —Mark 16:16

...Baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience.... —1 Peter 3:21

Yet, the Bible also clearly states:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. —Ephesians 2:8-9

Some people assume that baptism is a ‘work’ and since a person is not saved by works, then baptism does not save, rather...

Reason #6: Baptism is an outward sign of an inward faith (or grace).

Different words may be used to express the same thought, such as, “baptism is an expression of my love for God for having saved me.” Whatever the expression, the idea is that baptism is merely symbolic. So, once a person has been saved (by grace through faith), they are baptized *as a sign of their salvation*.

Is that what the Bible teaches about baptism?

First, there truly is rich symbolism associated with baptism. The Apostle Paul wrote that a believer’s baptism is symbolically parallel to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-4). However, he did not say that the believer’s baptism was merely ‘like’ the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Rather, in the same passage of scripture, he said that the baptized believer:

- ◆ **Has died** *with* Christ (vv 6 & 8);
- ◆ **Is buried** *with* Christ (v 4);
- ◆ **Is united** *with* Christ in His death (v 5);
- ◆ **Is united** *with* Christ in His resurrection (v 5).

The “likeness of His death” (v 5) is the believer’s baptism. The “uniting” with Christ in his death and resurrection is the work of God. Paul recognized the work of God as he wrote:

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. (v. 6)

So, God is doing something very real that we cannot sense physically. He is literally uniting the baptized believer with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection so that we “might walk in newness of life” (v 4). Baptism is never described as an *outward sign* to ‘show’ others anything, but to unite the believer with Christ.

Second, there *are* signs of one’s existing relationship with God. For example, just as an apple (fruit) is a sign of an apple tree, the fruit of the Spirit is a sign of the Spirit of God dwelling in a Christian (Galatians 5:22-25).

When Jesus told His disciples to “*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works*” (Matthew 5:16), the good works were a sign of one’s devotion to Jesus.

Paul encouraged Christians to “*conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*” He indicated that this was a “*sign...of salvation for you.*” (Philippians 1:27-28)

Curiously, baptism is never referred to in scripture as a visible sign of love or faith or salvation. So, if you were baptized as an ‘outward sign’ of anything, I would urge you to reconsider your baptism by turning to the Scriptures.