

## **Baptism Doesn't Produce Salvation, It Pictures Salvation has Taken Place (Acts 2:38)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on August 22, 2010*

[www.goldcountrybaptist.org](http://www.goldcountrybaptist.org)

It's important that we understand the proper relationship of baptism and salvation, first to make sure you're not trusting in the wrong thing to get you to heaven (because if you are, you're not going to heaven, the Bible says). You can't trust in the water of baptism or any works; you must trust the work of Christ alone. There have been a few groups that don't believe water baptism is for Christians today at all (Quakers/Friends, groups classified as hyper-dispensationalists, ultra-dispensationalists who also reject Communion for today, along with the Salvation Army). But the greater and more common error is not teaching baptism is unimportant or *unnecessary for Christians*, instead many teach that baptism *is necessary to make you a Christian, baptism saves*.

RCC *Code of Canon Law*, canon #849: "Baptism ... is necessary for salvation ... By it people are freed from sins, are born again as children of God and ... are incorporated into the Church. It is validly conferred only by a washing in real water with the proper form of words"<sup>1</sup> [i.e., power is in priest properly pronouncing it, some would use similar holy water to baptize (sprinkle) bells, clocks, animals, buildings].<sup>2</sup> RCC Catechism says for babies, "Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace, erases original sin..." (par. 405), "Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins..." (par. 977, then penance, 980). RCC Council of Trent: "If any one saith, that baptism is ... not necessary unto salvation: let him be anathema."<sup>3</sup>

Some form of baptismal regeneration (that baptism regenerates or imparts spiritual grace / life / salvation) has been taught by some in Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist (but not all) and other traditions. Luther himself emphasized that justification / salvation is by faith alone, but some of his writings and followers have confused rather than clarified exactly what happens at baptism. Augustine, the 4<sup>th</sup> century church father who the Reformers found so helpful in the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, paved the way for infant baptismal regeneration. Church history before him and especially since has had some form of those views, and even great theologians at times muddy the waters of baptism. And even some of the words from the NT apostles themselves from the very beginning of church history have not always been clear to all.

In Acts 2:36 Peter says: "*Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.*"<sup>37</sup> *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"<sup>39</sup> "*For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.*"

When Peter says "*and your children*" in v. 39, some have argued that this includes infants, just like God's promise to Abraham was to him *and his seed*, and the initiating sign of circumcision was given to Abraham the believing adult *and to future male newborns* (although not baby girls, but that's an issue many don't focus on).

But look at the verse carefully ... did Peter say “*the practice of baptism is for you and your children*”? What does v. 39 say? “*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off [the Gentiles], as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself*” [a phrase in the NT for all those effectually called to salvation, i.e., this promise is for all those whom the Lord will draw and save]. What is “*the promise*” Peter mentions in v. 39? Rather than make a jump to an OT promise from over 2,000 years earlier, the promise of the sentence Peter said a few seconds earlier fits in this context: v. 38 promises “*...forgiveness of sins...the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”

And a few moments earlier, Peter explicitly identified the promise: <sup>33</sup>“*Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, [also 1:4-5] He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.*”

The promise is the Holy Spirit in Acts 1-2, and it’s for all who the Lord draws and calls savingly to Himself (that’s the divine side). And on the human side it’s for (as 2:21 says) “*all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” Or as v. 38-39 say, the promise is for any person present, or in the future, whoever will repent (v. 38a) as God calls them to Himself in salvation (v. 39b).

The Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins is not promised to those who are too young to repent, before they can repent. The order of v. 38 is repent first and be baptized. And there is the promise of the Holy Spirit that’s closely associated with the forgiveness of sins.

It could be pointed out that biblical writers in Protestant/Reformed traditions do teach that for adults/young adults, repentant faith in Christ is the moment of salvation, by means of grace alone, through the merit of Christ alone, regardless of any infant baptism. But some groups, like Churches of Christ, Campbellites, and a few others believe that for adults who believe in Christ, you’re saved *after repentant faith at the moment of baptism*. Groups like the ICC believe it must be by them, Oneness Pentecostal with right words. And they all point to v. 38: “*Repent and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*”

I always knew since I was young, water baptism is a *symbol* of our salvation, not the *source* of it, because that’s what I’d always been taught, but now I was challenged to study what I believe and why. Maybe you already believe what I believed, because that’s what you’ve always been taught, but I hope that studying the Scriptures on this subject to see if it is so, will do for you what it did for me; that it will strengthen your confidence in Christ and in His true gospel. I doubt there’s many in this room who would be persuaded that water baptism saves. I hope there won’t be any after today who say “I know I was saved because Pastor Phil dunked me in the river, or even better, Pastor Dale, put me way down under, or when I was a baby I was sprinkled while a holy priest said something in Latin” (if you trust that, you’re all wet). If your faith is in anything except Christ, you don’t have Christ. The Lord of Scripture won’t share His glory with ceremonies, sinful man’s works, supplements to Christ’s work. Trust Christ alone or you’ll be alone eternally.

The NT warns Christians against false teaching and any alteration to the salvation message, and it also calls us in this room to not only recognize and reject them, but to be ready to give an answer, to respond with Scripture of the hope of the true gospel we have.

All of you will be in conversations before long with someone who uses Christian terminology but has a different gospel, different way to heaven, “believe in Christ *plus these additions to Christ.*” So if someone reads Acts 2:38 to you and says, “see, there it is, Peter is saying you need to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the Holy Spirit” ... how would you respond to him or her? How would you answer the following verses:

- Acts 2:38 “... *be baptized ... for the forgiveness of sins ...*”
- Acts 22:16 “... *be baptized, and wash away your sins ...*”
- 1 Peter 3:21 “...*baptism now saves you ...*”
- Mark 16:16 “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*”

What’s the #1 principle of Bible study? CONTEXT. If you simply read the whole chapter or the whole book, that alone often clears up what it’s saying (sometimes even just read the rest of the verse)! In each example it’s only part of the verse. If all you have is a verse or part of a verse and you ignore the rest of the text and other statements by the same author in the same book, and the rest of the Bible, there’s all kinds of errors you can fall into. Ex:

1 Tim. 2:15 NIV “...*women will be saved through childbearing ...*”  
(salvation by having babies? Good news for some moms!)

Acts 27:31 “...*unless you men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved ...*” (does eternal salvation come by being a sailor?)

Romans 11:26 “... *and so all Israel shall be saved ...*” (so is it the right gender or right occupation [woman or sailor] or right nation?)

John 6:54 “... *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life ...*” (salvation by cannibalism or by a Catholic mass?)

Mark 10:17-21 “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” ... *Jesus answered “... the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother ... sell everything you have and give to the poor ...’*” (saved by 10 commandments, charity, good deeds?)

This is one reason why I ask you to turn to Bible verses, instead of just showing you verses up on a screen, because I don’t want to train you that you don’t have to bring your Bible to church because it will all be on the screen, and I want you also to look at the verse we’re studying in context. You’re to study to show that you’re approved unto God, an unashamed worker who accurately handles the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). You’re responsible to:

- examine the Scriptures to see if what is being taught is so
- to compare Scripture with Scripture, like the Bereans did with even the best teacher, the Apostle Paul (Acts 17:11)
- to “search the Scriptures,” as they did even with Jesus
- to test what prophets taught with the rest of God’s Word
- to test the spirits, to examine everything carefully, etc.

Don't be a passive sideline-sitting spiritually-weak Scripture-starved study-neglecting spoon-fed superficially-satisfied Christian because that's a soldier without a sword in the battle for truth. Be a man of the book, woman of the book, young person of the book, a soldier valiant for truth, standing on the solid rock of Scripture, knowing it, growing in it, and holding forth its words of life! Jude commands us to "*contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.*" May God equip us for this fight and help us defend the gospel of grace for the glory of our King. I'm not a scholar, but we're all called to be students and soldiers, and so let's unsheathe our swords of Scriptures together in this fight of faith.

It doesn't take a scholar to understand what's going on in Mark 10 ... just keep reading and a few verses later the disciples ask "*Who then can be saved?*" Jesus answers, "*with man this is impossible, but not with God. With God all things are possible*" (v. 26-27).

The rich young ruler should have recognized the impossibility of his keeping the commandments truly in his heart, and that he could not "*do*" anything to "*inherit eternal life*" (v. 17) and that he was not a "*good*" person, "*only God alone is good*" (v. 18). Mark 10 is not teaching salvation is possible by works, the point as you keep reading is the impossibility of salvation unless the only good God and Savior works on your behalf to do what's humanly impossible. And if you read to the end of the chapter, in the last verse Jesus says to the blind man who had cried out for mercy from the Lord "*your faith has **saved you***" (literal meaning of Greek word *sozo*).

What about in John 6 where Jesus talks about eternal life for those eating His flesh? Keep reading. Jesus then says "*It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and truth*" (v. 63). He's speaking spiritually of spiritual life by taking Him in as the bread of life, partaking of Him by faith

- v. 40 "*everyone who believes in him shall have eternal life*"
- v. 47 "*I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life*"

If you were to study the context of Romans 11, Paul is not teaching that all Israel of all time are saved, including all who rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Romans 9:6 says "*not all Israel is Israel*" - not all ethnic Israelites are true spiritual Israelites, only those who trust in Christ. Read Romans 9-11 and he's talking about Israel at the very end of time, a remnant or revived nation that as a whole or in large measure will turn to the Messiah they once crucified and mourn for Him they once pierced and turn to Him in faith and will be saved! That understanding was lost in the spiritualizing and allegorizing interpretations of the middle ages, but it was recovered by some of the Reformers and especially by the Puritans, a coming mass conversion of Jews, not because of anything in them that is ethnically superior, it's only because of the sovereign electing irrevocable promise of Almighty God.

If you were to study the passage from 1 Timothy 2 or Acts 27, you'd learn the word "save" is used in the sense of preserved or delivered, and there are different ways to understand those verses. But for today's study, how would you answer Mark 16:16 which some use to argue that water baptism is required for salvation?

Mark 16:16 "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved ...*"

Sounds pretty straightforward, right? Sounds like the conclusion is “whoever *is not baptized* will be condemned”? Is that right? Why?

Mark 16:16b “...*but whoever does not believe will be condemned*”

You’re condemned for *not believing*, not for not being *baptized*! Do you see that in the text? Don’t take my word for it, take God’s. It’s true that everyone who believes and is baptized will be saved, and in normal NT Christianity everyone who believed was soon baptized, but can you think of any examples where a man believed in Christ and was promised heaven though he wasn’t baptized?

Thief on cross: “*Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.*” Jesus replies, “*I would like to, but baptism is absolutely required for salvation, and it looks like you’re out of luck friend.*”

Is that what Jesus said? No, to this man who could only trust Christ but had no works or waters of baptism before dying, heaven was given that day! That’s just one example, Jesus told many apart from baptism “*your sins are forgiven; your faith has saved you.*”

Turn to 1 Corinthians 1. Someone may object and say, “well that was all before Jesus died on the cross, and now in the book of Acts and the rest of the NT, baptism saves and is a part of the gospel.” Let’s see if Paul considered baptism an essential part of the gospel:

1 Corinthians 1:17 For ***Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel***, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void [or “emptied of its power” – Paul clearly says baptizing was not his mission by Christ, the gospel was, and they’re not the same thing. He differentiates them. And to add anything human to the gospel makes it empty, impotent, void]

<sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

God’s Word that says all you have to do is repent and trust Christ and what He did on the cross for you, not what you can do for God – that sounds foolish to our perishing world, reckless, ridiculous to put all your eggs in one basket and put all your hope in a man who died a nasty and naked death like a criminal on two beams of wood

But Paul says it’s what happened on that cross that is the power of God to save those who believe. If you keep reading to chapter 15, Paul defines the gospel as the acts and facts of what Jesus did for us, dying on the cross for our sins according to Scripture, buried and being raised from the dead, appearing and ascending bodily to heaven and taking with Him all in Him by grace through faith.

<sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached ***to save those who believe.***

It's those who believe the message of the gospel who are saved (as Paul says again and again, ex: Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9). So keep that in mind as you turn to Acts 22:16, which I read earlier where Paul is recounting his conversion story while on trial. Paul was blinded on the Damascus road and is now told God's purpose for his life in v. 15 is to be an evangelist. Acts 22:16: *'Now why do you delay? **Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins ...**'*

So does that prove Paul believed the act of baptism washes away our sins? Well you could look at any NT book Paul wrote and see dozens of places where Paul teaches that nothing we do can make our sins forgiven or our name written in heaven, it's only by grace. But all you have to do here is simply keep reading the verse: *"wash away your sins, **calling on His name.**"* That's the phrase connected with salvation and forgiveness in the original language, calling on the name of the Lord in faith (even in English in 2:21, 4:12, etc.).

It's not the physical acts earlier in v. 16 *"get up and be baptized."* If it was the first part of the verse, to be consistent, you'd have to say that it's not just "being baptized" it's also "getting up" that is what washes away our sins, salvation by standing up, by posture. But no one argues that salvation is caused by the physical act of your body going up from a position of sitting or lying and neither should we argue it's the physical act of going down into water. It's "calling on His name" that's linked with salvation in the grammar.

If you look at 1 Peter 3, there's another passage people quote but don't usually finish the verse. I want us to see this one last before we look at what the same Peter said in Acts 2:38 to see if Peter believed salvation was caused when the water washes our body in baptism, if souls are cleansed when the bodily dirt is cleansed.

In 1 Peter 3:21 the NIV that my ICC friends use does have the phrase *"baptism now saves you ..."* but they didn't keep reading: *"... **not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge [NIV footnote "or response"] of a good conscience toward God. It saves you [what's the "it" that saves you? What he just said, the response or pledge toward God, which is inward, not the outward water that removes dirt from our physical body]***  
*... It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

Peter knew it's not by being raised out of the water of baptism, it's by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, not any human rinsing or ritual.

Look at 1 Peter 1:3: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! **In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...***  
*... <sup>9</sup>for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls [most versions say the end or outcome of faith is the saving of your souls, it's faith not the fluid that God saves by] ...*

In the verse right before 1 Peter 3:21, Peter is speaking of how Noah and his family were delivered in the great flood and it says they were *"saved through water"* (3:20) and that's the picture he is building on in 3:21. The water didn't save Noah and the family and neither does water save us when he says in v. 21 (in ESV) baptism corresponds to this, or in the NIV baptism "symbolizes" how we're saved, it's not the *source* of salvation. Just like Noah and the ark, we're "saved *through water*" but not *"by or because of the water"* as he goes on to say.

It's not any physical washing or water on our physical, it's the spiritual pledge of pure and sincere inward faith. In the early church that pledge of commitment and faith to Christ was not a distant distinct or disconnected experience from baptism. In Acts 2, and at least some other examples in Acts, they believed and were baptized the same day, and you have to keep that in mind in reading verses that closely connect the two that the NT isn't written to modern churchgoers who may truly be saved but haven't been baptized yet for some reason (ex: not allowed before age 18).

The KJV in v. 21 speaks of baptism as a *figure*, which is helpful. You could use the word *picture* as well – if I show you a picture of my wife on the screen, I might say in some place “that’s my wife,” but that’s not my wife ... it’s a *picture* of my wife on a screen but it represents reality and so I can say “this is my wife” and not be confusing your or contradicting other statements I make in other contexts where I introduce my wife standing next to me and say “this is my wife” (the flesh and blood gorgeous woman next to me)

And Peter and other biblical writers will sometimes speak of the symbol of a reality as a shorthand for what it represents (ex: “the cross” but not as a physical wooden structure, the spiritual reality). Some Scriptures seem to do that with baptism, which is a *picture* of salvation, but the physical act itself doesn't *produce* salvation.

The NKJV brings this out a little better than some other versions in v. 21: *There is also an antitype which now saves us ...*

MSB: ‘In the NT, an antitype is an earthly expression of a spiritual reality. It indicates a symbol, picture, or pattern of some spiritual truth. Peter is teaching that the fact that 8 people were in an ark and went through the whole judgment, and yet were unharmed [v. 20], is analogous to the Christian’s experience in salvation by being in Christ, the ark of one’s salvation. **Baptism ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Peter is not at all referring to water baptism here, but rather a figurative immersion into union with Christ as an ark of safety from the judgment of God ... Judgment fell on Christ just as the judgment of the flood waters fell on the ark. The believer who is in Christ is thus in the ark of safety that will sail over the waters of judgment into eternal glory (cf. Rom. 6:1–4). **not the removal of the filth of the flesh.** To be sure he is not misunderstood, Peter clearly says he is not speaking of water baptism. In Noah’s flood, they were kept out of the water while those who went into the water were destroyed. Being in the ark and thus saved from God’s judgment on the world prefigures being in Christ and thus saved from eternal damnation. **the answer of a good conscience toward God.** The word for “answer” has the idea of a pledge, agreeing to certain conditions of a covenant (the New Covenant) with God. What saves a person plagued by sin and a guilty conscience is not some external rite, but the agreement with God to get in the ark of safety, the Lord Jesus, by faith in His death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 10:9,10; Heb. 9:14; 10:22 [which links the pure and sincere conscience with saving faith in Christ]).’

So in Acts 2:38, the text we started with, this same Peter says to his listeners “*repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit.*” All of that happened on the same day at almost the same time and you need to appreciate the context.

He's calling them not just to privately pray a little prayer, he's calling them to publicly identify themselves as disciples of Jesus, confessing as Lord the one they crucified. To do that in a public way in the waters of baptism would be costly to the Jews of that day, they would be kicked out of the synagogue, their family, and they might even suffer the same fate as Jesus (death). That filters out false converts and superficial faith pretty quickly!

To profess Christ in our culture is not as costly, and we may delay baptism wisely at times to make sure there is full understanding in the professing believer and evidence in their life of regeneration and transformation, but in Acts 2 there's no lack of understanding of the message of Jesus to these hearers. They understood Him so well and His assault to everything they believed that they killed Him for it, v. 36 says! Now Peter says you need to repent and turn *and obey* this crucified and resurrected Christ, give up all you have and renounce all that you are, in exchange for all that He is for you

Repentance is for the forgiveness of sins, and baptism signified the need for cleansing, as the Jews knew from John the Baptist who required them to confess their sins as they were baptized (Mt 3:6) and to evidence fruit of repentance / salvation before it (v. 7-10).

And when I will have the privilege of baptizing some believers in obedience to the Lord next Lord's Day afternoon, they also will confess their sin and confess their Savior as Lord publically, what God has done in their heart already to cleanse them from sin. It's an outward picture of salvation, but it doesn't produce salvation.

Looking at v. 38 more carefully, many don't focus on the phrase "*in the name of Jesus*" – but remember that Peter already said in v. 21 "*whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" The saving power is in the name of Jesus, i.e., all He is and has done.

But what about the phrase "*for the forgiveness of sins*" in v. 38? In the grammar, the active command is "*repent*" and it's 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural (i.e., "you all repent," or if he was SBC, "y'all repent"). And then the phrase "*forgiveness of your sins*" is also plural: "all of you will be forgiven of your sins when all of you repent." But when he says "be baptized," it's not passive and singular, not active plural.

In other words, the way they all would have their sins forgiven is if they all repent, that's what they all actively needed to do. And then each person individually should submit to baptism, not as an act that they do, but as something that is done to them, for them by another, and signifies what God has already done for them, in them

The Greek word "for" in v. 38 (*eis*) can mean many things, just like it can in English, depending on context. It can mean "because of" like in Matthew 12:41 where it says the Ninevites repented *for / at* the preaching of Jonah. They didn't repent *in order to receive* Jonah's preaching, they repented *because of* the preaching of Jonah that they had already received. So if baptism is connected to forgiveness in v. 38, the word "for" doesn't necessarily mean *in order to receive*, it can mean *because of forgiven sins*, be baptized. Let yourself be washed outwardly *because of* your inner cleansing.

If your eyes glaze over when people talk about grammar and word definitions, let me encourage you that anyone can see in context that Peter believed repentance, not baptism, results in forgiveness ... what's the key Bible study principle? Context. Keep reading ...

In Acts 3:12, Peter gives the gospel another time and he hits the same facts about the Jesus that they killed was Messiah and He is now risen, and how does Peter tell them their sins can be forgiven? v. 19 *“Repent and turn to God that your sins may be wiped out...”*

In Acts 4:8-11 Peter declares the same facts of the gospel and says in v. 11 that it is only in the name of Jesus that any can be saved (matching another phrase from 2:38, but not the baptism phrase).

In Acts 5:29-30 Peter again declares that they killed Jesus but He is risen and has a remedy for sin (notice a pattern?) and then he says: v. 31 *“God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give **repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.**”*

Again, it's repentance that's linked to the forgiveness of sins, and notice that both are a gift from God, not any work mere man does. The Holy Spirit is also a gift mentioned in Acts 2:38. In Acts 10, we see that these salvation gifts come with belief *before* baptism:

<sup>43</sup> *All the prophets testify about him that **everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*** <sup>44</sup> *While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message** [i.e., heard in Jewish sense and heeded it].* <sup>45</sup> *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. [i.e., amazing! Gentiles saved, too!!]* <sup>46</sup> *For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,* <sup>47</sup> *“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? **They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.**”* <sup>48</sup> *So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*

It's *because they had* received the Holy Spirit that they were to be baptized; they weren't baptized *in order to receive* the Holy Spirit! Peter understood the order as well as any and explained it in 11:13 to the Jews who weren't down with him being with Gentile/pagans

<sup>13</sup> *He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. <sup>14</sup> He will bring you **a message through which you and all your household will be saved.**’* <sup>15</sup> *“As I began to speak, **the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning ...*** <sup>17</sup> *So if **God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?**”* <sup>18</sup> *When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, **God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.**”*

No further proof is needed that Gentiles could be saved if they also repent and believe. So *because they were saved and Spirit-indwelt* believers, then they were baptized. That's the clear biblical order. In Acts 9:17-18 that's the order Paul experienced, Holy Spirit *then* baptism.

In Acts 15, Peter tells the story of Acts 10 again to silence Jews who said circumcision and works were required to be saved. He doesn't argue that circumcision isn't required because baptism is the replacement sign of faith ... notice what he does argue in v. 7:

<sup>7</sup> *After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips **the message of the gospel and believe.*** <sup>8</sup> *God, who knows the heart, **showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.*** <sup>9</sup> *He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts **by faith.*** <sup>10</sup> *Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?* <sup>11</sup> *No! **We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.***" [if you believe that, say Amen!]

You could keep going to the next chapter where the jailer asks "*what must I do to be saved?*" The answer: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" And then when he believed and was saved, he was baptized. Baptism doesn't produce salvation; it pictures salvation has taken place. When the true gospel is clarified, Christ's true sufficiency is glorified. We must study to show ourselves approved but the ultimate goal of this endeavor is not to win an argument, it's to glorify Jesus Christ as we clarify the gospel of grace and magnify the Giver of grace. I don't love debate or conflict, but I love Christ and I love His gospel, that's why this is important.

I echo the words of Caedmon's Call: "Thy free grace alone from the first to the last hath won my affection and bound my soul fast."

If you can't identify, if you are trusting a certificate of baptism or any ceremony or in self to any degree for any part of salvation, you need to trust the Savior alone today or you're not saved. If you think works or water will get you to heaven you're going to hell, but you don't have to. Because I love you, and I love Christ, I call on you to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. To renounce all you are and all that you have done, and to repent and rely in faith on all Christ is and has done for you by free grace alone.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Code of Canon Law* (London: Collins, 1983, Canon 849).

<sup>2</sup> Historian Curt Daniel, sermon on baptism at [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)

<sup>3</sup> "The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent." Found in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1877), Decree on Justification, Chapter IV, p. 91; Canons on Baptism II, V; pp. 122-123.