

I. Paul & Ephesus

A. When Paul wrote to the brethren in Ephesus he stated "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:1-6, ESV)

1. I think it's very interesting that out of the specifics of believer's practices that he could have mentioned, the one thing he states is baptism. Not even "one belief", but "one baptism." What I mean by that is we can't "practice" one Body, Spirit, Hope, Lord, or Father, but we can the one baptism because of the one faith. You actually can practice the one baptism and one faith. Just like Paul was preaching "the faith" and called others to "obedience of faith". But out of all the things that "faith" teaches, he points to one particular act: baptism.
2. Ironically it's in this letter that we find a common passage used to teach against baptism like we understand it to be. It's "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV)
3. Who wrote Ephesians? Well, the apostle Paul did. Let's consider Paul's own experience and the experience of those in Ephesus when they first heard the truth:

B. **Paul:** Acts 22:10-16. Now keep in mind that he was blind, obeyed the Lord, and for three days he was fasting. Notice how he was told "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name." This is what Paul "must do." Not only do we learn what he "must do", but we learn "why he must do" it. Paul was still guilty of his sins until he had been baptized. Brethren, this passage has been around for nearly 2,000 years. It's not going anywhere. You can check your theology with Acts 22:16. If your theology disagrees with this passage then you need to change your theology, not the passage. Nor do you need to attempt to explain the obvious away, because then you're obviously ignoring what happened.

1. Brethren, Paul understood grace. He wrote, not the book, but many letters in the book about it. One of which was Ephesians. What he wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9 would not contradict anything else he wrote and definitely not what he experienced in his own life.

C. **Ephesus:** "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:1-5, ESV)

1. First of all it seems strange to come to the conclusion that Paul doesn't consider baptism an act of faith when that's the first thing you read about with the first disciples in Ephesus. The group began with about 12 men who were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. He didn't simply "update" these disciples. He re-baptized them. He did it immediately. They came to "believe" in Jesus and His baptism.

II. John's Baptism

A. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:76-79, ESV)

B. Luke 3:3-12

1. Take note that it's a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This is what was part of preparing the way for Christ. Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins . . . sound familiar?
2. Take note that the tax collectors came out to be baptized, but others (Pharisees and Sadducees as seen in Matthew 3) refused the baptism. How do I know they refused it?

- C. "I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)" (Luke 7:28-30, ESV)
  - 1. Brethren, please take note how this ties back to John's baptism at the Jordan where tax collectors came to him and the Pharisees rejected it.
  - 2. Please take note that the text says they not just rejected baptism, BUT THE PURPOSE OF GOD. God's purpose, in order to prepare these people for Christ, was to be baptized for the remission of sins.
- D. Matthew 21:23-32
  - 1. Jesus brings up John's baptism. How important was it? Many try to say that Jesus didn't talk about baptism much - funny, because Jesus started by teaching "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" and His disciples were baptizing. He started His ministry . . . after He was baptized by John "thus fulfilling all righteousness". He's talking about the baptism right now, and right before He descends back to the Father He commands His disciples to go into the whole world to baptize so that they may be saved.
  - 2. The Jews realize that if they had BELIEVED John then they would have been baptized. Who is it that tries to separate baptism from belief? The chief priests and elders who didn't accept the baptism didn't even deny that.
  - 3. Jesus asks the question: Which did the WILL of the Father after giving a quick parable.
  - 4. Jesus then talks about John coming in the way of righteousness and says they didn't believe, but the tax collectors did. They didn't change their ways and believe. Brethren, what is Jesus talking about? He's talking about what He initially brought up - the baptism of John! The didn't "go" or do the will of the father because they didn't believe thus NOT BEING BAPTIZED - A BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS - WHICH IS WHY THEY WOULDN'T MAKE IT INTO THE KINGDOM!

### III. Faith, Grace, and Baptism

- A. Galatians 3:23-29
  - 1. Take note that faith has come.
  - 2. Take note how we're sons of God through faith.
  - 3. FOR when they were baptized INTO Christ they had put on Christ. It's through Christ (faith in Him) that we are sons of God. This happened when we came to be IN CHRIST THROUGH the act of baptism. Now brethren, the term grace isn't here, but can you see it? Saved by Grace through Faith. Can you separate Faith and Baptism in this passage?
- B. Colossians 2:11-14
  - 1. Many want to go to Romans 4 to point out how God justified Abraham BEFORE he was baptized and then connect it to this passage. PAUL'S NOT TALKING ABOUT BAPTISM IN ROMANS 4.
  - 2. Everyone in the Old Law (including Abraham's children) had to be circumcised in order to be in a covenant relationship with God. It was commanded.
  - 3. Do you see again, how you were united with Christ in baptism and raised through faith in the ACT of baptism.
    - a) As Protestants, we say that justification is by faith alone. That little word by is critical to our understanding of how justification takes place. It does not mean that faith is meritorious and obligates God to save us. Rather, the word by indicates grammatically what we call the instrumental dative, which describes the means by which a thing comes to pass. So, to use Aristotle's categories, faith is the instrumental cause of justification, according to the Protestant view.
    - b) By contrast, the Roman Catholic Church says the instrumental cause of justification is baptism. Rome proclaims that a person is justified when he or she is baptized by a priest. At baptism, the person receives an infusion, an inpouring, of grace in the soul. This grace is sometimes called the grace of the righteousness of Christ or the grace of justification. When it is infused into the soul of the person who is being baptized, that person enters a state of grace.
    - c) THAT'S NOT WHAT WE'RE SAYING - WE'RE SAYING IT'S AN ACT OF FAITH!
    - d) Again, I can't read the word grace, but I can see it. Can you see grace and faith in this passage? Can you separate faith from baptism?
- C. Titus 3:4-7.

1. I can't read about faith, but I do read washing. What washing is he talking about? What washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit would be poured out through Jesus Christ? What's going on here?
2. Even John Calvin commenting on this text said he had no doubt that the washing of rebirth is baptism. This passage stresses not baptism, but on God saving us in baptism by the Holy Spirit. "Although Calvin didn't think that John 3:5; spoke of baptism he went on to say, 'It is true that by neglecting baptism we are excluded from salvation; and in this sense I acknowledge that it is necessary..." Martin Luther believed it to refer to natural water and insisted that baptism was the means by which God gave new birth to the baptized and thanked God that that truth about baptism had remained established throughout the centuries. Martin and Luther who were obsessed about stressing salvation apart from meritorious works and that God alone opens our hearts to His call never ceased to connect baptism to God's act of saving us. This should cure us of the habit of saying that those who teach baptism is for salvation are teaching "salvation by works."
3. Can you read about God's grace? And when were we justified? See Romans 6:7.