

## 7 Reasons Why Baptism Is NOT Required for Salvation

(June 13, 2023)

### Frank:

Wow, did we get some hostile email regarding a short video that we put out to our email subscribers a couple of weeks ago. We have about, I don't know, a little over 70,000 people that get an email from us once a week.

We send one email a week that normally has a short video in it, usually from the college campus, a Q&A video that we think might be helpful to you. Maybe it's a question you've been thinking about, or maybe it's a question that other people ask you.

And so, we send one video out a week so you can actually have something that you can use either personally or in trying to disciple others. And we sent this short video out. A short is usually a video that's about 60 seconds or less.

And so, you can't make a complete argument. You can make one point, and the point isn't going to be complete. The question was, is water baptism necessary for salvation? And you should see how many hostile emails we got when I said I don't think it's necessary for salvation.

And I only gave one reason because I only had 60 seconds to make the point. And what I said was, that in 1 Corinthians chapter one, Paul says, "I don't even know who I baptized. I forgot who I baptized. I came to preach the Gospel."

And then in Romans 1, he says, the Gospel saves. So, by simple deduction, if the Gospel saves and Paul bifurcates baptism from the Gospel, then baptism isn't necessary. It's not part of the Gospel, it's not necessary for salvation. And so we've had some hostile emails. Here's one of them.

"Horrible theological gymnastics about baptism any way you twist it. Acts 2, question, what shall we do to be saved? Peter's answer is clear, Acts 2:38." Now, he doesn't quote Acts 2:38. So, let me quote it here.



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This is in the context of Peter actually giving a sermon at Pentecost. And he talks about how... Well, let's get some context. Let's start at verse 29. So, Peter's preaching here at Pentecost and he says, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that Patriarch David (I'm picking up in verse 29. It's right in the middle of his speech.) died and was buried. And his tomb is here to this day."

Because he just quoted that David's body will not see corruption, or my body will not see corruption. And so, what Peter is saying is, well, David's body saw corruption, but Jesus' hasn't. Verse 30.

"But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on the throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of Christ. That he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

He's quoting another Psalm. I think Psalm 110 here. He says, therefore, verse 36.

"Let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

So, this guy writing into me, whose name happened to be Joe, said, "Obviously in chapter two, verse 38 of Acts, Peter says, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin.' See?"

So, baptism is necessary for salvation. That's basically what Joe is saying here. And he goes on to say, he, Peter said it to those who knew they killed the Son of God. Read Luke's account at the cross. What did the multitude do after the centurion made the pronouncement about

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Jesus? They left Golgotha beating their breast. Then 50 plus days later, those folks are convicted by Peter's sermon, and they ask the ultimate question.

They knew the God of creation and the Savior of Israel had been killed by their choice. They wanted to be saved from murder, execution. They wanted to be saved from murder..." This is not a complete sentence.

"They wanted to be saved from murder, execution, which they knew they deserved. Frank, you did not do theology from God's word. You recited sectarian half-truths to continue your ample paycheck from your denominational masters. Shame on you, Frank. Time for you to repent of horrible Bible teaching. Honor the whole council of God like Paul did."

Well, thank you, Joe. Thank you for that measured response. Now, let me just clear up a couple of things. First of all, I'm not part of a denomination. I don't get a denominational paycheck. My ample paycheck doesn't come. I don't have an ample paycheck, by the way. It doesn't come from any denominational masters, okay?

We have a ministry. Our ministry is funded by donors. We're a 501(c)(3), and I don't report to any denomination or any denominational masters. And it's adequate, but it's not ample, okay? I'm not getting rich at CrossExamined.org, all right? People make accusations, and they have no basis to make these accusations. This is not something we ought to be doing, ladies and gentlemen.

In fact, you see people online throwing stuff around all the time that they have no basis in fact to throw around. Now, I will say this, Joe. You do get it right, that the people that killed Jesus, were at Peter's sermon, and they were cut to the heart. And so, they felt that they needed forgiveness.

And so, what does Peter say? He rightfully says, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. Now, is he suggesting here that baptism is required for the forgiveness of your sins?

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Well, what I'm going to do in this podcast is unpack, not just the one reason I gave in the one minute short video, but about seven different reasons why water baptism is not required for salvation.

And we'll cover this verse here, Acts 2:38. So, let's go back to, first of all, the process we go through when we're trying to interpret the Bible. We have an online course called "How to Interpret Your Bible." In fact, we have a lot of online courses.

Many of them you may want to look into over the summer because you can take them in a self-paced way. One of them, of course, is "How to Interpret Your Bible." We have courses from Stephen Meyer on the "Return of the God Hypothesis."

I do several. "Jesus Versus the Culture", "The Great Book of Romans", "Stealing From God", "Why Can't You Be Normal, Just Like Me?" Which is a fun course. In fact, that's actually going to be a mini-course over the summer.

We have courses from Alisa Childers on "Progressive Christianity", Clay Jones, "Why Does God Allow Evil?" We have several from Sean McDowell. We have "The Resurrection" with Gary Habermas. We have "Fearless Faith" with myself, J. Warner Wallace, and Mike Adams.

We have Dan Wallace on "New Testament Textual Criticism." We have courses on Hell. We have "Equipping Generation Z." We've got all these courses you ought to check out. Anyway, the one on how to interpret your Bible, we go through an acronym that will help you whenever you come to a Bible passage, discover what the true meaning is. It's STOP.

I've talked about it briefly on this program before. S.T.O.P. I'll just go through it very quickly. S stands for the situation. In other words, what's the context about the passage? You just can't read the verse. You've got to read what's going on around the verses to discover what's in it.

And remember, there are no verses in the Bible. The chapter and verse divisions were added 500 or so years ago to help us navigate the text. They are not there so we could just take one verse out of context because it has a number in front of it, and make it say whatever we want.

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We have to read around the passage. So, figure out the situation. That's the S. T is what type of literature? Is it poetry? Is it prophecy? Is it history? Is it law? Is it parable? What is it? O stands for who's the object of the passage? Is it ancient Israel? Is it just people in Corinth? Is it just the people listening in Acts? Is it the entire church? Who is the object of the passage?

And P stands for is this passage prescriptive or descriptive? Now, let's talk about the book of Acts. Situationally, what is the book of Acts? What kind of genre is the book of Acts? What's the situation? What type of literature is it?

The book of Acts is a historical book. It's telling us what the early apostles did and how the Church grew from about 33 AD, when Jesus was crucified and resurrected, all the way to about 62 AD. It covers about 30 or so years.

And it covers Peter, and Paul, and their missionary journeys, particularly Paul's missionary journeys. It's a book of activities. It's generally, when you get to the P, is this prescriptive or descriptive? It's generally descriptive. It's describing what happened. It's not necessarily prescribing what we ought to do.

It's describing what they did to spread the Church. So, when we come to Acts, chapter two, we're reading a description of what happened. Does that mean that there aren't some prescriptive elements in there? No, there are prescriptive elements in there.

When they are giving certain sermons, there are theological truths in there and even applications in there, which may be prescriptive to us. But overall, the book is descriptive. So, when we look at Acts, we have to keep that in mind. We have to try and decipher. Generally it's descriptive, but there may be areas that are prescriptive.

So, when we look at Acts 2:38, when he says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." That certainly is a description of the people who were there.

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And when Joe, who wrote in, said that these were the people who killed the Son of God, Joe, you're absolutely right about that. In fact, in the previous verse, verse 36, Peter says, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. So, when those people heard it, they were cut to the heart and they said, 'What should we do, Peter?' And he said, 'Repent and be baptized.'"

What was baptism, though? Was baptism something required for salvation? Or was baptism a symbol of salvation that said, now you are with Christ? I think it's the latter. And let me give you several reasons why this is so. There are several resources out there that you can avail yourself of on these difficult issues.

The one that I recommend the most is a book called, originally it was called "When Critics Ask". I think it's now called "The Big Book of Bible Difficulties." It is a book written by my co-author, Dr. Norman Geisler, and another professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary.

SES.edu, by the way, a great place to get an education in theology, philosophy and apologetics. That's where I went. That's where Alisa Childers goes and Melissa Dougherty goes. Several others go there. It is a great place to get an apologetic, theological, philosophical education. Check it out. SES.edu/Frank.

You can get half off your tuition. In any event, Dr. Geisler and Dr. Howe wrote this fabulous book where they go through several, like about 800 different places in the Bible that people have questions about, and this is one of them. Here's what they say. Here's the problem passage, Acts 2:38.

Did Peter declare that baptism was necessary for salvation? This is from "The Big Book of Bible Difficulties." Here's what they say. "Peter seems to be saying that those who responded had to repent and be baptized before they could receive the Holy Spirit.

But this is contrary to the teaching of Paul, that baptism is not part of the Gospel." I already mentioned that 1 Corinthians 1:17. "And that we are saved by faith alone." Romans 4:4 and Ephesians 2:8. So, what's the solution?

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Here's what they say, Geisler and Howe. This is resolved when we consider the possible meaning of being baptized "for" the remission of sins in the light of its usage, the whole context, and the rest of Scripture. Consider the following. First..."

Here's the first of seven reasons that baptism, water baptism is not necessary for salvation.

"First, the word for in Greek can mean with a view to, or even because of.

In this case, water baptism could be because they had been saved, not in order to be saved."

In fact, our friends over at Got Questions, that's another resource you can go to, [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org). You can get questions answered to any one of a number of theological problems, hundreds of theological problems, or theological questions. And they have an article on this particular verse as well.

And what they say is this, "As an example, when one says take two aspirin for your headache, it is obvious to everyone that it does not mean take two aspirin in order to get your headache. But instead, to take two aspirin because you already have a headache." And this idea that for means because of, rather than in order to get saved...

They also point out that in Matthew 3:11, it talks about baptism. It says that, baptize you with water for repentance. And they say, "Clearly, the word in Greek cannot mean in order to get. They were not baptized in order to get repentance. But they were baptized because they had repented."

So, Matthew 3:11 says, baptize you with water for repentance. In other words, it means baptize you with water because you have already repented. Okay? So, that's the first reason. It could mean, because they have been saved, not in order to be saved. The word "for" there.

The second reason baptism is not necessary for salvation, according to Geisler and Howe, is because people are saved by receiving God's word. And Peter's audience gladly received His word before they were baptized. And they reference Acts 2:41 there.

The third reason, verse 44 in Acts 2, says, it speaks of all who believed as constituting the early church, not all who were baptized. In fact, there are several places where people are saved in

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Acts, and baptism isn't part of their salvation. They don't say anything about it. They just believed. So, that's the third reason.

The fourth reason is, he says, "Later in Acts, in Acts 10, those who believed Peter's message clearly received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. Peter said, 'Can anyone forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'"

In other words, in Acts 10:47, these people were already saved. And Peter says, let's just get them baptism now. So, they were saved already, prior to being baptized. In fact, let's just go over to that passage and read that a little bit more closely.

This is Acts 10. So, this looks like it's Peter at Cornelius's house. Let's try and get the context. Here's verse 44. Peter's preaching again.

He says, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 'Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit, just as we have.'"

Notice this. This is verse 47. They've received the Holy Spirit just as we have. They already have the Holy Spirit. They haven't been baptized yet. And then Peter says, "So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Okay? So, the salvation occurred before the baptism.

The fifth reason that water baptism is not necessary for salvation, it is more a sign of salvation, is because the one I already mentioned, that Paul separates baptism from the Gospel. Saying, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 1:17.

But it is the Gospel which saves according to Romans 1:16. Therefore, baptism is not part of what saves us. Now, that was the only point I could make in a 60 second video. So, ladies and gentlemen, I beg your patience.

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When you see a short answer to a question, a question that you could make many more points on, don't get all upset when the person answering the question doesn't cover every one of the points and every nuance in 60 seconds. It's impossible. This is one of the problems with the sound bite culture.

Everybody wants everything in 60 seconds. Sorry. There are some things that can't be said in 60 seconds. Subjects can't be covered in 60 seconds. You can't understand the entire Bible in 60 seconds. In fact, for you to read the Bible, if you would just sit down and read it start to finish, it would probably take you about 75 hours to read the whole Bible.

In fact, if you go online and you look for an audio Bible, you'll see they're usually about three days long, three full 24 hour days or more. How is anyone going to cover all the bases? That's just to read the Bible. That's not to analyze it. That's not to nuance it or to or to comment on it. That's just to read it.

So, you're not going to get complete answers in short Q&A's. I'm unable to give a complete answer in a short Q&A. Everybody is. You can't do it. So, no matter who you're watching online, if they're giving a short answer to a question, give them some grace, will you?

Come on. They can't cover every nuance, they can't cover every objection. They can make one or two points, especially when they have (as we typically do), we'll have a line of people waiting at the microphone. You can't cover everything in one answer, especially when you have people waiting.

Even if you had nobody waiting, you couldn't cover it all. Now, our friends over at Got Questions point this out as well about the fact that 1 Corinthians 1 says that Paul didn't come to baptize. He came to preach the Gospel.

And in Romans 1, the Gospel saves. Here's what they say. "If baptism is necessary for salvation, why would Paul have said, 'I am thankful I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius?'" This is 1 Corinthians 1:14. So, just a few verses before he says that he wasn't sent to baptize.

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In fact, that's what they say next. "Why would Paul have said, 'For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. Not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.'" That's 1 Corinthians 1:17, as I mentioned.

And then these folks go on to say, "Granted, in this passage, Paul is arguing against the divisions that plagued the Corinthian Church. However, how could Paul possibly say 'I am thankful that I did not baptize', or 'for Christ did not send me to baptize', if baptism were necessary for salvation?

If baptism is necessary for salvation, Paul would literally be saying, I am thankful that you were not saved, and for Christ did not send me to save. That would be unbelievably a ridiculous statement for Paul to make. Further, when Paul gives a detailed outline of what he considers the Gospel, which is 1 Corinthians 15:1-8..."

You know, that's the ancient creed, ladies and gentlemen. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. That lays out what the Gospel is, and the early creed that early believers memorized. Anyway, they go on to say, "Why does that creed neglect to mention baptism? If baptism is a requirement for salvation, how could any presentation of the Gospel lack a mention of baptism?"

So, I rest my case on that point more than any other, ladies and gentlemen. And that's the main point I made in this one short video. Okay, how about the 6th reason baptism is not necessary for salvation?

And this goes back to Geisler and Howe. "Jesus referred to baptism as a work of righteousness in Matthew 3:15. But the Bible declares clearly it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. That's Titus 3:5."

Why are you suggesting a work or a work of righteousness known as baptism is required, but no other works are required? You're adding to the Gospel. You're adding a work to grace. And we are not saved by works. We're saved by grace.

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Now, the 7th reason water baptism is not necessary for salvation is found in Geisler and Howe. And they say this, "Not once in the entire Gospel of John, written explicitly so that people could believe and be saved, does it give baptism as part of the condition of salvation. It simply says over and over that people should believe and be saved. Of course, in John 3:16, in John 3:18, in John 3:36."

Yeah, the Gospel of John is written so that you may be saved, and it doesn't mention baptism at all. Some try and say born of water is baptism, but that's a murky passage. Does that mean born of water baptism? Does that mean born of the water of birth, the amniotic fluid in the mother?

That's disputed. That's when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus, when he says, you must be born again. And Nicodemus says, well, how can a man enter back into his mother's womb? And Jesus says, unless you're born of water and the Spirit, you can't be saved.

You must be born again. So, we're not exactly sure what he meant by that particular passage about water. If it meant baptism, it's not entirely clear. And why don't all the other passages mention baptism then? In fact, John 20:31, I'm doing this from memory, but it says something like this is the reason John wrote the Gospel.

And notice in this passage he will put belief that and belief in, in one sentence. You know, "belief that" is getting evidence that Jesus is the Savior. "Belief in" is trusting in Him for your salvation. John 20:31 says something like these things were written down so that you may know Jesus is the Messiah and that by believing in Him, you may have life in his name.

That's why the Gospel was written. And it doesn't mention baptism explicitly anywhere. So, here's how Geisler and Howe sum all this up.

They say, "In view of all these factors, it seems best to understand Peter's statement like this from Acts 2:38. Repent and be baptized with a view to the forgiveness of sins. That this view looked backward to their sins being forgiven after they were saved is made clear by the context and the rest of Scripture.

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Believing or repenting and being baptized are placed together, since baptism would follow belief. But nowhere does it say he who is not baptized will be condemned. Yet Jesus said emphatically that he who does not believe is condemned already. That's John 3:18. So, neither Peter nor the rest of Scripture makes baptism a condition of salvation."

Now, why would it be? And by the way, I didn't even mention the thief on the cross, right? He certainly wasn't baptized. And Jesus said, today you will be with me in paradise. You could make that reason number eight if you want. So, why would you add a work to the work of Christ?

I think that these people, when Peter said, repent and be baptized, every one of you, baptism was a sign to everyone that they had become a believer in Christ. That they were buried with Christ in death and raised to new life in salvation, as Romans 6 explains. It was a symbol.

And those people needed to repent right then because they were literally the ones that crucified Jesus 50 days earlier or so. They were the ones that did it. And so, Peter puts repent and baptized together there because why would you get baptized later?

Get baptized right now. When you repent, you're saved. Let everybody know it. Let's baptize you right now. So, the repentance, the belief is what saved them. The baptism just signified that they were saved to everybody watching. And by the way, when you got baptized back then, you might as well put a bullseye in the back of your head, because it was demonstrating that you now were a Christ follower.

And that could get you beaten, tortured, and killed. And that's another reason we know that this wasn't made up. There's no reason for Jews to invent a resurrected Jesus. People who didn't think a man could claim to be God, and they didn't think somebody would rise from the dead in the middle of time, they would never invent this.

This must have really happened, that Jesus actually claimed to be God and proved to be God by rising from the dead. Otherwise, you wouldn't even have a book like Acts. You wouldn't even have the New Testament documents. They wouldn't exist.

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Jesus would have been another one of a long number of supposed messiahs who just died, and that was it. No, Jesus actually did die, but he also rose again.

And that's why Peter is preaching 50 days after the event right there in Jerusalem when his tomb could have been exposed, and his body taken out had he not risen from the dead. Yet Peter is there saying that. And then Peter, as you know, paid the ultimate price for saying Jesus had resurrected from the dead. So did James, so did Paul, so did several others.

This is not an invented story. So, friends, the bottom line to all this is don't get all ornery with people who put out a one minute video on a theological topic that is very rich and requires more than one minute of data. I mean, give some people some grace, would you?

All right, not just me, but other people out there. Now, if the point they make is completely wrong, then you can say, have you ever considered this? Have you ever considered that? Have you ever considered these other passages?

But you don't need to beat your chest and say, wow, you're some kind of heretic because you didn't even recognize this passage or that passage. Don't do that. Be kind to one another. There's no reason to be all ornery about it. And I think people that really protest a lot, that try and say baptism is necessary for salvation, I think they protest too much.

Why would you get all ornery and angry about something like this? Because Christians are going to get baptized anyway because it's a command. So, if it is necessary for salvation, they're already covered. If it's not necessary for salvation, then they're covered anyway because they're already Christian.

So, either way, Christians are going to get baptized because they're supposed to get baptized. And if you're going to argue about this theological point, argue about it in a kind way. One last point on this. My co-author, Dr. Norman Geisler, as you know, written a great book on the differences between evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

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And of course, this is one of the differences. And you can get that book. It's still, I think, probably the best book on the topic, even though it's 30 years old next year. But one thing he said to sum all this up with regard to the difference between Roman Catholics and evangelicals on issues like this is, "One of the reasons I'm not a Roman Catholic is, I think the Roman Catholic Church has institutionalized salvation."

In other words, they hand out salvation to you through their organization. And one of the ways they hand it to you is through baptism, and then first Communion, and then confirmation, and confession, and marriage, and last rites, penance, all these things they're handed out to you as if they possess them.

And according to the Scriptures, that's not the case. There's one mediator between God and man, and that is the Lord Christ Jesus. So, even if a Roman Catholic is listening to you or listening to this right now, I want to be kind, even though I may disagree with you on some of these theological issues.

And I think we should expect the same with anybody we're talking to. We don't have to get all ornery. We can just lay out our case and then leave the results to God. So, that's what we ought to do. All right, friends, great being with you.

By the way, I want to mention every Wednesday night in June, Lord willing, I'll be at Central Church of God here in Charlotte. We're going through I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be An Atheist, every Wednesday night in June. So far, we've only covered night one, where we covered, does truth exist?

This week, we'll be covering, does God exist? The following week, we'll cover more on God and are miracles possible? And then the final week, is the New Testament reliable? And we'll take questions every night. So, check it out.

And also, I'm going to be in Virginia at a conference. I want to say it's near Roanoke. I don't have the schedule in front of me. But if you go to our website, [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org), or better yet, get our app because everything is on the app. You will see the calendar.

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In fact, I'm going to be at Cross Life Community Church. That's it. Sunday, June 25. And then the ThinkWell conference that night and all day the following day, June 26. So, June 25, Sunday. June 26, Monday. That's in Charlottesville, Virginia. Hope to see you there.

All right, folks, great being with you. I'll see you here. Oh, yeah. This Saturday's or this Friday's podcast is going to be with Seth Dillon, CEO of The Babylon Bee. You don't want to miss that. All right, see you here next week. God bless.

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