

## The Importance of Baptism

The view of most evangelical Christian scholars is that salvation is by grace through faith alone. This is especially indicated by Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, 1 John 5:1. It is important to understand that baptism is a result of salvation, not a cause.

Some cite Mark 16:16 as their proof text that baptism is necessary for salvation, but they only quote the first half of the verse—“*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved*”—and typically leave out the second part—“*but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*” This second part indicates the necessity of belief as being the prerequisite to the baptism issue.

The way to resolve most problems pertaining to the issue of baptism is to look at the whole of scripture. When we do, we find there is absolutely nothing we can do as humans to *earn* or *deserve* salvation. Romans 6:23 tells us that salvation is a “free gift.” Free means that there is nothing we can or have to do to get it. On the other hand, baptism is something we choose to do. If baptism or any other human work or activity (such as going to church regularly, teaching a class, etc.) contributed to our salvation. We could boast we did something and contributed to our salvation. However, Ephesians 2:8-9 says that no one should boast before God.

We come to Christ through grace by faith, and our public baptism brings glory and honor to God. Baptism is an act of obedience, not to obtain salvation, but because of it—because we love Him and want to obey Him. The motivation to pursue baptism should originate from a desire to show to the world an outward demonstration of the person’s decision as well as the inward work of the Holy Spirit that has already begun in the believer. And unsaved person would not likely want to be baptized, because he would not have the Holy Spirit indwelling in him to prompt his desire to follow Christ in obedience (unless a sect or cult group has erroneously taught him otherwise.)

In the book of Acts, baptism is typically the outward response to coming to faith. It was seen as part of a process which includes: 1) hearing (or reading about) the Gospel, 2) being convicted and lead by the Holy Spirit to confess one’s sins (Greek: “Homologeō”=to agree with, to speak the same), 3) coming to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, 4) joining a group of believers or church fellowship, and 5) being baptized. The last two parts are where we there are the most differing opinions among believers or church denominations.