

Buried in Baptism

Col. 2:9-14

All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 2:9-14 (NASB)

⁹ For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; ¹¹ and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; ¹² having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

In this passage, Paul takes the time to explain how our salvation works. A good case could be made that Col. 2:11-13 is the most important New Testament passage concerning baptism.

One reason this passage is so important is because it most explicitly identifies baptism as the specific **TIME** when a sinner is buried with Christ and raised up with Him.

Another is because it most explicitly spells out the distinctive roles of faith and baptism in the reception of salvation.

Third, it clearly indicates that insofar as baptism is a work, it is a work of God.

It also gives us the only New Testament teaching on how to relate baptism and circumcision.

BODY:

I. The Means, Time, and Place.

Salvation, according to God's Word, is achieved when specific conditions are met.

ILLUSTRATION:

Let's say you come home and it's dark and you want light. So, you go to the switch on the wall and flip it and **wah-lah** you have LIGHT!

What is the **means** of that light coming on? ELECTRICITY.

Electricity is running through the wires and when you flip the switch it causes the light bulb to generate light. The **time** that the light comes on is when the switch is flipped. The **place** that the light is generated is at the light bulb. The **means** by which it happens is electricity.

What if you come home and flip the switch and nothing happens?

It could mean many things. Maybe you didn't pay the electricity bill! Let's assume you examine the light fixture and you discover that someone has removed the light bulb.

The light bulb is not the **means** by which the light comes. It is electricity. But, if you do not have a light bulb, you are still not going to get any light. Of course, the opposite is true also. If the light bulb is good and screwed into the light socket, but there is no electricity, you are still not going to get light. In other words, there is more than one kind of condition necessary in order to generate light.

Let's say you bought a ticket to a Royals baseball game and you have got it in your pocket. The ticket is the **means** by which you are going to see the game.

Does that mean that just because you have that ticket in your pocket, that the ballgame is immediately going to unfold in front of you? OF COURSE NOT!

The tickets are the means by which you can see the game in person, but you still have to go to the game at the right place and at the right time in order to see the game.

Faith is like this ticket. Faith is the **means** by which we are going to get into the Kingdom. But we still have to come to the **place** and **time** when God says He will open the door for us.

Baptism is like a **place** and **time**. Even though **faith** is the **means**, there are other conditions besides **means**.

Colossians 2:12 actually says both. It says that you are **buried and raised with Him IN BAPTISM but through FAITH.**

Through **faith!** That **is** the MEANS. But baptism is the TIME and PLACE where it happens.

Faith alone IS the ONLY MEANS for salvation. But to simply quote a few or a hundred passages that say that faith is required for salvation and then suggest that nothing else is necessary, requires that you IGNORE a lot of other passages.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We are instructed that ALL SCRIPTURE is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is our sole authority on how Christ wants all mankind to live while we are on earth. It is our source for spiritual knowledge and wisdom that the world cannot know. If ALL scripture is inspired, then ALL scripture MUST be in harmony. We MUST NOT and CANNOT just pick and choose passages that fits our "belief system". We MUST read every passage realizing that it is in **agreement** with all the other scripture.

II. Faith in the Working of God.

Colossians 2:12 (NASB)

¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Another important point in Colossians 2:12 is the relation between faith and baptism in God's plan of salvation. We are buried and raised up with Christ in **baptism** as the **time** and **place**, but through **faith** as the **means**. The role of **faith** is not negated by the designation of **baptism** as the **time** of salvation, nor is there any conflict between the two. Rather, they complement one another perfectly.

When Paul says that we are buried and raised with Him **through faith**, it shows that going through the motions of baptism is not a true baptism UNLESS the one being baptized has faith in his heart. There is no magical power in the water or in the act itself. Baptism without faith is a futile dipping in water. Without faith the person's spiritual state after baptism is no different from what it was before.

Note that this eliminates **infant baptism** as a possible form of baptism. An infant cannot have the faith necessary for a true baptism.

"**Faith in the working of God**" also means that in baptism we must believe in what God in His word promises to do for us at the very moment of baptism itself. He has promised to forgive our sins and give us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

He has also promised to **put our old sinful nature to death**, to remove it in a kind of spiritual circumcision--a circumcision performed by Christ Himself.

Before our salvation, we were dead **IN SIN**. This is not just a state of being under the penalty of death, but an actual condition or state of death. Our soul is dead and infested with spiritual decay. We are doing worldly things. We are caught in a **helpless weakness of sin** that makes us powerless to please God.

And He has promised to raise us from the dead and give us new life.

The **new life** is given to us in Christian baptism, specifically through the gift of the Holy Spirit, whose special work is to "give life".

This NEW LIFE is the most significant thing that has ever happened to us! And when does Paul say that it took place? **IN BAPTISM!**

Colossians 2:12a (NASB)

¹² **having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him**

Baptism is the **time** and **place** when the saving benefits of Christ's own death, burial, and resurrection are applied to us.

III. Baptism and Circumcision.

A final point that draws our attention in Col. 2 is the **relationship** between **baptism and circumcision**.

Colossians 2:11 (NASB)

¹¹ **and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;**

For various reason many Christians believe that baptism is the New Testament replacement for the Old Testament circumcision.

Since circumcision is usually interpreted as a sign of **membership** in the covenant people, many Protestants assign this meaning to baptism, too. By virtually ignoring everything the New Testament actually says about baptism as God's work of salvation, and by assuming this relationship with circumcision, they interpret baptism simply as the outward sign that marks one as a **member of the church**.

Verse 11 says we have been circumcised in a non-physical sense ("**without hands**"). We have experienced a **spiritual** circumcision. This is called a "**removal of the body of the flesh**." This is similar to physical circumcision, which is the removal of a piece of the physical body. But in spiritual circumcision "**the body of the flesh**" refers to our **old sinful nature**, not the physical body. In baptism this **old sinful aspect** of our being is circumcised away; it dies and is disposed of.

When Col. 2:12 says this takes place "in baptism", it is affirming what the whole New Testament assumes and teaches, that baptism is an act of salvation. It does not say this happens "before baptism" or "after baptism", but specifically and clearly "in baptism".

Though baptism has a very high place in the plan of salvation, we must **emphasize** that it does **NOT** take the place of Christ and His saving blood. The focus, even in this passage, is upon Jesus Christ and His saving blood.

Baptism brings about this spiritual circumcision only because in it we are buried "with Christ". It is still His power, the power of His death, that accomplishes this saving deed.

It is something He does to us and for us, not something we do for ourselves!

CONCLUSION:

Matthew 16:24-26 (NASB)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

In order to live a life **fully pleasing to God** you must "deny yourself, and take up your cross and follow Christ".

God is not willing that anyone should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Christ died on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day. God sacrificed His son so that we could have forgiveness of sins.

Christ died for **all** of our sins once for all. But, unless you accept Him as your Lord and Savior and live by His WILL, you will not receive the forgiveness of sins that He died to forgive for you.

John 14:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

We must be careful to embrace all of Christ's commandments in the scripture. We cannot accept one and reject another simply because it does not fit into our "belief system".

Romans 10:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

But, Acts 2:38 also says:

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸ "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.

Faith is the MEANS. Baptism is the TIME and PLACE that we are saved.

It is important to note that there is nothing magical about the baptismal water. Just being immersed into water without faith will not save you. You must also live a life pleasing to God. The important part is that this is a commandment that is required in the scriptures. If we love God, we will keep His commandments.

II Kings 5 talks about a king named Naaman who had leprosy who went to Elisha to be cured.

2 Kings 5:10-14 (NASB)

¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will* be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.'
¹² Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you *to do some great thing*, would you not have done *it*? How much more *then*, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.

When Naaman chose not to wash in the Jordan seven times, he went away **MAD and with all of his leprosy**. It was only when he obeyed that the leprosy went away. The Jordan river did not cleanse him, the water was not miraculous. It was God. It just required an humbling act of obedience to be cured.

That is how baptism works. The water does not save you. You are saved through faith by the grace of God and because you were willing to humble yourself before the Lord and obey His commands.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

So we offer His invitation, realizing that there may be someone here who has never ever accepted Christ as their Savior. We plead with you. We appeal to you not to let this moment escape nor to let this window of opportunity pass you by.

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, then come now, confess that you believe in Him, be faithful to Him in Christian baptism, arise to walk in the newness of life. God's invitation is offered to you. Will you come as we stand and as we sing?

He Is Lord!

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.