

DOES EPH. 2: 8,9 EXCLUDE BAPTISM? Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Read the text.
2. This passage is one of great beauty. Also, one of great comfort and consolation to all who understand its true meaning.
3. However, how tragic it is that it has been so abused so often by so many sincere professed Bible believers, preachers included, who are fixated upon the sectarian agenda of faith only, or salvation at the point of faith, without further acts of obedience, rather than properly interpreting the passage in the larger framework of biblical truth.
4. Prime examples:
 - a. J. Carl Laney, professor of biblical literature at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, raised this question: “Did Peter teach that baptism was necessary for salvation?” [i.e., in Ac.2:38]
 - (1) His response is an unqualified “No!” for he said: “The Bible teaches clearly that salvation and the forgiveness of sins is always through faith in Christ (Eph.2:8,9), not the result of baptism.” – *Answers to Tough Questions*, p. 243, 1997, Grand Rapids, MI, Gregel Pub.
 - b. Arthur W. Pink, prolific author of various commentaries on N.T. epistles, in his Exposition of The Gospel of John, commenting on Jno.3:5 and being “born again,” wrote: “That baptism is in no wise essential to salvation, that it does not form one of the conditions which God requires the sinner to meet, is clear from many considerations.” P.109
 - (1) One of these he cited was this: “...if baptism be necessary to salvation, then we must utterly ignore every passage in God’s Word which teaches that salvation is by grace and not of works, that it is a free gift and not bought by anything the sinner does.” P.110.
5. Supposedly, therefore, as these two and multitudes of others teach, the Ephesian text excludes baptism from the plan of

salvation, even though this conclusion plainly and boldly contradicts numerous N.T. passages which teach that baptism is of necessity included in God's plan of salvation for sinners; and that it is still by grace through faith and a gift of God!

6. Therefore, we shall carefully and scripturally examine the Ephesian text (in context, immediate and remote) to bring out what the text is actually teaching – i.e., that it definitely includes baptism!

II. DISCUSSION

A. DEFINITION OF THE OBVIOUSLY IMPORTANT TERMS IN EPH.2:8,9 THAT NEED CAREFUL ATTENTION.

1. “**Grace**” (CHARIS,
 - a. Vine, II, 170, it means; (b) in the subjective sense,
 - (1) On the part of the bestower, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving-kindness,...especially with reference to the Divine favor or grace...; in this respect there is stress on its freeness..., as in the case of God's redemptive mercy, and the pleasure or joy He designs for the recipient; thus is set in contrast with debt, Rom.4:4,16; with works, 11:6; and with law, Jno.1:17; Rom.6:14,15; Gal.5:4.
 - (2) On the part of the receiver, the sense of the favor bestowed.
 - b. Strong (5485):”especially the divine influence upon the heart...: acceptable, benefit, favor, gift.”
 - c. H.C.G. Moule: the “gratuitous loving kindness of the Lord.” – *Studies In Ephesians*,72, 1997 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Pub.
 - d. So, “grace” is divine “favor” bestowed in the redemptive gift of Christ and independent of any inherent righteous worth resident in rebellious humanity.
2. “**Saved**” (S0Z0,
 - a. Strong (4982): “to save, i.e., deliver or protect”
 - b. “Saved” refers to divine pardon from the guilt of sin (though not from the consequences of sin). Cf. Rom.5:12.

- c. The verb is a perfect tense, suggesting the idea of a past act that results in a present state; in this case, a present state of salvation, having been saved or delivered from a past state of condemnation in sin by grace through faith.
 - d. Having been saved means therefore that there is a salvation from past sins that occurs at the point of one's conversion, and that state abides as long as the child of God, the one saved from past sins, walks "in the light" (1Jno.1:7), or "is born of God" (i.e., "stands born of God", 1Jno.2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4,18.)
3. **"Through faith"**
- a. Is a phrase that reveals how God's merciful grace by which the sinner is saved is accessed by the sinner who needs and longs for salvation from past sins.
 - b. Faith is not a *mere* acknowledgment of historical facts, nor even the disposition to trust, though it embraces both.
 - c. Faith also involves a *response* to whatever *conditions* may be divinely imposed. (Thayer, 511)
 - d. Vine, II, 71, faith is from the Greek *PISTIS*, "primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing (akin to *peitho*, to persuade).
 - (1) See Heb.11:1: "Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen."
 - e. "Grace" is God's parting freely offering salvation to the sinner. "Faith" is man's part in accepting the salvation God offers by his grace on the conditions God offers it.
 - f. Proof texts: Jno.3:16-18,36; Mt.7:21-23; Heb.5:8,9; Jas.2:24.
 - g. Heb.11, the whole chapter proves by the use of the expression "*by faith*" that it never means "*faith alone*" in pleasing God.
4. **"not of yourselves"**
- a. The preposition "*of*" from the Greek [ek], meaning "out of" emphasizes that the salvation which is "by grace though faith" does not and cannot possibly come out of any humanly devised plan or course of action – it's of God!
 - (1) Mt.7:21-23.
 - (2) Cf. Tit.3:4-7.

5. Rather, salvation is described as the “*gift of*” God, or “*from*” God, “not of works, lest any man should boast,” V.9. Cf. Rom.6:23.
- a. It is the gift of God’s grace Vs the meritorious works of man whereby man could coast of earning it and being able to boast of his accomplishment. Cf. Rom.3:27,28; 4:4-8.
 - b. However, being “the gift of God” doesn’t mean it is without conditions. For a **gift** may be **conditional** without nullifying the benefactor’s gratuitousness.
 - (1) For instance, if I were to hold up \$100 bill and say to you, “I will give you this if you will walk down the isle to get it;” it would still be a gift though a conditional one.
 - (2) The Israelites were “given” the city of Jericho, Josh.6:2: “And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho...;” Josh.6:16: “Joshua said unto the people, shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.”
 - (a) But they did not have possession of this gift until they complied with the divine conditions required to conquer it, Vv.3ff. Cf. Heb.11:30: “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”
 - (b) In V.2, the Lord said, “I have given” it.
 - (c) In V.16, Joshua said, “the Lord hath given it”
 - (3) See Ac.27:24,31.
 - (a) In V.24, the angel of God said to Paul, “Fear not, Paul...God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”
 - (b) In V.31, “Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these (the one’s God said he had given Paul) abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”
 - (4) Again, God “gave” his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for the whole “world,” Jno.3:16; Heb.2:9.

- (a) But only those who “receive him” may partake of the benefits of his death, Jno.1:11-13; 3:16-18,36; Mk.16:15,16.

B. THE FALLACY OF SECTARIAN INTERPRETATION OF EPH.2:8,19 AND RESULTANT PRACTICE FURTHER EXPOSED.

1. It is one of the great tragedies of “Christendom,” or of those professing to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ and Christianity, the world over, in distinction from heathen or Mohammedan lands, that so many have isolated Eph.2:8,9 in their interpretation of it from the larger body of redemptive information in the N.T., even from that of Paul himself who wrote Ephesians.
 - a. They emphatically declare that Eph.2:8,9 *excludes* water baptism as one of the necessary conditions of salvation from past sins because salvation is not of works.
 - b. Does that kind of logic also eliminate the requirement of “repentance”? It also is not mentioned in Eph.2:8,9. Nor is it mentioned in Jno.3:16; Nor Rom.5:1.
2. The following arguments demonstrate conclusively that the inspired Apostle Paul did not intend to *exclude* baptism, or to place water baptism in the realm of salvation by works, or to nullify the baptismal requirement, by his affirmation in Eph.2:8,9 that salvation is by “grace through faith” and “not of works.”
 - a. First, there is the evidence that Paul himself both taught and *practiced consistency*.
 - (1) As proof note what Paul taught that he practiced in order to be saved, Ac.9:1-6; 9:10-18; 22:6-16.
 - (2) Paul taught in agreement with Jude that there is what is known as “the common faith,” or “one faith,” or “the common salvation,” Jude 3; Gal.1:23; Eph.4:5; Tit.1:4.
 - (a) This was the faith which he preached, practiced, believed and obeyed in order to be saved, which included God’s grace, his own faith and water baptism to wash away his sins.

- (3) Would Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, be guilty of teaching and practicing it in one place and then turn around and exclude the necessity of it in Eph.2:8,9? Hardly!
 - (a) Truth doesn't contradict itself.
 - (b) Neither did the Holy Spirit guide an apostle to teach and practice the necessity of something in one place, then lead him to exclude or deny the necessity of the same thing in another place.
 - (4) When Paul, the Apostle of Christ, taught others as he was guided by the Holy Spirit, did he *omit, exclude* the very requirement to which he *himself* had been obligated in order to wash away his sins?
 - (5) The noted Baptist scholar H.B. Hackett, of the Newton Theological Institution, wrote that the phrase "wash away your sins" in Ac.22:16 states "a result of the baptism," and it corresponds to the expression "for the remission of sins" in Ac.2:38. In other words, one submits to baptism "in order to be forgiven." – *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, p.276,1879, Andover, MA: Warren Draper.
 - (6) Is it possible that the inspired Apostle Paul would be guilty of teaching that the **same** gospel both **requires**, and does **not require** water baptism in order to be saved from past sins?
- b. More evidence that Paul by means of the Holy Spirit **taught and practiced consistently**, never denying or excluding in one passage what he included as necessary in another passage.
- (1) In Ac.19:1-5, he taught the Ephesians the necessity of being "baptized in (into) the name of the Lord Jesus" in order to be saved. Cf. Eph.1:1,7,13; 2:1,5,8,9.
 - (a) The expression in Ac.19:5, "baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus," together with a similar one in the Great Commission of Mt.28:19, "baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Spirit,” signifies that “those who are baptized become the possession of and come under the dedicated protection of the one whose name they bear.” – F.W. Danker, et al. 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p.713.

- (b) Cf. Thayer, p.94.
 - (c) Mk.16:16, A parallel text to Mt.28:19 and Ac.19:5 stresses: “whosoever believes and is baptized shall be saved.”
- (2) Again, Paul, in both Romans and Galatians, affirmed that the believing sinner is “baptized into Christ,” and from that watery grave “raised to walk in newness of life,” Rom.6:3-5; Gal.3:26-29. Cf. Eph.2:4-6.
- (a) Never does he teach that one “believes into Christ.”
 - (b) Comparing Rom.10:10 with Rom.6:3-5 and Gal.3:36,27 we learn that faith and confession are “unto” salvation, while baptism is “into” Christ, where salvation is (2Tim.2:10)
 - (1) Illustrate the difference.
 - (c) On the basis of this parallel information, one could never conclude logically or scripturally that Eph.2:8,9 excludes baptism as a condition of salvation by grace through faith.
- c. Furthermore, later in the epistle to the Ephesians Paul amplifies his meaning regarding the means of salvation, specifically including a reference to baptism as a means of cleansing the Ephesians, Eph.2:25-27.
- (1) The term “cleansed” in V.26 is the equivalent of the term “saved” in Eph.2:8.
 - (2) To complete the parallelism, it is obvious that the grace-based faith that leads to salvation according to Eph.2:8 includes the “washing of water with the word” of Eph.5:26.

- (a) Eph.2:8 places the emphasis on divine favor coupled with faith-powered obedience accepting God's grace.
 - (b) Eph.5:26 specifies that the message of the "word," combined with the "washing of water," is the specific means by which the process is finalized.
 - (c) See Eph.1:13; Ac.18:24-19:5; Eph.5:25-27.
- d. Paul, also, in Tit.3:4-7, in language similar to the Ephesian epistle, teaches the same truth taught in Eph.2:8,9, but with further explanation.
 - (1) Tit.3:4-7 teaches:
 - (a) That God according to his mercy saves us, V.5b.
 - (b) How he does not save us, V.5b: "not by works of righteousness which we have done," i.e., not by our own meritorious works.
 - (c) How he does save us, Vv.5c, 6: "but by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior."
 - (d) That this is salvation or "being justified by his grace," V.7.
 - (2) Take note that "the washing of regeneration" in Tit.4:5c, parallels "the washing of water" in Eph.5:26.
 - (a) Furthermore, both expressions are identified with baptism for remission of sins.
 - (b) See *loutron* in Thayer, 382: "used in the N.T. and in eccles. Writ. Of *baptism*."
- e. Note what Peter said about baptism and salvation in Ac.2:38; 1Pet.3:21.
- f. Therefore, neither Paul nor Peter excluded baptism, nor do they place it in the category of salvation by works as sectarian theology does!

C. TO COMPLETE OUR STUDY EXPOSING THE FALLACY OF SECTARIAN INTERPRETATION AND PERVERSION OF EPH.2:8,9, WE EXAMINE THE VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF

WORKS AS THE WORD IS USED IN THE N.T., SOME OF WHICH COULD NOT AND CANNOT SAVE THE SINNER, AND SOME OF WHICH CAN.

1. First note the fact that the Protestant world has in good conscience reacted negatively to Catholicism's false, unjustified claim that the performance of certain works merit the attainment of eternal life in due time.
 - a. But Protestant theology is equally false, unjustified, and contrary to the Scriptures which has resulted in their perversion of Eph.2:8,9, et al.
2. One category of works mentioned in the N.T. which could not and cannot save the sinner is the *works of the law of Moses*.
 - a. Gal.2:16; 3:2-5,10-14,18,19; 5:1-4.
 - b. Cf. Rom.4:13-16; 9:31,32; 11:5,6.
3. Another category of works that cannot save is the *works of men*.
 - a. Ac.5:38; 7:41; Rom.4:2-8; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:4,5.
 - b. Mt.15:9; Col.2:8,20-23.
4. Another, is that of *evil works*, Mt.23:2,3,5; Rom.13:12; Eph.5:11; Col.1:21.
5. Then, there is the category of the *work of God*, or *works of righteousness*, or *works of faith*, or *the obedience of faith*, by which the sinner *is saved*, and/or without which the sinner cannot be saved.
 - a. Jno.6:29, faith itself, that by which the sinner is saved, is a work of God, a necessary work of God. Cf. 1Jno.3:23; Jno.3:16-18,36; See 2Th.1:11.
 - b. According to Gal.5:6 the thing that avails in Christ unto salvation is "faith which worketh by love." Cf. Jno.14:23,24; 1Jno.5:3.
 - c. Then take note of Ac.10:34,35.
 - (1) Peter is here telling Cornelius what to do to be saved, Ac.10:1-6; 11:13,14.
 - (2) Two things of a general nature are here required of all persons of all nations; i.e., both Jews and Gentiles:
 - (a) Fear or reverence God.
 - (b) Work righteousness.
 - (3) In Vv.47,48 the specific requirement of water baptism is commanded.

- (4) Therefore, baptism is a work of righteousness necessary in order to be saved. Cf. Ac.2:38; 22:16; 1Pet.3:21.
 - (5) Baptism is a work only in the sense that it constitutes obedience to a divine command.
 - (6) The conversion process embracing baptism is a “working of God,” Col.2:11,12.
 - (7) Baptism is never even hinted at as being a work of human righteousness; rather, is always distinguished from such works, Tit.3:5; Ac.10:48.
- d. Jas.2:24 plainly and emphatically declares that man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”
- (1) In Vv.14-26 he defines his use of the word “works” by which man is justified as “the works of faith,” or “the obedience of faith.”
 - (2) In Vv.14-20,26 he says that faith without this works is dead. And, of course, a dead faith cannot save any more than a dead horse can win a race!
 - (3) To prove his point and to illustrate what he means by works, he cites two examples of being justified by works:
 - (a) First, father Abraham, Vv.21-24.
 - (b) 2nd, Rahab the harlot, V.25.
 - (4) James in Jas.2 does not contradict Paul in Rom.4:2-8 as some sectarians claim. For: ---
 - (a) James speaks of “works of faith,” or “the obedience of faith,” faith doing God’s will by which man is justified Vs “faith only” or faith without works which cannot justify.
 - (b) Paul in Rom.4:4,5 speaks of works of merit which would make salvation a matter of debt and denies such works can save.
 - (c) Furthermore, Paul himself in the book of Romans taught “the obedience of faith,” and/or “works of faith” necessary to salvation the same as James did, Rom.1:5;16:25,26; 6:16-18.
6. Additional passages requiring good works in order to maintain one’s saved relationship, or in order to stand “born of God.”
- a. Mt.5:16.

- b. Phil.2:12,13.
- c. Col.1:9,10.
- d. 2Tim.2:21.
- e. 2Tim.3:16,17.
- f. Heb.10:24; Cf. 6:10.
- g. Heb.13:21.
- h. Rev.2:5,26.
- i. Rev.22:14 (Heb.5:8,9).
- j. 1Jno.2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18.

III. CONCLUSION

1. The Bible, as God's word, must harmonize with itself.
 - a. No one verse or section of scripture ever contradicts or is out of harmony with any other verse or section of scripture.
 - b. God's word is truth (Jno.17:17) and truth does not contradict itself.
2. The theological theories and doctrines of men do contradict God's word, but God's word does not contradict itself.
3. No one Spirit-inspired, Spirit-guided writer of the Bible ever contradicts himself or any other Spirit-inspired, Spirit-guided writer of the Bible. There is perfect agreement among them. Any apparent contradiction is just that – apparent! Not real! Not actual!
4. God's word can be understood as written, Eph.3:1-5; 5:17; 2Tim.2:15.

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