Review of Teaching That Was Given to Deny Baptism as Part of the Salvation Message

A brother was asked by a Dr. of Theology if he believes baptism is included in the message of salvation.

The brother gave this simple response:

*I believe what Jesus said: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16*

*I believe what Peter said: Acts 2:38*

The Dr. of Theology replied giving what he believes is evidence that baptism is not necessary to be saved. What is immediately obvious is the Dr. of Theology never once addressed the

Verses given him. All he did was to give lots of other passages that he claims prove his point, that baptism is not part of the response to the gospel message given to men. Here is the Dr. of Theology’s response written in black. The Biblical answer to what he wrote is given in blue. You will see that none of his suggested verses are ignored.

Dr: First, it is quite clear from such passages as Acts 15 and Romans 4 that no external act is necessary for salvation.

Response: The Dr. is not representing Acts 15 correctly. The discussion in this chapter is not about how to be saved according to the gospel but this issue stated in Acts 15:5— *"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."*

Here is the result of that meeting expressed in the letter sent to the gentile Christians:

Acts 15:23-29

*They wrote this, letter by them:*

*The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,*

*To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:*

*Greetings.*

*Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" — to whom we gave no such commandment — it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.*

*Farewell.*

If someone says, “See, they didn’t tell them to be baptized.” The answer is simple. Of course they didn’t. The people receiving the letter were already Christians. Those receiving the letter were “brethren.” They are being told that as Christians they did not need to be circumcised and did not need to keep the law of Moses.

What we should do is look at the Chapters in Acts that describe the teaching of the Gospel in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. We also want to look at what Paul the Apostle did to become a Christian since he is one of the ones defending against the requirement to keep the law of Moses.

The story of the conversion of Paul (Saul of Tarsus) is found in Acts 9. Paul is confronted by Jesus and told to go to Damascus. Jesus says to him - Acts 9:6 *"Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."* Let us pay attention to the fact that Paul will be told what he “must do.” Acts 9:17 tells us plainly the preacher Ananias baptized Paul. When Paul is retelling his story in Acts 22, he tells us exactly what Ananias told him. In Acts 22:13-16 we see that Ananias says, *'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.* ***And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'***

Without a doubt, Paul is told to be baptized. He is told the purpose of baptism was to wash away his sins (Act 2:38 to compare what Peter said). He was also told he must do this in faith because he was to *“call on the name of the Lord.”* Paul’s experience in becoming a Christian matches exactly what Jesus said in Mark 16:16.

Now let us move forward to the story of the conversion of the first gentiles to the family of Christ. This is found in Acts 10. The group is Cornelius and his family. As Peter is preaching to them the Holy Spirit falls on them and convinces Peter that these Gentiles may become Christians without the Law of Moses. Here is what Peter says. Acts 10:47-48— *“Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.* “ Notice that the receiving of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not eliminate the necessity of being baptized into Christ.

Acts 11 tells us about many gentiles being taught about Jesus. We are told that they believed and turned to the Lord. To deny that they would have been baptized as part of the plainly stated salvation plan shown to us in the conversion of a Jew (Paul) and a Gentile (Cornelius) is to be purposely promoting a lie. We were given those two examples to be sure we know what to do to follow the teaching of Jesus.

Acts 13 and 14 tell us of the travels of Paul and Barnabas into gentile territory and of the conversions of the gentiles. These stories give very little detail on the conversion of these people simply telling that they believed. Unless we are prepared to begin saying there are two ways to be saved, we will accept that those converted must have been baptized into Christ, for that is the stated will of Christ in the great commission and the practice shown us when detail is provided. You will find as you look at other conversion stories of gentiles that baptism is part of the conversion process.

Dr. of Theology: Romans 4 teaches that “no external act is necessary for salvation.”

The Dr. displays a couple of things. The first is that he fails to recognize that the general discussion in Romans 4 is about keeping the works of the law. Paul is teaching the Roman Christians that they did not need to keep the law of Moses to be saved. You will find that Paul fights this idea a lot as we still do to this day. It is important to recognize that Paul is also saying you can’t save yourself by just trying TO DO works. We do agree with that. However, this leads us to the second thing the Dr. reveals. He doesn’t understand the operation of faith. It seems that to him, “faith” is just the acceptance of some facts and that once the facts are accepted, one is saved. This is not saving faith. In Romans 4 is the story of God promising Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. We see the following: Romans 4:19-21— *And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."* Paul is delicately saying that because Abraham believed God would do what He promised, Abraham went and had sex with his wife Sarah and because of Abraham’s action in faith, Sarah conceived.

To claim that Paul is teaching that man by faith is exempt from having to take any action is to deny the plainly stated teaching by Paul in Romans 4 about Abraham and Paul’s teaching in the first part of the letter to the Romans.

Romans 1:1-5*— "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.”*

This passage plainly teaches that faith requires obedience.

Romans 1:16-17*— "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith.” Again, Paul is declaring that faith is accompanied by external acts. “The just shall live by faith.”*

Romans 2:5-16*— "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.*

*For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) 16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

We must be honest. Does Paul say here there is nothing to do externally? No, in fact he plainly says we have something to do. The big thing to remember is that we cannot be saved by ourselves and what we do. But this idea in no way removes the fact we in faith have something to do.

In Romans three Paul makes this statement. Romans 3:31*—"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”*

The last part of this passage is translated incorrectly and should read “we establish law.” The idea Paul is teaching in this chapter is that faith takes us out from under the law of Moses, but it doesn’t remove law that relates to how we behave. We must behave as moral people as he plainly showed us in Chapter 2. Thus, again Paul is not at all teaching that having faith eliminates any need for external behaviors.

There is a great deal more in the letter to Romans where the apostle Paul plainly teaches faith is real when it is shown by what we do. Romans 12 is major in this.

Next the Dr. says that Salvation is through faith alone.

The words “alone” or “only” are only connected to faith in one place. It is found in James 2:24— *“You see then that a man is justified by works and NOT by faith only.”* See the whole discussion in James 2:14-26. In verse 26 James says, *“for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

The Dr. lists Romans 3:22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30 and Romans 4:5 as verses that declare we are saved by faith alone.

I challenge him to show me the words “faith alone” in any of these passages.

Next, he gives us Galatians 2:16. In Galatians 2, Paul is pointing out to these gentile Christians that they do not need to keep the law of Moses to be saved. There were people teaching the same false doctrine about needing to keep the law of Moses to be saved. This is the same error the church confronted in Acts 15. Paul is correct in saying *“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”* The only one ever justified by keeping the works of the law is Jesus the Christ, God in the flesh.

Is Paul saying that because we have faith we don’t have to do any external things? Let’s see. Galatian 3:26-27*—“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Where does Paul get this idea? Compare with Mark 16:16. Baptism into Christ is clearly an external action.

Paul continues showing that Galatian Christians had no obligation to do the Law of Moses. It was totally unnecessary for them. Yet, he does say this to them: Galatians 5:7*—"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”* Here he challenges them that in following the law of Moses, they have been hindered from obeying the truth. Clearly there is something in the truth that requires obedience.

Galatians 5:16-26 gives us detail on what kind of external actions to put away and what kind of externals action to do. Is Paul trying to say that just by doing this we can be saved? Of course not, but he is plainly declaring that walking in faith and in the Spirit of God requires some external behaviors.

*“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another,”*

Galatians 6:7-10*— "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

To imply that Paul the apostle was teaching in Galatians 2:16 that having faith means we don’t have to do any external works is to deny what He says to the Christians in the rest of his letter. Clearly the Dr. hopes you won’t read the rest for yourself.

The Dr. says that Ephesians 2:8,9 does not say you have something external to do.

It plainly says you can’t save yourself by trying to do good works. What else does Paul say in his letter to the Ephesians.

Look at this: Ephesians 2:10—"*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

Here is plain statement that *We are created in Christ for good works* and that *we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 4:17-5:14

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

*But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

*Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

*5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.*

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.*

How anyone could say that Paul believed having saving faith meant you have no external acts to do is beyond me. Are we saved by our works? NO, but we will not be saved without this demonstration that our faith is real. We have to do something!

Here is something else Paul the apostle says in Ephesians 5:26, 27 that is important. *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”* In what way did the Ephesians participate in a washing of water? We know the answer for Paul himself helped them be baptized in the name of Jesus.

Philippians 3:9-10--*and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*

This is yet another place where Paul is declaring we cannot be saved by trying to live by the old covenant. That won’t work. The question is, Is Paul declaring that because of faith we have no external actions to do? Let us see.

Philippians 1:9-11--*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Here he says the Christians are to be filled with fruits of righteousness. How will we know if these are not seen?

Phil 1:27-30--*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*

Philippians 2:12-13--*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Philippians 3:2-19--*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

*Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.*

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things.*

Again, Paul contrasts the effort which will fail us if we try save ourselves by keeping works of the law without the salvation of living by faith in Jesus Christ. You will see he does not say you don’t have to do anything external, but you can’t depend on your own righteousness to be saved.

What is the Dr’s point in showing us all these passages? He is trying to convince us that we don’t have to be baptized to be saved because it is an external action and that we are not saved by external actions but only by faith i.e. to him, simply believing that Christ is the savior.

He fails miserably for two reasons. None of the verses he quotes relate to the process by which we become Christians. This is abundantly described in the Book of Acts which is the book of conversions. The process of becoming a Christian includes being washed from our sins when we are baptized into Christ. The second reason he fails is because he ignores all the rest of content in the letters from which he quotes. These letters all include the idea that walking in faith requires external behaviors to be exhibited in our lives. As James declares, ***“Faith without works is dead.”***

Now Dr. of Theology says this: Paul never made water baptism any part of his gospel presentation. In I Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul gives a concise summary of the gospel message he preached. There is no mention of baptism. In I Corinthians 1:17 Paul states that “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel” thus clearly differentiating the gospel from baptism.

We can tell whether or not Paul ever made water baptism any part of his gospel presentations by looking at his missionary work as shown in the Book of Acts of the Apostles. We are given detail in Acts 16:12b-15 about his work in Philippi and the conversion of a woman named Lydia.

*“And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God.* ***The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized****, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.”*

Notice the language: “The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized . . .” Now, the Dr of Theology would have us believe that Paul never made water baptism part of his gospel presentation. I guess Luke, the writer of Acts got it wrong because he says that Lydia was baptized as a result of the Lord opening her heart to the things spoken by Paul. So, the words “never made water baptism any part of his gospel presentations” are simply NOT true. Let’s go further and see if Paul ever told anybody else to get baptized.

In Acts 16 we also have the story of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. Paul and Silas had been arrested for casting a spirit of divination out of a slave girl in the city. Here is the detail:

Acts 16:25-34*— "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said,* ***"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”***

When the doors of the jail are thrown open, the jailor was going to kill himself thinking all the prisoners has escaped. Had that been so, he would have had to take their place or suffer a horrible death. He is prevented from taking this action when Paul tells him no one has escaped.

The jailer asks a question that was not about his soul, but his life. *“What must I do to be saved?”* Paul does not miss the opportunity and changes the point from life to the soul and tells him to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now if this was the whole story, we would have to change our belief. However, notice that Luke is clear in stating that Paul and Silas “***spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”*** What was the result of this instruction? After washing the wounds of Paul and Silas “immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Hmmm, who told the Jailer to be baptized? Want to guess? No guessing needed. We know it was Paul and Silas in giving him the message of the Gospel.

Acts 17 tells of Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica where we are told “many were persuaded.” We also learn of his work in Berea where we are told “*many of them believed.”* Though baptism isn’t mentioned in these cases, we are confident the people were baptized. It is not reasonable to claim that Paul was teaching a different response to the gospel in Philippi than he was in Thessalonica and Berea, particularly when we see what Jesus told the apostles to do in Matthew 28:1-20. Further in Acts 17 we have Paul declaring the gospel to the Athenians. Here he only tells them in his message to repent. He neither mentions belief or baptism. Given the circumstances of the message, we are not surprised. He didn’t get to say everything. We do know from Acts 17:34, that some of them believed.

In Acts 18 we come to the story of Paul’s ministry in Corinth. This is the same city to whose Christians Paul writes 1 and 2 Corinthians. Here is another place that plainly shows the error of the Dr. of Theolog’s statement that Paul “never made water baptism any part of the presentation of the Gospel.”

Acts 18:5-8*— "When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia,* ***Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ****. But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.* ***Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized*.”** How is it that these people knew to be baptized? Clearly Paul told them. Notice that the pattern we are told about here matches exactly what we see Jesus said in Mark 16:16.

As we travel with Paul, we now come to Ephesus. Here is the detail on the presentation Paul made there. Acts 19:1-6*— "Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."*

*And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."*

***Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”***

This is an important story as it follows the work of a Jewish believer named Apollos who preached about Jesus in Ephesus before Paul arrived there. We learn from Acts 18:25 that his knowledge was missing something. Acts 18:25-27*— "This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”* We know from what follows in Acts 19 what correction Apollos needed in his teaching.

From the passage in Acts 18, we see why Paul asked his question about baptism. John’s baptism that Apollos was teaching before he was corrected had no aspect of the Holy Spirit connected to it. Acts 2:38 teaches that all who are baptized into Christ receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When the Ephesians know nothing about the Holy Spirit, Paul suspects right away something was wrong with their baptism. When Ephesians learned the reality of the necessity of being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they received baptism into Christ.

From these stories we discern that teaching people to be baptized was part of the message of the Gospel that Paul Proclaimed.

Let us return to the scriptures from Corinthians that are mentioned by the Dr. of Theology. Here is the actual text. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4*— "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”*

Paul plainly describes the three fundamental elements of the Gospel.

1. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures
2. He was buried
3. He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they had received and stand in these and says they are saved by these if they hold fast the word that he preached to them. It is obvious Paul does not use the word “baptism” in this passage, but he also doesn’t use either the word “believe” or the word “faith.” That said, Paul does require three actions regarding the gospel message. He says it is to be “received,” and the Corinthians are to “stand in it.” The third thing they are to do is to “hold fast to it.” Notice that Paul does require action on the part of the Corinthians. As we follow the plan from the Holy Spirit, we want to see if there are passages that relate to the idea of the gospel.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9— *"in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Peter 4:17-18*— "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

The first is from Paul the apostle and the second is from Peter the apostle. Both men are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Both say something many people miss because they don’t search the scriptures. Both say that bad things will happen to people who don’t obey the gospel. Notice this doesn’t say “do not believe the gospel.” It plainly says ”**do not obey** the gospel.” Oh my. How do I obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? I can’t just say, “I believe it,” I have to obey it! This isn’t really complicated if you observe that in the book of conversions, the book of Acts, that when the full detail of a conversion is given, those believing the gospel are baptized into Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:1-9 states the purpose of baptism into Christ very plainly. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it****? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.******For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*** *For he who has died has been freed from sin.* **Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him***, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.”*

Paul explains it clearly. One shares in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ when in faith they receive the grace of God by obeying the command of the Lord to be baptized into Christ. Pay attention to these facts.

* Paul is the writer that says we are saved when we receive the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
* Paul is the same writer that says we will suffer the vengeance of flaming fire if we do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.
* Paul is the same writer that says we must share in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (the gospel) by being immersed (baptized) into Christ.

We are confident Paul would call this the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26)

The second point the Dr. of Theology makes about baptism in the book of Corinthians is this.

“In I Corinthians 1:17 Paul states that “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel” thus clearly differentiating the gospel from baptism.”

Have you ever taken your car to a mechanics shop or car dealership where the person who assesses your car’s needs is called a “service writer”? The service writer puts down what should be done to the car, but the service writer does not repair the car. The mechanic repairs the car. This is what Paul is effectively saying in I Corinthian 1:17. He, Paul, is the “service writer” who tells us what it wrong and what needs to be done to fix it. Somebody else has the responsibility to accomplish the work. Just as it is silly to claim that the service writer of the repair orders is not connected with what the mechanic does, it is silly to disconnect the proclaimer of the gospel from the one who helps the hearers obey the gospel.

Paul is simply saying he didn’t consider it his primary role to be the baptizer, but to be the proclaimer. He could easily declare this because he had a team of men with him who did most of the baptizing. Paul did some of it as he declares that he indeed did baptize some of the Corinthians. Here is his full declaration.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17*—"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”*

Paul explains that the church at Corinth was divided along the lines of the preacher each group liked best. Paul effectively tells them that this is a big mistake and that he doesn’t want anybody following him on the basis of being baptized by him. He didn’t care who baptized you. He didn’t want anybody to claiming he baptized in his own name. This writer is currently an old man of many years of age. Now and for a long time, I don’t think of being the baptizer as my role. There are plenty of younger men who will happily do the baptizing. My surrendering the role of being the baptizer does not in any way change the teaching of the Christ, *“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”* (Mark 16:16)

We have another reference to baptism in the book of I Corinthians. It is found in chapter 6. Here Paul is reminding the Corinthians of behaviors that would result in condemnation and reminds them that they had been delivered from these. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*:” Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* We don’t have to guess what this refers to because we know that at their conversions the Corinthians were baptized into Christ. Remember that Paul also plainly taught that baptism is the place we are separated from sin to a new life in Christ. (Romans 6)

The Dr. of Theology says that Seminary is a good place to discover God’s real truth. I did…Tell it to a grieving mother who child was saved by Romans 10:9, but then someone says baptism is a requirement to get into heaven.

In response, I suggest that the best place to discover God’s real truth is the Holy Scriptures. The New Testament in divided nicely into sections that answer serious questions. Here they are:

* Who is Jesus? The Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
* The Proclamation of and Response to the Gospel—Acts of the Apostles
* How to be successful in the Christian Life—The Epistles: Romans-Jude
* Christ is Coming to overcome a corrupt world-Revelation

If I already believe that Jesus is the Christ, then I would learn very quickly how to respond to the good news of Jesus being my redeemer in the Book of Acts. This book has many stories of preachers proclaiming the good news and people becoming Christians.

Why is it that most of the time many seminarians do not tell people about how to be a Christian using the book of Acts? The answer is simple. The book of Acts teaches people to be baptized in the name of Jesus whether the one seeking salvation is either a Jew or a gentile. Many seminarians go to the epistles and stress the teachings regarding completing salvation by faith and ignore the very plain teaching regarding baptism in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Titus, and I Peter.

The grieving mother and a son who thinks he is saved by Romans 10:9 is a sad situation. None of us is a judge. I would always tell a mother that her son is in God’s hands. I cannot judge. I can only proclaim. The One Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy will always make the correct decision. As proclaimer, I have NO authority to change the message. I cannot make salvation easier or more difficult. I can only declare what the Lord says. Here is the passage and its immediate context.

Romans 10:5-13

*For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Why is it always forgotten that Romans is written to people who are already Christians? Romans 10:9,10 make perfect sense to those who are already in Christ. There is no need to tell them to be baptized into Christ because if they obeyed the Lord and in faith were baptized into Him, there is no need to tell them that they need to be baptized. A second question. Why do people who quote Romans 10:9,10 fail to point out that Paul is making a contrast between those seeking to make following the Law of Moses the standard and those who are saved in Christ. Those trying to be saved by following the law are driven by the mentality that they must keep the rules of the Law. In Romans 10, Paul is again making the point that having faith in and confessing Christ does NOT require keeping the rules of the law. Here is the introduction to the discussion in Chapter 10.

Romans 10:1-4*—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

Paul is making the point that those who want to follow the Law of Moses make a big mistake in thinking they can save themselves by establishing their own righteousness under the Law. Paul declares to them and to us that Christ is the END OF THE LAW TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES.Paul’s point in Romans 10:5-13 is that depending on Jesus and living by faith in Him after being reborn in Jesus by being baptized into Him, and by confessing Jesus, we have no necessity to worry about the rules of the Law. Living by faith in Jesus once reborn will find us having a heart of righteousness that doesn’t need rules. Please pay attention to the truth of Romans 6 and don’t try to dismiss what it says about being born again when baptized. When I live by faith in Christ and confess Him with my mouth, I don’t need to keep going back and getting baptized all the time.

Romans 10:13 is a statement of who can be saved rather than being the process by which a person comes into salvation. There is no doubt that faith in Christ is the beginning but calling on the name of the Lord is occurring when a person is baptized into Christ. When Paul the apostle became a Christian, after believing that Jesus was the Lord, he was told to do this. “Stop wasting time, get up and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord.” Acts 22:16

Now the Dr. of Theology states: Perhaps the most convincing refutation of the view that baptism is necessary for salvation are those who were saved apart from baptism: The penitent woman-Luke 7:37-50; the paralytic man-Matthew 9:2; the publican-Luke 18:13-14; The thief on the cross-Luke 23:29-43.

Does anyone pay attention to timelines? Are we that ignorant of the changing covenants? Neither Noah nor Enoch nor Abraham were baptized into Christ, and neither of these had to keep the law of Moses. The same would be true for Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Now move forward. All of these were under the law of Moses, but none of them had to be baptized into Christ: Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samson, David, Jonathan, David, Samuel, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Nahum, Micah, Malachi. The list of people named by the Dr. of Theology all fit in the same category of the group listed before them. All were under the Law of Moses as the New Covenant was not yet put in place. The Old covenant ends and the New begins at the time of Christ’s death on the cross. When is the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15,16 given? It is given after Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. NOONE saved before he death, burial and resurrection of Christ had to be baptized in obedience to and in the name of Christ. No one who is saved in the New Covenant has any responsibility to keep any part of the Law of Moses. The question is simple. On which side of the cross does a person live. That determines what covenant they have to follow to be saved. I am so happy to be under the new covenant. Faith in Christ and being washed in His blood in baptism is a whole lot easier than trying to keep the Law of Moses.

Finally, the Dr. of Theology says: For that matter we have no record of the apostles being baptized, yet Jesus pronounced them clean of their sins (John 15:3). Note that the word of God, not baptism, is what cleaned them.

We do have record of one of the apostles being baptized. His name is Saul of Tarsus (Paul). His story of conversion is found in Acts 9, Acts 22 and Acts 26. Why we have no record of the other being baptized is not revealed to us. However, we do have Paul’s interesting statement in 2 Corinthians 11:5— “For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.”

Paul is stating that he was not in any way inferior to any of the apostles. This would make it easy to say that the other apostles were baptized as well even though we are not told the details.

Imagine the difficulties they would have to face if they are telling people to be baptized as in Acts 2:38 and get asked, “Were you baptized?” The only answer consistent to the message would be “yes.” This idea is truly in line the fact that even our Lord had to be baptized with John’s baptism to fill all righteousness just because John’s baptism was commanded by God.

We have another clue in I Peter 3:21: *“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”* Peter states that baptism is the antitype that saves US. This is his statement to all of us that he had shared in baptism.

John 15:3-4: *“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”*

We do not argue with the work of the Lord but make again the point that this occurs before the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. We must see the cross as the point of differentiation for what man has to do. We must also recognize that Jesus as the Lawgiver and Lord of Lords may do whatever He wants to do. Were He to appear in our time frame and grant redemption to someone who is not baptized and not hold them accountable to His own command, I will not argue with Him. He may do as He will!

There are three other references to baptism in the letters.

Colossians 2:11-14*—"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ****, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God****, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,”*

Titus 3:4-7***—"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”***Paul is describing exactly what GOD DOES when we are baptized into Christ. (Acts 2:38)

Hebrews 10:19-24*—"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil* ***conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”***

We do need to make this simple point. Little Children do not need to be baptized. This only becomes a necessity when they are accountable for sin. That varies from child to child and is not our right to set a particular age.

Let me give this contrast. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they were given this simple and direct teaching. They could eat of every tree in the Garden except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the day that they would eat of that tree, they would surely die. When Satan tempts Eve, Satan asks Eve if God said this. Eve acknowledged that God had said it. Satan’s response was basically, “Well He lied to you.” This is exactly was is happening with the question of baptism. We have abundant evidence that baptism is a command of Christ, that part of the conversion process is the be baptized into the name of Christ, and when we comply Christ GIVES us remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now along comes Satan who says, “When people tell you that the New Testament teaches you that you need to be baptized into Christ to be saved, it is a lie.” Just like Eve, we have millions of people over the whole world who accept the lie of Satan and deny the simple truth—Christ commands us to be baptized by faith in the authority of His name and receive the grace of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Please don’t accept the Devil’s lie. Please just submit to the teaching of Jesus and his apostles.