

# ***Refuting Baptismal Regeneration – 5 KEY Texts***

***By Pastor Dwight Oswald***

Baptismal regeneration is the belief that somehow the ritual of water baptism is involved in making a person right with God and that without undergoing that ritual one is not saved. In contrast the Bible teaches that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Justification is by FAITH ALONE! To add anything we do physically or is done to a person physically as a requirement for salvation amounts to a WORKS salvation and that is a FALSE GOSPEL that is denounced by Paul in the strongest of terms.

## **Galatians 1:8–9 (NKJV)**

**8** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, **let him be accursed.**

**9** As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, **let him be accursed.**

Baptism is important as an outward testimony following saving faith! But it is only a testimony. It is a testimony that we are already saved – not to get saved. Our TRUST must be in Jesus alone and in His finished work on the cross, not in anything we do including baptism. It's not the baptismal waters that wash our sins away, but rather the BLOOD of Jesus ALONE! It all comes down to where a person places their TRUST!

Following are 5 KEY texts which clearly refute the idea of baptismal regeneration.

## **1) Romans 1:16 in combination with 1 Cor. 1:17**

### **Romans 1:16 (NKJV)**

**16** 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.

### **1 Corinthians 1:17 (NKJV)**

**17** 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.

In Romans 1:16 Paul clearly says the gospel is the power of God to salvation “for everyone who believes”. The gospel is the message BELIEVED.

Building on Romans 1:16, Paul in 1 Cor. 1:17 makes a clear DISTINCTION between baptism and the gospel saying, “Christ did not send me to baptize [that is one thing], but to preach the gospel [that is another thing]. This verse emphatically shows that baptism is NOT the gospel and in Romans 1:16 Paul says the gospel is the message believed and when it is believed one has salvation.

## **2) The Gospel of John**

The gospel of John is called, “The Gospel of Belief” because the word believe occurs there about 90 times. In fact, the entire purpose of John writing this gospel is seen in his purpose statement towards the end of the book as seen in John 20:31.

### **John 20:31 (NKJV)**

**31** but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Note the ONLY thing stated necessary to have LIFE in John purpose statement is BELIEF. Twice in this single verse John states the necessity of BELIEVING, but nothing more is stated.

There is no mention of BAPTISM in John 20:31. In fact, John does not even address believers New Testament baptism in the entirety of the book. It's not there. Are we to believe that John the apostle wrote the is long book of John so we might have life and left out something vitally important to be saved! IMPOSSIBLE! John did not miss it, he did not leave out anything necessary to be saved. Throughout the book John consistently makes the case of WHO Jesus is and WHAT He has done and that BELIEVING in Him is what is necessary to be saved.

Note it carefully, John says we must “believe that Jesus is the Christ”. The Christ refers to Him being the special chosen One Who fulfills the OT Messianic prophecies Who is shown to be both God and man in one person and Who comes a Deliverer (Savior) and Ruler (two comings).

Either John is write as seen in the gospel of John or the baptismal regenerationist is right, but they both can't be right. I put all my stock in the apostle John who wrote the book of John under inspiration.

### 3) Romans 3 & 4

We are justified (declared righteous) by FAITH. Paul belabors the point in Romans 3:22-31 that we are justified by FAITH ALONE and not by our works or law-keeping.

- Rom. 3:22 “through **faith** in Jesus Christ”
- Rom. 3:22 “on all who **believe**.”
- Rom. 3:25 “by His blood, through **faith**”
- Rom. 3:26 “justifier of the one who has **faith** in Jesus.”
- Rom. 3:27 “by the law of **faith**.”
- Rom. 3:28 “a man is justified by **faith**”
- Rom. 3:30 “justify the circumcised by **faith**”
- Rom. 3:30 “uncircumcised through **faith**.”

Romans 3:21-28 is the great text on justification by faith alone, but Romans 4 then follows up by giving the great illustration of Justification by faith alone as seen in the person of Abraham.

#### **Romans 4:3–5 (NKJV)**

**3** For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

**4** Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

**5** But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

In all the Bible Abraham is the premier example of saving faith. This is KEY! What did Abraham do? He simply believed the promise of God. He believed in the LORD in the sense He believed God would bring to pass what He said He would do. He believed God COULD do it and that He WOULD do it. Abraham simply accepted what God said was true and relied on Him to fulfill it. That’s it! All he did was BELIEVE. That’s all!

The concept in view in Abraham believing God here in Genesis 15:6 is that of TRUST. He TRUSTED God to bring to pass what He promised. Trust is the idea of reliance or dependence upon. TRUST is confidence in God’s Word.

Faith all the way through Romans 3 and 4 is contrasted with works. Faith involves human response but it is not a work. Abraham did respond – He did believe! “*Abraham did the only thing a person can do without doing anything – he believed God (Gen. 15:6).*”

**– John Phillips**

The nature of Abraham's faith was essentially the same as that of the NT believer – although revelation was progressive. Abraham looked forward to what God had promised to do, whereas the Christian looks back at what God has accomplished in Christ. But the nature of saving faith in dependence upon God remains the same as Paul plainly states at the end of Romans 4 (cf. Rom. 4:23-25).

Romans 4:4-5 is perhaps the strongest text in the whole Bible on the truth of justification by grace through faith alone.

There are hypothetically two ways in which money can be put to your account. You can earn the money and put it into your account yourself; or someone can gift you and just put it into your account for you. Paul is arguing that when it comes to righteousness we have been GIFTED by God. God in grace has put it to our account on the basis of faith alone.

**But** in Romans 4:5 is a contrast word. In contrast to the person working and receiving on that basis is the person who DOES NOT WORK. Stop right there!

Note this person does not work. The issue is justification and being accounted righteous. This person is not working to be righteous. Instead of working for a righteous standing this person simply BELIEVES on Him who justifies the ungodly. It is this person whose faith is accounted for righteousness. This is essential truth. It goes to the heart of what constitutes THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH!

A saving faith is not depending on works to be right with God. Instead of trying to work their way to God this person simply believes on the Lord. Again works are shown to be mutually exclusive of believing. To truly believe on the Lord means you are not trusting in your works to make you right with God.

To truly believe in Jesus as Savior means I am not trusting in myself or my own works at all. Rather we now trust in Jesus ALONE to save us. He alone is Savior and we trust in Him alone to save us. He is our ALL! "Jesus paid it all – all to Him we owe!" We make no contribution to our salvation. All we do is believe.

Understand what the text is saying. The person who says I believe in Jesus but I also believe in some form of works (such as sacraments, baptism, being a good person, etc.) to get me to heaven is NOT saved.

It is ONLY the person who does not work but rather believes on the Lord – it is ONLY this person whose “faith is accounted for righteousness”. In order to be saved we have to let go of everything we do. We have to stop trusting in any and all works of any kind and believe on the Lord ALONE and His finished work on the cross.

And this is consistent with Paul’s personal testimony in Philippians 3.

**Philippians 3:7–9 (NKJV)**

**7** But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

**8** 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

**9** 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;

Romans 4:5 says the one who “believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness”.

Let this soak in a moment: God “justifies the ungodly” on the basis of faith alone. In a state of being ungodly – which is a very strong term indicating not being right with God, in that condition when they put their faith in the LORD He instantly accounts their faith “for righteousness”.

Note the emphasis in Romans...

“justifies the ungodly” – Romans 4:5

“justified by His blood” – Romans 5:9

“justified by faith” – Romans 5:1

- God justifies the ungodly on who put their faith in Him on the basis of the shed blood of Christ. Saving faith is in the PERSON and WORK of Jesus. It believes on Him for WHO He is as LORD and for WHAT He has done as SAVIOR. And He has done it all. All we must do is BELIEVE!

4) 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 11

In 1 Cor. 15:3-4 Paul reiterated to the Corinthians what defines the gospel.

### **1 Corinthians 15:1–4 (NKJV)**

**1** Moreover, brethren, I declare to you **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

**2** by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

**3** 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,**

Notice that the gospel according to Paul is TOTALLY what Jesus has done for us. It is Christ who died for our sins, it is Christ who was buried, it is Christ that rose again. THIS IS ALL ABOUT JESUS! We are not in the gospel formula! As someone has well said, “We did all the sinning – Jesus does all the saving!” The gospel is ALL ABOUT JESUS!

But notice this gospel is “according to the Scriptures”. By this Paul meant the Old Testament Scriptures as seen for example in Psalm 16 and Isaiah 53. The gospel is a fulfillment of these prophetic Old Testament Scriptures. At the time Paul wrote the New Testament Scriptures were just being given and were not even complete.

The truth of Christ’s death for sins is found clearly in OT passages like Isa. 53 but where is N.T. Baptism to be found in the OT? It’s not there. The gospel by which we are saved is FOUND IN THE O.T. That is a powerful truth in confronting baptismal regenerationists – those who tie forgiveness of sins to a water ritual.

In terms of payment for sin Christ’s death paid it all. In His dying breath He said, “It is finished.” (Jn. 19:30) Payment for sin was made. The veil in the temple at the moment of His death was torn from top to bottom showing that on the basis of His death we now are forgiven and have access to God (cf. Mt. 27:51).

The point is this: The Old Testament Scriptures did not even teach about believer’s baptism as seen in the New Testament Scriptures. So, clearly baptism is not a part of the gospel. The gospel of the New Testament is that which is found in the Old Testament and it this gospel that must be believed in order to be saved. Jesus did it all – all we do is BELIEVE!

### **1 Corinthians 15:11 (NKJV)**

**11** Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

### 5) Ephesians 2:8-9

#### Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

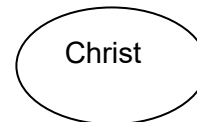
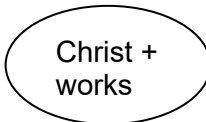
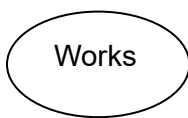
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

**Grace** means “*unmerited favor*”. It is God doing something for us that we do not deserve. It is an undeserved and unmerited gift. The opposite of GRACE is works. They are mutually exclusive. We are either saved by what we do (works), or by what God does (grace).

#### Romans 11:6 (NKJV)

6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

Which one of the following describes what a person must trust in to get to heaven?



Remember – for grace to be grace, it can have no works whatsoever. Grace to be grace must be 100 percent grace. So, which circle are you trusting in to get to heaven? Saving faith answers: CHRIST ALONE!

Grace is what God does for us, not what we do for Him. Grace is most clearly seen in the cross of Christ. When Jesus died for our sins – that was the grace of God on display (cf. Gal 1:7-9, 2:20-21). We didn’t deserve it or earn it. It was the pure favor of God. This is what Paul stated in 1:7 (cf. Romans 3:24).

**through faith**, – Here is the single CONDITION for salvation – namely, FAITH. We are saved by grace ALONE, through faith ALONE. The basis of it all is GRACE, but the means of personal appropriation is by faith. The Greek preposition translated “through” is **dia**, meaning “*by means of*” or “*through*”.

Faith means to agree with God concerning His Son and His finished work (cf. Gen. 15:6, Rom. 10:9-10, 1 Jn. 5:9-13). Faith means to rely upon; to depend upon the gospel truth of God.

Faith means to count it to be so, personally, in your heart. God says that Jesus is Lord; and in your heart, you count it to be so. God says that Jesus is Savior; and in your heart, you count it to be so. Faith is taking God at His Word and personally appropriating it; personally applying it to yourself. Faith, in the Bible, is always connected to the Word of God. Most simply – faith is taking God at His Word.

**not of yourselves;** – Salvation is not of ourselves. We didn't earn it. We didn't work for it. It is not on the basis of human effort. It is not something we merit in any way. We make absolutely no contribution. This is wholly and completely a God thing!

**it is the gift of God,** – A gift, by nature, is something that is given to you without cost. You simply receive a gift. A gift is something that is free. You simply receive it.

**not of works,** – **Works** are things that we do. It refers to human effort of any kind. When Paul speaks to the Jews, he speaks of “**works of the law**” because that was their orientation and what they were prone to trust in. However, here he speaks to Gentiles and shows that any and all works of any kind do not contribute anything to salvation. Salvation is not acquired on the basis of any works. We are not saved on the basis of what we do; but rather, on the basis of what Jesus has done – and He did it all.

**Works** is man trying his best to attempt to reach up to God. **Grace** is God reaching down to man in his helplessness and lifting him up out of the graveyard of sin.

However, one of the most persistent heresies that continues is that somehow works do contribute something to our salvation. The natural way of thinking is that nothing is really free – you have to earn your own way. Grace is not natural. We don't naturally think this way. In fact, until you are saved, you really don't believe in grace. Oh, you may intellectually understand the concept, but you don't really buy into it in your heart until you are saved (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14).

This is why when we ask people, “What do you think you have to do to go to heaven?”, almost invariably they give us an answer involving a litany of good works, often involving “churchy” type things – thinking that on that basis, God will let them into heaven.



People think that things such as baptism, confirmation, church membership, church attendance, communion, trying to live by the Ten Commandments, living by the Golden Rule, giving to charity, being a good neighbor, living a good moral life, and on and on, will somehow help get them into heaven. They won't! No matter how many good things we do, they are not the basis for getting into heaven. Salvation is by grace, not by works!

In fact, to trust in any work of any kind whether it be religious ritual or otherwise, is to not be trusting in the grace of God's finished work for you. This is so serious that it will damn your soul for all eternity. God demands that we humble ourselves, admit total spiritual bankruptcy and trust Him alone for salvation. That is salvation by grace.

Saving faith is based on the grace of God alone! Paul consistently makes a stark contrast between works and faith (cf. Rom. 3:20, 27-28, 4:1-5, 9:32, Gal. 2:16, 3:2-9).

**lest anyone should boast.** – No one will be walking around in heaven like a proud peacock, claiming that they somehow deserve to be there! Only the humbled are there.

There is no self-congratulation in heaven – only honor and glory to the Lord for His great work of salvation. There is no “we did it” – there is no “it was a team effort”; there is only “WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO HAS REDEEMED US!” For all eternity, we will sing His praises alone.

Heaven will not be a place of self-display, but rather of grace display. God will showcase His grace, as seen in us. We will only be there as trophies of Grace!

Boasting is an expression of pride. It was pride that was the root of original sin, which resulted in Satan being expelled from heaven (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6). God has worked salvation in such a way that no one can ever brag on what they have done to get to heaven.

Boasting perverts trust and makes self the object of salvation. The difference between heaven and hell is the difference between trusting in what I do and trusting in Christ and His finished work on the cross. There will be no braggarts in heaven, only humbled souls who came to see Jesus as the whole of their salvation from A-to-Z.

Note that four times (in Eph. 2:8-9) Paul states the same basic truth in 4 ways. Twice he states it in the positive and twice in the negative.

1. **by grace** [unmerited favor]
2. not of yourselves [you didn't do it]
3. **gift of God** [it is freely given]
4. not of works [it is not from self-effort]

Twice, he emphasizes it is a gift (*grace* and *gift* having the same idea). So, there is a double emphasis here. Twice, he emphasizes we didn't do it (**not of works** is a further elaboration of **not of yourselves**). So, there is a double emphasis here as well.

**Conclusion:** There will be no bragging rights in heaven. All glory and praise will go to God for salvation! We will brag on Jesus alone for all eternity.

Paul has emphatically shown that salvation is on the basis of grace through faith alone. Works have nothing to do with saving us! However, if we are truly saved, if we truly have saving faith, then God changes us from the inside out and that change shows in our life in the form of good works.

Faith and faith alone saves, but the faith that saves does not remain alone. – **The Reformers**

Grace is God's unmerited favor! We are saved by God's grace which is seen most clearly in the cross. We didn't deserve it – we can't earn it. Rather Jesus did it all for us! This is GRACE!

The only thing we must do is put our FAITH in Him. Salvation is a GIFT. It is not something for which we work. It is given to us on the basis of faith! Paul plainly says, "not of works, lest anyone should boast". We do NOTHING in terms of works which would include baptism or any other work that is done physically. It's all of GRACE through FAITH!

To make baptism a part of the gospel is to "water down" the gospel. We are saved by the blood of Christ not the baptismal waters! It all comes down to what is our TRUST really in. Yes, if we really believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior the expectation is that we will be baptized – but not to get saved – rather to testify of our faith!