

GOOD REASON TO BE BAPTIZED

We are not saved by being believers, we are saved by God's grace - and we can only trust Him for that (Eph. 3:24). We don't merit any of God's kindness. It is not a 50/50 proposition - as if half were deserved and half were a gift - or even 99/1. God's favor and forgiveness are totally undeserved, unmerited, unearned. We cannot rely one whit on our own ability to please God by our performance, our obedience, our efforts, our knowledge or even our good intentions. We can only trust God to declare us righteous for Jesus Christ's sake.

Our works do have their important place. They demonstrate our faith, embody our faith, express our faith, bring our faith to full flower, in that sense "perfect" our faith (Eph. 2:10; Heb. 11:8; James 2:22-26). But our works, our obedience to God, do not add anything to what Jesus has already done. We do not trust God to some extent but bolster that confidence by a record of our own performance. We are not saved by faith plus works, or by faith without works, but by faith - which works (Gal. 5:6). If we focus on trusting God in Christ, the obedience and works will naturally follow.

The Bible says that "whoever believes in him has remission of sins" (Acts 10:43) and that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). It also commands believers to be baptized (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48) and promises that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mk. 16:16). There is no contradiction in those things. When a believer is baptized, she or he is expressing trust in what Jesus did to save sinners.

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