

answered correctly; do this, and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

What happened next reflects the problem we are addressing. The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbor?" This, apparently, was supposed to show that even though the Scriptures said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18), the

practicality of carrying that out was in question. The lawyer knew what it said, but he was essentially negating it because he didn't see how it could be applied. One can read a text and, due to self-blindness, not see the importance or application of it.

People do it with baptism. People do it with grace.

We may see what we want to see and, with a proverbial swipe of the hand, negate what Scripture teaches when it doesn't fit our other assumptions. Let's all be careful, then, to read Scripture in order to see what God wants us to see. "Not my will, but Yours be done." ~

NAVARRE MESSENGER

May 5, 2019



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by Doy Moyer

Think about these two statements:

"Baptism has nothing to do with salvation."

"Baptism now saves you."

Which is true? I was studying with some who were adamant in their opposition to thinking that baptism was connected in any way to salvation: "baptism has nothing to do with salvation," they insisted. I clarified to make sure of what they were saying; I didn't want

to misunderstand. They stressed it: "Nothing" to do with salvation. I wrote it down on a piece of paper, and they agreed. Then I wrote down a second statement: "baptism now saves you." They denied that statement in favor of the first. They were quite clear about it.

I asked them to open up 1 Peter 3 and read. They read out loud. "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (v. 21).

You could tell there was some discomfort here. I asked, "Now which of these two statements is true?" I was seeking explanation, some way to reconcile the ideas. They doubled down on their position, and without hesitation, affirmed what is not said in Scripture to deny what is said: "The first one. Baptism has nothing to do with salvation." Though I figured that's what they would

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38

do, there is, still, always a little bit of disbelief when those who claim to believe Scripture so plainly deny it. They had no explanation at all for 1 Peter 3:21. They didn't try to explain it. They simply denied it.

"How can you say that?" I asked, perhaps a little impatiently. What disturbed me, even more, was the answer they gave here:

"Because Ephesians 2:8-9 overrides 1 Peter 3:21." Yes, overrides! In other words, grace was opposed to baptism, and since we are saved by grace, not works, baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Since Ephesians 2 affirms grace, then it must override what Peter said. There was no attempt to harmonize. No attempt to explain or exegete. One passage just ruled out the other. End of story.

Never is there a need to pit God's grace against a command that He has given. Baptism is not magical, and Peter said as much ("not the removal of dirt from the flesh"). We do need to understand baptism in conjunction with Christ's death, just as Paul indi-

cates in Romans 6 ("baptized into His death"). We also need to understand baptism in conjunction with God's grace, for there is no way any of us are earning salvation. Baptism is an exercise of faith, not in our own works, but in the working of God (Col 2:11-14). After all, the revelation of baptism is God's plan, not ours.

Yet there is something else going on here that we ought to consider, something bigger that impacts the way we read the Bible as a whole. How do we read and study the Scriptures? A question like this cannot be answered adequately in a short article, but I'm asking the question, not in order to provide the answers, but rather to encourage us to think

And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

Acts 22:16

about how we might personally answer it.

When we start coming with up arguments that essentially negate some Scripture because it doesn't fit our current view, or because we have a favored position that requires us to deny a passage, then we are no longer seeking to understand the truth. Rather, we are looking to rubber

stamp what we already think. If we are uncomfortable stating exactly and quoting what the text says, we might be having some trust issues with the Lord.

Think about the lawyer who asked Jesus the question, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responded, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" Good question. What does the text say? Of course, we have to know this before we can understand or explain what a text means. The lawyer answered correctly, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus told him, "You have