



## Is Baptism a “Work”?

David Sproule  
Palm Beach Lakes church of Christ  
<http://www.pblcoc.org>

In an attempt to “prove” that baptism is not essential to someone’s salvation, it is often argued that baptism is itself a “work,” and since salvation is “not of works,” then salvation is not tied to one’s baptism. The question that must be asked and answered is, “What does the Bible say?”

**The Bible teaches that salvation is not tied to works of the law of Moses.** Passages like Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16 teach that “a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” Not all “works” in the Bible are the same thing. These passages are addressing works of the law of Moses, which cannot save today.

**The Bible teaches that salvation is not tied to works of human merit.** “Works” of human merit are deeds by which one might earn salvation. That is the kind of “works” under discussion in Ephesians 2:8-9—works that are “of yourselves” and of which one can “boast.” This passage does not teach that “works” do not save. It teaches that God’s grace saves us, and meritorious works cannot save.

**The Bible teaches that salvation is “by works.”** Don’t misread that—it does not say “by works” alone. But one’s salvation is Scripturally tied to works. But what kind of “works”? “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead...Faith without works is dead...Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect...A man is justified by works, and not by faith only...” (Jas. 2:17-26). James is dealing with a different kind of works than Paul was in Ephesians 2, for he makes it clear that faith-perfecting works (i.e., “faith working together with works”) are essential to be justified (i.e., to be saved) by God (cf. Gal. 5:6).

**The Bible teaches that acceptable faith to God is a “work” itself.** Jesus said that one must “labor for...everlasting life” (John 6:27). When He was questioned about “works,” Jesus Himself said, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him” (6:29). “Believing” in Jesus is a “work” appointed by God. If one would try to dismiss baptism as a “work” and therefore not essential to one’s salvation, then he would be obligated to also put “belief” in that same category, since Jesus Himself calls it a “work.”

**The Bible does not contradict itself!** Some “works” will not save—like the works of the law of Moses and works of human merit about which one might boast. But, keep Bible passages in their context, for some “works” are essential to one’s salvation. We must let the Bible speak for itself! The New Testament repeatedly specifies baptism as a condition to being “saved” (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Faith without works and without baptism cannot save!