

20 Benefits of Baptism

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The New Testament associates many benefits with salvation, with faith, with obedience, and with repentance. The following list puts into perspective just how much the New Testament also says about the role of baptism. Many of the things here, which are clearly linked to baptism in the passages listed, cannot be explained outside of the actual conversion experience. Yet, their clear linkage to the act of baptism within the contexts makes it undeniable that water baptism plays a major role in the new birth.

1. remission of sins ({Mark 1:4}, {Luke 3:3}, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Col. 2:13)
2. receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, Acts 9:17-18, 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
3. regeneration, new birth (John 3:3-5, Titus 3:5#)
4. put on Christ - new man (Gal. 3:27, Eph. 4:24*, Col. 3:10*)
5. put off the old man (Rom. 6:6, Eph. 4:22*, Col. 3:9)
6. crucified with Christ, union with the atonement (Rom. 6:6,8, Gal. 2:20*)
7. buried with Christ (Rom. 6:4)
8. baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3, 1 Cor. 12:13)
9. changed life after baptism (Rom. 6:4,6, Eph. 4:22-24*)
10. united with Christ (Rom. 6:5)
11. freed from sin's power, old nature (Rom. 6:6,17-18,22, Col. 2:11, Col. 3:3*)
12. become servants of righteousness, and God (Rom. 6:17-18,22)
13. condition for future resurrection (Rom. 6:5,8)
14. end result is everlasting life (Rom. 6:22)
15. salvation (1 Pet. 3:21)
16. cleansed (1 Cor. 6:9-11#, Eph. 5:26#)
17. sanctified, set apart (Eph. 5:26#)
18. assurance of salvation (Heb. 10:22#)
19. circumcision of Christ, circumcision of the heart (Col. 2:11)
20. made alive (Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:12-13, Col. 3:1*, Eph. 2:5-6*)

these passages use synonyms for baptism (bathe, wash, bath), see below

* these passages do not mention baptism, but mention things associated with baptism in other passages

{ } passages that associate benefits with John's baptism

Synonyms for baptism

Below we have listed explanations of three Greek words used in the New Testament as synonyms for baptism. These words are just as significant as the word "baptize" for determining what the Bible says about baptism. The careful reader will notice that our

view depends mainly on taking words in their normal literal sense. Our opponents are forced to allegorize these terms and phrases in order to maintain their position. We will show from the grammar why our view is consistent with the grammar, and theirs is not.

1. *"bathed"* (verb - λούω {lou-o}) is found in Hebrews 10:22. *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies **bathed** with pure water."* Some interpret the term figuratively, on the basis that "sprinkled" is figurative. The claim is made that "sprinkling" refers to the Old Testament practice of sprinkling blood on those things that were sanctified to the Lord. The inference is drawn that the "washing" is a reference to the priests washing before ministering in the Temple. While it is true that the word "sprinkled" is a metaphor, and harkens back to the Old Testament usage, note that the object of the sprinkling is the heart, a synonym for the inner man. The "heart" was not "sprinkled" under the Old Covenant. The "heart" is something that is meant literally, since the heart was considered to be the seat of the soul, the inner man. Since it is clear that the object of the verb "sprinkled" was meant literally, there is every reason to take the object of the washing literally also, the "body." It is difficult to imagine that the "body" was being used by the writer to represent something else. Also, the instrument used in this bathing is water. While we cannot prove that the washing of the body is literal in this passage, the literal sense certainly makes good sense given the NT teaching on baptism.

2. *"Wash"* (verb - ἀπόλουομαι {apo-lou-o-mai} "wash") is found only in Acts 22:16 & 1 Cor. 6:11. This word is clearly a synonym for baptism in Acts 22:16. *"Arise and **be baptized**, and **wash** away your sins."* It appears in the middle voice, meaning the subject participates in doing the action and also receives the action. Literally, Ananias told Paul to wash away his sins by being baptized. The same word is also used in the middle voice in 1 Cor. 6:11. *"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."* It is significant that of the three verbs listed which distinguish a believer from his former lost condition, two are in the *passive voice* (sanctified and justified), and "washed" is in the *middle voice*. The passive voice indicates that the subject received the action of the verb but did not participate in doing the action himself. Being "justified" and "sanctified" are performed by someone else upon the subject. Obviously, that someone else is God. Yet, in contrast, "washed" is in the *middle voice*. Therefore, "washing" cannot be something performed by God, but by the individual himself. It cannot be a spiritual or metaphorical washing implying some spiritual benefit because the person cannot do that himself. The only thing he can do himself is obey the command to be baptized. Also, notice "washed" is listed first, and "sanctified" and "justified" follow. This is exactly what we would expect if God's part (sanctification and

justification) were done for the believer in response to His washing (baptism). On the other hand, if the Baptist position on baptism were true, this passage must be speaking of some type of metaphorical or spiritual "washing," which could only be accomplished by God. As we have seen, that is not consistent with Paul's use of the middle voice, the subject both performing and receiving the action of the verb. Notice the two prepositional phrases, "in the name of the Lord Jesus" and "by the Spirit of our God." The first prepositional phrase, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," refers to the middle voice verb "washed." (Baptism was done in the name of Jesus Christ). And the second prepositional phrase "by the Spirit of our God" refers to the two passive voice verbs, "sanctified" and "justified." Both of these are done for us by God. It is obvious from this passage that all three verbs were instrumental in bringing about the change in the Corinthians from their former life of sin. And baptism is the first of those.

3. "Bath" (noun – λουτρον {loutron}) is found only in Eph. 5:26 & Titus 3:5. This word is translated "washing" in the KJV, but literally means "bath." *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it **by the bath of water** in the message"* (literal Greek translation). Some might be tempted to allegorize this passage, taking "bath" in a figurative sense. However, Paul identified what kind of "bath" he meant with the words "of water." Not only must one interpret "bath" figuratively to escape the literal sense of the text, but also take the additional step of claiming that "water" is figurative too. The prepositional phrase, "by the word" (KJV), is thought by some to identify "water" with the Scriptures. But, the sense of the prepositional phrase is not to identify the object with the word it modifies, but to explain the relationship between the two. Unfortunately, many English translations mistranslate this prepositional phrase, "by the word." The Greek phrase is "ἐν ῥήματι," literally, "**in [the] message.**" The word ῥήματι always means something spoken, such as a command, or a saying. It is frequently used of the sayings of Jesus. It is also used of the Gospel message and preaching. Here, it refers either to the message of the Gospel, or to the Great Commission, Jesus' command to make disciples by baptizing them. The preposition ἐν is equivalent to our English "in." So, the whole statement should be understood as follows: *"...that he might sanctify and cleanse it [the assembly] by the bath of water [contained] in the message."*

The second occurrence of this word is Titus 3:5-6. *"[N]ot from deeds of justice which we did, but according to His mercy He rescued us through **the bath** of rebirth and renewal of the holy Breath"* (LGV). Again, some are tempted to allegorize "the bath of rebirth" and make it something mystical. But there is no justification for this in the text. This is especially apparent when we examine the words of Jesus to which Paul undoubtedly referred. *"... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the*

kingdom of God" (John 3:3,5). Notice that both John 3:3,5 and Titus 3:5 mention the instruments of salvation being "water/bath" and the "Spirit/Breath," in the same order. Also, notice that both passages associate these two things with being "*born again.*"

There is one more passage we should consider in relation to these two, 1 Pet. 1:22-23. "*Since you have purified your souls in **obeying** the truth through the Spirit ... **having been born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.*" The verb "purified" is a perfect active participle. The perfect tense indicates a completed action in the past with the results continuing to the present. The active voice means the subject is performing the action. In other words, they cleansed their own souls. We stated earlier, when examining 1 Cor. 6:11, that one cannot wash away his own sins, or perform such inward acts. These are God's domain. However, Peter used language here that requires the participation of the subjects. It is possible for us to "*cleanse our souls*" by doing what Peter stated in the next clause, "*obeying the truth through the Spirit.*" Because the result of our obeying the truth is the cleansing of our souls, even though we do not actually cleanse our own souls, the active voice verb was used. Since the cleansing of the soul is the guaranteed result of our obeying the Gospel, it is viewed by Peter as our doing something that results in the purifying of our souls. Ananias used the same kind of language in his command to Paul. "*Arise and **be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord***" (Acts 22:16). Paul could not literally wash away his own sins. However, Ananias told him how to achieve the result of having his sins washed away. And it depended on Paul's taking action, being baptized. So, the washing away of his sins was the **indirect result** of baptism. That is why Ananias used the middle voice. The same effect occurs in 1 Pet. 1:22. Peter's readers had "*purified their souls*" in obeying through the Spirit. That is, the Spirit actually purified them, in response to their obedience to a command.

Although the act of *obedience* is not specified here, it is easy to infer that it was baptism, based on the promise in Acts 2:38, and Paul's linking baptism with obedience to the Gospel in Rom. 6:17. Peter continues by saying, "*having been born again...*" This term is synonymous with the terms in John 3:3,5 and Titus 3:5. It is connected by Peter with the act of purifying one's own soul through obedience, and by the power of the Spirit. The verb in question is a present passive participle. God is the one who does the action, hence the passive voice. The time implied by the verb tense in the participle is relative to the time of the main verb, "purified." So, being "born again" occurred at the time of the purification of the soul, which itself was the result of the act of obedience. All of this is perfectly consistent with the idea of baptism being the obedient act, with purification of the soul and being "born again" the result. Of course, this does not prove that baptism is that act of obedience *in this passage*. However, baptism is the action associated with

the new birth in Scripture. **If obedience demands action, then baptism is the only thing that could be meant.**

While it is possible to claim that “faith” is obedience, baptism fits much better with the concept of obedience because it is a tangible act (cf. Acts 2:38 & 41). Also, the three passages we have discussed here, John 3:3,5, Titus 3:5-6, 1 Pet. 1:22-23, have far too much in common to dismiss a connection between them. They all speak of the new birth. They all refer to the role of the Spirit in regeneration. One mentions being “born of water,” another a “bath of second birth,” and the third being an unspecified act of obedience, from which the “new birth” results. A blind man can see the connection.

We are not suggesting that these passages cannot be taken allegorically. They obviously are taken that way by those who see no connection between baptism and the new birth. But, the literal meaning is always preferred, particularly when there is so much in common with other passages that cannot be taken figuratively.

Our aim here is not to overstate our case, but to show the beautiful consistency of all such passages with the scenario we have laid out; namely, that regeneration (new birth) takes place in conjunction with obedience to the command to be baptized in water. Baptism is the tangible act of both faith and repentance, the means by which one obeys the Gospel, and receives the remission of sins and the free gift of eternal life.