

4. Water baptism is never a means of salvation, it is never a qualification for church membership, and it is even unnecessary unless the new believer desires to participate.
5. Baptism is not a sacerdotal function that is exclusive to church leaders such as pastors or his associates. Anyone can perform a baptism. All believers are royal priests and may conduct the ritual for any convert who wants to do so. For example, a father can baptize members of his family who are believers.
6. A pastor's job, as emphasized by Paul, is to teach his congregation. He should not be distracted from his primary duties of studying and teaching to perform a ritual that any member of his congregation is qualified to conduct.
7. Consequently, there is nothing wrong with water baptism. It is a legitimate practice and useful in teaching the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and as a testimony of one's salvation through faith alone in Christ alone.
8. Therefore, if you want to be baptized then do so. But its purpose is simply instructive. It is an illustration, a teaching aid, an elucidation.
9. The real issue for the believer is spiritual growth which requires Bible study, and Bible study that is consistently presented by a pastor-teacher who leads his congregation in such a way that "there be no divisions" (1 Corinthians 1:10) and that "there should be no schism in the body" (1 Corinthians 12:25).
10. Unfortunately, baptism continues to be a major cause of divisions and schisms among Christians and the bane of churches that emphasize this ritual at the expense of *exōteriké harmonía* of not only their local church but also the body of Christ.

Acts 2:38 - And Peter said to them, "All of you change your minds regarding Jesus as Messiah (and let each one of you be baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ), because of the forgiveness of the sins of all of you; and all of you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit consisting of His indwelling and filling ministries." (EXT)

Acts 2:39 - "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (NASB)

1. Peter begins verse 39 by citing a promise with which his comments in verse 38 define as a “gift” of salvation. The word is the subject of the sentence, the singular noun **ἐπαγγελία** (*epangelia*): A legal term denoting a summons or promise to do or give something and in this case it refers to the promise of God of the indwelling and filling ministries of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Christ.
2. The gospel is designed to inform the unbeliever of his problem before divine justice. All have sinned but Jesus came to offer Himself as our substitute before the Supreme Court of Heaven.
3. By virtue of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, He put Himself in our place and allowed the justice of God to determine if He was qualified to be our substitute.
4. To qualify, Jesus must be free of personal sin and then freely offer Himself to receive the judgment that belongs to us. The result was the agony of the cross.
5. Since He was accepted by God as qualified, our judgment was transferred to Him and “by His wounds, we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Those wounds were not of the physical kind but rather the collection of all human sin judicially imputed to Him for forensic judgment: “The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Isaiah 53:6).
6. This promise is the gospel of salvation which may be received once the individual changes his mind about Christ. Simple faith in response to His work on the cross results in deliverance from the lake of fire and the imputation of eternal life (John 3:16).
7. Peter makes this offer clear and that its availability is universal to all including their children, plus all who are “far off,” referring to Gentiles generally but by application to “whosoever will.” All depends on a positive volitional response by each individual.
8. In light of this, we must give some attention to the final phrase, “as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” The word “call” is the aorist middle subjunctive of the verb **προσκαλέω** (*proskaleō*).

(End CR14-80. See CR14-81 for continuation of study at p. 801.)

9. This word is confusing in the English, but it is used here to describe the gospel presentation to unbelievers and is associated with the common grace ministry of the Holy Spirit.
10. The mechanics of common and efficacious grace are receiving their inauguration in the streets of Jerusalem in Acts 2. Baptism is used in the process as a visual aid to explain how a new believers in Jesus Christ becomes a new spiritual species.
11. First of all let's observe some points on common and efficacious grace:
 - (1) Common grace is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in making the gospel clearly understood in the soul of a spiritually brain-dead unbeliever. This occurs in the **νοῦς (nous)** of the soul and results in academic understanding.
 - (2) The spiritually dead person can make legitimate decisions to listen to and consider the gospel and then believe in Christ. These decisions occur in the status of spiritual death and one cannot reach these decisions apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) When volition makes the decision to believe the gospel, then the Holy Spirit performs the act of salvation which is referred to as the efficacious grace ministry of the Spirit.
 - (4) This function of the Spirit makes the faith of the spiritually dead person effective for salvation and the imputation of eternal life.
 - (5) This two-step process emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the sovereign executive of the gospel and He manages the results of the unbeliever's volitional responses.
 - (6) It is important to understand that a person's positive response to the gospel presentation is nonmeritorious which makes it compatible with the grace plan of God.

- (7) As we have noted on numerous occasions, the verb “to believe” is **πιστεύω (pisteúō)** which is transitive and demands an object which is Christ.
- (8) It is important to understand that successful evangelism is accomplished in two stages: **(1)** the presentation of the gospel and **(2)** following positive volition, the act of salvation imparted by the Holy Spirit. Here are the principles associated with each:

The *gospel* is designed to present Jesus of Nazareth as Savior. Any number of details may be presented to describe His person and His work: He is both perfect God and sinless Man, who was sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the entire human race, after which He died, was buried, and three days later, was resurrected from the dead. Regardless of how many details are given, the free will of the unbeliever must be left to consider whether to accept or reject Jesus as his personal Savior.

Salvation occurs when the unbeliever responds with nonmeritorious faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8–9). This *faith* response has both purpose and result: The *purpose* is deliverance from punishment in the lake of fire. The *result* is the imputation of eternal life. Taken together, salvation means that believers go to heaven when they die (John 3:16). (Also see John 3:15–16, 18, 36; 6:47; 11:25; 20:31; Acts 16:31 and 1 Corinthians 15:3–4)¹

12. The object to be considered in the presentation of the gospel is Jesus Christ. The faith of the believer is nonmeritorious because the verb *pisteúō* is transitive and demands an object which is Jesus. Thus, a faith response cannot be classified as works which is pointed out in:

Ephesians 2:8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that salvation is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

v. 9 - not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

13. Because mankind is born spiritually dead and simultaneously physically alive, the only opportunity a person has to receive salvation is during his lifetime.

¹ “Gospel and Salvation,” in *Forty Proclamations: The Theology of Grace Doctrine Church* (St. Charles: Joe Griffin Media Ministries, 2011), 9.

14. Once a spiritually dead person is physically dead, the opportunity to believe in Christ is over and his soul is transferred at that moment to the Torments compartment of Hades, a temporary incarceration that will become permanent in the lake of fire following the Great White Throne judgment.
15. Therefore, time is of the essence for every believer to not only hear the “call,” but also to respond to it. The “call” is the noun **προσκαλέω (proskalēō)** and it defines the period between common grace, the presentation of the gospel, and efficacious grace which follows the decision to believe.
16. The “call” is that few seconds of time after a person hears the gospel to make a decision. God uses those moments to persuade that individual to make the eternal choice for salvation.
17. This process is explained by Isaiah in:
Isaiah 49:8a - “In a favorable time [common grace] I have answered you [the call]; and in the day of salvation I have helped you [efficacious grace: salvation].
18. Paul quotes this passage in:
2 Corinthians 6:2 - “At the acceptable time [common grace] I listened to you [the call], and on the day of salvation [efficacious grace] I helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation.”
19. Among those who heard the call and responded positively to it, we learn later in our passage that about 3,000 experienced efficacious grace thus adding to the early harvest of the royal family of God.
20. These initial events at Pentecost fulfilled the Lord’s prophecy to His apostles just prior to His ascension in:
Luke 24:45 - Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures,
v. 46 - and said to them, “Thus it stands written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day [cf. Psalm 16:8–11; 110:1; 2 Samuel 7:16; Matthew 12:40],

Luke 24:47 - and repentance [μετάνοια (*metánoia*): to change one's mind from disbelief to belief] for the forgiveness of sins [all sins were judged on the cross; forgiveness occurs at faith alone in Christ alone] would be proclaimed in the name to all nations,² beginning from Jerusalem.

v. 48 - You are witnesses of these things [cf. Acts 2:32].

v. 49 - And look, I am sending you what My Father promised [ἐπαγγελία (*epangelía*): a legal term denoting a promise to do or give something; Acts 2:38]. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (NET)

21. The fulfillment of these promises occurs as Peter makes the pronouncement to the gathered throng in the streets of Jerusalem in:

Acts 2:39 - "The promise of the Holy Spirit [see Luke 24:49] the gift of salvation [indwelling and filling ministries of the Holy Spirit] is available for you and your children and for all the Gentiles [common grace], as many as the Lord will call to Himself [efficacious grace]. (EXT)

Acts 2:40 - And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (NASB)

1. Peter continues to teach the people with further details about Christ, salvation, and the Christian way of life. This indicates there are many ways to present the gospel as we noted in our excerpt from the definition of the gospel in *Forty Proclamations*, page 9.
2. The job of the personal evangelist is to make sure that in their comments, faith alone is the central and foremost doctrine to emphasize. This and other doctrines that present and amplify the salvation message are dependent upon the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

² "To all nations. The same Greek term (τὰ ἔθνη (*tá éthnē*)) may be translated 'the Gentiles' or 'the nations.' The hope of God in Christ was for all the nations from the beginning" (*The NET Bible* [Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005], 2015sn23).