

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## Baptism and Ephesians 2

The Holy Spirit teaches that baptism is necessary to get "*into Christ.*"

**Romans 6:3:** *Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*

**Galatians 3:27:** *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

The Holy Spirit teaches that baptism is necessary for remission of sins.

**Acts 2:38:** *Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

**Acts 22:16** [Ananias, the Lord's messenger, to Saul]: *Now why do you wait? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'*

Jesus taught His disciples to baptize.

**Matthew 28:19:** *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**Mark 16:15-16:** *[Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned.*

Despite these and other passages that prove baptism's essential role in salvation, challenges to baptism's necessity abound.

One question that sometimes arises pertaining to this subject is, "Isn't binding baptism for salvation teaching 'salvation by works?'"

This question can stem from a misunderstanding of **Ephesians 2:8-9**, which says, "*for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast.*"

The Bible teaches that we do not earn, or deserve, salvation. It is a gift of God and He deserves the credit. We have no reason to boast about what we do to receive God's unmerited gift.

One thing **Ephesians** never says, though, is that we do not have responsibilities to meet to receive God's gift of salvation. Works of obedience, including baptism, are part of what God requires of us (cf. **Philippians 2:12**; **James 2:14, 17**).

Salvation by grace through faith is a Bible doctrine.

Salvation by grace *alone* through faith *alone*, with no works required on our part, is a manmade doctrine.

None of us deserve salvation, but we must do what God requires to receive the gift of salvation. One thing He requires is baptism in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

May we accept and follow what God commands on this and all biblical subjects.

## “So Then, Have I Become Your Enemy by Telling You the Truth?”

The question above was asked by the inspired apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians (**Galatians 4:16**).

Because of Paul's *genuine* love for others (cf. **Romans 12:9**), he opposed error like that of the Judaizers harming the churches of Galatia. Paul did not pretend to love by encouraging sin, but zealously cried “danger” when he saw others on a dangerous path.

In asking the question, “*So then, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*” Paul confronted a common reaction to warnings of danger. Instead of hearing constructive criticism as guidance that may help one improve, such is often viewed as an “attack.”

If we are unknowingly driving down a dead-end road and someone lets us know, we might thank them and turn around. Yet, when many individuals are taking the broad path that leads to destruction, any who point such out are seen as enemies.

This typical reaction makes it even more difficult for someone who genuinely cares to point out error, which should make us even more *appreciative* when one does so. Those who love us enough to warn against sin should not become enemies, but friends.

May we heed the message of what God requires of us to be saved, instead of becoming angry at His messengers.

## Burying Our Talents

When it comes to doing good, we must be cautious to avoid doing things that appear to be good but are not truly in harmony with God's will (**Romans 10:2**).

Yet, we cannot use caution for avoiding evil as an excuse for doing *nothing*. In **Matthew 25:14-30**, Jesus spoke a parable of three men entrusted by their master with talents.

The first was given five talents, and used them to gain five more. The second was given two talents, and likewise gained two more. The third was given one talent, and buried the talent in the ground out of fear.

When the master returned, he commended the five-talent man and the two-talent man, but reprimanded the one-talent man, calling him a “*wicked and slothful servant*” (**Matthew 25:26**).

Why was the one-talent man wicked and slothful? We do not read about him stealing from his lord or being dishonest. Rather, it was what he did *NOT* do that was sinful. The one-talent man had the ability and opportunity to do good, but neglected his *responsibility* to do good.

We all have abilities and opportunities *our* Lord has given *us* to do good. May we not be as the one-talent man and be condemned as wicked for “burying our talents.”

**-Michael Hickox (all articles)**

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