



# Living Letters

## *Thoughts for Christian Living*

Ryan Connor, MA, Minister  
Spring Valley Church of Christ

Nobody likes to be misunderstood or misrepresented. Churches of Christ are often misrepresented as teaching that baptism is the basis or ground for salvation—that baptism is a necessary work for salvation. While churches of Christ do believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, we do not believe that it is a work or the basis for our salvation.

Unfortunately, many well-meaning believers respond to the notion that water baptism is necessary for salvation with repugnance. They may retort, “Baptism is not necessary for salvation, since we are not saved by works, but by grace through faith” (See Ephesians 2:8-9). Members of the church of Christ will often reply, “Yes, we are saved by grace, but that doesn’t exclude obedience—and any casual reader of the Bible can see the command to be baptized for the remission of sins” (See Acts 2:38).

What we have here is a failure to communicate. Churches of Christ do not believe in working our way to heaven. We believe that we are saved by grace as much as anyone else. The problem lies with a common misunderstanding about baptism. While baptism is something we do—or more correctly, is done to us—it

is not a work! No Bible passage ever refers to baptism as a work. The only passage that even comes close to speaking of baptism as a work is Colossians 2:12. Here baptism is not a human work, but the working of God!

Baptism is the occasion or event in which God works our regeneration, and thus bestows the forgiveness of sins. This is why Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). The water did not wash away Saul’s sins (See 1 Peter 3:21), but the working of God on the basis of Christ’s shed blood washed his sins away.

Baptism is excluded from the category of “Good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus separates baptism from all other commandments to observe (Matthew 28:19-20). The Apostle Paul separates “works of righteousness which we do” from “the washing of regeneration” through which we are saved (Titus 3:4-5).

Churches of Christ believe that we are saved by grace (the basis), through faith (the means), in baptism (the occasion), for good works (the result).

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