

## Evangelical Myths



Included in Paul's instruction to pastors is the obligation to, "Have nothing to do with (i.e. reject) irreverent, silly myths [lit. imaginary beliefs promoted by old women and the world](1Ti 4:7)<sup>1</sup>." In this respect, Paul's goal for God's Church is clear. He desires that congregations be equipped to discern and distance themselves from those doctrines which attempt to pass as genuinely Christian, yet are nothing more than generational fiction and godless fabrications. As such, Paul's words require what is at the very heart of apologetics: a defense of the biblical witness, since this is exclusive means (and method) to mitigating myth. Today, the biblically minded Christian doesn't have to look long to find myth among what calls itself Christian. Evangelicalism (the predominant influence within modern Christianity) is filled with such imaginary beliefs. In fact, its most sacred cows are all myths!

### **Myth #1: I was saved the moment I put faith (alone) in Christ (alone), not when I was baptized.**

- 1.1. Though a necessary means to salvation, exercising faith alone in Christ alone is not what saves us. Rather God's gracious acceptance of it (Eph 2:8 – the cause of our salvation = "by grace...and this not of yourselves").
- 1.2. The bible teaches the place where God accepts our faith (i.e. our faith becomes saving) is in the waters of baptism (1Pe 3:21; in light of Eph 2:8, consider Eph 4:5 – "One Lord, one faith, one baptism"; see also Gal 3:26-27).
- 1.3. This is why Peter skips over the word "believe" when explaining to the Jews at Pentecost what they must do to be saved. Because though we need to believe, it does no good unless such faith is accepted by God. And (once more) the place of such acceptance – and salvation is the waters of baptism (Act 2:38).
- 1.4. There has never been a Christian who wasn't baptized - including the thief on the cross. He (like us) was baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ -literally! He died w/Jesus and rose again also w/Him in Paradise (Luk 23:43). God even makes a special kind of baptism for those too sick/on deathbeds to do it the conventional way (Jam 5:14-15).
- 1.5. Baptism (then) is the sign/seal of God's acceptance or approval of our faith (and when we become a Christian). There is only one exception to this – and for good reason (Act 10:1-11:18).

### **Myth #2: The sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Table) have no real spiritual power or salvific significance but are done as a memorial only. Therefore, they are not necessary to being a Christian.**

- 2.1. Though Jesus tells us to, "Do this in remembrance of Me" as it relates to the Table, and the sacramental elements of both baptism and the Table remain the same, there is nonetheless more to them than just this. God also promises to give His spiritual power and salvific promises through them (1Pe 3:20-21; Rom 6:1-8; Joh 13:1-30 w/Mat 26:17-29; 1Co 11:29-30)
- 2.2. This was true with previous redemptive signs as well (e.g. the Passover lamb – Exo 12:13)
- 2.3. This is why Paul requires another baptism of those in (Act 19:1-6).
- 2.4. As such, there is both real spiritual power and salvific significance in the sacraments. They are absolutely necessary to a person's salvation. You are not a Christian/saved until you are baptized (Mar 16:16), nor will you remain one if you neglect the Lord's Table (Joh 13:8-10). IOW: God refuses to give His promises to those who refuse/neglect His sacraments!

### **Myth #3: I don't need to be a part of a legitimate and local Christian Church in order to be saved nor do I need to be baptized in such a place. As long as I am a part of the "universal Church" and baptized "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" I am a Christian<sup>2</sup>.**

- 3.1. In Scripture, the Church is never a reference to some nebulous, non-geographical group (i.e. "universal Church"), but rather very visible, local assemblies approved and occupied by Christ and the Holy Spirit's presence (Mat 18:19-20; Act 5:9, 15:28; all NT epistles are written to legit local assemblies).
- 3.2. No one goes to heaven without receiving forgiveness on earth. The keys for loosing someone from their sins were given by Christ to His local churches before He ascended back to heaven (Mat 16:18-19; Joh 20:21-23).
- 3.3. This is why one of the most quoted statements by theologians throughout Church history has been, "There is no salvation outside the Church."
- 3.4. For these reasons (then), these geographical/local assemblies are called the household of God, New Jerusalem and likewise, gateway to heaven and place where Christ's blood resides (1Ti 3:15 w/Gen 28:17; Act 20:28; Gal 4:26; Heb 10:21-22, 12:22-24).

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<sup>1</sup> Myths are also what Paul warns in his second epistle will be the attraction of those in the latter days and yet another reason for remaining steadfast in preaching the truth.

<sup>2</sup>"You don't need to go to church to be a Christian. If you go to Taco Bell, that doesn't make you a taco." (Justin Bieber, 2015 interview with Complex Magazine)

3.5. All the above statements become nonsensical unless the Church refers to visible, geographical locales (approved and occupied by Christ and the Holy Spirit) where a person must go to receive salvation. As such, the bible makes it clear that Christ's blood or forgiveness will not be available to those who neglect her (Heb 10:25-30).

3.6. Though Trinitarian baptism is important (Mat 28:19), the promises granted through such baptism have only been given to legitimate, local Churches. In other words, the sacraments have only been given to such places (in this light consider again Mat 16:18-19; Joh 20:21-23; consider also the implications of God requiring only Trinitarian baptism for it to be legitimate/saving—literally anybody could do it, including pagans). Hence, God does not recognize those receiving the sacraments anywhere but in legitimate churches – no matter the “Name” it was taken in<sup>3</sup>.

**Myth #4: Apostasy can never happen for those who are the elect and justified. All such warnings in the bible are purely hypothetical. In other words, they exist only to keep real Christians on the narrow path through scaring them.**

4.1. Though the number of those God has decreed to be the citizens of heaven is certain, this is not what is communicated through those passages dealing with our election or justification. In other words, they are not revealing God's decree for the future but rather our present state (consider 1Th 1:4-5 w/3:5; 2Pe 1:10; Rom 8:30 w/Joh 17:22 and Eph 2:6 – “glorified” = exalted into heavenly fellowship w/God).

4.2. As such apostasy is not contradictory to God's sovereignty in salvation (Deu 29:29) –or the NT witness, to contain clear warnings of apostasy to those who are truly elect/justified (e.g. Heb 6:4-6, 10:26-30; Rom 11:17-22).

4.3. If it is impossible for those truly saved to apostasize, then such warnings are unnecessary and illogical. Likewise, it is completely useless – even ridiculous, to attempt to motivate someone by something they already know is imaginary (i.e. a myth – 1Ti 4:7! e.g. telling the kids there is monster in the hall to keep them in bed, but then telling them you made it up). Such thinking also implies that God must lower Himself to levels of unrighteous manipulation (i.e. lies about dangers that don't really exist for Christians) in order to preserve us.

4.4. Apostasy is therefore a real threat to real Christians that should cause them to “take heed lest they fall” (1Co 10:12).

**Myth #5: I do not need to be faithful to all (even any) of God's Law to be saved. Attempting to obey the Law would mean trying to earn my salvation. And besides, Christ obeyed and cancelled the Law for me. Therefore, my assurance of salvation is not dependent on me, but rather found through looking with faith to what Christ has already done on my behalf<sup>4</sup>.**

5.1. Obedience to the Law is never viewed by God (or His Word) as attempting to earn one's salvation. This was not why God gives the Law nor what anyone in the biblical text ever believed about it. Even the Pharisees condemned such thinking (Luk 5:21).

5.2. At the same time, obedience is absolutely necessary to salvation. Though we gain it by faith, it must be maintained through faithful (not perfect) obedience to all of God's Law (Mat 5:17-20, 7:21-27, 19:16-30, 24:42-25:46, 28:19-20)<sup>5</sup>. This has been true of every saving covenant that Christ makes with His people (e.g. Exo 24:1-8 w/1Pe 1:2; Deu 28:1-2).

5.3. Maintaining our salvation (justification) through faithful obedience is (additionally) the necessary conclusion to the possibility of apostasy.

5.4. As it re: Christ, He did indeed obey all of God's Law (perfectly!) –but not so that we wouldn't have to. Rather, His obedience served as our example – and more importantly, what qualified Him to be our sacrifice for sin (Phi 2:5-8; 2Co 5:21). As such, the prior clean laws – esp. the animal sacrifices were no longer needed (since Christ is now our clean law). This (then) is the only Law being referred to as “cancelled” in the NT – not the moral commands (in light of such thinking consider Rom 10:4 w/13:8-10).

5.5. When Christians refer to assurance of salvation, never are they questioning the sufficiency of Christ' atoning death or victorious resurrection. Rather, they are asking whether or not those benefits have been (or are still) applied to them. In this respect, the bible makes it clear that such assurance is found by looking to our deeds- not those of Christ (2Pe 1:5-11 – notice: it is not waiting at the bus-stop but traversing mountains).

**Conclusion: Why does Evangelicalism get it so wrong?** The same reason people fail to figure out Rubik's Cube.

<sup>3</sup> Some have attempted to use the Reformers as their support for thinking it is simply the form of baptism (i.e. Trinitarian) that matters since they did not believe it necessary to be re-baptized though their original baptisms were done in the Roman Catholic Church. What such individuals however forget is that at the point the Reformation began, the Reformers did not believe the Catholic Church to be apostate (but on the path). Hence, why what they were attempting to do was “reform” her (not start another church). As such, they viewed their baptisms in that place as legitimate since they viewed her as legitimate (though deeply flawed and dangerously close to spiritual death). Their assessment in this regard, did eventually change as a result of the Catholic Church's refusal to repent (i.e. to be reformed). As such, none of the Reformers would – nor did, continue to recognize those who after this point were baptized in the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>4</sup> “We have the greatest healer of all. and his name is Jesus Christ. and he really heals. This is it. It's time that we all share our voice. Whatever you believe. Share it. I'm at a point where I'm not going to hold this in. The key to being Christian, is having “this connection that you feel there's no insecurities”. (Ibid)

<sup>5</sup> That God is calling us to faithful not perfect obedience should be obvious given the fact that He also makes provision when we do sin – and always has (1Jo 1:9; Lev 1-17).