

*But to the one who does not work, but believes  
in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is  
credited as righteousness.* Romans 4:5

THE  
ERROR OF  
SACRAMENTAL  
SALVATION

*With quotes from the publications of Martin Luther,  
John Calvin, and the Roman Catholic Church*

## SACRAMENTAL SALVATION

The Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and various groups that follow the teachings of John Calvin, while professing to be "Christian," believe that participation in the sacraments is necessary for salvation. They also insist that you must maintain a certain level of holiness or sinlessness either to show that you are saved, or to keep from losing your salvation. They believe that when you sin (violate God's law), or continue to practice sin, you may lose your salvation, (or show that you really were not saved) and that you must perform a sacred work (sacrament) such as penance, repentance, confession, and/or the Lord's Table to be reinstated, forgiven, or re-saved. To begin this sacred-works salvation plan, you are usually initiated by the sacrament of water baptism. This is supposed to erase all previous sins, and original sin, and start you in the "pay-as-you-go" system. The implication is that even infants are damned to hell because of original sin, and that they too have need of this sacred work of cleansing. Many of these "sacramental" religions contend that the water baptism of the New Testament replaces the circumcision of the Old Testament. The following statement by John Calvin, taken from *Calvin's Institutes*, Book IV, Chap. XVI, p. 531, typifies the attitudes of these religions (emphasis added),

“We have, therefore, a spiritual promise given to the fathers in **circumcision**, similar to that which is given to us in **baptism**, **since it figured to them both the forgiveness of sins** and the mortification of the flesh. Besides, as we have shown that Christ, in whom both of these reside, is the foundation of **baptism**, so must He also be the foundation of **circumcision**. For He is promised to Abraham, and in Him all nations are blessed. To seal this grace, the sign of circumcision is added. There is now no difficulty in seeing wherein the two signs agree, and wherein they differ. The promise, in which we have shown that **the power of the signs consists, is one in both** - viz. the promise of **the paternal favour of God, or forgiveness of sins, and eternal life**. And the thing figured is one and the same - viz. **regeneration**.”

**Romans 4:7-12** (emphasis added) shows us what the Bible really says about circumcision, which is supposedly replaced by baptism,

*“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the **uncircumcised** also? For we say, ‘Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.’ How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or **uncircumcised**? Not while circumcised, but while **uncircumcised**; and he received the **sign** [not sacrament] of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that*

*righteousness might be **reckoned** to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of **the faith** of our father, Abraham, **which he had while uncircumcised.**"*

God's Word tells us here that circumcision is a sign, a seal, a testimony of the righteousness given freely because of Abraham's faith "which he had while uncircumcised." There is nothing in the Bible that even hints that circumcision (a work) seals God's grace, or that the "power of the sign" is "forgiveness of sins and eternal life" as Calvin erroneously taught. But this error is not peculiar to Calvin. Even in the Old Testament the Jewish people put the wrong emphasis on circumcision. In **Jeremiah 9:25**, God exposes their hypocrisy (emphasis added),

*"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will **punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised ...**"*

The purpose of circumcision was to literally brand men as part of the nation of Israel; it did not work "forgiveness of sins, eternal life" or regeneration. The point God is making in the above verses from Romans is that Abraham was regenerated apart from circumcision, just as David also was in **Romans 4:5-6** (emphasis added),

*"But to the one who **does not work**, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith is reckoned as righteousness**, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God **reckons righteousness apart from works ...**"*

God certainly wants us to do good works, but the above verses show clearly that circumcision, keeping the 10 Commandments, and all good works have no part in securing the eternal righteous justification we receive at the moment of salvation. David *believed* (trusted, had faith in God's promise), and his "*faith* is reckoned as righteousness," not his circumcision or keeping any other part of the Law. If circumcision was so important, why was it not taught that way in the Bible? The Bible even rebukes those who put such a high importance on circumcision. **Romans 2:28,29** states (emphasis added),

*"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; **neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh**. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **the circumcision is that which is of the heart**, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God."*

**Galatians 6:15** states (emphasis added):

*"For **neither is circumcision anything**, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."*

## ARE CIRCUMCISION OR BAPTISM FOR SALVATION?

As we will document later, there are religions that teach water baptism is necessary for salvation. This is the same error as was made with circumcision, and because they see water baptism as New Testament "circumcision," the error continues. This "sacramental salvation" error is first introduced by false "believers" in the New Testament Church, in **Acts 15:1, 2** (emphasis added),

*“And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren. ‘**Unless you are circumcised** according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.**’ And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.”*

Paul describes this situation to the **Galatians in Chap. 2:1b, and 4** (e. a.),

*“...I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also... But it was because of **the false brethren** who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”* (the men in **Acts 15:1, 5**)

When Paul, Barnabas, and Titus arrived at Jerusalem, **Acts 15:5** begins the record of what happened, (emphasis added):

*“But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed [the false brethren], stood up, saying, ‘**it is necessary** to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses [for salvation, 15:1].’”*

The conclusion, that “circumcision and keeping the Law” is not “necessary” for salvation, is summarized in **Acts 15:10-11** (emphasis added),

*“Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that **we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they** [our fathers] **also are.**”*

When Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, dealing with this very issue, he referred to those believers that said, "circumcision and keeping the Law are necessary for salvation," calling them "false brethren." That is, they acted and talked like Christians (brethren), and "had believed" in Jesus. The reason they were really not Christians is because they "had believed" a sacramental "works" gospel. God tells us in **Galatians 2:16** the following (emphasis added),

*“Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”*

**Galatians 2:21** states the obvious conclusion (emphasis added),

*“I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law [good works, sacraments], then Christ died needlessly.”*

**Gal. 5:2-4** clearly shows that you are not saved unless it is “by grace” (e. a.),

*“Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision [for salvation], Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision [for salvation] that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from [brought to nothing the work of] Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen [removed yourself] from grace.”*

Today water baptism is the initiating saving sacrament in many false “Christian” religions. This error is strengthened by the incorrect interpretation of the word “baptism” in certain verses in the Bible. “Baptism” can refer to “teaching,” “Holy Spirit,” “fire,” “blood,” etc., and only refers to “water” if the context of the verse indicates water. Examples are **Mark 16:16** and **Acts 2:38, 41** (e. a.),

**Mark 16:16** *“He who has believed and has been [Holy Spirit] baptized shall be saved; but he who has **disbelieved** shall be condemned.”*

(Notice that it is lack of “belief”, not lack of baptism that condemns)

**Acts 2:38,41** *“Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized [taught] **in the name** [not in water] of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ So then, **those who had received his word** [believed what they were taught] were [water, and/or Spirit] baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”*

On the following pages you will see statements quoted from publications that document the sacramental salvation teachings of John Calvin, Martin Luther, and the Roman Catholic Church. These two verses are a final reminder for you that God’s Word makes it clear that water baptism is not part of the gospel. In **I Cor. 1:14, 17** (emphasis added) Paul, by the Holy Spirit says;

**“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ...For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...”**

Quoted from the *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, Liguori Publications, 1997 (emphasis added),

**"Outside the Church there is no salvation"**

846 ... all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body: ...the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: ...Hence they **could not be saved** who, knowing that the **Catholic Church** was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would **refuse either to enter it or to remain** in it.

I. ONE BAPTISM FOR THE **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**

977 Our Lord ties the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved." **Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins** because **it unites us with Christ**, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that "we too might walk in newness of life."

980 It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church: Penance has rightly been called by the holy Fathers "a laborious kind of baptism." This sacrament of Penance is **necessary for salvation** for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as **Baptism is necessary for salvation** for those who have not yet been reborn.

IV. THE SACRAMENTS OF SALVATION

1129 The Church affirms that for believers **the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation**. "Sacramental grace" is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament.

VII. THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

1263 By **Baptism all sins are forgiven**, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin.

1265 **Baptism not only purifies from all sins**, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

1274 **"Baptism indeed is the seal of eternal life."** The faithful Christian who has "kept the seal" until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his Baptism, will be able to depart this life "marked with the sign of faith,"...

1275 Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: **Baptism** which is the beginning of new life; **Confirmation** which is its strengthening; and the **Eucharist** which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.

1277 **Baptism** is birth into the new life in Christ. In accordance with the Lord's will, **it is necessary for salvation, as is the Church herself**, which we enter by Baptism.

1279 **The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace**, is a rich reality that **includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins...**

1283 With respect to **children who have died without Baptism**, the liturgy of the Church invites us to trust in God's mercy and to **pray for their salvation**.

## V. THE SACRAMENTAL SACRIFICE

1365 Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: "This is my body which is given for you" and "This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood." **In the Eucharist** Christ gives us **the very body which he gave up** for us on the cross, the very blood which he "poured out for many **for the forgiveness of sins.**"

1367 The **sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist** are one single sacrifice: "The **victim is one and the same**: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "In this **divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ** who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and **is offered in an unbloody manner.**"

## VI. THE PASCHAL BANQUET

1392 **...Communion is the flesh of the risen Christ ... preserves, increases, and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.**

1393 **Holy Communion separates us from sin.** The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is "given up for us," and **the blood we drink** "shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins." For this reason **the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins: ...**

1394 As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the **Eucharist strengthens our charity, which tends to be weakened in daily life; and this living charity wipes away venial sins.**

1395 By the same charity that it enkindles in us, the **Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins . ...**

VII.THE EUCHARIST--"Pledge Of The Glory To Come."

1405 There is no surer pledge or clearer sign of this great hope in the new heavens and new earth "in which righteousness dwells," than the **Eucharist. Every time this mystery is celebrated, "the work of our redemption is carried on" and we "break the one bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ."**

1414 As sacrifice, the **Eucharist is also offered in reparation for the sins of the living and the dead** and to obtain spiritual or temporal benefits from God.

Quoted from *INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION*, John Calvin, Eerdmans Publishing, 1994, BOOK IV, (emphasis added),

Chap. XIV.

7. ...It is certain, therefore, that **the Lord offers us his mercy, and a pledge of his grace, both in his sacred word and in the sacraments**; but it is not apprehended save by those who receive the word and sacraments with firm faith: in like manner as Christ, though offered and held forth for salvation to all, is not, however, acknowledged and received by all. **Augustine**, when attending to intimate this, **said that the efficacy of the work is produced in the sacrament, not because it is spoken, but because it is believed.**

17. Wherefore, let it be a fixed point that the office of **the sacraments differs not from the word of God**; and this is to hold forth and offer Christ to us, and, in him, the treasures of heavenly grace....

Chap. XV.

1. Baptism is the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship of the Church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted children of God . ...For it is his will that all who have believed, be **baptized for the remission of sins**. Hence those [Anabaptists] who have thought that [water] baptism is nothing else than the badge and mark by which we profess our religion before men, in the same way as soldiers attest their profession by bearing the insignia of their commander, having not attended to what was **the principal thing in baptism**; and this is, that we are to receive it in connection with the promise, "He that believeth and is **baptized shall be saved.**"



3. ...We ought to consider that at **whatever time we are baptized, we are washed and purified once for the whole of life**. Wherefore, as often as we fall, we must **recall to remembrance of our baptism**, and thus fortify our minds, so as **to feel certain and secure of the remission of sins....**

5. ...that Christ by [water] **baptism has made us partakers of his death**, ingrafting us into it.

10. ... Believers become **assured by baptism**, that this condemnation is entirely withdrawn from them, since (as has been said) the Lord **by this sign** promises that a **full and entire remission has been made, both of the guilt which was imputed to us, and the penalty incurred by his guilt....**

15. ...**In baptism, the Lord promises forgiveness of sin**: receive it, and be secure

16. ...But if **baptism** was of God, it certainly **included in it the promise of forgiveness of sin**, mortification of the flesh, quickening of the Spirit, and communion with Christ . ...

Chap. XVI.

3. ...Now, the **first access to God**, the **first** entrance to immortal life, is the **remission of sins**. Hence it follows, that this corresponds to the promise of our **cleansing in baptism . ...**

4. ...For just as **circumcision**, which was a kind of badge to the Jews, **assuring them that they were adopted** as the people and family of God, was their first entrance into the Church, while they, in their turn, professed their allegiance to God, so now we are **initiated by baptism**, so as to be enrolled among his people, and at the same time swear unto his name. Hence it is incontrovertible, that **baptism has been substituted for circumcision**, and performs the same office.

17. ...But how, they ask, are **infants regenerated**, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Moreover, **infants who are to be saved** (and that **some are saved** at this age is certain) must, without question, be previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bring innate corruption with them from their mother's womb, they must be purified before they can be admitted into the kingdom of God, into which shall not enter anything that defileth (Rev. xxi . 27).

22. ...For Paul comprehends the whole Church when he says that it was **cleansed by the washing of water**. In like manner, from his expression in another place, that **by baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ** (I

Cor. xii. 13), we infer, that **infants**, whom he enumerates among his members, **are to be baptized**, in order **that they may not be dissevered from his body....**

23. ...Hence they [Anabaptists] think they can make out that **baptism cannot be lawfully given to anyone without previous faith and repentance.**

## Chap XVII.

1. ...First, then, the signs are bread and wine, which represent the invisible food which we receive from the body and blood of Christ. For, as God, **regenerating us in baptism**, ingrafts us into the fellowship of his Church, and makes us his by adoption, so we have said that he performs the office of a provident parent, in continually supplying **the food by which he may sustain and preserve us in the life to which he has begotten us by his word** ...We now, therefore, understand the end which this **mystical benediction** has in view--viz. to assure us that the body of Christ was once sacrificed for us, so that we may now eat it, and, eating, feel within ourselves the efficacy of that one sacrifice,--that his blood was once shed for us so as to be our perpetual drink . **...For the covenant which he once sanctioned by his blood he in a manner renews**, or rather continues, in so far as regards the confirmation of our faith, **as often as he stretches forth his sacred blood as drink to us.**

11. ... And, indeed, **I see not how any one can expect to have redemption and righteousness in the cross of Christ, and life in his death, without trusting first of all to true communion with Christ himself.** Those blessings could not reach us, did not Christ previously make himself ours. I say then, that in the **mystery of the Supper, by the symbols of bread and wine, Christ, his body and his blood, are truly exhibited to us**, that in them he fulfilled all obedience, in order to procure righteousness for us--....

19. ...I willingly admit anything which helps to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, as exhibited to believers under the **sacred symbols of the Supper**, understanding that they are received not by the imagination or intellect merely, **but are enjoyed in reality as the food of eternal life.**

33. ...Not better founded is the other objection, that we attend only to the fruit of effect which believers receive from **eating the flesh of Christ.** We formerly said, that **Christ himself is the matter of the Supper**, and that the effect follows from this, that by the sacrifice of his death our sins are expiated, by his blood we are washed, and by his resurrection we are raised to the hope of life in heaven....**I admit and hold that the power of the sacrament remains entire**, however the wicked [Anabaptists] may labour with all their might to annihilate it.

Quoted from *LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM*,  
Concordia Publishing, 1971 (emphasis added),

I. THE NATURE OF BAPTISM (p.170)

251 Infants, too, are to be baptized (p.173)

B. Because **Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants, who, too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated** and brought to faith;

C. Because infants, too, can believe.

II. THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM (p.174)

*What does Baptism give or profit?* It works **forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation** to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

254 ...By His suffering and death Christ has indeed earned these blessings for us; **Baptism, however, is a means by which the Holy Ghost makes these blessings our own.** (Baptism is a means of grace.). (p.175)

257 ...The word of God places these great blessings into Baptism; and through **faith, which trusts this word of promise, we accept the forgiveness, life, and salvation offered in Baptism** and make these blessings our own. (p.177)

II. THE BENEFITS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (p.200)

*What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?* That is shown us by these words, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; namely, that ***in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us*** through these words. For where there is **forgiveness of sins**, there is also life and salvation.

III. THE POWER OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (p.201)

*How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?* It is not the eating and drinking indeed that does them, but the words here written, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"; **which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.**

317. *How, then, does the Sacrament impart such forgiveness of sins?* By His words "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins" **Christ has placed the forgiveness of sins into the Sacrament**, and there He offers, gives, and seals it to all communicants. These words, therefore, are the chief thing in the Sacrament.

## HOLY SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

11. Now if this covenant did not exist, and God were not so merciful as to wink at our sins, there could be no sin so small but it would condemn us. For the judgment of God can endure no sin. **Therefore there is no greater comfort on earth than baptism.** For it is **through baptism that we come under the judgment of grace and mercy, which does not condemn our sins but drives them out by many trials.** There is a fine sentence of St. Augustine which says, "*Sin is altogether forgiven in baptism; not in such a manner that it is no longer present, but such a manner that it is not imputed.*" It is as if he were to say, "Sin remains in our flesh even until death and works without ceasing. But so long as we do not give our consent to it or desire to remain in it, sin is so overruled by our baptism that it does not condemn us and is not harmful to us. Rather it is daily being more and more destroyed in us until our death."

## BLESSED SACRAMENT OF BODY OF CHRIST

We have, therefore, **two principal sacraments** in the church, **baptism and the bread.** **Baptism leads us to a new life on earth; the bread guides us through death into eternal life.** . . . So entirely is this sacrament intended and instituted for a strengthening against death and an entrance into eternal life. *LUTHER'S WORKS, Vol. 35, Word And Sacrament, I, (Fortress Press, 1981) (p. 67, emphasis added)*

. . . and I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we **must be baptized or we cannot be saved, . . .** *The LARGE CATECHISM by Martin Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) (p. 565, emphasis added)*

## SUMMARY: Sacramental Works vs. Free Eternal Gift

The Bible makes it clear that Jesus' suffering paid our total sin debt--past, present, and future. Eternal life is eternal, everlasting, never-ending, and it can't be lost, given back, or sinned-away. Works of righteousness, works of the Law, or works of the sacraments do not get us saved, keep us saved, or prove that we are saved. Salvation is by faith alone in the promises of God, not by a faith that works, or by faith plus works. It is an "irrevocable" free gift. Our prayer for those that have a different gospel is as Paul's prayer in **Romans 10:1, 2--**

***Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.***

For questions or comments call or write:  
GOOD NEWS MESSENGERS CHURCH  
1436 W. Arthur Ave., Milwaukee WI 53215 Ph. 414 383 6522  
or call toll free 1-877-YRU-REAL or www.gnmc.us