

With so many religious organizations today, it is not uncommon to hear strange things about many of them. This brief tract will address things said about one religious group – the churches of Christ. The churches of Christ are not associated with the religious groups begun by Joseph Smith, but are a separate group with an entirely different source of authority, the Bible. As you examine the matters discussed here we encourage you to be noble and study the Bible to see if what is taught is true (Acts 17:11). We believe when you do so that you will find that, though some may not agree with the teachings of the churches of Christ, these teachings are not original to them, but to the Bible. If you find us teaching error we ask that you care enough about us to bring it to our attention.

The specific teaching that we will address here is the oft heard charge that the church of Christ believes in “salvation by works.” This charge is usually made because of the teaching that baptism (immersion in water) is essential for one’s salvation. In response to this we often hear such things as:

- *“Jesus plus nothing equals salvation!”*
- *“Faith, and faith only is essential for salvation!”*

Let’s look briefly at each of these statements, then we will look to what the Bible really teaches regarding salvation, baptism and works.

### ***“Jesus plus nothing equals salvation!”***

I remember some time back getting a letter from a man proposing that very thing. I wrote back kindly asking some questions of this man, such as:

- “If Jesus plus nothing equals salvation, where does faith come in?” (John 8:24)

- “If Jesus plus nothing equals salvation, why did Jesus say that there would be ‘many’ who would be lost?” (Matthew 7:13-14)
- “If Jesus plus nothing equals salvation, why did Jesus say that without repentance one would be lost?” (Luke 13:3)

Of course I received no response to my letter, there is none that can be given and still express any respect for God’s Word at all. You see, “Jesus plus nothing equals salvation!” makes for a good bumper sticker, but has nothing to do with the reality of Bible teaching. I know of no religious group or individual who really believes the statement, though it is often repeated.

### ***“Faith, and faith only is essential for salvation!”***

This is another often heard statement, but are you aware that the only time that the phrase “faith only” is used in the Bible is in James 2:24. Notice what is said:

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

The idea of faith only is not only denied, but it is attributed to devils (James 2:19) and is called a “dead” faith (James 2:20). It is sad how people will directly deny the teachings of the Bible, just because they want to have their own way. Of course such is not new, it was first attempted in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-4).

### ***The Bible teaching regarding works and salvation***

You might be thinking, “Are you saying that you can save yourself by works?!” The answer is clear - there is no way such can be done. But let’s look now to the true teaching regarding works God has commanded and salvation.

It is clear that Jesus gave commands. Most religious folks have no objection to the commands of faith (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6), repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30) or even confession of Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9-10). Why? Because they realize the truth of Jesus’ teaching:

“... when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

And of course they are right in believing and teaching this. But the question is, why stop there? Why is it when we find commands that clearly teach baptism that this teaching of being an “unprofitable servant” is rejected and charges of “legalism” and “works salvation” are made? If these charges are true regarding baptism, wouldn’t they also be true regarding faith, repentance and confession?

Of course Jesus describes obedience to all his commands as something far different from legalism or in any way meriting salvation. Notice what Jesus says about obedience to His commands.

1. If ye love me, keep my commandments. (John 14:15)
2. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)
3. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)
4. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Hebrews 5:8-9)

Did Jesus teach that we are not to be concerned with working the works He has commanded? Clearly not! If we love Him, respect Him as Lord and want Him to be the Author of our salvation we must do what He has commanded.

### ***The Bible teaching about Baptism***

From all we have seen so far, it is clear that obedience to God is not legalism, but love. The only question that remains regarding our subject is, "What did Jesus teach about baptism?" Let's look again to His word to find the truth.

#### *Baptism is commanded by Jesus*

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

#### *Baptism is for salvation*

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:16) (See also 1 Peter 3:21)

#### *Baptism is for the remission of sins*

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37-38) (this is the same phrase used in Matthew 26:28 regarding the purpose of Jesus' shedding His blood)

#### *Baptism is to wash away sins*

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)

#### *Baptism is the act by which God puts us into Christ, where all spiritual blessings are found (Ephesians 1:3)*

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

Baptism? God makes it clear that salvation cannot be had apart from it. Not because the church of Christ teaches it, but because He has taught it in His Word.

Yes, you hear some strange things about the churches of Christ. But if you study the Bible you realize that the strange thing is that other religious groups do not teach the necessity of loving God enough to obey His will – and that will includes baptism.

Our prayer is that you will study this with an open Bible and an open heart. Contact us if we can be of help.

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## ***Strange Things You Hear About The Church of Christ***

### ***“You Believe In Salvation By Works!”***

by  
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