

# Dry Denials and Distortions

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I have heard many weak and ridiculous arguments against the essential nature of water baptism. However, with respect to its necessity, the Bible is really not hard to understand. The apostle Paul is clear and to the point in his Roman letter:

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)*

When Paul says, we have been baptized into Christ, the *only* baptism he could have in mind is water baptism (cf. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36; 10:47; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16).

While Paul is clear, those who wish to deny the need for water baptism must deal with the apostle's inspired words. In a desperate attempt to deny the necessity of baptism, Charles Swindoll gives us a desperate distortion of Bible truth. He does so in his book, *The Grace Awakening*. Commenting on Paul's words in Romans 6:3-4, Swindoll writes:

"To understand what this is all about, we have to set aside the concept of water baptism and understand this is a reference to dry baptism. Some baptisms in the New Testament are *wet* and some of them are *dry*. This one is in the latter category.

The word *baptizo* primarily has to do with identification.... When we believed in the Savior's death and resurrection, we were 'dipped' into the same scene. Our identity was changed."  
(*The Grace Awakening*, 1990, p. 117).

With all the references to water baptism in the New Testament, one wonders how Swindoll can conclude that Paul was writing about a dry baptism? If it is a dry baptism that puts us into Christ, why did the Ethiopian eunuch ask about water for his baptism? (Acts 8:36). If it is a dry baptism that saves us, it was pointless for Peter say at the household of Cornelius,

*"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:47).*

The reason Swindoll concludes Paul to be describing a dry baptism is because the inspired apostle contradicts what Charles Swindoll, and many others, believe and teach concerning the necessity of water baptism.

As if his denial of the obvious is not enough, Swindoll also changes the focus and meaning of the word *baptizo*, saying it primarily has reference to identification. This is not true!

Jim McGuiggan, in his commentary on the book of Romans, writes:

"'Baptized'? What does the word mean? What it means today you can get from Webster's. What it meant in Paul's language you can get from the lexicons. They are all in agreement. The word means to dip, immerse, plunge, or some such synonym. J.W. Shepherd compiled a book of testimonies on the subject of baptism called Handbook on Baptism (Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville). On the "action of baptism" he cites the testimony of 33 lexicographers, 21 encyclopedias, 26 church historians, 18 church "fathers" and 63 theologians. They all agree with the definition I've given above. These sources are all recognized people from many denominations. Included are all the standard reference works.

Shepherd calls on 124 commentators, church 'fathers', theologians, lexicographers and the rest in connection with Romans 6 (and Colossians 2). They all agree that this section deals with immersion in water." (*Romans*. Sunset Institute Press, Electronic Edition)

In light of the clear teachings of Scripture, why do so many, who claim to believe the Bible, not accept what it clearly teaches in regards to water baptism? Perhaps, the bigger question is: How should one respond when the Bible clashes with their long held doctrinal beliefs? The apostle Paul was faced with this very issue. He went from a violent persecutor of the church, to a baptized believer. The Bereans were also confronted with a new truth. They

give us a great example as to how one should respond when faced with the same:

*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. (Acts 17:11-12).*

When confronted with a conflict between what we believe, and what the Bible teaches, let us not, like Swindoll and others, resort to ridiculous non-sensical arguments and desperate distortions. Rather, let us accept the word of God for what it is: Truth (John 17:17). Accepting and obeying the truth of God's word is the only way to be saved.