

Dying Before Baptism?

by [Kyle Butt, M.A.](#)

The New Testament clearly states that water baptism is necessary for salvation (see [Lyons and Butt, 2004](#)). But one of the most frequently used arguments against the necessity of baptism for salvation is the idea that “God would not do that.” The question is asked, “What if a sincere believing person is on his way to be baptized and dies right before he gets to the water? Are you telling me that God would send that person to hell just because he did not make it to the water?” At first glance, this argument may seem legitimate. Upon further investigation, however, it is easy to see that it is simply a play on emotions, and in no way disproves the necessity of baptism for salvation.



The “God-would-not-do-that” argument can be used against almost any commandment in the Bible. For instance, the Bible repeatedly says that a person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Romans 10:11; John 8:24; et al.). Suppose, then, that a Christian had just begun to tell the story of Jesus to an older gentleman, when suddenly that gentleman has a massive heart attack and dies without getting to hear the rest of the story, and thus did not have the opportunity to believe. Should we, therefore, do away with the biblical command to believe in Jesus Christ, simply because a theoretical scenario can be concocted in which a potential convert dies moments before his compliance? To ask is to answer. Nor, with a wave of the hand, can we do away with the biblical command to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

Consider also the fact that the Bible plainly states that God wants all people to be saved. In 2 Peter 3:9, the inspired apostle wrote: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel was instructed by God to convey this message to the Israelites on God’s behalf: “‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live’” (Ezekiel 33:11). The apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Therefore, if a person truly and honestly wants to become a Christian by being baptized for the forgiveness of his sins as God commanded, then God (Who wants all to be saved and is watchful of each individual human) certainly would provide an opportunity for that person to obey His commandment to be baptized. If no sparrow falls to the ground apart from God’s knowledge (Matthew 10:29), and God is no

respector of persons (Acts 10:34), then we can be sure that His providential care will ensure that each person is given a fair opportunity to respond to His commands.

REFERENCES

Lyons, Eric and Kyle Butt (2004), "Taking Possession of What God Gives: A Case Study in Salvation," [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2546>.

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