

The Reformed Doctrine of Salvation

Reformed churches teach many important and essential Biblical doctrines, such as the Trinity, the inspiration of Scripture, and the authority of the Word of God for faith and practice. Furthermore, as the Bible teaches “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom 3:28), so Reformed confessions teach “that God imputes righteousness . . . without works. . . . And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours, when we believe in him” (*Article 23, Of Justification, Belgic Confession*). “Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love” (*Westminster Confession, Chapter 11:1-2*). These Reformed statements line up entirely with the Word of God.

Likewise, just as the Bible teaches that “whom [God] justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30) so Reformed confessions teach that “they, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved” (Chapter 17:1, *Westminster Confession*). Both the Bible and Reformed confessions agree that true believers are eternally secure and not one of them can ever be lost.

Since these Reformed doctrines are Biblical, members of Reformed churches do very well to believe them heartily. Reformed church members, with their commendable

acceptance of the authority of Scripture for faith and practice, also need to recognize all other Biblical truth that relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This includes the essential fact that *nobody has always been a Christian*, including those born in Bible-believing homes. “And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also *we all* had our conversation [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:1-3). Ephesians was written to the Christian congregation at Ephesus (Eph 1:1), which, of course, included parents who had infants and children (Eph 6:1). The children of Christians, like everyone else, are dead in their sins, under the power of the devil, and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, until they are made alive at the moment they are born again by grace through faith in Christ, as Ephesians two goes on to explain: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9). Since infants have “no knowledge between good and evil” (Deut 1:39; Isa 7:16; Jon 4:11; Rom 9:11), they do not conduct themselves “in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” Since all those made alive in Christ at one time conducted themselves in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind, people—including those with Christian parents—are only born again after they have reached an age where they are able to so conduct themselves, and consciously repent and believe the gospel. Every member of a Reformed church should recognize this truth, and believe that there is nobody who has always been a Christian. The only people who are made alive in Christ are those who have been consciously lost, walking in sin, and have subsequently repented and believed.

Reformed confessions also agree with the Bible (Jer 17:9; Rom 5:12-19) that “through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature, and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother’s womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof; and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God, that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind” (Article 15, *Belgic Confession*).

Indeed, until someone is “born of the Spirit” and made alive by Christ, he is dead in sin, simply “born of the flesh” (John 3:6)—but “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). Someone who has not been born again has never truly pleased God in any action he has ever done in his entire life. The Lord Jesus said, “[E]xcept ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lu 13:3). The Reformed agree, stating, “Repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it” (Chapter 15, *Westminster Confession*). “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 87). When a lost sinner repents and comes to Christ for salvation, he must agree with God that he is indeed lost and not in any way acceptable to God (Lev 26:40-41; Neh 9:33-35). A lost adult or child, who does not agree that he really is lost, does not have a “true sense of sin” and cannot truly repent. “Jesus . . . said . . . They that are whole [healthy] need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Lu 5:31-32). Every person on earth who has never come to a specific point where he agrees with God that he is “vile and abominable in the sight of God” and on his way to hell has never truly agreed with God, and has thus never truly repented. Every person who has never truly repented is still lost and headed to eternal damnation. “[T]he Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was LOST” (Lu 19:10). There is no difference in this way between those who grew up in Reformed churches or homes and those who did not. Reformed confessions agree with the Bible that at a particular moment in time, the moment of repentance and faith, one is instantly born again (Jn 3:1-21), passes from death to life, from condemnation to justification, from spiritual death to spiritual life, and from being a child of the devil to being a child of God (Jn 5:24). Dear Reformed friend, even if you have Bible-believing parents and believe the Bible yourself, attend church faithfully, confess your sins, accept the doctrine of justification by faith alone and every other doctrine taught in the Bible, and try to live a moral and upright life, **IF YOU HAVE NEVER COME TO A SPECIFIC POINT IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU HAVE AGREED WITH GOD THAT YOU WERE A LOST, ABOMINABLE, AND WRETCHED SINNER, A CHILD OF THE DEVIL, ONE WHO WAS UNDER**

THE WRATH OF GOD AND ON YOUR WAY TO HELL, AND AS A LOST SINNER YOU CONSCIOUSLY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, CAME TO CHRIST IN REPENTANCE AND FAITH, YOU HAVE NEVER TRULY REPENTED, AND YOU ARE NOT SAVED. Unfortunately, despite the many important truths defended by Reformed churches, a very high percentage of their members are not truly born again, because many Reformed leaders and teachers either deny or do not preach the absolute necessity of consciously coming in repentance and faith to Christ, as a lost sinner, at a particular moment in time. Can you remember a point in time when you came to the Lord Jesus, recognizing your lost condition, in repentance and faith? The question is not if you have completed a catechism class or stood in front of the church at some point and made a public confession of faith. Dear Reformed friend, have you ever been lost? If not, you have never been saved—and you have never truly pleased God in your life, but you “are as an unclean thing, and all [your] righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Is 64:6). All you are and have every done, no matter how religious you are, is a mass of filthy, rotten sin, simply making the Holy One ever more angry with you. You “shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and [you] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of [your] torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and [you will] have no rest day nor night” (Rev 14:10-11). You are lost, and you will certainly go to hell unless you are converted, by God’s grace. REPENT!

How can Reformed denominations defend important truths like justification by faith alone and the authority of the Word of God, yet, tragically, have so many religious but unconverted people on their membership roles? When the Reformers separated from the church of Rome at the time of the Reformation, they rightly rejected many of Rome’s errors, blasphemies, and heresies, and they correctly affirmed, “There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself . . . against Christ and all that is called God” (*Westminster Confession*, Article 25). In this they agreed with the Bible, which, in contrast to the true church, the pure bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5), identifies the religious system centered at Rome as a “great whore . .

. full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication,” indeed, states that the Roman religion is “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev 17:1-6). Unfortunately, the Reformers did not abolish one of the central errors and corruptions of the false religion they protested against—infant baptism. By not eliminating this heresy of Antichrist, the Reformed have allowed the doctrine of salvation to be confused.

The Bible teaches that baptism is “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet 3:21), and thus it is “he that believeth [that] is baptized” (Mar 16:16; Ac 2:38, 41). The Biblical order is that one is to first “hear” the gospel preached, then “believe” (Rom 10:14-15; Ac 18:8), and only after having “gladly received [the] [W]ord [be] baptized” (Ac 2:41; 8:13). The question, “[W]hat doth hinder me to be baptized?” is answered in the Bible, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest,” and baptism is given only to those who can say, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Ac 8:35-38). In the Bible, those who were baptized had first brought forth “fruits meet for [befitting] repentance” (Matt 3:6-8). Since infants do not “know to refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa 7:16) and “cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand” (Jon 4:11), much less understand and believe the gospel, confess their sins (Matt 3:6), and show fruits of repentance, they cannot be Biblically baptized.

Sometimes people who do not wish to repent of the heresy of infant baptism, but do not want to admit that it is merely a human tradition added to the Word of God, attempt to argue in favor of it because there are several records of entire households receiving baptism in the Bible (Ac 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16). Defenders of infant baptism assume that these households had infants, and the infants were baptized. However, in each example, it is never stated that the households had infants, and it is actually obvious that believer’s baptism was practiced. In Acts 16:31-34, all in the household had the “word of the Lord” preached to them, and having received Christ by faith, the whole household “rejoiced, believing in God” (v. 34). In Acts 16:15, the head of the house was a rather wealthy unmarried woman doing business far from her home, and her household consisted of servants who responded, as she did, to the gospel. Do babies make good household servants? In 1 Cor 1:16, the household of a man named Stephanas was baptized (1 Cor 1:16), and the members of the household “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor 16:15). Do infants go around performing all kinds of

Christian ministry? Just about the only other passage in the New Testament that those who practice infant baptism try to employ in its favor is 1 Cor 7:14, a verse that does not use the word *baptize* or have anything to do with baptism at all. The verse simply teaches that when one believing person is in a household, an unbelieving spouse, and infants or unbelieving older children, are “sanctified” by the believer’s presence. This simply means that unbelievers participate in some of God’s blessing on account of the presence of the Lord’s favor on a believer in a household (cf. Gen 39:5). This sanctification takes place the very moment the first household member is saved; it does not wait until later when infants are supposedly baptized. 1 Cor 7:14 no more proves that infants are baptized than it does that the unbelieving spouse in the verse is baptized without his or her consent. Finally, advocates of infant baptism argue that baptism replaces circumcision, and since infants were circumcised in the Old Testament, babies are to be baptized in the New. However, neither Christ nor the apostles ever stated that baptism replaces or is equivalent to circumcision. The Jewish and Gentile Christians who received both baptism and circumcision in the New Testament (cf. Ac 10:45; 16:3) obviously did not think the one replaced the other. Furthermore, only male babies were circumcised, but baby girls also receive infant baptism in the denominations that practice it. The New Testament, using Abraham as our pattern (Rom 4:23-25), also states that circumcision was a “seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised” (4:11). If one wants to argue that circumcision is replaced by baptism, then the New Testament pattern would be faith before baptism, as Abraham believed before he was circumcised, and baptism would not be a means of receiving salvation, but only a token or sign (Gen 17:11) of a previously received “righteousness of faith” (Rom 4:1-25). However, the fact is that the spiritual equivalent in the New Testament of circumcision is not baptism, but being born again (Phil 3:3), a spiritual act that happens “without hands” (Col 2:11) and which is a prerequisite to baptism (Col 2:12). There is nothing in the Bible that teaches infant baptism. It is an error, a false human tradition that the devil has used to deceive millions.

Those who practice infant baptism inevitably confuse the gospel by doing so. In any particular location, the “church of God [has as members] . . . them that are sanctified

in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Cor 1:2; Col 1:2), so only people who have been justified by faith, only saved people, are fit church members. Since baptism adds one to the membership of the church that authorizes the ordinance (Ac 2:41, 47; 1 Cor 12:13), but true churches require the new birth for membership, infant baptism is really only consistent with the heresy that the salvation of babies is somehow connected to the application of water to them. At the very least, infant baptism leads people to think that they do not need to be converted when they get older, while the great majority of “Christian” groups that practice it say that sins are actually removed at the time of baptism.

The Reformed claim that God “hath instituted the sacrament of baptism . . . which serves as a testimony to us, that he will forever be our gracious God and Father” (*Belgic Confession*, Article 34). A sacrament is supposedly a “holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers,” so that “sacraments become effectual means of salvation” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 91, 92). However, the Bible never says that baptism or the Lord’s supper “seal” or “apply” salvation to anyone. The word *seal* appears 16 times in the New Testament, and none of its appearances indicate that a “seal” gives a particle of saving grace to anybody. The word *sacrament* never appears in the Bible. The Reformed did not go far enough when they reduced the seven sacraments invented by the Antichrist-led church of Rome to two sacraments. The truth is that there are no sacraments, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper do not do anything to justify anybody—salvation is by faith alone (Rom 3:28).

Absolutely nothing in the Bible either affirms that baptism is the way to be born again or teaches infant baptism. The Reformed claim that they “reject all mixtures and damnable inventions, which men have added unto, and blended with the [ordinances], as profanations of them: and affirm that we ought to rest satisfied with the ordinance[s] which Christ and his apostles have taught us, and that we must speak of them in the same manner as they have spoken” (Article 35, *Belgic Confession*). This is in accord with God’s command, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God . . . What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor

diminish from it” (Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:6; Matt 28:19-20; Rev 22:18-19). If the Reformed were consistent with their own confessions, they would reject infant baptism just like they reject infant communion, and just like they reject many other of the damnable inventions of the church at Rome. The error of infant baptism was recognized at the time of the Reformation by men like Zwingli, the father of the Swiss Reformation, who said, “Nothing grieves me more than that at present I have to baptize children, for I know it ought not to be done,” and “if we were to baptize as Christ instituted it then we would not baptize any person until he has reached the years of discretion; for I find it nowhere written that infant baptism is to be practiced” (see pgs. 198-199, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, by the Christian Reformed author Leonard Verduin). By retaining infant baptism—as Zwingli did, against what he knew the Bible taught—the Reformed undermine the gospel and confuse justification by faith alone. Dear Reformed friend, you must face the fact that your infant baptism did absolutely nothing to contribute to your salvation—so far from helping to save you, or from proving that you were somehow already saved or destined to be saved, it was not true baptism at all, but actually an abomination to God.

Furthermore, when believers are baptized, immersion, not sprinkling or pouring, is necessarily practiced for Biblical baptism. One who is baptized is “planted together in the likeness of [Christ’s] death” and “shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection” (Romans 6:5); baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior, as well as the death of the believer’s old life and his resurrection to new life in the Lord Jesus. Only immersion pictures death, burial, and resurrection. Does anyone bury a person in a graveyard by pouring or sprinkling a little dirt on his head? Then how can one be “buried with [Christ] in baptism” (Col 2:12) by pouring or sprinkling a little water on him? Why did people go “down . . . into the water . . . and . . . come up out of the water . . . [when] baptized” (Ac 8:38-39; Mat 3:16) in the Bible if only a little water was poured or sprinkled on the head? Furthermore, the Greek verb *baptize* means to dip or immerse, not to pour or sprinkle. The father of Reformed denominations, John Calvin, acknowledged this, saying that “it is evident that the term *baptize* means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive church” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:15:19), while the first of the Reformers, Martin Luther, said that “baptism is . . . when we dip anything

wholly in water, that it is completely covered over. . . . it should be thus, and would be right . . . [for] any one who is to be baptized, [to] be completely sunk down into the water, and dipped again and drawn out” (*Opera Lutheri*, I. 319, cf. pg. 108, Christian, J. T., *A History of the Baptists*, vol. 1). The Reformers themselves acknowledged that the Bible teaches immersion is New Testament baptism. Do we dare change what God Himself has commanded to picture His Son’s death, burial, and resurrection to practice instead a corruption inherited from the false religion of Rome? Do we change the ordinance of God to that of a system of religion that the Holy One calls “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Rev 17:5)?

No church, including those within Reformed denominations, can be a true church if it confuses the gospel by not demanding that the children of believing parents come to a place where they see themselves as lost and at a point in time repent and believe the gospel. All who do not preach this therefore fall under the dread curse of Galatians 1:8-9: “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” Furthermore, Reformed denominations cannot be Christ’s churches because they reject Biblical baptism, the immersion of the believer, to practice instead the heresy and human tradition of sprinkling or pouring water on the head of infants. Furthermore, Reformed denominations cannot be Christ’s churches because they did not exist for 1,500 years after Christ started His church in the first century. The Lord Jesus said “the gates of hell shall not prevail against” His church (Mat 16:18), but rather that God would receive “glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages” (Eph 3:21), and He would be with His churches “alway, *even* unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). If Reformed denominations are Christ’s churches, then the Son of God failed to keep His promises to keep true churches in the world for the first three-fourths of Christian history! Furthermore, when people who adopted Reformed doctrine in the era of the Reformation started new churches, they separated from the church of Rome—which they rightly saw as headed by “the Pope of Rome . . . that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition” (*Westminster Confession* 25:6). The Reformers and the first generation of Reformed church members received baptism from a religion they correctly saw as headed by

Antichrist. Unless the church of Antichrist can perform valid baptisms, the Reformers and the first members of the denominations they started were not baptized, and thus not truly church members. If they were not church members, they could not baptize anyone else. For the Reformed denominations to be Christ's churches, either unbaptized people must be able to perform baptism, or the church of Antichrist can legitimately administer the ordinances!

In contrast, churches that believe and practice like modern day Bible-believing Baptists, churches that defend the true gospel of justification by faith without works and practice the baptism only of believers, have existed from the first century until today. In the words of Dr. J. J. Durmont & Dr. Ypeig, Reformed historians specifically appointed by the State of Holland to ascertain if the historical claims of the Baptists were valid, the Baptists "descended from the tolerably pure evangelical Waldenses. . . . They were, therefore, in existence long before the Reformed Church. . . . We have seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists . . . were the original Waldenses; and who have long in the history of the Church, received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles; and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrine of the gospel through all ages." The Christian Reformed scholar Leonard Verduin stated, "No one is credited with having invented the Anabaptism of the sixteenth century for the simple reason that no one did. . . . There were Anabaptists, called by that name, in the fourth century." (pg. 189-190, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*). Churches that believe in salvation by faith and practice believer's immersion never needed to separate from the church of Rome because they never were part of that false religion. They are older than the church of Rome and than all the Protestant denominations. Their Biblical doctrine and practice proves what is confirmed by the testimony of history—they are the churches founded by the Lord Jesus Christ. All other religious groups are guilty of schism and division from the Lord's true churches. All other groups—including the Reformed denominations—thus have no Divine authority to baptize, carry on the work of God, or exist at all.

Dear Reformed friend, the Bible commands, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor 13:5). Have you ever come to a particular

point where you saw yourself as lost, and consciously repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, you are currently on your way to hell, and, no matter what else you believe and do that is good and right, you will certainly be damned unless you repent. You should, right now, submit to the Biblical truth that you have never yet been saved, and immediately come to Christ for salvation. If you reject His Word and insist that you are saved, or that your baptism or previous life is in any way pleasing to God, you will suffer in unquenchable fire for all eternity. If you forsake all confidence in your previous religious actions and good works and come to the Savior as a worthless, empty-handed sinner, with nothing but your black heart and your innumerable sins, He will receive you and save you by His free and sovereign grace. The Lord Jesus calls you to come to Him (Mat 11:28), and promises, “He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The Lord commands you to come to Him right now: “[B]ehold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). If you are saved, God commands you to submit to believer’s immersion, join and faithfully serve Him in one of His true churches (Heb 10:25). The Son of God said, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mr 8:34). Although people are not in any way justified before God by their works, there are no examples in the Bible of true Christians who refused to follow the Lord Jesus and who stubbornly refused and rejected believer’s baptism (cf. Ac 2:41-42; Mr 16:16). Separation from all religions that practice heresy, including infant sprinkling or pouring, is the plain command of the King of heaven. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:17-18). “[M]ark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17). “[H]ave no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11). The Lord Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15). Immediately separate from Reformed religion, and attend, be baptized, and serve joyfully in a Bible-believing and practicing Baptist church.

For more information on the nature of true repentance and faith, and a careful analysis of the Biblical teaching on baptism, please visit <http://faithalonesaves.googlepages.com/salvation> and read Bible studies #5-7 (“How Do I

Receive the Gospel?” “The Christian: Security in Christ and Assurance of Salvation,” and “The Church of Jesus Christ.”), as well as the work *Heaven Only for the Baptized?* at the same web address. A true church in your area that would also be happy to study the Bible with you and help you spiritually is: