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## Baptism

*The Manifold Wisdom of God revealed in Baptism.*

I submit to you this question; What is Baptism?

The simple answer is to go underwater and rise up. But there is so much more to it. So much more wonderful meaning and wisdom.

The bible has plenty to say about the act of water immersing. There are two examples we must read first.

Let's begin by reading 1 Peter 3:20-21; *(New International Version (NIV))*

*20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

The Apostle Peter compared the flood waters with the waters of baptism. As the world was immersed completely in water, every body died (except the eight that God spared). And out of the waters resurrected a new world.

Then, let's read 1 Corinthians 10; 1-2; *(Tree of Life Version (TLV))*

*1 For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea. 2 They all were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

In this epistle the Apostle Paul tells the Israelite congregation at Corinth (he calls them brothers and sisters) about their fathers, when Moses redeemed them from Egypt. He says "*I do not want you to be ignorant*". He's telling them not to forget about the signs and wonders that God performed for Israel in the desert and in the crossing of the Red sea. He first covered them with a cloud in the dessert (which is a symbol for water) and then he divided the waters of the Red Sea over them, effectively baptizing them with water, covering them completely as in Baptism.

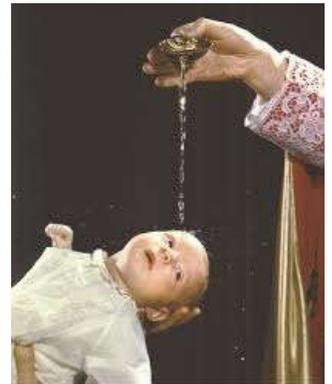
The point being on both accounts is that Baptism is an actual immersion in water. It is a cleansing with water and at the same time it is a death and a resurrection.

So having said this, let's now examine the meaning of baptism and the correct teaching in our congregations today.

There are two mainstream ways of Baptism in the western world. They are not the same, either in doctrine and overall impact over each believer's faith. Let's see why.



If you were a catholic believer, it would be a ritual where the priest pours or sprinkles water over the head of an infant. This action of pouring a handful of water over the head of the infant is customary for parents having their infant baptized within the first year of life. Nowadays catholic adults are having their priests pour water over their heads as means of Baptism for mature believers.



If you are a protestant or evangelical believer, Baptism is having the reverend or pastor immerse you (as an adult) fully under water and raising you back up. This could happen in a river with flowing waters, or in a prepared baptismal pool.



Do I have to Baptize to get Salvation? **No.**

Baptism and Salvation are two separate things. I prepared a separate study on Salvation, let's focus today on Baptism.

Baptism we do, consciously, out of our free will and understanding of what it represents.

An infant does not know what Baptism is, nor can he believe in Jesus, because he has not heard the word of God in order for Faith to germinate in his heart.

Let's read Romans 10:17 (*King James Version - KJV*)

*17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

But let's see what the Apostle Paul says about what Baptism really is. Let's read 1 Corinthians 12-13 (*New Living Translation - NLT*)

*12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body, by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.*

Paul means that before Baptism we were apart from God and each other, by nationality, by race and faith. But when baptized we become part of the body of Christ. Every one is particular, distinctive and individual, but we all are members of the Body of Christ and we share ONE SPIRIT, The Holy Spirit.

Also, let's read Romans 6:1-3 (*King James Version - KJV*)

*1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

Here the Apostle Paul is pointing out that after Baptism; we are legally dead to the Law (it has the same effect as if you die physically). Then if dead to the Law, by criteria of the Law of Moses, then also dead to sin.

When the Apostle Paul says, "*forbid*" in verse 2, it uses the Greek **root** word *Me, Μὴ γένοιτο* (*Strong's Concordance Number g3361*). It's Paul's usual way of rejecting an idea indignantly. Paul is pointing out that we died and have resurrected in Jesus.

In verse 3, he says, that we were baptized into his "*death*" (using the Greek **root** word *thanatos, γένοιτο* (*Strong's Concordance Number g2348*), he's referring to the fact that when we are immersed into the baptismal waters, we die. So then we died jointly with Jesus, in Baptism. Paul is emphatic that now we have nothing to do anymore with sin. It's over, it's been settled by the payment of Jesus Blood on the cross. This payment, this debt cancellation, this forgiveness of sin was done ONCE AND FOR ALL TIMES by our redeemer Jesus Christ. When Jesus is mentioned in the Bible, many times he's called our redeemer.

Let's see what that means. The "nearest kinsman" or "kinsman redeemer" (using the Hebrew **root** word *Gaw-al - Goel* גֹּאֵל, (*Strong's Concordance Number 1350*) means to redeem, receive or buy back. Provision was made in the Law of Moses for the poor person who was forced to sell part of his property or himself into slavery. His nearest of kin could step in and "buy back" what his relative was forced to sell (Leviticus 25:48).

The kinsman redeemer was a rich benefactor, or person who frees the debtor by paying the ransom price. "If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold" (Leviticus 25:25; cf. Ruth 4:4, 6). The nearest of kin had the responsibility of redeeming his kinsman's lost opportunities. If a person was forced into slavery, his redeemer purchased his freedom. When debt threatened to overwhelm him, the kinsman stepped in to redeem his homestead and let the family live.

Four things were required in order for a kinsman to redeem:

- He must be near of kin. (Leviticus 25:48; 25:25 Ruth 3:12-13)
- He must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6). He must be free of any calamity or need of redemption himself.
- He must be willing to redeem (Ruth 4:6)
- Redemption was completed when the price was completely paid (Leviticus 25:27; Ruth 4:7-11).

Our redemption is precious. Our salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost because the Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them. Jesus made one payment, one time, for our sins of the past, for our present sins, and for those sins not yet committed, before our physical death. Is this hard to believe?

In our redemption, there are two things happening simultaneously.

1. Once Moses delivered the Law to Israel, they became sinners under the Law. Jesus fulfilled all requirements as our "Kinsman Redeemer" and paid our debt, according to the Mosaic Law. Then, Jesus made *"Righteous Life Available"* to all those who were under the Law.
2. Jesus became Israel's Final Jubilee. The Jubilee which paid all of the debt, past, present and future.

Let's read Luke 4:14; (*One New Man (ONM)*)

*14. Then Y'shua returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. And news about Him went out throughout the whole region. 15. And He was teaching in their synagogues, being praised by everyone. 16. Then He came into Nazareth, which was where He grew up, and He entered the synagogue according to His custom on the day of Sabbaths and He stood up to read. 17. And a scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him and when He opened the scroll He found the place where it was written, 18. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach Good News to the repentant, He has sent Me to preach release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, (Isa. 61:1) to send release to the oppressed, (Isa. 58:6) 19. to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Isa. 61:2)*

20. *Then rolling up the scroll, after He gave it back to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were looking attentively at Him.* 21. *And He began to say to them "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears."*

The second redemptive work Jesus did was that he was the prophesied "Jubilee" for the people of Israel, who were waiting for centuries, a messianic release from oppression, bondage, sickness, poverty and sin (*Isa. 61:2*). Jesus preached "*the acceptable year of the Lord*", the final "Jubilee".

Jesus is a "prophetic Messiah." Being a prophetic Messiah indicates that Jesus is not just here to proclaim a year of material satisfaction. He means to redeem the world not with political mindset, limited by times and peoples, but rather redeeming the world from sin and darkness.

He liberated not only the Israelites, but all of mankind returned to their rightful owner, The Father.

As Jesus said in John 18:9 (*New Living Translation (NLT)*)

9 *He did this to fulfill his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me."*

Then, as he gave his last breath in John 19:30 he said "*It has been completed,*" and having bowed His head He gave up His spirit. (*One New Man (ONM)*)

Once a Jubilee is fulfilled, all bonded property returns to the owner, all debts (sins) are erased.

Through Adam's sin; **death entered all of mankind**. That is, to all of the people since Adam. But then; Jesus' blood paid the ransom for all of our sins, and the sins of the people going back to Adam. As the *One New Man Bible* translates; "***Righteous Life Became Available***" to all.

Let's read Romans 5:18-19; (*One New Man (ONM)*)

18. *So then just as through one transgression with respect to all; they were in condemnation, so also through one righteous act, righteousness of life became available for all mankind: 19. for just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were declared sinners, in this manner also, through the obedience of the One, the many will be declared righteous.*

In legal terms, as to what the Law requires; all of the accusations since Adam were cleansed, blotted out forever. They were paid in full over exceedingly. It was an over payment for all. But we must remember; we "*will be declared righteous*" is in future tense. It will happen in judgment day. We'll be spared from God's wrath. We are redeemed. We are saved.

Jesus came to redeem all of his sheep's, the heirs by blood and the sheep grafted by faith.

Let's read Romans 3:25-26; *(New Living Translation - NLT)*

*25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.*

God declared us righteous in his sight when we believed in Jesus. He held back (on past sins) and did not punish us, because he was looking ahead and including all of our sins, past, present and future, in the blood sacrifice of his Son, Jesus.

And this payment has no parallel or facsimile anywhere in the Universe. There is nothing more valuable in all of the heavens. It's too precious, and there is no comparable object of value that could be used in the sacrifice that took place in Golgotha.

In his death, **a multitude of things** happened. One of these things was a transaction, an exchange that occurred. Our sins were imputed to him, and his righteousness WAS IMPUTED TO US. No questions asked. We didn't do anything to deserve it. He did it for us as an act of Love. Now we are Righteous as he is. Hallelujah!! This is the Gospel of Grace, of unmerited favor. This is the Gospel of Jesus.

So with this in mind, Baptism becomes urgent, because we need to die and resurrect jointly with Christ. A believer must be free of the yoke of the Law, and the way is through Faith in Jesus and baptism.

Once Baptized, sin has no longer power over us, because WE DIED TO THE LAW. And most important, we resurrected jointly with Christ; as RIGHTEOUS as he is in his fathers eyes. We are imputed with his righteousness. Halleluiaah!

Now let's continue reading the rest of Romans 6:4-18 *(King James Version - KJV)*

*4 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.*

*5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

**11** Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. **12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. **13** Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. **14** For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

**15** What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. **16** Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? **17** But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. **18** Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Let's also read Colossians 2:9-17 (King James Version - KJV)

**9** For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. **10** And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: **11** In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: **12** Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. **13** And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; **14** Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

**15** And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. **16** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: **17** Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The epistles of Roman and Colossians are rich in biblical truths and complement each other. But I'll focus on one area that is of paramount importance in the understanding of what Baptism is. In Colossians 2:11 it calls Baptism "*the circumcision of Christ*". Remember that Jesus replaced the Old Covenant with a new one IN HIM.

In the Old Covenant Jews by requirement of Mosaic Law had to circumcise, so that they have a physical mark separating them from the other nations, a sign that they were Abraham heirs to the promise of the Messiah of Salvation.

That they were a people set apart, sanctified for the Lord.

Now in the New Covenant, we are circumcised in Baptism. This is our spiritual mark that we are set apart sanctified and justified in Jesus, members of the Body of Christ. Halleluiah!!

Let's read Romans 8:28-32; *(Tree of Life Version (TLV))*

**28** *Now we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.*

When the Bible says that someone or many are called, it's the act of inviting. In antiquity the invitations for a royal banquet were sent with servants, days ahead of time, so that every one should take notice of the event and be able to respond to the calling.

**29** *For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.*

This verse is often applied as a proof text about predestination. But in those times, it was referring to those God knew before; The Children of God, Israel. The People Moses rescued from the bondage of Egypt. Paul says that God predestined Israel to be exactly like Jesus; his firstborn son among his Hebrew brothers and sisters. And then, we who were gentiles without covenant or hope are now also included with Israel, as we are grafted in by Faith, in the tree of Israel. Now IN JESUS, Jews and Gentiles are one new man.

Let's read Ephesians 2:14. *(One New Man (ONM))*

**14** *For He is our peace, the One Who has made both things into one and Who has loosed the dividing wall of the fence, cause of the enmity to His flesh, 15. by His nullifying the tradition of the commandments by decrees, so that He could create the two, Jewish and non-Jewish, into One New Man, establishing peace 16. so He could reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, as God killed their enmity by means of Y'shua. 17. And when He came He proclaimed the Good News of peace to you, to those far away, and peace to those near: 18. because through Him we both have the introduction to the Father by means of one Spirit. 19. Therefore then, you are no longer aliens and strangers, but you are fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God, 20. building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Y'shua being His cornerstone, 21. in Whom the whole building being constructed is being fit together into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, 22. and in Whom you are built together into a habitation of God by the Spirit.*

These verses in the book of Ephesians are critical in helping us believers discern and understand the structure and composition of the Body of Christ, the church. The Apostle Paul presents us the depth and width of the love of God for the world, as he sent his only begotten son to die as a sacrificial lamb and take our guilt and shame in the cross.

Now let's continue reading in the book of Romans 8:30. (Please notice the past tense used in verse 30)

**30** *And those whom He predestined, He also called; and those whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also glorified.* **31** *What then shall we say in view of these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* **32** *He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?* **33** *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*

We have been predestined, invited, justified and glorified. All the verbs are in past tense. It's already done. It's past, its Jesus completed works.

Now let's go back to Colossians 2:9-17. I emphasize the fact that we are no longer condemned, when it says in verse 2:14 that the accusations that were contrary to us were blotted out. Let's read this verse again.

Colossians 2:9-17 *(King James Version - KJV)*

**14** *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

Wow! Did you understand what Jesus did for us at the cross?

These verses in Colossians 2:9-17 **are** in total agreement with what the Prophet Isaiah said;

Let's read Isaiah 44:22; *(King James Version (KJV))*

**22** *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

Jesus wiped away with water, legal decrees of accusations (based upon the Old Covenant of Law) and nailed all of them to his cross.

Every accusation made against us, past, present and future was blotted out. This was done almost two thousand years ago by Christ. He did it before we were born.

As we read this verse in the King James Bible, we notice that most of the Bibles today do not translate from the Greek uniformly, and instead of the word blotted they use the word annulled. This word does not reflect the correct meaning and Hebrew context of the act of wiping away letters written in ink, as in a parchment of lambskin, papyrus or wood. I'll explain why.

Let's look and the word blotted, on the original Greek manuscript. The word used for blotted is the Greek **root** word **exaleiphō** ἐξάλειφω *(Strongs Concordance Number g1813)*.

The Thayer Lexicon Dictionary titled "*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*", provides the following definition: (Published around the year 1890)

1) to anoint or wash in every part

1a) to besmear: i.e. cover with lime (to whitewash or plaster)

2) to wipe off, wipe away

2a) to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out

In the context of Colossians 2, the meaning obviously is to wipe completely with water the decree of accusations against us. The edicts and decrees in Roman times were written with ink.

Roman Government Officials wrote over papyrus rolls, wooden tablets and lambskin parchments. They often reused the more expensive parchments by washing the written ink with water. Levite scribes in ink also wrote the ordinances of Jewish Law over parchments of lambskin.

Read again Colossians 2:14 which read;

**14** *blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

Now we can understand the meaning of "*Blotting out the Handwriting*". The Law, with its ordinances; is against us. Because the Law is perfect and we cannot fulfill it. During Baptism, when we are immersed in water, we died legally to the Law. The Law has no effect upon a man once he dies, and every accusation written against us, IS BLOTTED OUT by the cleansing of Baptism waters.

Today, non Christian Jews still observe the Law of the Old Covenant, rejecting the new covenant IN JESUS, The Gospel of Grace.

These orthodox Jews (Law Observing Jews) show their adherence to the 613 mitzvahs of the Law by dressing with a covering called "The Tallit", which has strings (or threads) hanging from the corners. These strings are called *Tzitzits*. They represent The Law and ordinances of Moses to which they are committed to obey every day of their lives.

Let's see the text in the Old Testament from where they claim is the commandment for them to obey.

Deuteronomy 22:12 (Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

**12** *Thou shalt make thee gedilim (fringes, tzitzis, twisted threads) upon the four corners of thy garment, wherewith thou coverest thyself.*



Most observing Jews will have a Tallit for life. They treat it as a sacred garment.

Once they die, the Jewish burial rites include the cutting of the fringes (threads) in the Tallit. Meaning, that the Law no longer has dominion over the deceased.

This right here is the importance of right believing the words of the Apostle Paul when he said in Colossians 2:12-13; (*One New Man (ONM)*)

*12. because you were buried with Him in immersion, by means of Whom you also were raised through your faith in the working of God, the One Who raised Him from the company of the dead: 13. and although you were dead in your transgressions and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive, together with Himself, when He granted forgiveness of all the transgressions in us.*

We were buried with Jesus in Baptism and he made us ALIVE, together with himself, righteous, sinless, when God raised him from the company of the dead. By dying and resurrecting with Jesus in baptismal waters, we are truly alive IN JESUS, a new creation, born again, with no condemnation and the righteousness of Christ Jesus imputed to all of those who believe in their hearts and confess him publicly.

This verse also says "*and took it out of the way*". In the original manuscript the word that is used is the Greek root word *airō* (ah'ee-ro) αἶρω with the (*Strongs Concordance Number g142*). The Thayer Lexicon titled "*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*" (*Published around the year 1890*), provides the following definition:

- 1) to raise up, elevate, lift up; 1a) to raise from the ground, take up: stones
- 2) to take upon one's self and carry what has been raised up, to bear
- 3) to bear away what has been raised, carry off
- 3c) to remove
- 3d) to carry off, carry away with one
- 3e) to appropriate what is taken
- 3f) to take away from another what is his or what is committed to him, to take by force
- 3h) to take from among the living, either by a natural death, or by violence 3i) cause to cease

When I read these definitions with the Hebrew mindset, I perceive that the accusation that was "*lifted up*" was in reality a heavy yoke. The yoke bulls carried in order to pull a heavy weight, the yoke that the condemned carried and kept them in bondage, unable to free themselves. When you remove a yoke from a person in captivity, you are literally lifting up the thing that keeps him a prisoner, the heavy yoke.

Jesus took away the accusations, **lifted up** the heavy yoke on top of our shoulders, and nailed ALL OF THEM, past, present and future, to the cross. Hallelujah!! And then he gave us something so precious, so marvelous, that once we grasp it's meaning we can only praise him in total awe. Jesus inputted us his RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Let's read Romans 3:21-22, and 3:25-26; (*New Living Translation - NLT*)

*21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago.*

*22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.*

*25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.*

In Jesus WE ARE RIGHTEOUS TO GOD.

And Baptism is an urgent matter for any believing Christian. We join the body of Christ and God declares us righteous in his sight.

Amen and Hallelujah!!

Baptism is mentioned in many verses in the the New Testament, like *Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:4-5, Mark 16:16, Luke 3:16, Luke 3:21-22, John 3:23, Acts 2:38, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12, Acts 8:38, Acts 9:18, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:31-33, Acts 18:8, Acts 19:5, Acts 22:16, 1Corinthians 12:1, 1Peter 3:21, Colossians 2:12, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:4-5, Romans 6-1-18.*

Read these verses and pray to the Father and ask Him for understanding, his comforter, promised guide and teacher. **Read each chapter keeping in mind the Hebrew context of the scriptures.** There is one thing that jumps at you when you read; as soon as they believed, they were baptized. No formal training, discipleship, theological seminary. Just believe in your heart, confess with your mouth, and be saved.

Paul's epistle to the Romans is the treasure trove. The Apostle Paul was a particular Jew, small in stature, faint in voice and most probably almost blind by the end of his ministry. But the Lord Jesus gave him a wonderful and deeper revelation than all of the others Apostles combined. Jesus revealed mysteries to Paul that no other Apostle had. Paul said once the he went to the third heaven, and saw and heard things that no one could express in words.

Let's read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (*New Living Translation - NLT*).

*1 This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. 2 I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. 3 Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know 4 that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell. 5 That experience is worth boasting about, but I'm not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses. 6 If I wanted to boast, I would be no fool in doing so, because I would be telling the truth. But I won't do it, because I don't want anyone to give me credit beyond what they can see in my life or hear in my message, 7 even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. 8 Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. 9 Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 10 That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

The Book of Romans is a good place to start studying Baptism, Salvation, Righteousness and God's Mysteries revealed to Paul. In his writings we have a complete set of tools to grow and strengthen our faith.

May God find you and your loved ones in Shalom and Total Health, Amen!

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