

HIGHER AIM WITH DR. CURT DODD

The Symbolism Of The Ordinances

What We Believe | Part 4 | Ephesians 2:8-9

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever looked the part but not felt the part? It is easy to put on the right clothes, say the right things, and show up at the right places. We can look spiritual, carry a Bible, and attend church, leading others to assume we know exactly what we believe. But the truth is, many people who look the part are on shaky ground when it comes to their own faith. Biblical ignorance is at an all time high in our culture.

This is why it is so important to know what we believe, anchored not in tradition or opinion, but in the Word of God. The central question must always be, “What does the Bible teach?” As we align our lives with Scripture, we build our faith on a firm foundation. This leads us to a crucial belief that separates us from many other traditions: our understanding of the ordinances of the church.

KEY POINTS

1. Salvation is by Grace Through Faith Alone, Not by Works

The Bible is clear: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is a gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.” This truth is the foundation for understanding everything else about our faith. Our salvation does not come because we did something, whether it is performing good works, taking Communion, or being baptized. There is nothing we can do to add to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. While some traditions teach that the elements of Communion or the waters of baptism have saving power, Scripture tells us our hope is in Christ alone. The ability to believe is a gift from God, not something we earn through religious rituals.

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2. The Ordinances are Powerful Symbols of Our Identification with Christ

Baptism and Communion are the two ordinances we practice as a church. We do not see them as sacraments that save, but as powerful symbols that declare a spiritual reality. The word for baptism in the Bible is the Greek word *baptizo*, which means “to immerse” or “to go under.” This physical act is a picture of a profound spiritual truth: our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When a believer is immersed in the water, they are declaring that their old life of sin is buried with Christ. When they are raised out of the water, they are celebrating their new life in Him. Likewise, Communion is a symbolic remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice. He is our Passover lamb, and through these ordinances, we celebrate our identification with Him and proclaim His death until He comes again.

Understanding that baptism and Communion are symbols does not diminish their importance; it clarifies their purpose. They are not magic rituals that secure our salvation. Instead, they are beautiful, God-given pictures that point us to the one who does save us: Jesus Christ. Our hope is not found in a piece of bread, a cup of juice, or water from a baptistry. Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

A pastor friend of Dr. Dodd, Gene Smith, recently faced the end of his life. From his hospice bed, he shared that he was not afraid. His confidence was not in the religious acts he had performed over a lifetime of ministry. His confidence was in the person he was about to see. His hope was in Christ. That is where true, lasting hope flows from. It is found not in what we do for God, but in what He has done for us through His Son. Our confidence for eternity rests entirely on this: we have turned from our sin and thrown ourselves helplessly and hopelessly on Christ.

