



## Pour It Out!

Don't be worried about throwing out Jesus when you empty your life of the putrid and muddy waters of *Bad News Religion*.

I have this wacky notion that my salvation is completely paid in full, and that nothing I can ever do will make any contribution to what Jesus has already done. It's called grace, and it's so good that some believe it's too-good-to-be-true.

There are those who are convinced I have gone too far with this grace thing, and that I've thrown out the baby with the bath water.

You can imagine my relief when I read an article by Cora Holder (*Proclamation*, November-December 2004). Ms. Holder used to be involved in a legalistic religion that judged her life on the basis of her obedience to unbiblical demands.

She said that the warning—"don't throw out the baby with the bath water" was one she took seriously when she first started to cautiously dump the bath water of unbiblical teachings that have nothing to do with the cross of Christ.

So at first she was careful and was even momentarily distracted by some of the beautiful water lilies that floated on top of the putrid water. There are external products of religious legalism that seem to be beneficial and helpful. But all that glitters is not gold.

One person who read my book, *Bad News Religion*, wrote to me and said that, while I had some bad experiences with legalistic religion, I shouldn't assume that many others have also had the same troubling experiences. My answer? Don't be deceived by beautiful flowers—they can grow even in polluted water!

As I read Ms. Holder's article, my mind drifted back over 50 years ago to life on a farm in south Texas. I can't remember all of the reasons, but I do remember a brief period of time when the septic tank was full, and we had to use one tub of water for all of the baths we took. The tub was not emptied until everyone had bathed, and as I recall, the youngest ones were the last ones in line. At seven years of age I always volunteered to

miss my bath, and on that occasion I had good reason.

By the time I finished my bath, the water looked like the muddy waters of the Brazos River where we caught catfish. That was one tub that desperately needed to be emptied!

Ms. Holder admitted that when she first started to discard unbiblical teachings and traditions she was cautious, carefully straining the grimy waters of her past religious beliefs and practices, wanting to make sure she didn't throw out baby Jesus. She said, "After much straining the water was really getting shallow, but I still couldn't see a baby...I started thinking that maybe I didn't know what a baby looked like."

And finally, she said she was shocked to find out that there was no Jesus at all in the dirty bath water of the religious teachings, rituals and rites she had once held so dear. Lots of strange beliefs and practices were poured out, so much so that the strainer became clogged. But she discovered that the baby was never in the tub, because "the ones who filled the tub refused to accept the New Covenant."

Finally, she describes the glorious moment when she threw out all of the bath water of her past life of legalistic religion. "When the tub was upended, the most awesome symbol of all was under it. There, hidden from the view of anyone who was focused on the dirty water, was an empty cross!"

If you are struggling with unbiblical practices that attach themselves to your life like barnacles on a boat, by all means empty the bathtub. Don't be worried about throwing out Jesus when you empty your life of the putrid and muddy waters of *Bad News Religion*.

Get rid of any slavery to the old (Galatians 4:30). Pour it out! And then, rest in the refreshing streams of living water that come from Jesus. Luxuriate in him. Let him cleanse you from all of the performance-based religion that once oppressed you. □

—Greg Albrecht