



Lesson 5

Baptism

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In past studies we have looked at the way God grants us the forgiveness of sins. We've seen that forgiveness is not dependant on our good works, but rather God offers it to us because of Christ's work. We've seen that we receive the forgiveness of sins through faith. And we've seen that this faith is created and strengthened by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word. All of this God does simply because of his grace — that undeserved love that he feels for all people.

In our next two lessons we want to look at other ways that God shares his grace with us — through the Sacraments. We define the sacraments in this manner.

☑ **DEFINITION: The Sacraments** — are:

1. a sacred act started by Jesus
2. in which the words of forgiveness are linked to something you can see and touch
3. by means of which God offers, gives, and assures us of the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life

Using that definition we see only two sacraments in the Scriptures: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just like God's Word, these Sacraments serve as ways God shows us his grace. In church terminology, we often call these "Means of Grace."

☑ **DEFINITION: Means of Grace** — the gospel in word and sacraments, by which God offers and gives us the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life

We begin the study of the sacraments by looking at baptism. And the questions that we will want to answer in this study are:

- ◆ What is baptism?
- ◆ How can water save us?
- ◆ What does my baptism mean for me today?

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Ephesians 5:25-26 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with *water* through the word.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 [John the Baptist said,] "I baptize you with *water*..."

Acts 8:36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is *water*. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

- 1) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is one component of Baptism?
- 2) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is the other component of Baptism?

Ephesians 5:25-26 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to *make* her *holy, cleansing* her by the washing with water through the word.

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and *wash your sins away*, calling on his name.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Mark 16:16 [Jesus said,] “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...”

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

- 3) **According to the italicized portions of those verses, what does baptism do?**
- 4) **Therefore, what gifts are offered in the sacrament of baptism? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)**

On the basis of what we’ve looked at so far, how would you answer that question, “WHAT IS BAPTISM?”

The next question we need to consider is...

HOW CAN WATER SAVE US?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Romans 6:3-5 Or don’t you know that all of us who were *baptized into Christ Jesus* were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

1 Peter 3:21 This water (the water of the flood at the time of Noah) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*.

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have *clothed yourselves with Christ*.

- 5) **According to the italicized portions of those passages, to whom are we linked when we are baptized?**
- 6) **Therefore, the power of baptism to offer forgiveness *doesn’t* come from the water. Where does that power to forgive come from? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)**

Baptism offers forgiveness of sins and salvation by linking us to Christ. Through baptism, we receive the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection. Let's look at how this is accomplished. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through *faith* in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your *faith*.

Galatians 2:16 We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by *faith* in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our *faith* in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by *faith* in Christ.

Romans 15:18,19 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done — by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

7) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is it that links a person to Christ?

8) According to the underlined portions of those passages, how is that link established?

Now let's look precisely at what happens in baptism. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

John 3:5,6 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and *the Spirit*. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but *the Spirit* gives birth to spirit."

Titus 3:4,5 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the *Holy Spirit*.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the *Holy Spirit*."

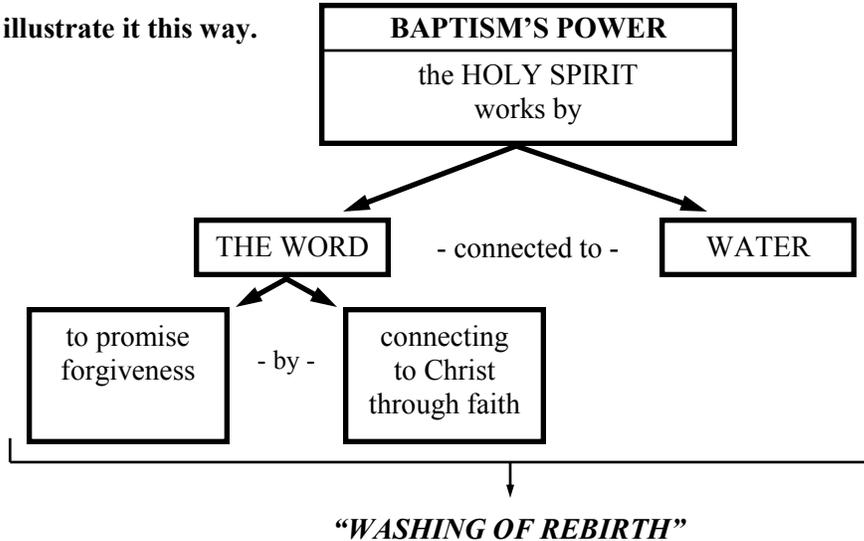
9) Earlier we said that baptism consisted of water connected to God's Word. In these passages we see why the word is the part of baptism that gives it power. According to the italicized portions of those passages, who works through the Word in baptism?

10) Based on the answers to questions #7, 8, and 9, what do you think "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is in Acts 2:38?

On the basis of what we have looked at in this section of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, "HOW CAN WATER SAVE US?"

THE WATER OF BAPTISM, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING. HOWEVER, THROUGH GOD'S WORD, WHICH IS CONNECTED WITH THE WATER, THE _____ CREATES (OR STRENGTHENS) SAVING _____ IN A PERSON'S HEART. THIS THEN LINKS THAT PERSON TO _____.

You could illustrate it this way.



This illustrates that the water, by itself, could accomplish nothing. But coupled with God's powerful Word the miracle of baptism takes place.

The next question that we need to consider, then, is...

FOR WHOM IS BAPTISM INTENDED?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Psalm 14:3 (also Romans 3:12) There is *no one* who *does good*, not even one.

Romans 3:23 *All have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God.

Genesis 8:21 Every inclination of [mankind's] heart is evil from childhood.

Psalm 51:5 Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh. (Note: "Flesh" in the New Testament is generally used in the sense of "sinful flesh.")

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is **hostile to God**. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is **death**.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but **sent them to hell**.

- 11) According to the italicized portions of those passages, who is guilty of sin?
- 12) According to the underlined portions of those passages, at what time in our lives are we first considered guilty of sin in God's eyes?
- 13) According to the portions of those passages that are printed in boldface, what happens if our sin is not taken care of?

Acts 22:16 Be baptized and *wash your sins away*.

John 3:5 Unless a man [literally “Unless anyone...”] is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 2:38,39 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the *forgiveness of your sins*. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.

14) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what does baptism do to sins?

15) According to the underlined portions of those passages, whom is this blessing meant for?

16) And whom would that therefore include? (Look at the last part of Acts 2:39.)

Therefore, one way we can tell who baptism was intended for is by looking at who has the *need* for baptism. The second way we can tell who baptism was intended for is by looking at Christ’s command to his disciples (including us) which he gave before he ascended.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, " *All authority in heaven and on earth* has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

17) According to the italicized portion of those passages, what does Jesus have?

18) And according to the underlined portion of those passages, what does Jesus ask us to do?

19) Who do you think would be included in “all nations”?

Incidentally, it’s important to note that Jesus does not command baptism alone. Not only are the disciples to baptize, they are to “teach...everything.” Baptism is not a magic ritual which saves a person, no matter what. Baptism is a miracle through which the Holy Spirit creates saving faith. But can faith ever be lost? Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

1 Corinthians 10:12 If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Luke 8:13 They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Psalms 119:28 Strengthen me according to your word.

20) On the basis of those passages, can a person fall away from faith?

21) How does the Holy Spirit keep our faith strong?

On the basis of what we have looked at in this section of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, “FOR WHOM IS BAPTISM INTENDED?”

Unfortunately, that is something that not all church bodies believe and confess. Some churches refuse to baptize infants. We maintain that Scriptures are clear on the matter. “All nations” is a clear statement. The burden of proof is on those who would claim that “all nations” would *not* include children. They must produce evidence — from Scripture — which would show that children are not to be included. Additionally, the teaching that we are sinful from the moment of conception (due to original sin) is clear. God’s intention to damn sinners is clear. And his promise to save sinners through the means of grace, which would include baptism, is crystal clear. Arguments against infant baptism are *never* made on a Scriptural basis. For a more detailed look at the fallacy behind rejections of infant baptism, please see Appendix VIII.

The final question we need to consider is...

WHAT DOES MY BAPTISM MEAN FOR ME TODAY?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature desires *what is contrary to the Spirit*, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other.

Romans 6:3-6 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life**.

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that **we should no longer be slaves to sin**.

Colossians 2:11,12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

22) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what does our sinful nature always want?

23) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is one of the things baptism does?

24) Therefore, what is one thing that our baptism should remind us of every day? (Look at the portions of those passages printed in boldface.)

We will not always succeed in living that “new life” — a life that gives perfect glory to God. Therefore baptism will remind us of something else, as well. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Psalm 38:18 I *confess* my iniquity; I am *troubled* by my sin.

2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings *repentance* that leads to salvation.

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in *repentance* and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

25) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what will we do when we fail in our life of service to God and commit sin?

26) Part of repentance is remembering why we have forgiveness. When we sin, where do we turn for forgiveness? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)

DEFINITION: Repentance — sorrow over sin accompanied by reliance on Christ alone for forgiveness

When we commit sin our baptism reminds us that Christ’s righteousness covers over that sin (cf. Galatians 3:27). We therefore have the comfort of knowing that when God looks at us he doesn’t see our sinfulness, but Christ’s perfection. That comfort is the beauty of baptism. It is summed up well in the following passage.

Isaiah 54:10 “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Baptism is a way that God makes a “covenant of peace” with us. A covenant is a legal agreement between two parties. This covenant is based on faith in the work of Jesus Christ. The beauty of baptism is that even when we aren’t faithful in keeping God’s commands, God is faithful in offering us forgiveness. His love for us “will not be shaken.” His covenants will not “be removed.” Incidentally, God’s covenant of peace — his promise to forgive — is the reason that we don’t need to be re-baptized every time we sin. Our unfaithfulness cannot negate God’s faithfulness!

On the basis of what we have looked at in this portion of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, “WHAT DOES MY BAPTISM MEAN FOR ME TODAY?”

MY BAPTISM SERVES AS A DAILY REMINDER THAT...

TAKING IT DEEPER

- A) Agree or Disagree — The power of baptism lies in the holy water.
- B) Agree or Disagree — Baptism is a ceremony where we say that we want God to take care of this person.
- C) Agree or Disagree — Babies are too young to understand baptism.
- D) Agree or Disagree — Babies are too young to believe in Jesus.
- E) Agree or Disagree — It makes no difference whether you are baptized or not.
- F) Agree or Disagree — You should be re-baptized if you switch religions and become Lutheran.
- G) Agree or Disagree — We lose the blessings of baptism if we don't act like Christians.
- H) Agree or Disagree — Babies who die without baptism are damned.
- I) Question: Is it necessary that someone be baptized in order to be saved? Why or why not?
- J) Question: Baptism is given to us by Christ in the New Testament. The Old Testament believers didn't have baptism. Does this mean they were somehow "less Christian"? Why or why not?
- K) Question: Who has the power to baptize?
- L) Question: If baptism creates faith, why don't we fly over a football stadium with a blimp, dump thousands of gallons of water on the crowd, and announce over the loudspeaker, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"?
- M) Exercise — In Appendix IX you will find Martin Luther's summary of the doctrine of Holy Baptism as it appears in the Small Catechism. Read through that summary and determine if it is an accurate confession of what the Bible teaches.