

## **Baptism: the Washing of Water By the WORD**

Titus 3:5-7, October 24, 2010  
Trinity Sunday XXI

Beloved of the Lord.....The baptism of a new baby, an infant, is always a special and joyous occasion in a truly Christian Church, for we know what God does through this Means of Grace, namely He by His grace gives, and grants to this child, SALVATION by the forgiveness of sins, even the faith to believe. In baptism a child is born again, born from above, his mother being the True Church, his Father being the eternal Father of Mercies. When a Christian mother then gives birth, and then brings this gift from God to the baptismal font, heaven itself is increased and grows. C.F.W. Walther said, "Reflect, is it not a great privilege that God should hold you worthy to give life and existence to an immortal being, called to eternal life and already dearly redeemed through Christ? And when the dear infant is happily born into the world, that is a greater event than one thinks. For then the child is there in order that it may know God for all eternity, to praise Him, and to be blessed forever. If God were to give you a million dollars, that would be a great gift far inferior to that of such a little child."

Today then dearly redeemed and baptized into God's grace, being justified by the very blood of this world's Savior, let us now in the hearing of the Word give all honor and glory to God, by a proper understanding of Holy Baptism, a Gospel covenant of God's grace. For baptism is not something we do for God, but something that God does for us, even to us, this "washing of regeneration", this "renewing of the Holy Ghost."

I. Original sin and human reason. How sad then it is to see today so many despise infant baptism. Quite often such will ask us, "Where can you show God commands the baptism of infants?" To this we answer "Where can you show God forbidding the baptism of infants?" The burden of proof falls upon them, not us, for we have the clear command of Jesus in Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them....." Children and infants are certainly a part of ALL NATIONS for whom Christ died! And if it was so contrary to God's will that infants and children be baptized, wouldn't God make it clear in the Bible? Wouldn't Jesus then say, "make disciples of all nations baptizing everyone EXCEPT little children"? But Jesus did not say that, did He! The reason why so many churches today refuse to baptize infants is they are giving human reason a higher place than God's Word. They *reason* that infants cannot believe and have saving

faith, and they *reason it to be unreasonable* that children are born in sin, thus needing salvation.

Yet in John 3 Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." If anyone is to reach that heavenly home above, a spiritual birth is necessary, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh", namely we are all born in a corrupt and sinful state, received from our corrupt and sinful parents. Sinful parents cannot give birth to holy and sinless children. David writes in Psalm 51, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." The Hebrew word for "shapen" means to twist, whirl, or writhe in pain. The Hebrew word for "iniquity" means not just sin, but perversity, a moral evil. Thus to be "shapen in iniquity" is to be painful born in a perverse or evil state, namely born in sin. And even before birth, while we are yet in the womb David writes, "in sin did my mother conceive me". From our earliest existence, conception, we were in a totally sinful state without any goodness. Thus this one passage alone teaches we are not only sinful from birth, but sinful from conception. Being born in sin, we are naturally bent in the wrong direction, and our natural inclination is always to do evil. We are in no way then born in the image of God, rather we are born in the image of our first parents, sinful Adam and sinful Eve.

This is why all children need Holy Baptism, for it is the only means we know wherein God brings to them salvation, faith, and the forgiveness of sins. Don't ever let anyone tell you then that baptism is unnecessary and useless, for God Himself says in I Peter 3:21, "Baptism doth also now save us!" For we are in no way saved "by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy HE SAVED US BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION." God saves us by baptism! Thus it is not our deed of being baptized which saves us, but we are saved by God's grace which He has placed into baptism.

II. The water connected to the Word. Listen closely now to another proof passage that God washes away our sins by the Word connected to the water in baptism. Ephesians 5:26 says, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Could God's Word be any more clear? God sanctifies, that is He makes HOLY His Church, WITH THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE WORD. Thus the forgiveness of sins Christ earned for all men by His body and blood on the cross, that "which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, " COMES TO US ABUNDANTLY BY THE MEANS OF HOLY BAPTISM, BY THE WASHING OF WATER BY THE

WORD. When we baptize little babies then, we don't just sprinkle water upon their heads, but we speak the words God has commanded, saying, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is not literally the water that washes away the sins, but the Gospel Word which brings Christ, who washes away the sins. It is the Gospel Word then which makes unholy children holy, by that holy Child Jesus Christ, "that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

III. Reason verses faith. In the case of infants and children then, God not only gives full forgiveness of sins, but He also regenerates them, creates faith. Baptism is the WASHING OF REGENERATION and regeneration is rebirth, to be born from above. Thus when men *reason* infants cannot believe, because they cannot hear God's Word or think it through in their mind, we ask them two very simple question, "Is faith a gift from God or a work of man?" and "What does reason have to do with faith?" Reason says "I cannot see God therefore he cannot be", but "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Moreover those who say infants and children cannot believe, have a very superficial understanding of the Bible. Jesus Himself said, "whoso shall offend one of these LITTLE ONES WHICH BELIEVE IN ME, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Likewise, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Likewise, to the unbelieving Pharisees who told Jesus to rebuke the children for singing Jesus' praises, the Lord answered, "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of BABES AND SUCKLINGS thou hast perfected praise." We could speak similarly to those Christian parents today oppose infant baptism. We could say, "If you teach that children cannot believe until they reach the age of accountability, are your own children hypocrites when they as little children sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so?" Will you tell your children "Stop singing that, for you are too young to believe in Jesus?" Isn't this a *reasonable* argument?

But of course true Christians do not base their faith on reason, but our faith is built firmly upon the Word of God which declares Jesus Christ saying, "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." And "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Thanks be to God that the Holy Ghost has taught us this truth by the Word which comes both through the water, and the preaching of faith. For "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ the Lord or come to him, but that the Holy Ghost

has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith."

IV. The comfort of our own baptism. To this day then dear Christian, our baptism brings us the greatest of comfort, for "it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare." Though we daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but punishment, God has planned out our salvation, chosen and elected us through Christ before the foundation of the world! It was no accident that our parents brought us to baptism as infants or we were later baptized after hearing His Word as adults. Nor was it an accident that "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation". Nor was it an accident that as we physically grew and matured though we spiritually fell into numerous sins and shameful deeds, God did not cast us away but lifted us up when we had fallen. Nor was it an accident when we had to struggle with controversy in our churches, for God through such taught us the error of our ways, and that the truth is worth fighting for, for future generations. No dear Christian, your baptism, your hearing of the Word, your preservation of faith, these trials and tribulations were all a part of God's gracious plan. And just as He laid out your path in the past, so He has laid out your path in the future which leads to heaven. "Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And even if now you worry about the future, if you are worried that some day you might deny your baptismal vow, take comfort for Jesus said, "Fear not, only believe". It is ever God's firm and unshakable promises of grace and salvation which keep us from falling. Jesus promises, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand." "If God be for us, who can condemn us?" And "He that believeth on Him is not condemned."

Oh what a joy we have dear Christians, when we remember our own Holy Baptism! Every day then be sure to remember that God long ago planned out your salvation, secured it, signed and sealed it to you in your own baptism. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration", the washing of water by the Word. "That being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Amen.