



Cleansed and Fed: The Sacramental Life God Has Poured His Love Upon Us

BAPTISM SAVES

Introduction:

A boy says, "If I had been on the Titanic when it sunk, I wouldn't have drowned, because I know how to swim." What's wrong with his line of thinking?

How is it that you or I may fail to appreciate the saving nature of our baptism?

Our Need

Highlight and discuss phrases from the following scripture passages that show that we were all born into this world needing to be rescued:

Psalm 51:5 - Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Ephesians 2:1 - As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death.

Romans 5:12 - ... Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Revelation 20:14-15 - The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Highlight phrases from the following passages that show that we still need to be rescued:

Romans 7:18 - I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Romans 7:21 - When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Matthew 15:19 - For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Isaiah 64:6 - All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

“Lord, forgive me for the times I’ve sinned.”

- What do you like about this plea for rescue?
- Based on the scriptures we just read, what’s missing?

A trick question: What are some reasons why it might not be important to look for God’s rescue each day?

*Sing or say the following hymn stanza together
(to the tune of “Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice”)*

You were before your day of birth,
Indeed, from your conception,
Condemned and lost with all the earth,
None good, without exception.
For like your parents’ flesh and blood,
Turned inward from the highest good,
You constantly denied him.

*Paul Gerhardt
Christian Worship Supplement, Hymn 736, s.2*

The Lord's Rescue

Highlight and discuss phrases in the following scripture passages that describe the benefits of Baptism.

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

Titus 3:4-7 - 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, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Mark 16:16 - Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

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 and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."

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,...

Baptism doesn't work apart from Jesus.

Put a "†" next to the preceding passages that teach us this.

Baptism doesn't work apart from faith.

Put an "F" next to one of the preceding passages that teaches us this.

Agree or disagree: Everybody who is baptized will automatically go to heaven one day.

Agree or disagree: A person can get to heaven without being baptized.

Agree or disagree: It doesn't matter whether we're baptized or not.

Explain: A person who denies infants God's gift of Baptism is probably someone who doesn't understand what Baptism means.

Sing or say the next stanza of the hymn.

But all of that was washed away -
Immersed and drowned forever.
The water of your baptism day
Restored again whatever
Old Adam and his sin destroyed
And all our sinful selves employed
According to our nature.

*Paul Gerhardt
Christian Worship Supplement, Hymn 736, s.3*

The Bible's Pictures of Baptism

Noah's Ark

1 Peter 3:21 - In [Noah's ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water 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.

What are some ways in which the water of the great flood is rightly called a "saving" water?

Using Martin Luther's "Flood Prayer" (1523) as a guide, mention some ways in which the baptismal picture of the flood can help you in your life of faith.

"Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father, through your stern judgment the unbelieving world was destroyed by the flood, but according to your great mercy, you saved Noah and his family. You engulfed stubborn Pharaoh and his army in the waters of the Red Sea but led your people through those same waters to safety on dry land. In the waters of the Jordan your own Son was baptized and anointed with the Spirit. By these signs you foreshadowed the precious, cleansing bath which you give us in Holy Baptism.

"Clinging to your command and promise, we ask that you would look with favor on us and all who are baptized. Through the water of Baptism, drown in us all sin inherited from Adam and any other evil we may do. Set us apart from the unbelieving world and hold us safe and secure in the holy ark of the Church. Keep us always fervent in spirit and joyful in hope so that we may honor your holy name and at last receive, together with all your people, the promised inheritance of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

A Robe of Righteousness

Revelation 7:13-14

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The book of Revelation is full of figurative, symbolic language. Find a clue in this Revelation passage which shows that the white robes St. John sees are to be understood figuratively, not literally.

What do these white robes in St. John’s vision symbolize? Why is this a fitting picture for believers in heaven?

Galatians 3:26-27

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

What does it mean to be “clothed with Christ” already in this life? What is the alternative?

Below are some situations where the “robe of righteousness” aspect to Baptism can be especially comforting. Can you add to this list?

- You’ve been battling temptation; recently you’ve given in and you can’t shake your sense of guilt and regret.
- The people around you don’t seem to appreciate you.
- You’ve just been diagnosed with a terminal disease.
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Sing or say the next stanza of our hymn.

In Baptism we now put on Christ -
Our shame is fully covered
With all that he once sacrificed
And freely for us suffered.
For here the flood of his own blood
Now makes us holy, right, and good
Before our heavenly Father.

*Paul Gerhardt
Christian Worship Supplement, Hymn 736, s.4*

A Unique Gift from God

*“To be baptized in God’s name is to be baptized not by men, but by God himself.”
Large Catechism, Part IV, Paragraph 10.*

What are some places other than God’s Word where we sometimes turn to find comfort? How well do they work? Why will they never work for long?

What makes Baptism unlike any of those other sources of comfort?

Same/ Different? Discuss the comfort of Baptism and the comfort of Communion.

You know better than anyone else what’s currently going on in your life.
Jot down something about Baptism that you would like to take home and use.

Sing or say the next stanza of our hymn.

O Christian, firmly hold this gift
And give God thanks forever!
It gives the power to uplift
In all that you endeavor.
When nothing else revives your soul,
Your baptism stands and makes you whole
And then in death completes you.

*Paul Gerhardt
Christian Worship Supplement, Hymn 736, s.5*

Close with Luther’s Flood Prayer, p.4