

## Written Copy: Romans 6:3-5 “Why Do I Need to be Baptized?”

Baptism of our Lord  
Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Text: Romans 6:3-5

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

### The text's intent

That as I live out my life as a saint and sinner I should see God's grace in Christ not as an excuse to sin, but through my baptism the abolishing of my slavery to my sinful nature. In my baptism I am intimately united with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, so that just as my sin washed onto Him and He died to remove it from me, the enslaving power of my sinful nature also dies with Him. And I am intimately united with His resurrection so that just as He rose glorified body and soul, I rise to live by a new life led by the Spirit working through my new nature, one He creates and feeds through the means of grace. Whereas the old nature desired to please myself this new one desires to please Christ out of love and thankfulness for all He has given to me through my baptism. And just as He rose again never to die, I can know and hold fast to His promise that on the Last Day I too will rise again completely glorified body and soul, never to die again, but to live with Him forever. I have this assurance for whenever my conscience becomes stricken with guilt over my sin, by faith I know that I have died to sin and have been reborn to a life with Christ now, all my sins washed to the cross and removed from my account, so that I am united with Him as the Father's precious child now, and will live with Him forever.

### Focus Statement:

Baptism is the invisible work of the Spirit in the Gospel made visible and knowable in the water combined with the Word. It contains Christ's promise that you are intimately united in His death, your sins washed to the cross where they are no longer counted against you, and the enslaving power of your sinful nature is broken, as you die to its control and rule over you. And you are intimately united in His resurrection, a new nature arising with Him from the tomb, one that desires to obey and please Christ out of love and thankfulness. And just as He rose again never to die, my baptism promises I too will rise to eternal life

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

The Work of the Holy Spirit through the proclaiming of the Gospel Message saves. If that is true, why should I be baptized? Because my sinful self is still active, and my conscience spurred on by the devil is at work to move me to sin willfully since its all forgiven. And when I do sin to make me doubt that I'm truly forgiven.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Make use of the means of grace whereby the Holy Spirit reminds us of the promises we have through our baptism and provides us with steadfast faith that all that Christ won for me was given to me that day I was baptized. Those promises are mine.

### Subject Sentence: Baptism: The Spirit's assurance for the Saint/Sinner

## **Introduction**

“Why do I need to be baptized?” Have you ever had that question asked of you, perhaps by your child or your grandchild? If not them, perhaps by a Christian from outside the Lutheran faith. There are many Protestant denominations that do not see anything special about it, certainly nothing supernatural. It is for them an outward sign that one has become a full-fledged member of the Church. Some say that baptism should wait until the person can confess by mouth their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Some non-denominational Churches don’t even see it as necessary for that. Instead it’s something you can do if you so choose to or not. So, if you are asked “Why do I need to be baptized?”, what should you answer?

I would like to spend some time giving you an answer inspired by our text and the Small Catechism’s explanation of the benefits of baptism. In doing so, I pray that not only are you given a better understanding of the necessity of baptism, but through the power of the Spirit that you grow in your appreciation of baptism and the confidence and assurance of faith that Christ gives to you through this Sacrament.

## **Why Do We Need Assurance**

So, is there any rational behind a Christian pondering the need for baptism? Well, there is the Holy Spirit’s work through the Gospel Message preached, read, sung, and even shared by believers like you. Whenever you share the Gospel: that Jesus lived a perfect life, yet suffered and died for our sins, and rose again so that we could know we are forgiven and have eternal life; through that testimony the Spirit can and does work saving faith in the hearts and minds of those who hear it. Through that message the Holy Spirit does the work of conversion, creating faith which believes Jesus grants forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life.

Now, let’s imagine that you are not a believer. Let’s say you came here because your spouse made you come, or you wanted to look good in the sight of your friends, or perhaps you think that attending Church and worshipping, earns you enough credit so that God will bless your days on earth, and let you in through the pearly gates on the Last Day. But you’ve never been baptized. Let’s further say that through that Gospel proclamation here today the Holy Spirit brought you to faith. But before you can arrange a date to be baptized, you die. Would Jesus’ angels take you to be with Him and with us in eternal life? Yes! Most definitely. We see the same thing happen to the thief on the cross. Hanging next to Jesus, in the real presence of the Savior, hearing His words and seeing His actions, the thief is given saving faith, which is why Jesus declares “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.” The argument made is: “The thief on the cross didn’t need to be baptized, so why do I?” You could answer that person, “Do you really want to be the thief on the cross?” But perhaps there is a better answer than that.

First of all, the Lord commands that we be baptized. There are many verses that we could cite, but here are a few. **Ephesians 4:4-5** <sup>4</sup> **There is one body and one Spirit---just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call---<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism** **1 Corinthians 12:13** **For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free---and all were made to drink of one Spirit.** And Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, in response to the conviction his sermon worked in the hearts of those present (**Acts 2:38**) **And Peter said to them, "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.** Then there is Jesus Himself in His final marching orders to the Church before ascending to the Father: **Matthew 28:19-20** <sup>19</sup> **Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** <sup>20</sup> **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** Not to mention what we have in our Gospel Lesson today. John is reluctant to baptize Jesus, knowing that He is the sinless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (**Matthew 3:15**) **But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."** **Then he consented.** If the sinless Son of God needed to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness, how much more do you and I and all humankind?

But Paul gives us another reason why baptism is important. **Romans 6:1** **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** What exactly is Paul getting at here? The spiritual truth about you, and me, and all believers, as Luther once said is: "We are Saints and Sinners at the same time." In the previous chapter Paul described how the Law served to show us just how sinfully disobedient we are, every time we look at it. And in that respect sin seems to grow and flourish in our life. But how should we look at God's gift of grace? It is greater than our sin, covering it all. So, Paul moves on to what can develop out of that. Since grace abounds even more than our sin, why can't we simply live to satisfy our sinful heart?

Paul says you have the answer in your baptism. He writes in **Romans 6:3** **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** What dies in us? It's the power that our sinful nature exerts over us, specifically the power that tempts us to please that sinful nature at the expense of doing what we know is the will of God. What dies is the enslaving power of our sinful nature that moves us to put our wants and needs as more important than God's will and commands. That enslaving power moves us to look for any excuse, even the abundance of grace, as justification for our doing what we want to do, because, after all, Christ forgives. But in Baptism we are so united with Jesus' death that our sinful nature begins to die too, and specifically its power to rule our lives. We die to our desire to rule on the throne of our heart.

## **The Assurance Baptism Gives**

Now Paul recognizes that we are still saints and sinners at the same time. As he told his young protégé in **1 Timothy 1:15** **The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.** Our sinful nature dies a slow death. But in your baptism, all of Jesus' saving work: His life, death, and resurrection are given to you and applied to your life personally. They become God's medicine to shrink and remove that sinful nature just as if it were a tumor.

Jesus lived the perfect sinless life for all people. In His suffering and death He took the punishment for all people. And in His resurrection, He rose again so that all mankind might receive eternal life. Your baptism created a personal and intimate connection with Jesus and His work of salvation. All these gracious gifts He earned for all mankind are given personally to you. His suffering was for your sins, all of them, even the ones you haven't committed. In your baptism all those sins were washed off of you and washed on to Jesus in His baptism. He was baptized to fulfill the righteous plans of the Heavenly Father. He stood in your place and received your baptism, even though He Himself had no sin that needed to be washed off. He did this so that in your baptism all of your sins are washed on to Him. Then He went on to stand in your place and suffer the death your sins deserved. Intimately connected with His death by your baptism He removed your sins from you forever. They are no longer charged to you, you are no longer responsible to pay the price of eternal death and separation from God for them. Jesus did that for you, out of love for you.

And in that intimate baptismal connection He gives to you the credit for the perfect sinless life He lived. That life becomes your life. When the Father looks at you, He no longer sees your disobedience, instead He sees the perfect obedience of His Son. In Jesus baptism, as the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, the Father's voice could be heard exclaiming "**This is My Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**" In your baptism, because you are so intimately connected with Jesus, as all your sins were washed away, all of Jesus' perfect obedience was washed on to you. Just as in Jesus' baptism, when you were baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon you in the baptismal waters, and the Heavenly Father spoke the same words over you; "**This is My beloved son, my beloved daughter, who because of the faith given to them, I am well pleased.**"

In your baptismal connection, you are declared to be a precious child of the Heavenly Father. Jesus earned your adoption into His family. And your baptism stands as the adoption papers. Whenever you might doubt whose you are and what your relationship to God is, remember your baptism. You were called into His family and accepted as His dear child whom He loves. You now live your life with Christ, in His constant presence, through the Holy Spirit who has taken up residence in your heart and life and has never left. Through His presence you and I live out the rest of our days together with our Savior.

And because you are family, you will inherit the family fortune. In baptism you are not only intimately connected with Jesus' death, but also His resurrection. Just as He rose again in glory, never to die again, so will you too on the Last Day. Your body will rise from the grave, and your soul will be glorified-made new. You will be resurrected body and soul to live out your eternity in the intimate and real presence of your Savior, and the all the rest of us, His adopted family, in the perfection of life eternal.

## **Living in That Assurance**

Why do we need such reassurance? Because we are still saints and sinners at the same time. We sin. The law convicts our conscience that we've disobeyed God and we fear His wrath. And the devil is there to whisper to you his lies: "Are you sure God can forgive you for that? Do you know how many times you've failed him this week? Do you know how many times you've asked forgiveness for that and yet have disobeyed Him again? How can you even think you're forgiven? We know we sin, and that causes guilt, which can cause doubt in our hearts that we are really forgiven, really saved, really loved by Christ.

The answer is to remember your baptism. Remember the promises given: that all of your sins have been washed away. And even though you've disobeyed your Heavenly Father, because of your faith in Christ and all that He has done for you in His suffering, death, and resurrection, your baptism stands as proof positive of His forgiveness, and of His grace and mercy which never end for those who believe. Remember the day and place it happened. That is when Christ promises His Spirit began this glorious work for you and in you. And He promises He is still at work today

There's the story of a young man who had done time in prison for auto theft. But there in prison he was introduced to Jesus Christ and the Gospel message. He became a believer. When he got out of jail, he sought out a Lutheran Pastor and asked to be baptized. After some time of instruction, the young man was baptized on a Sunday morning. All those in Church celebrated with this young man as he was a real-life example of the Prodigal Son who had returned home to his Heavenly Father. On his way home from Church he saw, parked on his street, one of his favorite make and model cars that he formerly loved to steal. He thought about how he would go about breaking in and driving off with it. It was then that he felt crushed by a load of guilt. He knew in baptism all of his previous sins of auto theft had been washed away. Yet now here he was adding more. He thought to himself, "My Savior gave His life for me, and this is how I repay Him? The young man frantically called the Pastor to asked to meet with him right away. He wanted the Pastor to baptize him again, because obviously the first time didn't take. The Pastor replied, "A person only needs to be baptized once. That one-time baptism will continue to do its work in you for the rest of your life. And by the way, that guilt and shame you feel, that's your baptism at work. This sin was washed away along with the rest of them. Take heart young man, you are forgiven and loved as His precious child."

## **Conclusion**

And that assurance of continued forgiveness and cleansing is also the gift of baptism. As fast as you sin, even faster it is washed away. The presence of the Holy Spirit given in baptism is the reason we see our sin and feel broken. But through the means of grace the Holy Spirit shows us our Savior and reminds us of all we have received in our baptism. Through the faith that He gives and strengthens He works to assure us that we remain God's precious forgiven children, who have died to sin and are living in our Savior's presence now and will in the eternity to come. Yes, God commands us to be baptized. But not simply to assert dominance over us, or to give Pastors something to do. He commands it because it's His wonderful gift He desires us to have. So, when someone asks that question: "Why should I be baptized?" Maybe a better question is: "Why wouldn't you?" May the Spirit continue to work in your hearts and minds reminding you of your baptism until eternal life to come. Amen.