
REVIEW OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON BAPTISM

for Parents Presenting their Children for the Ordinance

I. Preparation for the Sacrament—Principle of Worship: Lev. 10:3 “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.”

“While, in all ordinances, holy fear and devout reverence should characterize religious worshippers . . . the seals of the covenant should be approached with peculiar solemnity, and with a frame of mind corresponding to the nature and importance of the service—to the spiritual benefits expected from its performance, and to the weighty obligations which it involves.” Thomas Huston, “Preparation for Baptism by Christian Parents,” 1853

A. Self-examination

Particularly, consider the Nature of Vows—Review *CF 22, Of Lawful Oaths and Vows: VI.* [A vow] is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want, whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto.

B. Due consideration of the truths held forth in Baptism

You will be asked: (1) Do you acknowledge _____’s need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?

Here you must consider that:

1. That as a child of Adam, the curse of the covenant of works, transmitted through you, rests upon your child.

Rom. 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . . .”

Eph. 2:1 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins. . . . and were by nature children of wrath. . . .”

2. That no external performance can contribute to salvation, but that God is sovereign in the distribution of His mercy.

Not moral endeavors

Rom. 3:20-22 , “20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight. . . . 21 But now apart from the Law {the} righteousness of God has been manifested . . . 22 even {the} righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. . . .”

Not religious ceremonies

Rom. 4:9-12, “9 Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, “faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.” 10 How then was it reckoned? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; 11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.”

Salvation is of the Lord

Rom. 9:11-16, "11 in order that God's purpose according to {His} choice might stand, not because of works, but because of Him who calls. . . . 15 For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' 16 So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

3. Yet we cannot neglect God-ordained ceremonies; we must act in faith, out of obedience to Christ. Baptism is a means of grace—not a cause, but the occasion. And, faithful in the way Christ teaches, ". . . you have reason to hope for his blessing; for he is wont to bless his own institutions, and to smile upon the means of grace which he hath appointed." Jonathan Edwards

Mat. 28:18-20, "18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. . . ."

4. Salvation is by Christ, through faith, leading to obedience, in every administration of the Covenant of Grace (OT & NT). See CF 7.5-6.

Eph. 2:4-10, "4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. . . . 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

5. OT Administration of Covenant of Grace. Promise—faith—the sign of the Covenant: circumcision—sensible sign, marks a people under the government of God, among whom His grace is specially at work.

Gal. 3:6-9, "Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, {saying} , "all the nations shall be blessed in you." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. "

Gen. 17:10 "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations. . . . thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Note: for Abraham, coming into a covenant relationship with God, the command was "believe, and be circumcised"; with respect to his children the command was "be circumcised, and be raised to believe (i.e., in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord")".

But, the NT *forbids* this everlasting sign. How can this be?

Gal. 5:2-4, "2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. . . . 4 You have been severed from Christ. . . . 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love."

6. NT Administration of Covenant of Grace. Promise—faith—the sign of the Covenant; baptism. Answer to our question: being "baptized into Christ" we are counted as Abraham's offspring.

Gal. 3:26-29, "For 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. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

Christ is circumcised for us, and we are "circumcised" in him through baptism, the NT sign of the Covenant:

Col. 2:11-12, "11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

Note: now for those coming into a covenant relationship with God through the preaching of the Gospel (Eph. 2:11-13) the command is "believe, and be baptized" (Acts 8:12); yet, as with Abraham, with respect to the believer's children the command is "be baptized, and be raised to believe (i.e., in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord")" (Acts 16:31, 33; Eph. 6:4).

C. Due consideration of the privileges held forth in Baptism

You will be asked: (2) Do you claim God's covenant promises in his/her behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for his/her salvation, as you do for your own?

Must stir up a lively exercise of faith—reliance upon Christ—for "without faith it is impossible to please God," Hebr. 11:6

Rm. 3:1-4, "1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? 4 May it never be!"

Outward identification w/people of God—"The visible church is the people among whom God hath set his tabernacle and among whom he is wont to bestow his blessings." Jonathan Edwards

- Providential Care
- Spiritual Government
- Nourished in Word & Sacrament
- Fellowship & love of Covenant Community—living in the midst of the miracle of grace

Upon the exercise of faith, a sign of God's promise, sealed to faith—inward identification w/God's people D. Due consideration of the obligations held forth in Baptism

You will be asked: (3) Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before him/her

- a godly example,
- that you will pray with and for him/her,
- that you will teach him/her the doctrines of our holy religion,
- that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment [particularly discipline], to bring him/her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

II. Review of Baptismal Service

A. The Mode of Baptism & Its Symbolism

CF. Chapter 28. *Of Baptism.*

2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called thereunto.

3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.

The Biblical Image of Pouring or Sprinkling

Joel 2:28 "And it will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. . . ."

Ezek. 36:24-26, "24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Hebr. 9:10-22, "10 since they {relate} only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation. . . . 19 [Moses] took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "this is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." 21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. 22 And according to the Law, {one may} almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebr. 10:22, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

Unlikely immersions!

Acts 2:41, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls."

Acts 16:33 "And he took them that very hour of the night . . . and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household."

B. Congregation's place: witness & shared responsibility in fellowship

"Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?"