

His Baptism and His Blood

V - *A new man should daily emerge*

What is Baptism? This is, as we might remember, the first question our Catechism asks with regards to Baptism. And at heart, all that our Catechism has to say about Baptism is really the answer to that same question: that *Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God's command and combined with God's Word.* What we believe about Baptism cannot and should not be separated from what Holy Scripture teaches altogether, about God and His salvation, about Christ, and about the Christian life; just as nothing else Holy Scripture says in any given verse should be seen in isolation from what Holy Scripture teaches altogether. Holy Scripture is not a collection of disparate sayings; God is not a god of confusion. When any verse of Holy Scripture is used as *the Word of God* in isolation from the whole of Holy Scripture, as if Christians were free to choose which words of God to take to heart and which to disregard, and particularly when a verse is separated and isolated from that which is the *heart* of Biblical teaching, it will lead not only to misunderstanding, but also to all kinds of outright ungodliness and unbelief and direct disobedience to the clear command of God.

This is evident from the multitude of false teachings taught by those who tout the claim *the Bible is the Word of God*; not only do many have women perform as preachers and teachers of the faith, in direct disregard for the clear command of God, nor only do many reject clear teachings of Holy Scripture, such as that *Baptism saves you*, and that the promise of salvation in Baptism is *for you and for your children*, but, even more disastrously, in their preaching and teaching and worship many neglect salvation in Christ, which is the heart of all that Holy Scripture teaches, and devote instead most of their attention, if not all their attention, to things they find more interesting.

Salvation in Christ is the heart of all that Holy Scripture teaches. To Him has been given the name that is above all names, and this because of what He has done for our salvation. For to God, our salvation is the most precious of all, because of His love for us, and because what the Son of God has done for our salvation is the greatest display of the greatest love of all, not only His love for us, but also His love for the Father; for that reason, also, nothing is more precious to God. And nothing is more repulsive to God than when His goodness is neglected or outright rejected, His love for us, and that of the Son for the Father.

Baptism has its place in the whole of what Holy Scripture teaches, and in that which is in the innermost heart of God, His unfathomable love for His most beloved creatures, sinners though we are, ungodly and impure at heart.

We learn this, also, from what we hear tonight of our Catechism: that Baptism is not merely a one time event in the life of baptised Christians, although it is that, also, and must be, but that it also pertains to the life that is given to Christians in Baptism, and in which we are called to live, always.

What does such baptising with water indicate?, our Catechism asks, and answers that *it indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

You might remember that we looked at this some weeks ago, how Baptism indicates that in Baptism our sin has drowned and died with Christ, who was baptised into our sin, and died with it, and was buried with it, so that it is no more before God, and cannot condemn us before His judgement. And we looked at, also, how in Baptism, Christians have been raised with Christ from the death of sin and guilt and impurity to live with God forever, in righteousness and purity, cleansed from all guilt and impurity in His sight.

Tonight, though, what we shall have before us is that we are not only to live with God in purity and righteousness forever when our Lord Jesus comes in glory to judge the living and the dead, and to take His Christians to Himself in His heavenly Kingdom, rather, already in this life are we to begin to live with Him in righteousness and purity. As our Catechism says it: *the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God.* Yes, for as the holy Apostle Paul writes it, as our Catechism reminds us: *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.* And this pertains not only to living in the love of God and having our sins forgiven, but also to living out the love of God in the way we actually behave. Yes. What the Apostle writes, he writes in continuation of the question he himself has asked: *We who died to sin, how can we still live in it?*

We cannot. It does not make sense to, first of all. More importantly, we owe it to God not to.

And furthermore, as the Apostle writes it a couple of chapters later, *if you live according to the flesh you will die*, that is: if we follow our sinful nature in the way we live, and pay no attention to the Word and will of God, but deliberately disobey or disregard it, then faith in us will die, and we will fall again under judgement and damnation with God, *but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*.

As Baptised Christians we are called, not only to live in the love of God, in the Word and worship of His love, but also to live out His love in our life with others; to *serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life*, as Holy Scripture says it.

Some Christians know this very well. And in the spirit of being charitable, and putting the best construction on things, we should probably allow for the possibility that that might be the reason why they do not pay much attention, in their preaching and teaching and worship, to that which is the heart of Holy Scripture, namely the love of God, and what His love has done for us, and devote instead much more attention, if not all their attention, to how much we should love Him, and how much they themselves love Him already. Rather than proclaim the salvation of God they seek to inspire and instruct Christians to lead a better Christian life; but they leave them to their own devices in doing so, by not pointing to the Word of the cross. As the holy Apostle Paul writes it, it is by having Christ publicly portrayed before our eyes as crucified that we have the Spirit of God living in us. *And having begun by the Spirit, as he then goes to write it, are you now being made perfected by the flesh* - by means of our own devices, that is, and by our own sinful nature? Well, we are not.

We will not be made perfect by the flesh; *but, again, as the Apostle writes it, if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*.

The life Christians are to live before God in holiness and righteousness is nothing other than a continuation of what has been given to us in Baptism; it is the putting to death of that which is our own, and receiving, instead, that which is given to us by God, with His living Word of love, by which His love lives and works in us.

Or as our Catechism says it: *the Old Adam in us, that is: our sinful nature, should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity*.

Our renewal is nothing other than constant repentance, constant acknowledgement of our sin, and constant growth in appreciation of the love of God, as His love shines upon us in His Word of salvation.

We heard it tonight, in our Passion reading, how our Lord Jesus said to the women who were mourning and lamenting for Him: *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, rather weep for yourselves and for your children.* His sufferings should move us, also, to mourn, not so much for *Him* as for our sin, that our evil and ungodliness caused the Son of God to suffer, and that our sins and shortcomings cause us to be under judgement and damnation with God. For for those who die into the judgement of God it would be better, had they never been born. As our Lord Jesus also said it, *the days are coming when they will say: Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never gave birth and the breasts that never nursed!*

His blood be upon us and our children, the husbands of these women had said just a few hours before, and perhaps not even that long before; well, perhaps not actually *their* husbands, but nevertheless, those who said it did speak on behalf of all the people, and of all sinners. We are guilty, all of us, for His sufferings, by our sin.

But a couple of months later, after our Lord Jesus had been raised from the dead, His servants would proclaim to their husbands, or rather, again, to all the people: *the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.*

Now, this *the promise*, which is for all people, and for our children, is the promise of Baptism; as the Apostles had just said it: *Repent and be baptised 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 Holy One of God had Himself baptised with sinners, and crucified and condemned for the sin of all sinners. In His sufferings God has condemned sin in the flesh. We are ransomed and redeemed from our otherwise rightful fate of eternal death and damnation. His blood *is* upon us, and upon our children. This is the promise God has set His Church to proclaim to the world. And all through life, all that He promises is given to us, as we live in His Word, and hear it, and take it to heart, and constantly turn away from our evil and ungodliness and receive instead the life that He gives to us.

O Christ our God, Lamb of God, who have borne, and take away, the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. *Amen.*