

## 238. What Is Baptism?

**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. *Titus 3, 5.***

The Rationalists regarded Baptism as a mere ceremony and spoke of confirmation as being necessary to make it of any effect. And in our days there are many who believe that the children are not members of the Church until they have been confirmed. This is wrong. Holy Baptism is not a mere form, but a means of grace and complete in itself. Through it faith is created in the heart of the child, and thus such a child is a member of the household of God, the true Church. When a man is baptized, the Triune God enters into a covenant with him, pledging Himself to be His God and to adopt him as His son and heir. In the Gospel, God proclaims grace and peace in general to all, but when a man is baptized, God enters into a covenant with that man personally and individually, and in this covenant He promises to forgive the sins of that man, to impute Christ's righteousness to him, and to instate him as an heir of all the riches of Christ. This covenant is not made for God's sake; God stands in need of no covenant. It is for man's sake that everyone who is baptized should have the full assurance that by his baptism God has entered into a covenant of grace with him. This is implied in the words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Baptism saves, because in and through it God receives man into His covenant of grace. For this reason Ananias said to Saul: "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins"; and St. Peter writes: "Baptism doth now also save us." Baptism saves, not as though water could wash away sins, but because it is the ordained means through which the Triune God establishes His covenant of grace with those who are baptized and believe. Believe the Gospel and be baptized and know that God has made a covenant with you and you with God.

Water is the visible element in Baptism. Is Baptism, then, simple water? No, the water is comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word. Great things are connected with the water of Baptism.

## Prayer.

Almighty God, who didst save faithful Noah and his family during the Flood, who safely leddest Thy people Israel through the Red Sea, prefiguring thereby the washing of Holy Baptism, and who the baptism of Thy beloved Son didst sanctify and ordain Jordan and all waters for a saving flood and an abundant washing away of sin: we thank Thee that in Thy dear Son Thou didst make a new covenant with lost mankind and didst institute Baptism as an open fountain to wash away sin. Let everywhere children be born to Thee by water and the Spirit that Thy kingdom may be spread ever more and more throughout the world. Amen.

Blessed Jesus, here we stand,  
Met to do as Thou hast spoken,  
And this child, at Thy command,  
Now we bring to Thee in token  
That to Christ it here is given;  
For of such shall be Thy heaven.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries.

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