

## Introduction:

A couple had adopted a baby boy after trying to have a baby for five years. To their surprise, a short time after the adoption, the mother discovered she was pregnant, and she later gave birth to a boy.

One day, years later, when the two boys were eight and nine, a neighbor stopped over. Watching the children at play, the neighbor asked, "So, which boy is yours?" A little surprised by the question, the mother simply answered, "Both of them." The neighbor persisted. "But I mean, which one is the adopted one?" Her finest hour, the mother replied, "I've completely forgotten."

For the Christian, baptism is this moment and this kind of adoption. We, who had orphaned ourselves through the original sin of Adam and by our own sins, we have been miraculously restored to our position in the family of God by the work of Christ alone, the only true Son of God. And through baptism he has forgotten that at one time we weren't even his. By baptism now God sees us no different than his perfect Son, Jesus Christ.

## Illustration:



## A. Christianity

**Revelation of God the Father:** To this point we have discussed how there is only one True God, the Triune God, and how he alone created and saved us by the "Godman," Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the testimony of the Holy Bible which the resurrection of Christ has proven to be the absolute and lone authority of God the Father.

**Revelation of God the Son:** That testimony of salvation found in the Bible is this: Salvation is provided all by God's grace and not by our work in whole or even in part. All that God demanded of us by his law (perfection) he gives to us freely and all the payment we owe him for our sins (eternal death) he cancels through faith/trust in the work, sacrifice, and resurrection of his only Son. It is through faith (trust) that we receive all the benefits Christ offers (salvation – eternal life here and hereafter). This is the Gospel.

**Revelation of God the Spirit:** The only work that remains, then, is the method to communicate this good news to us whereby we can come to trust and grow in our trust of God with all certainty until he seals us in the eternal life he has already given us. This communication is attributed to the work of the God's Holy Spirit. The tools/means he uses to communicate the Gospel and create/increase this precious faith in us are three:

### MEANS OF GRACE (*Tools by which Grace is Worked*) = *The Word and 2 Sacraments*

- 1) The Word – *Faith comes by hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ (Ro 10:17)*
- 2) Baptism
- 3) Lord's Supper

NOTE: A sacrament is a non-biblical church term (like Trinity) which in our Lutheran/Christian circles is defined as: 1) God Instituted & God-Worked; 2) Offering God's Word - Gospel/Forgiveness of Sins; 3) Attaching this Special Promise to an Earthly Element.

## B. Baptism is a gracious package from God opening to us salvation - *not* a good “saving” work we do.

1. Biblical Proof #1: The Bible proclaims that Baptism connects us to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

Romans 6:3-5 (CONNECTS TO CHRIST’S SAVING WORK) <sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that *all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* <sup>4</sup> *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.* <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

2. Biblical Proof #2: The Bible says Baptism gives the gift of salvation / the forgiveness of sins.

1Peter 3: 21 (SALVATION) <sup>21</sup> and this water (of the flood) symbolizes *baptism that now saves you also*—not the removal of dirt from the body (not symbolic/outward cleansing) but the pledge of a good conscience toward God (*an inner cleansing of the conscience with forgiveness*). *It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*

Acts 2:38 (FORGIVENESS) Peter replied, “Repent (*turn from sin and turn to trust in Christ*) 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.

3. Biblical Proof #3: The Bible gives Word Pictures to show that Baptism gives us new birth, connects us to Christ, and to the Church.

John 3:3-6 (BORN AGAIN) In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” <sup>4</sup> “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless *he is born of water and the Spirit*. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Titus 3:5 (SPIRIT’S WORK) 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.

Galatians 3:26-27 (CONNECTED TO CHRIST) You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*.

1Corinthians 12:12-13a (CONNECTED TO CHURCH) <sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> *For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—*

### Questions to Consider...

1) I thought faith was necessary for salvation. How can baptism save?

*The Holy Spirit has promised to bring salvation through the Word and water as the passages clearly state. We, therefore, recognize that in baptism the Holy Spirit is creating faith through which salvation can only come to the individual.*

2) Baptism looks like a work we are doing and the Bible says we cannot save ourselves by works (Ephesians 2:8-9), right? How can we say, then, that Baptism saves us?

*Speaking the Gospel to others as we proclaim the Word, or speaking the Gospel attached to Water in baptism, or speaking the Gospel attached to bread/body and wine/blood in the Lord’s Supper all look like something we do. And outwardly they are. But inwardly, where the saving work takes place, this is the sole work of the Holy Spirit. Inwardly, by these **means**, he actively produces and sustains our faith in Jesus Christ that we might receive the salvation he won.*

### C. The risen Lord's command to baptize dictates the delivery of this precious package.

Matthew 28:19-20 <sup>19</sup>Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them (means “apply water”) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Word), <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

#### 1. What is needed for baptism? (2 COMPONENTS: WATER “Baptize” & WORD “Father, Son, Spirit”)

##### Questions to Consider...

A. Pastor, I know some churches immerse a person all the way under water and we just pour water over someone's head in baptism. Is either way okay or is there only one way? How can we be sure?

*Some churches demand that one be entirely immersed for baptism to be a true baptism. But how to apply the water according to the Bible (i.e. sprinkling, pouring, immersing) does not matter. Contrary to what some teach, the Greek word for baptize does not exclusively mean to immerse. For example, in the following passage the word translated “wash” is “baptized” and it is used in reference to cleaning a dining couch: Mark 7: 3-4: <sup>4</sup>When they (Pharisees) come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash baptize). And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles (variant reads “and dining couches.”) Point being – they didn't drag their couches out and immerse them.*

B. When we were younger, I remember seeing a baptism done at church and then me and my brother baptized each other later in the day at home playing “church”. Was that a real baptism?

*Baptizing in the name of the Triune God involves baptizing according to Christ's teaching. Some examples of invalid baptisms: children playing church; baptisms performed by churches that reject Christ's teaching (The Triune God's work of salvation: Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses for example.)*

C. Pastor, I haven't been to church for years and there's been a time or two when I wonder if I even had faith in Jesus anymore. So, was my baptism not saving and do I need to be rebaptized?

*When the Water and Word are present, baptism is valid. It neither depends on the one baptizing or the individual being baptized to make the baptism effective. And although people can reject the faith their baptism produces, when people have received a valid baptism, there is no reason for them to be “rebaptized.” Should they return to the faith given at their baptism, they will again receive the blessings of their baptism. If one were uncertain if they were baptized or if there were a question on whether it was done properly, they may be baptized. Cases are decided individually.*

#### 2. Who should baptize? (The Church - Matthew 28:19-20)

<sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

*(This command was given to the Christian Church. Therefore all Christians can baptize. Normally, to insure that things are done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40) the called pastor will perform baptisms. But all Christians can, and in the case of emergencies, should be ready to perform baptisms. One would simply apply water and say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”)*

### 3a. Who should be baptized? (ALL – Matthew 28:19-20) (See above)

Matthew 28:19-20 <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

*NOTE: From this command, we see who is to be baptized, namely, “all nations”. This is all -inclusive. It includes all genders in a nation - males and females. It includes all generations in a nation – babies, elderly, and everyone in between. The addition of the word “all” shows that this is a gift for all races and nationalities. In short, all people are to be baptized.*

### 3b. Infants should be baptized too? (INFANTS: Part of all nations)

A. Infants, like adults, are not part of God’s spiritual family until God adopts them (brings them to faith). Why?

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

Psalm 58:3 Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.

*\*NOTE: Because of the fall into sin by Adam and Eve all are conceived and born sinful (Romans 5:12). This is referred to as original sin. Unlike what some churches may claim, this sin is “accountable” sin.*

Romans 5: 18a (ALL ARE CONDEMNED) <sup>18</sup>Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men...

Romans 6:23 (EVEN BABIES DIE) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

B. They too can believe in Jesus.

Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Matthew 21:16 <sup>16</sup>“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise’?”

Luke 1:44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

#### ***Questions...***

1) A/D: A baby that is miscarried or that never makes it to baptism after being born will not go to heaven because they were not baptized.

*To say that a miscarried child or an infant that is never baptized cannot be saved is to go beyond what the Scriptures say. But the truth remains that saving faith comes from hearing the Gospel which is alone found in the Word, Word & Water, and Word & Bread/Wine. How can one be saved if they have not come into contact with the Gospel? The Bible’s answer is, “They simply cannot” (Romans 10:13-17). So, we leave it up to God and trust that whatever he decides for every individual is just and right. We further can comfort Christian parents who have prayed for their unborn or their infants who have not been baptized by reminding them that “whatever we ask in Jesus’ name” he will do!’ This question does emphasize the importance of baptism and hearing the Gospel.*

2) A/D: Baptism is merely an ordinance Jesus gave so we could publicly proclaim him as our Lord. And since infants cannot believe they shouldn't be baptized.

*To say that baptism is just an ordinance from Jesus (another ceremonial law) is to misunderstand why Jesus came. He was not interested in adding to the law which we could not keep. He came to fulfill the law, so it would completely contradict his teaching of "saved by grace" if at the end of his time with us he tacked on a couple new laws. As to infants being baptized and believing, if faith is a gift as the Bible declares (1 Corinthians 12:3), then this presents no problem for an infant to believe. And all who believe should definitely be baptized. If faith is a decision humans make by their own power, then babies can't believe and baptism can't have much power, nor can the Word or Lord's Supper. But what do the Scriptures say? Baptism is not an ordinance but a means of grace (**Gospel Invitation – a "command" Jesus gives which requires the Spirit's power alone to accomplish it. Like the invitation to believe**) by which faith comes and is strengthened and it is for all people – for infants that can't confess their faith to us and for adults who can.*

3) A/D Great! If baptism saves me, then, all I need to do is get baptized and have my kids baptized and I never need to mess with the Bible or Jesus again. I can live however I want.

*Finally, a child's faith as well as that of an adult needs to be nurtured or it will die. [Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.] To think of baptism as a magic trick or a lucky charm that gets us in with God is to ultimately see baptism as the source of our salvation and not a tool through which the saving power of Christ comes. To think of baptism in this way actually denies Christ and places baptism on his throne.*

#### **D. Baptism is to be highly regarded (as our adoption papers into the family of God.)**

Mark 16:16 (BELIEF & BAPTISM GO HAND-IN-HAND) Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

#### **Question**

Does one have to be baptized to be saved?

*Faith in Christ alone is how we receive salvation. Not all people who have believed in the Christ were baptized. The Old Testament believers are an example as well as the criminal who died next to Jesus. Yet Jesus promised them eternal life through faith in him. [Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him (unbaptized criminal), "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."] However, if someone trusts in Christ they will desire baptism because he who loved them wants this and commands this for them since this effects faith and strengthens faith. Rejection of baptism is, therefore, evidence of unbelief. [Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.]*

## A summary regarding infant baptism:

### Infant Baptism: Here is why we baptize infants...

Psalm 51:5 – <sup>5</sup> Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.  
(All people, even infants, are sinful and desperately need a Savior. Baptism saves as we'll see below.)

Matthew 28:19 – <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in <sup>a</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Infants are included in all nations.)

**(Side note: Is there an age of accountability (an age where God will begin to punish sinners for their sins)? Most will use this next passage to say there is.)**

Ezekiel 18:20 - <sup>20</sup> The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

\*It's important to recognize that Ezekiel here is speaking of temporal crimes not our spiritual relationship with God. (The context is a temporal one concerning the government.) There isn't an age where God begins to hold people accountable for their sin. He holds everyone of every age accountable for their sinful state even at conception as Psalm 51:5. Romans 5:12 also says all are condemned.

### **Baptism Saves:**

Romans 6:3-5 - <sup>3</sup> **Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.** <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

1 Peter 3:20b-21- God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and **this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also...**

Acts 2:38 -<sup>38</sup> 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."

Titus 3:5 -<sup>5</sup> he (Jesus) 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,**

Galatians 3:26-27 -<sup>26</sup> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> **for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

\*The act of pouring water on someone's head would never by itself save. But because Jesus says it will when it is connected to these promises above (His Word) we trust Jesus that he will save people through baptism. It saves because Jesus connects it to his all-saving work of dying and rising from the dead.

\*\*When we bring a child to baptism we are trusting that the Lord can work faith in that child because God promised he saves through baptism. They need to be saved just like all other people.

### **Why do some churches have problems with seeing the working of God in Baptism and the Lord's Supper?**

Human reason. Our human reason can sometimes doubt that God can do awesome things through such humble means as the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. But we look at God's Word and say, "Even if it doesn't make sense to our human reason, we'll believe it." This is the case with each of the 3 Means of Grace.