

Sermon: Doctrine 3: Baptism

By: Dr Alvarez

Date: 03/24/24

Where: St John UMC.

Introduction:

Baptism is the initiation celebration of the believer's journey of faith. Through baptism, the believer is connected to the faith community to grow and mature in Christ. When a person is baptized, they are assimilated into the body of Christ. After baptism, the believer begins to take their first steps and profess their faith as a member of the baptized Body.

Baptism is then an act of faith of the believer, and a public confession of the inner grace poured into their heart by the Holy Spirit who has been given to them. Upon entering the waters, we experience a level of grace greater and more excellent than in any other celebration (except Communion, which is also a sacrament) Christian.

The Father equally rejoices in every sinner who repents and is baptized as they move from being a sinner to a repentant sinner and cease to be a creature to become a son. It is necessary to clarify that God is the officiant, initiator, executor, and giver of the sacraments.

Each sacrament, baptism, and Holy Communion are gifts granted by God by grace. Therefore, nothing and no one can invalidate them. No human work can invalidate any baptism or the Lord's Supper. Man is only a mediator, an intermediary, a collaborator in these special celebrations.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are co-laborers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

What does baptism mean? Greek word: Baptizo

“baptize,” 76 times, “wash,” twice, “baptism,” once, and “baptized,” once also. This means

1) To immerse repeatedly, submerge, immerse oneself—concerning ships.

2) To cleanse by immersion or submersion, wash, make clean with water, cleanse oneself, and take a bath.

Baptism is ONE: "Regarding the number, baptism symbolizes unity and oneness with God."

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

We affirm, based on this understanding, that a person can be baptized **ONLY ONCE**. It can only be done again if the baptism was performed in another name and outside the Christian faith.

Baptism is considered valid once it is performed, regardless of the personal life of the one performing it. Even if the baptizer is living in sin, the baptism is still considered valid. This is because baptism is a spiritual act that is of God and performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While the life and character of the baptizer is relevant, it does not determine the validity of the baptism. Even if the entire church has a false doctrine, when a person is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, God, in His mercy and sole authority, validates that baptism.

Therefore, it is conclusive that baptism occurs ONCE ONLY since God is perfect, and when He does something, He does it perfectly. What God does cannot be improved or corrected by anyone. Every Christian baptism is carried out in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and therefore is VALID before the Church of Christ and the world.

"Regarding the time for baptism:"

Immediately, Straightaway, Instantly, At this moment.

The Bible is full of evidence that believers were baptized immediately upon hearing the word. They believed and were baptized. Nowhere do we see evidence that one had to study for a year or take courses.

While it is true that it is important to study the Scriptures and prepare ourselves, we must not confuse baptism with human work, and much less earn merits by knowledge.

It is enough that we believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and go to the waters as an expression of faith.

The baptism of Apostle Paul:

Acts 9:18 And **immediately** there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

The baptism of Cornelius

Acts 10:47 "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

The baptism of the Jailer

Acts 16:33 “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

The baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:35-38 ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ³⁷ ^a ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

“Who can baptize?”

A minister ordained by the Church of Christ. One cannot baptize oneself.

In general, baptism is typically performed by ordained clergy members such as priests, ministers, pastors, or deacons. However, under certain circumstances, it can also be performed by laypeople or designated members of a community of faith.

“Who is eligible to receive baptism?”

Individual, Collective, men and women, and family. (Adults and Children.)

Evidence 2: Individual Baptism.

Can I be baptized alone, even if there are few people around? The answer is YES.

Acts 9:17-18

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,

Evidence 3: Collective Baptism:

In the Church of the Book of Acts, baptism was ever occurring. Believers were baptized individually and in groups. Biblical stories tell that up to 3,000 believers were baptized in one day after hearing the gospel message.

Acts 2:38-41 ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ **Those who accepted his message were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

God wants us all to be baptized, understanding that the promise of Salvation is for everyone, including our children.

The first step is Repentance. We must confess that we are sinners and that we need to be forgiven by God for every sin of thought, word, and deed.

We must confess that we have received Christ in our hearts and believe that He came to earth 2000 years ago to die for us. If we have faith and believe in what He did for us, we are **SAVED**.

If all this happens in our hearts, then how do we demonstrate that our faith is true before men?

One way to do it is through baptism!

Baptism positions us under authority to be empowered and live a victorious life. Now, pay attention to the fact that despite Peter's powerful speech, not everyone was BAPTIZED. ⁴¹ **Those who accepted his message were baptized**, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

This means that baptism is only for those who BELIEVE, since without faith it is impossible to please God. It is also important to highlight that these believers were baptized immediately after hearing Peter's message, which leads us to the next portion of evidence.

Evidence 4: Baptism of Men and Women Only.

Acts 8:12

"But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Evidence 5: Family Baptisms.

In the New Testament, there are cases of conversions where it can be concluded that the baptisms of new believers included their children, meaning the entire family.

Acts 2:38-39

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Upon emerging from the waters, one obeys God and preaches the message to their own so that all might be saved.

Acts 11:13-14

¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'

Acts 16:31 ³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

The Case of Lydia:

Acts 16:14-15

¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

The Case of the Jailer:

Acts 16:32-33

³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.

The case of Stephanas:

1 Corinthians 1:16

¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized **the household of Stephanas**; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.

We conclude that God's plan of salvation includes the entire household. God wants to save and baptize the entire family (individuals, men, women, youths, and children).

Evidence 6: Baptism of Children

What Jesus Baptism teaches about Baptism and how it supports the inclusion of children into the New Covenant by Baptism:

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."

It is well understood that the baptism of adults refers to the act of sinners, beings who wish to become children of God, shifting from death to life by confessing their sins. It is acknowledged that baptism is **necessary for salvation, but not essential.**

What does this mean?

It means that the only thing necessary for salvation is "God's grace," which is activated through faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

We conclude from this Scripture that for man to enter heaven, they only need to believe and confess Christ wholeheartedly. If someone receives Christ and dies immediately after that moment, that person will go directly to heaven because they have received salvation in Christ Jesus through grace by means of faith.

Let's clarify something: we all believe in Adult Believer's Baptism. The question is, can a person who dies without the opportunity to be baptized enter heaven?

According to scripture, baptism depends on one's circumstances, timing, and willingness to follow Christ to the baptismal waters. Rejecting it puts our salvation in jeopardy.

God demands baptism at the hand of man; this demand is circumstantial and depends on the opportunity the person has to perform it. We believe with all our hearts that God will give us many years of life. Therefore, it would be good to understand what happens when a person, by their own free decision, decides not to be baptized. By making that choice, they enter into rebellion, not following in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was baptized before all men and heaven. We are called to follow in Christ's steps, who was baptized so that all righteousness would be fulfilled. And if the Lord and Master of all was baptized, how much more we, sinful men and women of little faith?

An example of entering heaven without baptism is the thief on the right on the cross of Jesus, who, recognizing Christ, was promised by the latter that he would be with Him in paradise that very day.

Luke 23:42-43

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, **today** you will be with me in paradise."

Therefore, if someone dies and does not have the opportunity to be baptized, nothing will impede their entrance to heaven if they have received Christ as Lord and Savior. Now, if a person has time to be baptized, as we have today, God expects our baptism as he did of his own Son.

We believe in Adult Believers' Baptism. The question is whether children of Christian households can be baptized.

Evidence 1 Jesus was baptized by John.

Matthew 3:13-17 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

The baptism of Jesus reveals that water baptism is not just for the forgiveness of sins but also for obedience to fulfill all righteousness. What righteousness? The righteousness of Jesus. The righteousness that is by faith in Him, who fulfilled ALL the works of the Law.

Mark 10:39 Baptism of Obedience to Die on the Cross

"We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with,

When we are baptized, we experience God's presence in a supernatural way. In baptism, the Father opens the heavens, pours the Holy Spirit upon us, and declares us children.

In conclusion, Matthew 3:13-17 describes the baptism of Jesus, which provides a basis for baptizing children. As explained in Evidence 1, Jesus' baptism illustrates that water baptism is not just for the remission of sins, but also as an act of obedience to fulfill all righteousness, which is by faith and by law.

Romans 9:30-33 elaborates on the righteousness that comes by faith:

"What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'"

Finally, Baptism, as a Christian rite of admission and adoption, prominently features in the New Testament, though its roots and symbols can be traced to the Old Testament in forms of purification and prefigurations.

The dispensation of grace, baptism as a sacrament is the sign of obedience to righteousness by faith. In contrast, in the dispensation of the law, circumcision is the sign of obedience to the divine command through Moses' law, through the Old Testament.

In closing, this argument, with strong biblical theological support for the Baptism of Children in the New Inclusive Covenant, promises to be wider and greater than the Old Exclusive Covenant.

Here, we will explore passages that directly or symbolically reflect on baptism in both Testaments, **including men, women, and children**, highlighting the deep connection and continuity between them, the old covenant and the new.

Genesis 17:12-14

"And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and **my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant**. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, **that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.**"

It indicates that uncircumcised children were judged for violating the Abrahamic covenant, later reaffirmed by Moses, and suggests a parallel judgment in the present day by violation of the baptism instituted by Christ through the church, and in future judgment.

1. ****Noah's Ark (Genesis 6-8)**** - While not about baptism directly, the story of Noah's Ark is often seen as a prefiguration of baptism. The flood waters that cleansed the earth of sin prefigure the waters of baptism that cleanse the soul from sin. Peter explicitly makes this connection in the New Testament.

****1 Peter 3:20-21:** ²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when 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, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

2. ****Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)**** - This event is seen as a symbol of baptism, where the Israelites passed through the water to escape slavery in Egypt, akin to passing through the waters of baptism to escape the bondage of sin.

- ****1 Corinthians 10:1-2**** : "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;"

The circumcision of Moses' son is mentioned in **Exodus 4:24-26** in the Bible:

"At a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. So the Lord let him alone. (At that time she said 'bridegroom of blood,' referring to circumcision.)"

This passage describes the circumcision of Moses' son by his wife Zipporah to avert God's anger.

Let us follow Jesus into the baptismal waters, for the promise is for us, our children, and all who are near and far.

Baptism is a means of grace. Therefore, It's important to understand that the Greek word "baptize" doesn't just mean to immerse, but also means to wash. In the Old Testament, washing with water was a communal Jewish practice. What matters isn't the amount of water, forms, or human actions, but the action of God, who baptizes through a minister of God ordained and set apart by the church to officiate the sacrament. Therefore, the emphasis should be on God's action of pouring His grace upon man's heart, rather than on actions, confessions, and human decisions.

Water baptism rites includes immersion, infusion, sprinkling, or splashing.

Immersion. Symbolizes death and resurrection in Christ.

It is the traditional form and most practiced by the Christian church. Where the person is totally submerged in water for confession and forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Immersion: Representing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Romans 6:4 Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in the newness of life.

The purpose of baptism is to affirm the believer; it is the gateway to the kingdom of God. As the word says, when we are submerged in water, we are "buried together with Christ," and being raised up means that "we are raised up together with Christ."

All this is done with the purpose of walking in a new life. It is essential to clarify that immersion baptism is not the only form of baptism, as we will soon see. Death and resurrection are in Christ, and everyone who is in Christ is dead and risen in Him.

There are many drawbacks to practicing this form of baptism (immersion) as the only one. In what cases are the other two forms of baptism supernaturally convenient?

- 1- When baptizing sick people who cannot be submerged.
- 2- When baptizing elderly people.
- 3- When baptizing people with phobias, fears of being submerged.
- 4- When baptizing people where there is not enough WATER. People who live in arid places where there are no bodies of water often.

Infusion: Symbolizes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the person.

Joel 2:28 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

This consisted of pouring water over a person, from the head, so that the water "symbolizing the blood of Jesus" dyed the entire body to the feet.

Sprinkling. Symbolizes the purification and sanctification of sins.

****Cleansing Rituals**** - Various cleansing rituals involve water, symbolizing purification and renewal, principles central to baptism.

- ****Ezekiel 36:25**** - "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

Hebrews 9:13-14 ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer **sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.** ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Call to action:

- a. Follow Jesus' example and be baptized in water, publicly declaring your faith and allegiance to Christ.
- b. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for continual spiritual growth and transformation.
- c. Embrace a life of holiness, surrendering to God's sanctifying work in you.

Prayer: Lord, may our baptism proclaim our union with Christ. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit and empower us to live righteous lives, reflecting Your love and grace.

Benediction: May your baptism serve as a constant reminder of the new life found in Christ. May you walk in the power of His resurrection, embracing God's call to live victoriously.