

Introduction

- Pastoral Theology: the application of historical, biblical, and systematic theology to the life of the church as a whole and to individual believers.
 - o How does the technical study we've done over the past eight weeks apply to your life here and now?
- Luke 18:15-17 *Let the Children Come to Me*
 - o Verse 15: "Now they were bringing even *infants* to him."
 - The same word is used in Luke 2:12 to describe Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes.
 - The same word is used in 1 Peter 2:2 when Peter tells his readers they should, 'like newborn infants, long for pure spiritual milk.'
 - o Jesus welcomes children because God has always welcomed children.
- In a real sense, baptism is a naming ceremony.
 - o Sinclair Ferguson: "Our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, pronounces the blessing. We are baptized into his name, with a view to his saving resources, his possession, authority, and fellowship."
- Just like Jesus welcomed children and blessed them, so, too, does the church. They are baptized into the name of the triune God and receive all the benefits of Christ as they receive him in faith.

What Baptizing our Children *does not* mean.

- Even though we believe our children are set apart, distinct, and different from the world, we do not believe that baptism necessarily saves them.
- Ligon Duncan: "Nowhere in the Bible will you find a covenant sign which *effects* a relationship. A covenant sign always *reflects* a relationship."
 - o To those who believe by grace, blessing.
 - o To those who do not believe, it will serve as a witness against them.

- Those who receive the sign need the Spirit to work in them and teach them inwardly for all that it signifies to be sealed to them.
- Illustration: The Word Preached
 - The preached Word does not confer salvation to everyone within audible range when it is preached. The Spirit must attend it to make it effectual unto salvation.
 - Baptism—described as the visible Word—is made effectual in the same way.
 - The Spirit makes the waters of baptism effectual by grace alone through our faith alone.

What are the blessings of baptism, then?

Blessings of the call to faith

- Like circumcision before it, baptism calls out to those who receive it.
 - It forever marks them:
 - As having belonged to the Covenant Community
 - Reminding them they have heard the Covenant promises
 - It pleads with them to have faith in Christ and to look to the God of promise.

Blessings of the Call to Faithfulness

- Baptism calls our children not only to faith but to faithfulness
- WLC Question & Answer 167:
 - Q: How is our baptism to be improved by us?
 - A: The needful but much-neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation and when we are present at the administration of it to others;¹ by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and

¹ Col. 2:11-12; Rom 6:4, 6, 11

our solemn vow made therein;² by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements;³ by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament;⁴ by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace;⁵ and by endeavoring to live by faith,⁶ to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness,⁷ as those that have therein given up their names to Christ;⁸ and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.⁹

- **Have I improved upon my baptism?**
 - Use this catechism answer as a helpful tool to think and pray through.
- Striving and resting are twin virtues within the Christian life. The sacrament of baptism calls us to that truth. The Christian life is all of grace, and yet we are to improve upon our baptism as well.

Blessings of Church Discipline

- Baptized children are under the care of the elders of the church. They are members of the church—non-communicating members who are not admitted to the Lord’s Table, but members nonetheless. Therefore, they enjoy all the benefits of that membership, including church discipline.
- Discipline Defined:
 - Discipline is everything the church does to help its members pursue holiness and fight sin.¹⁰

² Rom 6:3-5; 1 Pet 3:21

³ 1 Cor 1:11-13; Rom 6:2-3

⁴ Rom 6:4-7, 22; 1 Pet 3:21; Rom 5:1-2; Jer 33:8

⁵ Rom 6:3-5

⁶ Gal 3:26-27

⁷ Rom 6:22

⁸ Act 2:38; Gal 2:20; Rev 2:17

⁹ 1 Cor 12:13, 25

¹⁰ *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides, pg. 17.

- Two types of Church Discipline
 - o Formative:
 - Preaching, teaching, prayer, reading and memorizing the Bible, corporate worship... and godly oversight by pastors and elders.¹¹
 - o Corrective
 - This is when we confront sin in another member's life and encourage them to repent and pursue holiness.¹²
- When used properly, discipline maintains:
 - o The glory of God
 - o The purity of His Church
 - o The keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners¹³
- Watchful care for the souls of our children is essential in the life of the church. They receive this blessing, which is tied to their baptism as members of the church.

Blessings of Assurance

- When our children place their faith in Christ, baptism serves as a continual means of grace that grants them the assurance of God's eternal promises.
 - o You are God's
 - o You are Forgiven
 - o You are cut off from the first Adam
 - o You are united to the second Adam
 - o The old you died, and the new you has been resurrected with Christ.
 - o You are his, and he is yours!
- Martin Luther
 - o "The only way to drive away the Devil is through faith in Christ, by saying: 'I have been baptized, I am a Christian.'"

¹¹ Ibid., pg. 17.

¹² Ibid., pg. 17

¹³ PCA Book of Church Order 27-3

Conclusion

- Do our covenant children need to be baptized in order to be saved? No. But the blessings that they enjoy when they are baptized, and which baptism signifies for them, should encourage us to bring them to the baptismal font.