

## Why Baptize the Baby?

*At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. (Acts 16:33)*

Lutherans and Catholics practice infant baptism. However, another group of Christians believes a person should reach the “age of accountability” before receiving baptism. This difference regarding baptism is rooted in a different understanding of how God instills and works faith.

Scripture plainly teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:3, *Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.* Simply put, individuals cannot have and profess a faith in Jesus Christ without the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in His ministry, *This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.* (John 6:65)

Baptism is not something that requires cooperation, a more willing spirit, or even a desire in a person. Throughout his writings, the Apostle Paul emphasized his own unworthiness in having been called to faith. He considered himself the “chief of sinners.” Yet, God, through the Holy Spirit, turned Paul’s heart of unbelief into a heart of faith.

While God uses the Holy Spirit to accomplish this miracle, the Holy Spirit uses His own tools — namely, the Gospel in Word and sacraments. Concerning God’s Word we learn: *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.* (Romans 10:17)

Through the message of sin and grace God is able to change the hearts of people. And it is not a process of human deductive reasoning. In fact, human reason drives us away from God (see 1 Corinthians 1:22ff). This working is so miraculous, it convinces a person of the most illogical of all things: that the only innocent man ever to have lived had to die to save all the guilty ones. And now, we believe it though we have never seen Jesus, witnessed his death or resurrection, nor seen our heavenly home. But we believe it because of the miracle of faith.

The Word of God is attached to two specifically-mentioned sacraments in Scripture: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism involves both the application of water and God’s Word. That is why it is called a “washing of rebirth” (Titus 3:5) and an act which saves us (1 Peter 3:21). In Biblical times entire households were baptized — children and all. It fits because while we are permitted to perform the sacrament, it is not the performer or recipient’s cognitive skills or personal convictions that make the sacrament powerful. It is the Word of God.

Will children who are not baptized be saved? The clear requisite in Scripture for salvation is faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). If faith comes through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, why wouldn’t children be brought to church? Why wouldn’t a child be brought to baptism?

Remember, in baptism it is not what we do, or even our ability to fully understand its significance. It is what God does to us through it. Why baptize a child? Why not?

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