



EST FONDS VITAE

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SERIES

Stand Alone Message
on a Baptism Sunday

TITLE & PASSAGE

*Baptism: Christ's
Covenant People*
Galatians 3:23-29

OCCASION

A message presented by Pastor Marc Minter on the Lord's Day to the congregation of First Baptist Church of Diana, TX.

INTRODUCTION

Baptism is a topic about which many Christians have disagreed over the centuries. However, the overarching agreement for all orthodox Christians has always centered upon the idea that baptism does serve as the public designation that one is among Christ's covenant people in the world. In this message, we shall consider the meaning of baptism in the life of the Christian. May God help us to celebrate this marvelous sign and the divine covenant to which it points.

MAIN POINT

Baptism is the public designation that one is among Christ's covenant people.

EMAIL QUESTIONS TO PASTOR@FBCDIANA.ORG

SCRIPTURE READING

Galatians 3:23–29

23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that **we might be justified by faith.**

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for **in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.**

27 For **as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

29 And **if you are Christ's**, then you are Abraham's offspring, **heirs according to promise.**

MAIN POINT

Baptism is the public designation that one is among Christ's covenant people.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

- (1) JUSTIFIED BY FAITH
- (2) IDENTIFIED BY BAPTISM
- (3) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

- “23 Now before faith came, **we were held captive under the law**, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that **we might be justified by faith**” (v23-24)
 - The main theme of Paul’s letter to the Galatians is ***distinguishing the “law” from the “gospel.”***
 - The law of God:
 - It obligates everyone to “**keep the whole**” of it, perfectly fulfilling every single law (5:3).
 - It justifies “**no one**” before God (3:11).
 - It holds sinners “**captive**” under its condemnation (3:23).
 - It curses “**everyone who does not abide by all things**” contained in it (3:10).
 - The gospel of God:
 - It is singular, unique, and exclusive (1:6-7).
 - It originates in God Himself and is made known through Christ (1:11-12)
 - It is relevant to every area of life (2:14).
 - It was “preached” throughout the Old Testament, even predating the giving of God’s law (3:8-9).
 - It demands faith, trust, belief in the person and work of Christ (2:26-27).
 - It converts sinners into sons, slaves into freedmen, prisoners into heirs of the eternal promise (3:23-29).
 - It is ***not a deficiency in the law*** that makes it unable to justify sinners
 - Paul speaks of what some theologians have noted as the “first use” of the law.

“**we were held captive under the law**, imprisoned until the coming faith” (v23)

 - Threefold use of God’s law
 - *A mirror to expose God’s righteousness and our sin*

- A standard by which evil is restrained in this world
 - A revelation of God's good character and pleasure
 - The law cannot help us because we are sinful and unrighteous (Gal. 3:21-22).
 - The law is good and right and true.
 - We (sinners) are bad and wrong and faulty.

- **How**, then, can *sinners* be **justified before God**?
 - “the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that **we might be justified by faith**” (v24)
 - Heidelberg Catechism
 - Question 60: How are you righteous before God?
 - Answer: Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. That is: although my conscience accuse me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them, and that I am still prone always to all evil, yet God, without any merit of mine, of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me, if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart (Rom. 3:9-26; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:1-10).
 - Martin Luther: “So when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: “I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is there I shall be also!”
 - Galatians 2:16 – “A person is not justified by works of the law but **through faith in Jesus Christ**, so **we also have believed** in Christ Jesus, **in order to be justified** by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

- **Justification**, then, is based on **faith alone** in **Christ's** person and work

- Friends, are you justified before God today?
 - If you think you are, why do you think that?
 - God is righteous and holy.
 - He sees everything you do, hears everything you say, and knows everything you think.
 - He will judge every ungodly thought, every rebellious word, every careless deed.
 - How will you escape God's perfect judgment?
 - Do you think God will forget about your self-centered approach to life or your foolish pride just because you were somewhat nicer than other people you know?
 - Do you think God will forget about your lying tongue or your slanderous/blaspheming words just because you are a church member?
 - Do you think God will pretend that you aren't saturated with sinful desires and characterized by wicked pursuits just because you got baptized?
 - If you are justified before God, do you praise God for His gracious grace?
 - Do you love the gospel?
 - Do you cherish Christ?
 - Are you overwhelmed by the gracious gift of God's Spirit to all who are in Christ Jesus?
 - Does your life show that you really believe that God has entered into real human history to rescue your rotten soul?

So, Christians are **Christ's covenant people** – heirs according to promise – by **trusting** or **believing** or "**faithing**" in Christ (i.e. His person and work).

But, there is not only **vertical** relationship in view here... there is also a **horizontal** one.

(2) IDENTIFIED BY BAPTISM

- “in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (v26-28)
 - Baptism is (among other things) the **formal adoption ceremony**
 - Two things to note about this here:
 - One: **Sonship** is in focus
 - “in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith” (v26)
 - Regardless of religious background, socio-economic status, or gender, “you are all one in Christ” (v28) and “sons of God” (v26).
 - This is highly significant when one considers the connection of “sonship” with “heir” (v29).
 - “if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring...” (v29)
 - This is a bombshell that we will have to set off another time...
 - For our consideration now, we want to understand that all the blessings Christ as “Son” enjoys from the Father are shared blessings of “sonship” with all those who are “Christ’s [people].”
 - Christ’s people are joint-heirs.
 - Two A: Baptism is the hinge on which **identification with Christ** turns
 - “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (v27)
 - Who are the ones who “have put on Christ” (v27)?
 - “as many... as were baptized” (v27)
 - Two B: And Baptism is the **unifying identifier of Christ’s people**
 - Who are the ones who “are all one in Christ” (v28)?
 - “as many... as were baptized” (v27)

- So, faith alone in Christ alone IS THE BASIS of our union with Christ and His people.
 - And baptism is the public display or signal that we are in union with Christ and in union with His people.
 - Who are the Christians in the world?
 - Those who have identified themselves with Christ and His people in the world.
 - Those who have been baptized, publicly ratifying their identification with Christ and His people in the world.
 - Baptists have historically been exceptionally strong on this subject.
 - We believe that only believers should be baptized.
 - We believe that only those who give conscious agreement with the gospel and affirm personal intent to live as a Christian in the world should be baptized.
- Baptism IS NOT THE BASIS of a sinner's union with Christ and His people
 - We politely but firmly **disagree** with our Church of Christ friends down the road from here, who claim that baptism:
 - **Saves** (Mk. 16:16)
 - This verse does not claim “baptism” is either a sufficient or even a necessary cause of salvation. “Belief” is the crucial ingredient, and this is in harmony with the entire testimony of Scripture (Rom. 3:23-26).
 - **Puts one into the [spiritual] kingdom of God** (Jn. 3:3-5)
 - This passage explicitly speaks of “regeneration” (i.e. “born again” or “parented again” or “born from above” *gennēthē anōthen*), not merely being identified with God's kingdom in this world or entering God's visible kingdom. See Titus 3:4-7 for more on “regeneration” and the contrast of “God's grace” with human “work.”
 - **Brings the gift of the Holy Spirit** (Acts 2:38)
 - While the book of Acts does record the coming and infilling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 10:44, 19:6), distributed to all God's children as a sign of the New Covenant (Acts 2:36), this is a unique and pivotal moment in human history. Furthermore, Peter's statement recorded in Acts 2:38 is not issued as a

theological treatise on the chronology of salvation nor does it claim baptism as the basis for the coming of the Holy Spirit. See Ephesians 1:11-14 for more on the gift of the Holy Spirit apart from any work of obedience.

- ***Washes away sins*** (Acts 22:16)
 - Again, this is a statement with a context, which the Church of Christ assertion doesn't seem to consider. Moreover, this passage clearly places the "washing away of sins" on the basis of "calling on his [Christ's] name" and not on the basis of being "baptized."
- But if we (Baptists) only say what baptism is not, then we may rightly deserve the accusation that sometimes comes from our Church of Christ friends... "You make too little of 'baptism'!"
 - To this I reply, "I am a *Baptist* for crying out loud! I want to make much of baptism!"

Baptism is the public designation that one is among Christ's covenant people.

(3) SOME APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Are you justified before God?

- a. If you think you are, then make your case...
 - i. God says, why do you deserve blessing and not cursing?
 - ii. God's laws are clear, and the first cuts straight to our hearts. You shall have no other gods before Me.
 - iii. Is your life marked by love, admiration, and fear toward God?
 1. Do you diligently seek to know and follow His commands?
 2. Do you gratefully thank Him for every good thing?
 3. Since you got up this morning, have your thoughts, words, and actions centered upon love for God's character, admiration for His holiness, and fear/respect for His kingly majesty?
- b. Have you trusted in Christ alone (who He is and what He has done) to justify you before God?
 - i. Do you cling to this gracious Savior at this very moment?

2. If you are justified by faith alone in Christ alone, have you publicly identified yourself with Christ and His people?

- a. Do you assume that your relationship with Jesus is a private matter?
 - i. If so, why do you think that?
 - ii. Can you name a single example in the Bible of a Christian who was not publicly identified with Jesus by baptism?
- b. If you have been baptized, do you understand that this is what baptism means?
 - i. Do you realize that baptism is your public promise to follow Jesus as King and Master?
 - ii. Do you realize that baptism is a congregation's public affirmation that they are with you and you are with them?
 - iii. Do you feel the weight of this privilege and responsibility as Christ's people in the world?

3. Will you think about what this means in the life of our church family?

If this is what Baptism means:

- a. Is there any reason we should be slow to baptize someone who professes faith in Christ?
- b. Should we make sure to explain the full meaning of baptism, including the obligations of following in obedience to Christ, before we publicly identify ourselves with anyone?
- c. Should we expect those who are baptized among us to be part of our church body?
 - i. If so, what expectations should we have on those who are baptized members of FBC Diana?
 - ii. If not, then what difference does it make how someone is baptized or where they are baptized?
- d. How should we (as a church family) relate to those who have been baptized among us but no longer assemble regularly with us?
- e. Is there any reason we should delay the baptism of young children?
- f. Is there wisdom in waiting until a person can better understand the meaning and obligations of baptism?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR THIS PASSAGE/TOPIC

Baptism and Galatians 3:27 by Matt Slick

<https://carm.org/baptism-and-gal-327>

Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation by John MacArthur

<https://www.gty.org/library/questions/QA79/is-baptism-necessary-for-salvation>

Galatians 3:15-29 a Dialogue by John Frame

http://thirdmill.org/articles/joh_frame/TH.Frame.Gal.3.15-29.html

Christian, Be Baptized! by Marc Minter

<https://marcminter.com/2017/07/28/christian-be-baptized/>

The Threefold Use of the Law by RC Sproul

https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/sproul/threefold_law.html