

## **HC 71-73–Underestimating and Overestimating the value of Baptism**

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: Baptism is a sensible sign that points you to the work of the Savior on the cross. Baptism is also a seal. God implants on your soul that your sins are washed away as surely as water washes away dirt from the body. This seal of assurance strengthens your faith. You are assured that you have been redeemed, adopted, and have the hope of heaven in your heart.

**What is your role in your baptism?** As an **adult** you are bound to respond to God's promises to you and show your faith in Christ. You do this by your covenant faithfulness. And as a **child**, you are bound to claim God's promises, to cash that check God gave you at your baptism.

But some are not satisfied with what the Lord teaches and they either underestimate the assurance they get in baptism or they overestimate it. You will see these errors corrected today.

Our headings are:

**Don't Underestimate the Assurance of Baptism**

**Don't Overestimate the Assurance of Baptism**

Our goals are: That **you are refreshed by the covenant mark of baptism that God put on you, that you embrace the assurances you get in your soul, and that you then live like you have these assurances you get through your baptism.**

**Don't Underestimate the Assurance of Baptism**

**71 Q. WHERE DOES CHRIST PROMISE THAT WE ARE WASHED WITH HIS BLOOD AND SPIRIT AS SURELY AS WE ARE WASHED WITH THE WATER OF BAPTISM?**

A. In the institution of baptism where he says: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." "**He who believes and is baptized** will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned." This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.

**72 Q. DOES THIS OUTWARD WASHING WITH WATER ITSELF WASH AWAY SINS?**

A. No, only Jesus **Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us** from all sins.

**73 Q. WHY THEN DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT CALL BAPTISM THE WASHING OF REBIRTH AND THE WASHING AWAY OF SINS?**

A. God has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that **the blood and Spirit of Christ** wash away our sins just as water washes away dirt from our bodies. But more important, **he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,** that the washing away of our sins spiritually is as real as physical washing with water.

**1. Your baptism assures you that "just as" water washes away dirt from your body "just so" Christ's blood and Spirit wash away your sins and makes your soul clean.**

**2. God showed this assurance by tying together baptism and salvation closely together.**

This was one of his final words on earth.

**Matthew 28:19** "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

So those who **believed Jesus Christ kept the covenant and died for them and are saved ought to be baptized.**

**3. Further, the Apostle Paul used very strong language to show the close relationship between salvation and baptism.**

**Titus 3:5** **not by works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration** and **renewing of the Holy Spirit,**

He deliberately **tied baptism and regeneration together to make the assurance stronger.** It is tied so strongly that he calls baptism the "washing of regeneration." He wasn't saying that water washes away sins. It was just a figure of speech.

He did this to assure you in a special way that just as you are 100% sure that just as water washes away dirt from the body, so you can be 100% sure, that Christ blood washes away all your sins. True faith is requisite for and tied to baptism. **You are saved by the inward washing** by the Holy Spirit.

**4. This close relationship with salvation and the sign of the covenant is not just something in the New Testament.**

**God assured believers and their children (Gen 17, Ex 4) of his promises at their circumcision, and he consequently threatened anyone who rejected the sign of the covenant for himself or his children.**

**Death or excommunication was the punishment.** (This should give you a sense of how angry God is with those who rob their children of the covenant sign and the assurance that it brings.)

In fact, **God was going to kill Moses because he had failed to circumcise his son.** And **this law requiring the sign of the covenant be tied to salvation and put on the children of believers was in place long before Sinai.** It was given to Abraham and Moses.

**5. Lessons:**

**a. It is an act of defiance against God for those who refuse to baptize their children.** God does not change. He wanted the sign upon children then, and he wants it now.

**b. This doctrine silences those who teach that you are saved by your covenant faithfulness.** Your faith is seen in obedience. For you and your children to be baptized is obedience. You can say that the rite of your baptism assures you of the wonder of your baptism.

**c. All Charismatics (Pentecostal types) and Baptist churches minimize baptism. They treat it as a mere sign.**

**d. If you marry someone who rejects the importance of baptism that will affect you and your children; it affects how you view your children and how you will raise them.**

**e. If a preacher minimizes baptism it will affect his ability to faithfully preach the Word of God.** He will miss the grace that comes from baptism. He will treat children as pagans.

### **Don't Overestimate the Assurance of Baptism**

#### **1. Some teach that baptism washes away the sins of children and parents.**

**This is a lie. This gives false assurances. This is sometimes called "sacramentalism."** With this view, a man can be lazy and not "work out his salvation" or lead his children to Christ. He would feel his ticket to heaven has been paid.

**Baptism does not wash away sins.** Rather, the blood of Jesus Christ washes us from all sins. The outward action, baptism, shows the inward reality (having been washed in the blood of the lamb).

**Baptism doesn't cause the inward reality.** Baptism is the result of that inward reality. You are washed, sanctified, and justified by the Lord's work by his Holy Spirit, **not by your baptism.**

**1Corinthians 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

This is not a literal washing in blood, of course. You are spiritually washed in Christ's blood.

**1John 1:7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

**Revelation 1:5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and **washed us from our sins in His own blood,**

Baptism does not wash away the sins of parents **nor the sins of children.**

#### **2. Some say children can't be saved because children don't have faith**

**and therefore they ought not to be baptized!**

**This is an overestimation of baptism. How?**

We believe, based on God's Word, that we need not worry about the salvation of children dying in infancy. Children surely can be saved. The promise is to you and your children!

**So on what basis are children saved?** Children may be saved by virtue of their parents' faith.

**Did not God condemn children for the sins of their first parents...** not having committed a single sin? Doesn't God say that children are sinful from the time they are in their mother's wombs? Logically then, why couldn't God similarly save children on account of their parents' faith? So to demand a child have faith to get the sign of the covenant is overestimating its value.

**Also, those who argue against God possibly saving children are limiting of God's hand.** (Strangely, many of them still believe that young children will go to heaven when they die because they are innocent. That is perverse. That is denying total depravity. There is only one way to be saved.

**3. Some say that they don't want to baptize their children because they believe that a child may reject God later in life.**

They think that this misuses baptism. But even adults who are baptized reject God and yet they are baptized. You know of others who were baptized and rejected the faith. **If children reject God's covenant later, they incur a severer judgment.** They will have to take full responsibility for their sins. Furthermore, **don't mistake covenant for salvation.**

**Let me illustrate:** There are those who argue that Israel (God's covenant people) will return to Palestine and take possession of it. That is not biblical at all. The Jews rejected the covenant and God rejected them. They can only come to God through faith in Jesus Christ. So if a child rejects the covenant God, will reject him.

**Parents must teach their children to make their "calling and**

**election sure.**” Teach them to show that they believe. Teach them to tarry in the Word of God, bruise their knees in prayer, and tire their lips with speaking of God’s truth.

Teach them to be dedicated to the Lord, mortify their flesh, and lead God-fearing lives.

**4. Some believe that baptism may help as part of your salvation, which is another overestimation.**

**Based on the Word of God, baptism does not even help to wash away your sins; baptism is not part of your salvation.**

**a. To prove this, let us look at 1st passage** that is often misused to show this.

**Mark 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.**

Does this verse mean that you must be baptized to be saved-that baptism is part of your salvation? You will only make that **mistake if you ignore the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the verse...or if you ignore the clear teachings that you are saved by faith alone**... Look at the verse: The one who is condemned is the one *who does not believe*...not the one who is not baptized. The Jews were all covenant people, but many Jews were not saved. Ishmael and then Esau were covenant people, but they were not saved either. They were judged more severely for God placing them in his covenant and their consequent rejection of it.

**b. Consider 2 other verses** that are misused to teach that baptism saves or at least helps to save.

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said to them, **"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;** and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 22:16** ‘And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

**Peter was giving directions about how a Christian could become a member of the church. The Apostle Paul was already teaching that those who were already converted needed to show that they were converted.** Baptism does not make you a Christian, but neither does repentance make you a Christian. Baptism and repentance are responses to regeneration. Further, Jesus saved the unbaptized thief on the cross. And what about converts in prisons who are never baptized?

**Linguistically, baptism is not salvic.** Consider: “Go home and eat.” Which is the command? Both or one! Similarly, baptism does have to be taken as salvic. Clear passages teach that one is only saved by faith...without tying salvation to baptism.

### **Conclusion:**

What a wonderful assurance baptism is! As surely as water washes away dirt from your body, so Christ’s blood and Spirit wash away all your sins. But what a waste that such a beautiful assurance is abused by those who teach sacramentalism...that you are saved from your sins by baptism, or by those who teach that you are partially saved by baptism.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. **I hope you are refreshed today with what the Lord did at your baptism:** He gave you an assurance in your heart that your sins were washed away.
2. I hope you **have received some answers to respond to** those who have erroneous views of baptism.
3. **Talk about your baptism and the one who baptized you** – not the minister – but God. Tell the world that you were united with Christ in his life, death, and resurrection, and he then marked you for eternal life. This is how you bring glory to him.
4. Because you realize the greatness of Christ’s work for you and his promise for you, **you must also be ready to face insults for him.**

Finally: If you are not yet a believer in Christ, ask God to work a work in your heart so your mouth will drop-that you will be stunned by what God does in you. Ask him to take away your sins because of Christ’s death on

the cross so that he will no longer be angry with you, but that he will delight in you.