

Belgic Confession 34-2 - Common Errors About Baptism

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

You have seen **why you should be baptized –you belong to Jesus.**

You have also heard the **command to be baptized by Jesus.**

And you **understand how you must be baptized – by sprinkling or pouring.**

Today we will complete our examination of baptism and see **3 corrections to 3 common errors** commonly taught regarding baptism.

Our headings are:

God baptizes believers, not man

God baptizes once, not twice

God baptizes children of believers

Our goals are: **That you will learn how much God cherishes you and marks you as his own through Jesus, and that that will move you to live better as his covenant children.**

God baptizes believers, not man

The ministers, therefore, on their part administer the sacrament and that which is visible, but our **Lord gives that which is signified** by the sacrament, namely, **the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of His fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds**

1. God marks believers in baptism, not man.

Baptism is God's *water mark* on you showing you that you are in covenant with him— a covenant in which he entered with you through faith in Jesus Christ - by your personal faith or by the personal faith of your parents.

God is the initiator in baptism – he has to be – as he chose you, called you, regenerated you, and is sanctifying you. After he brought you into a relationship with him, he **determined the terms of the covenant.** He declared **what the blessings and curses would be.** He determined **what the sign would be** and what would be signified by the sign.

He **gave invisible grace.** He **cleaned out your soul of filth.** He **renewed your heart.** He **comforts you** through sacraments. He **gives you assurance** by his Spirit that you belong to him and that he is good to you. And after baptism he **continues to clean you out.**

2. Question: Why couldn't you be the initiator of the covenant and of baptism?

Answer: You did not want to seek God. You could not do any good. You were a failure after your father Adam. The new covenant and the sign came to you through your new federal head, Jesus, your new Covenant Keeper who perfectly kept the covenant for you.

You have a **special relationship with your covenant God because of Christ's work and are in a special place!**

So the handicapped or infants of believers who die are not left out of heaven and God's kingdom because they are unable to make a clear confession. **The focus in baptism is what Christ did!** Christ could give salvation on the faith of your parents.

3. Or Baptist brothers take an Arminian position when they put the emphasis on “my choice” in baptism, rather than on the work of Jesus.

Logically, our Baptist brothers are saying that the child or the mentally incapable person, because he can't give consent or express faith, is necessarily lost to hell, and must not be baptized. But God is more forgiving than Baptist theology.

But don't worry! God will save infants of believing Baptists who die in infancy – even though they reject his promises.

God baptizes once, not twice

We believe, therefore, that every man who is earnestly studious of obtaining life eternal ought to be **baptized but once** with this only baptism, **without ever repeating the same**, since **we cannot be born twice**. Neither does this baptism avail us only at the time when the water is poured upon us and received by us, **but also through the whole course of our life**.

Therefore we **detest the error of the Anabaptists**, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received...

1. Our Baptist brothers reject covenant (family) baptism and they reject any baptism other than immersion.

So if you who were baptized at New Horizon as an adult and you attempted to become a member of a Baptist church, they would require you be baptized again. If you refuse, you will be refused.

And if you were baptized as an infant here and wanted to be a professing member in a Baptist church, they would require you to be rebaptized.

But a **second baptism is 100% useless**. It has no merit before the Father.

More than being merely useless, **to submit yourself to rebaptism is a serious sin.**

2. Consider the reason it is sinful to submit yourself to rebaptism.

You have seen already immersion is not the prescribed method of baptism in the Bible, but here is the sin:

a. Since you are only reborn once and then baptized, to be baptized again is minimizing the power of the work of Jesus Christ. It is like attempting to be reborn – twice. **It is attacking the once for all times sacrifice of Jesus.** So you must hate rebaptism. Though our Baptist brothers are not intending to sin, it is an outcome of their action.

b. Since you may have been baptized as an infant based on the faith of your covenant head, to be baptized again is to show contempt for the federal head, your parent. It is saying that you were not in a precious position before you attempted to join the Baptist church. This is saying that Isaac's, Jacob's, and David's circumcision were invalid as they were babies when they were circumcised.

3. Baptism is not limited in its effects to the time the water is poured or sprinkled, but throughout the course of life.
So repeating it makes no sense.

God baptizes children of Believers

...and moreover condemn the baptism of the **infants of believers**, who we believe ought to be baptized and **sealed with the sign of the covenant**, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the **same promises which are made unto our children**. And indeed Christ shed **His blood no less for the washing of the children of believers** than for adult persons; and therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ has done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, baptism is to our children. And for this reason St. Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ

1. The Bible teaches that believers and their children ought to be marked with the sign and seal of the covenant.

This must be the starting presupposition in the Bible. Why? This was what God commanded Abraham, the father of all believers to do – and all our consequent forefathers.

God was very angry when his covenant people did not apply the sign of the covenant to their children. He pronounced curses on those who did not circumcise their children and on their children also. God was about to kill Moses for not circumcising his son. Exodus 4:24-25. His wife saved him.

Genesis 17:11 "and **you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins**, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Applying the sign of the covenant was **not a suggestion to Abraham**. It was an explicit command.

2. A sign of the covenant continues for children (you can't argue for a change from silence).

(Last week you saw how baptism – the non-blood sign- replaced the bloody sign of circumcision which was fulfilled in Jesus.) **The sign was not removed from anyone.** God's kingdom is always expanding so you can see it applying to more – like girls and Gentiles – not less. There is no evidence of a discontinuity of a sign. A covenant must have a sign.

3. Covenant children today have the same covenant and **Covenant Keeper** today as Old Testament children.

God promised the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus to them and their parents. It was the same blood that washed away Isaac's sins that washed away yours and your children's sins. Covenant children are people of God through the forgiveness of sins – forgiveness that only comes through Jesus Christ.

So when the Jewish boys were circumcised they were raised with an awareness of their sins, and their forgiveness through their Covenant Keeper. This is the same promise covenant children have today.

Genesis 17:7...I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, **to be God to you and your descendants after you.**

Acts 2:38 ... "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. 39 **"For the promise is to you and to your children,** and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

4. Covenant children's parents today have the same **faith** as covenant children's parents of the OT.

This faith caused the inclusion and incorporation of children into the covenant community. BTW, this is why Christian parents who have children who die in infancy or in the womb do not have to worry about their children being saved.

Didn't God condemn **children for the sins of their first parents?**

Weren't **children condemned in Adam without their consent**...not having committed a single sin?

Logically then, why couldn't God similarly save children on account of their parents' faith?

Didn't God save **Jewish children without their consent because their parents put the Passover blood** on their doors?

Did God not **save Rahab's family because of Rahab's faith?**

Didn't **God save Ham because of Noah's faith?**

Christian children are **called holy seed.**

1Corinthians 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, **but now they are holy.**

Those who argue against God possibly saving children who are handicapped or infants are horribly limiting God's hand. (Some of those who believe children can't be saved by virtue of their parents' faith 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 – through faith in Jesus.

Furthermore, you who are baptized will still have unconfessed sin in your life when you die. Do you think you will go to hell because you haven't confessed all your sins? Surely you will be saved because you believe in Jesus.

5. Children today are part of the same church as Old Testament children.

Eph 2-3 proves this point. The wall of separation between the Jews and the Gentiles have been torn down! In Zechariah 10, you see children living as part of the church.

Zechariah 10:7 Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, And their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, **their children shall see it and be glad; Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.**

How does the Baptist come to this view that only adults must be baptized? **He argues for change of a great doctrine based on silence!** He quotes the verses that seems to teach you must believe and be baptized! And we say: Of course! But belief for the adult **also preceded circumcision in the OT,** and **yet children received the sign also.**

The **only way around this is dispensationalism**...which is the false teaching that people were saved in a different way in the OT.

6. Children today are confirmed as part of the same covenant so they must receive the covenant sign.

a. Households (which included children) were always baptized, as households were circumcised. Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Gaius, Crispus, and Stephanas' families were baptized.

b. Jesus embraced children AND blessed them. Mk 10:14, Lk 18:16. Only his children receive special blessings.

Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." 15 And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.

c. God directly addressed children in the covenant and promised them blessing for doing good. Only believers can do good. (Honor your father and your mother that you days may be long upon the land...)

Ephesians 6:2 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 **that it may be well with you** and you may live long on the earth."

7. Theological argument: God made the family the center of the covenant.

Since children are in the family, they are included in the covenant and distinct from the world. Covenant blessings in the family flow to the other members. You can rightly teach your children to sing and to pray. If they aren't holy, they should be condemned for attempting to worship and to pray without sacrifice. **But Baptists don't stop them, because they are holy.** Thankfully, they are not consistent.

8. There is one other major objection against infant baptism.

Baptists say they fear their child may reject God later in life. 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, then they incur a severer judgment.** They will have to take full responsibility for their sins. Covenant doesn't mean salvation.

To combat this fear, parents must teach their children to make their "calling and election sure." Teach them to tarry in the Word of God, toughen 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.

Conclusion:

God marks a believer in baptism. He marks him as his property. He marks him on his soul. Man merely submits to baptism. This baptism, because it signifies the once for all times sacrifice of Jesus, must only be done once. And believers and their children ought to be baptized because they are part of the covenant community.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Thank the Lord for marking you and your children in holy baptism. Remember what that baptism means to you...remember all that Christ has done...for his election, to his crucifixion, and his regeneration of your soul.

2. If you know of someone with unbaptized children, warn them of the dangerous place they are placing their children. Encourage them to study the issue so they can come to the truth.

3. Live like the Lord has kept the covenant for you. Don't live like you have to carry the burden of sin.

Finally: If you are not in covenant with the Lord, you are in covenant with the Devil. You might feel contented, but the Devil's way is the way to hell. May you beg God to turn you around. He will do so if you ask through Jesus.