

IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

CLASS 9 and POWER POINT 9:

BAPTISM: Part I review and Part II: THE SACRAMENTS, HOLY COMMUNION: Introduction

1. Infant B is one of the best illustrations of justification by faith. LS does say that B infants can have faith. A baby does not have knowledge or capacity for choice, but faith is not intellectual mastery or a decision. Faith is a trust, utterly dependent upon Christ. Can a baby trust their parents? The love of the mother for her child is something the baby knows and is the most heartfelt realities of their existence. If a baby can have faith with their parents, resting securely on their love, why can't they have faith in their heavenly Father?
2. In faith, a person is passive and receptive, salvation is not by works, a moral effort or having knowledge or certain spiritual experiences. Salvation receives the free gift of God. A baby B models that reception. Adults struggle with their zeal to save themselves by their own effort.
3. This is why Jesus when explaining the Christian life, faith and conversion, offers a little child as the model. "Unless you change and become like little children.....you will never enter the Kingdom of God....." Matthew 18:2-4. A helpless child is a role model. "Unless you change," in justification there is no room for human pride or one's capacities or one works, "Humble yourself like this little child."
4. In B infants passively receive God's grace and are changed. The Holy Spirit dwells and has living faith that needs to be constantly nourished (Seed under a can illustration), by hearing God's Word and just like life, must be fed or die.
5. We are not to sentimentalize B as just a ceremony. For all the good feelings and cuteness of the baby from parents, relatives and the congregation, in B the child dies. The waters of baptism signify a cleansing. The NT says "A burial." In B a child is named, but a personal name is the name of God. "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The Word of God invokes God's presence and the child's identity is the identity of Father who made the child, the Son who redeemer her and the Holy Spirit who leads her into faith.
6. Baptism plays a continual role in the spiritual life of Lutherans. We are told to "remember your baptism," every day you wash your face remember your baptism, said Luther. In His Catechism B applies to everyday life. To Luther our Old Adam and sins and lusts are to be drowned daily in repentance and put to death, so that "the new man can come forth and rise up, cleansed and ready to live in God's presence."
7. B is tied to one's salvation, many Christians worry if they made a personal decision for Jesus. The Altar call to many Evangelicals is like a Sacrament to them. They are to come forward and make a decision. One of EV's students wrote about a man who would have went forward except the invitational hymn was one stanza too short for him to come up. As the story goes he died that night without making a decision and coming forward in a car crash sending his soul to perdition. The subjective emphasis on the moving of a person's will puts the focus on what the person does, not what Christ did is uncertain.
8. Another uncertainty inherit to those who believe in salvation by grace alone is the fear of not being one of those who God chose to give faith. Luther answered those agonized over the question if they are/are not God's elect, that they're a "B child of God." For those uncertain

should not look inward as they will find only more reasons to doubt their salvation. Grace in LS is objective. Christians in need of assurance should understand that their salvation is an objective fact, sealed in time and space and as tangible as water.

9. In LS to remember our B is to remember it in the past, that we have been B! Most of us don't remember that, though EV can! This teaching holds truth for adults as EV was B as a teen, so he can recall it. LS accepts any B from any church, it is the Word and Name of God with water that constitutes B, not the theology of the pastor. It's not human work or a L says it, B is God's work.
10. When EV was 12 saying that he was an unknowing as an infant, he went to the Altar call, not an LS practice, and was B by immersion, and conveyed the sense of being 'drowned, buried in B. He remembers it vividly, the baptistery was built into the wall, with paintings around it to look like the River Jordan, it was hid by a curtain. When the curtain was rolled back, EV saw B as a solemn mysterious event. He was B with other youth, he wore old jeans and a T shirt with a white robe. He was dipped back, with his hand over his nose and B in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was called Jr. and had to catch his breath when he came forward he felt exultant. He felt a new zeal for God totally 'born again.' He went up to his friend in school and told him that he needed to get B. His friend said, "Why?" His first witnessing was what he calls as pathetic, he shared it was fun! He knew there was more than that, but was still an infant.
11. EV's B was not a B in LS. He read C.S. Lewis, then the Bible and much later the Lutheran Church as this was his beginning to understanding B.

THE SACRAMENTS: HOLY COMMUNION:

12. In LS, we don't seek God, He seeks us, we do not love Him, He loves us. It is God, not us who acts, see the parable of the Lost Sheep, Luke 15:4-7. 1 John 4:10, we don't love God, He loves us. Frances Thompson's poem, "The Hounds of Heaven," we run from God, He tracks us, we don't ascend to God, God descends to us. Christians are called to 'act' in the world, but in our relationship with God, all hinges on His actions.
13. This action is OBJECTIVE. God comes to us from the outside. Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells in us and this is much more than a mere function of our psychological state, or inward selves. LS never tells anyone to look inward if someone is doubting or struggling, because we only see our sinful selves, but to look to something objective and tangible; "The Cross, to God's Word, and the immutable promises of God!"
14. These concrete promises of God that apply to me being saved, aren't established by the vagaries of memories, decisions or sensations or having been elected or not, but in a tangible, historic event. When our sins oppress us, Luther reminds us that "We have been baptized." Being B, I have the promise of salvation and have eternal life in body and soul!
15. God works through material reality. The word "spiritual," is the opposite of "material," so many assume it's the escape from the material world as it opposes all things material. In Eastern religions this is the case. In Hindu, the material world is an illusion spun by a demon and to be saved means to escape this bondage of senses and attachments to the body. Christianity by contrast, affirms the religious significance of the physical.
16. In the 1st Article of the Apostles' Creed, is the doctrine of creation that God made all things "good." The 2nd article is the doctrine of incarnation. It affirms the physical, God became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. In Christ, "The Word became flesh!" John 1:14. In the 3rd Article we find that the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the communion of saints/the church and the 'resurrection of the dead.'