

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAPTISM

Why do some churches not baptize infants?

They view baptism as something we do, rather than something *God* does. Because of this, they only permit those who know about baptism and ask for it to be baptized. They are trying to make the “arrow” of the sacraments point up, when it should be pointing down.

Did the early church baptize infants?

Absolutely, because early Christians knew that baptism is something God does for us. Numerous inscriptions on the graves in the catacombs, dating back to the very first centuries of Christianity, testify to the fact that the early Christians baptized their children. Here is one: “Aristus lived eight months. He was recently baptized.”

Many of the early church fathers wrote about infant baptism. For example, Irenaeus (d.202 AD) a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, speaks of people of all ages, from infants up to the oldest, as reborn through Christ in baptism. Origen (185-254 AD) wrote, “Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins,” and “The church received from the apostles the tradition to give even little children to baptism.”

Does it matter how much water is used in baptism?

No! Scripture nowhere specifies an amount of water to be used. Early engravings dating as far back as 165 AD show pictures of baptisms by pouring water over the head. **It is not the water that has the power, but the Word of God applied with water in the name of the Triune God.**

Is there any difference between baptizing children and adults?

Jesus said, “*Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*” (Matthew 28:19-20)

- **When we baptize an infant**, we trust through this sacrament God is putting faith in their heart. We (pastor, parents, and sponsors) also take responsibility to teach them God’s Word throughout their life so their faith can grow.
- **When we baptize an adult**, we recognize that God has already given them faith through the preaching of the Gospel. We trust that God will strengthen that faith through baptism, and through a steady diet of God’s Word throughout their life.

IS IT TRUE THAT A PERSON IS “ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED?”

CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

On the one hand, Jesus doesn't want us to doubt our salvation. As he died on the cross, he said “It is finished.” Our salvation is completed, accomplished, paid in full. Nothing more needs to be added.

In addition, Jesus doesn't want us to doubt that he will guide us all the way to heaven. He will never forget us or let go of us. There is nothing in all creation strong enough to tear us away from Jesus.

John 10:28 *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

WARNINGS AGAINST COMPLACENCY

On the other hand, Jesus does warn us not to be complacent in our faith lest we reject him. It's been said, “No one can snatch you out of Jesus' hands - but you can choose to jump.” Sadly, sometimes this happens.

Luke 8:13 *Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but have no root. They believe for awhile, but in a time of testing they fall away.*

1 Timothy 1:18 *Fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have shipwrecked with regard to their faith.*

Galatians 5:4 *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

Here are a few more specific examples from the Bible:

Saul was called by God to be the first king of Israel. (His life is chronicled in 1 Samuel). Many indications are given that God chose a believer. In fact, 1 Samuel 10:6-9 describes the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him to give him the gift of prophecy. But Saul abandoned faith in his God and died in despair.

Judas Iscariot was called by Jesus to be one of his closest disciples. No indication is given in the beginning of Jesus' public ministry that he chose an unbeliever. Rather, Judas was involved in the ministry of the disciples as a Jesus follower (Acts 1:17). But Jesus himself tells us Judas died an unbeliever (John 17:12).

A member of the Corinthian congregation fell into a lifestyle of sexual sin for which he was not repentant. Paul urged the congregation to “hand this man over to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:4-5), that is, to view him as an unbeliever until such time as he repented of his sin and rejoined the congregation. Thankfully, this particular story has a happy ending. The man came back to faith, repented of his sin, and was welcomed back into the congregation with love and forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:5-11)

HOW DOES A PERSON FALL AWAY?

The Bible lists several marks of behavior that could lead to a Christian rejecting the gospel, and so becoming an unbeliever:

- Refusal to stay connected to God's Word (Mark 4:16-17)
- Refusal to repent of our sins and work towards a sanctified life (Romans 8:13-14; 1 Corinthians 6:12)
- Despairing over sin, that is, believing our sin is too great to be forgiven (Matthew 27:1-10)
- Becoming entrenched in works righteousness (Galatians 3:3, 5:5)

Note that these sinful attitudes and actions do not always indicate unbelief. In fact, Christians struggle with these attitudes and actions every day! Thank God that Jesus forgives us and helps us. However, remember that the Holy Spirit builds faith through God's Word, and specifically through the gospel message. The attitudes and actions on this list strive to keep us from regularly hearing God's Word and taking it to heart. Without being fed a steady diet of the gospel, our faith can grow weak, shrivel, and ultimately die. The Bible gives us many warnings not to let this happen to us!

1 Corinthians 10:12 *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

2 Peter 3:17-18 *Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.*

1 Corinthians 9:27 *Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified from the prize.*

Hebrews 3:13 *Encourage one another daily. . . .so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

Matthew 10:22 *The one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

To sum up - Jesus doesn't want us to doubt our salvation. He has washed our sins away, covered us with his righteousness, and put faith in our hearts. Based on all that our Savior has done for us, we can be confident that we will be with him in heaven.

However, Jesus also wants us to have a healthy awareness of our own sinful nature, which would still like to rebel against him. He wants us to battle against our sinful nature every day, "drowning it" (in the words of Martin Luther) "with daily sorrow and repentance, that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death." In its place, Jesus wants our "new nature" - our new heart of faith - to grow and blossom and flourish. As we gladly hear his Word, learn it, and take it to heart, the Holy Spirit blesses us with a rich and vibrant faith - "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season." (Psalm 1:3)

May God build our faith each day until we reach eternal life in heaven!