

Power for Daily Living

Session 2: Baptismal Exercises

Introduction

A man got all dressed up to go to a party. He was dressed in the fanciest clothes. Suddenly he fell over on the floor. A doctor nearby came running. After trying unsuccessfully to revive the man, she said, "It's too late—he's gone." Then she said to those who were standing around, "What religion was he?" And the people said he was an unbeliever. "That's too bad," said the doctor. "He's all dressed up with no place to go."

1. Read Galatians 3:26–27. In these verses, the apostle Paul speaks of Baptism as a garment. To "put on Christ" is to be clothed with Christ's righteousness. This is what happens when you receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism and believe in your Savior. What are some of the outward signs of one who has been baptized and has "put on Christ"? Talk about how those signs are evident in you and in those around you. In what sense is it true that Christians give evidence of their faith in their lives?

Into the Word

Your Personal Easter Experience

2. In Romans 6, St. Paul indicates that when you are baptized, you go through a personal Easter experience. Read Romans 6:1-14.
 - a. To what purpose are you "resurrected" in Baptism? (vs.4)
 - b. How sure is the promise? How do you know? (vs.5)
 - c. What has happened to you in Baptism? (vs.6,7)
 - d. What is the result in your life? (vv.8– 14)
3. Many have popularized the saying "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." In Baptism that is really true. As a baptized Christian, you live in God's grace, His forgiveness. You live in relationship with your Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. It's a baptismal lifestyle. What do the words of Galatians 2:20 mean specifically for you?

Exercising Baptism

Baptism can be compared to one of the body's muscles. By God's beautiful miracle of birth, we are born with many marvelous muscles that help us move and act. But as marvelous as muscles are, when they are not used, they atrophy. We have all seen muscles that have been inactive for a time. They wither from lack of exercise, shrink, and become almost useless.

An atrophied muscle is still there. It has only lost its power to act. For some, their use of Baptism is quite similar. Baptism is a gift with the potential for much good in a person's life. But sometimes our use of it becomes atrophied.

4. Unfortunately, there are people who have a baptismal certificate sitting in a drawer someplace who think little or nothing about their Baptism. What do you think leads to that kind of attitude? What are some things you might do to help people make sure their Baptisms are exercised?
5. You may know many who have failed to exercise their Baptisms. Perhaps there was a time in your own life when the use of your Baptism was in a state of atrophy. Some people say that at that time we need to be rebaptized. But Baptism does not depend on our response to be effective. When Baptism slips into disuse, what do we need?
6. Martin Luther had a nice way of saying Christians should exercise their Baptisms every day.

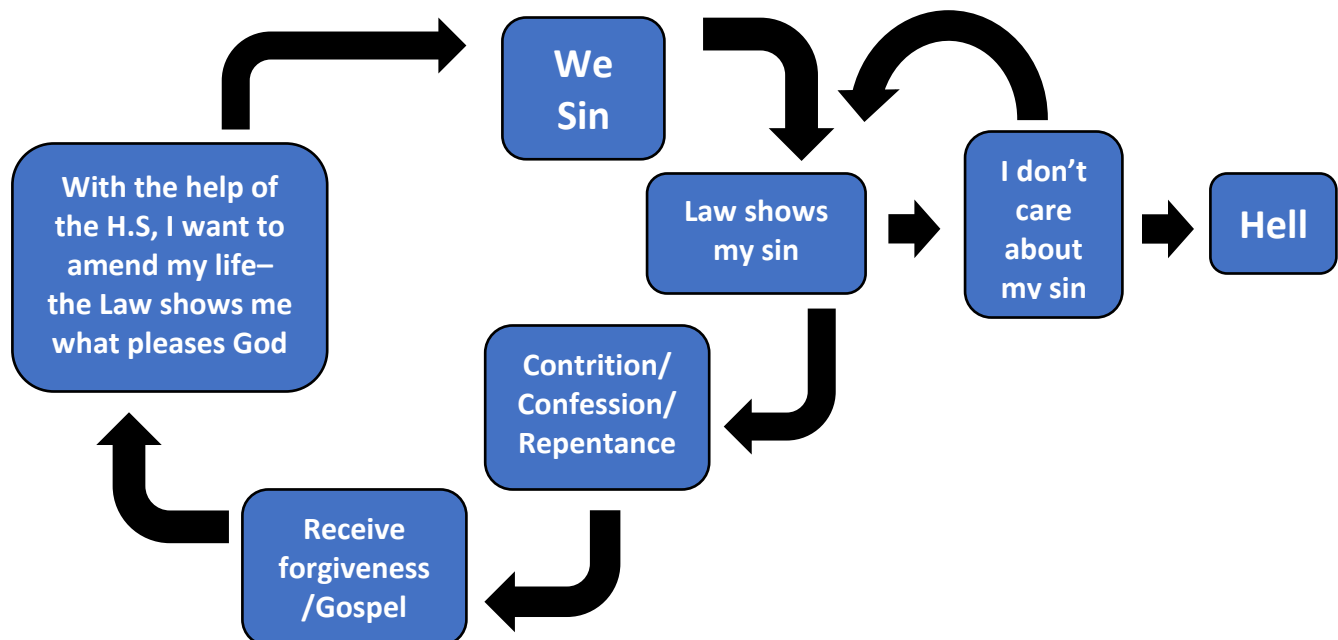
Baptism Part 4: Luther's Small Catechism

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

- a. What is the exercise?
- b. What is the result of the exercise?
- c. Talk about what that daily renewal means for you.

The following diagram depicts the life of repentance we daily observe as Christians.



7. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15:22; and Revelation 21:5. If a Christian feels badly about some recent sin, what is the real, joyful hope you find in these passages.

Power for Change

9. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. Describe the enormous potential for change due to the effects of Baptism and a new relationship with Jesus Christ!
10. Look again at Ephesians 5:25–27. What is the connection between Baptism and the Word? Why is that connection important?
11. Discuss the close connection between baptizing and teaching (or learning from the Scriptures) in the act of making disciples (Matthew 28:18–20). Why is that connection important as we reach new people with the Gospel?
12. Discuss other ways the family can exercise Baptism. What do Bible reading, prayers, times of informal worship, and the like have to do with remembering Baptism? What other ways to remember the benefits of Baptism can you list?

Conclusion

The means of grace are the channels through which God gives the free gift of forgiveness. These channels of His grace are the Word and the Sacraments. Baptism is one of these sacraments. It is a one-time act that begins a living relationship with Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. The other sacrament is Holy Communion, in which God repeatedly gives forgiveness through the body and blood of Christ that is shared with us as we attend His table. In Holy Communion, the forgiveness for which Jesus paid dearly on the cross becomes personal in the life of a Christian. Thank God for His Word and Sacraments.

Point to Remember

Exercise takes discipline. The word *discipline* comes from the same root word as the word *disciple*. To exercise your Baptism takes some discipline. It involves living in daily repentance, looking to the Word, believing God's promises in Christ, praying to God diligently, renouncing the devil, and pledging allegiance to Jesus.

In Conclusion

Read Job 42:1–2. Reflect on the promise you find there. What mechanisms of discipline do you or can you use for exercising your Baptism? Please list them.

Prayer: Lord, my God, out of great mercy, through the washing of regeneration, You made me a partaker both of the death and of the life of my Savior. Bestow upon me the power of Your Holy Spirit, that I may daily die unto sin, but live unto You and serve You, until in the life to come I shall be wholly renewed and in perfect bliss. Amen. (C. M. Zorn, 1846–1928)