

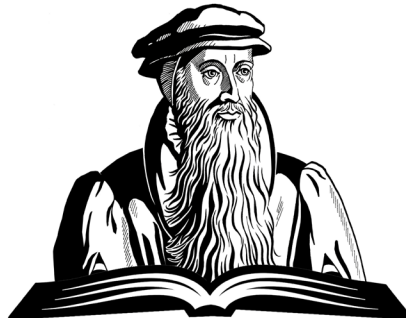
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

# Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

*Sermon #33, Lord's Day 26*

## Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel



The John Knox Institute  
of Higher Education

## **John Knox Institute of Higher Education**

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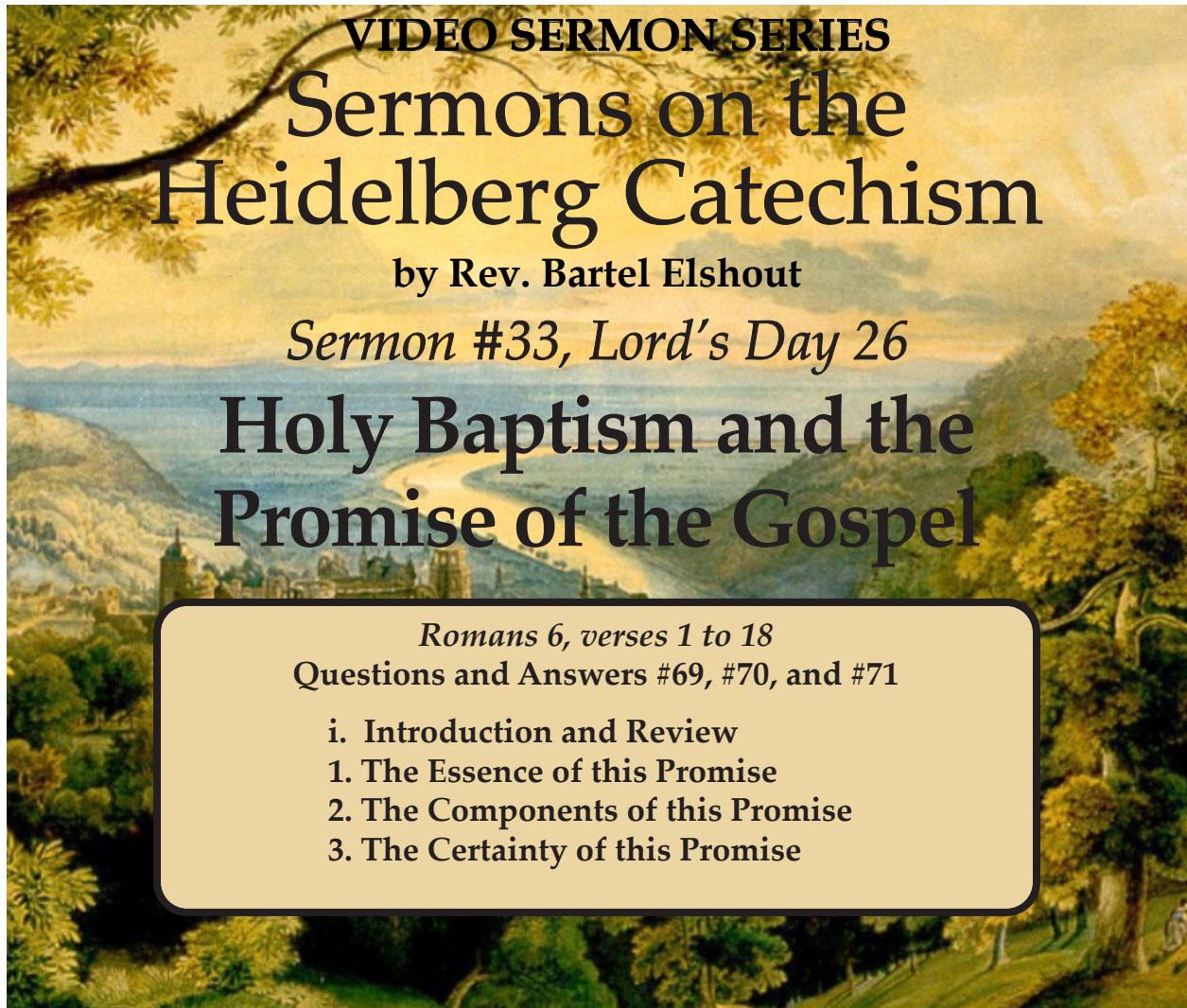
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*Sermon #33, Lord's Day 26*

**Holy Baptism and the  
Promise of the Gospel**

*Romans 6, verses 1 to 18*

**Questions and Answers #69, #70, and #71**

**i. Introduction and Review**

- 1. The Essence of this Promise**
- 2. The Components of this Promise**
- 3. The Certainty of this Promise**

**Introduction and Review**

Congregation, let's turn for a moment to Lord's Day 25 of the Heidelberg Catechism, and I want to read again Question and Answer #66 by way of review, and also for the benefit of our many visitors, to give the background for what we will be addressing tonight. Question and Answer #66 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Question is: *What are the sacraments?*

And the Answer is: *The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.*

And so, last week, we considered that the two primary means of grace—and I'm talking about the means of grace that function especially in the public worship service—are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments. Of those two, the preaching of the Word is the primary means of grace, which God has ordained both to work faith, and to strengthen faith. And yet, in his Fatherly compassion, God has also, in addition to the preaching of his Word, he has appointed the sacraments in order to strengthen that faith which he has wrought by his Spirit. And

so, the sacraments are intended for believers. The sacraments are intended to strengthen that which the Holy Spirit has already wrought. And the focus of the sacraments is ultimately the promise of the gospel. And so, the message communicated by the sacrament is not a different message that is communicated to us by the preaching of the Word. But they are, as I pointed out last week, the sacraments are God's visual aids—his visual aids, just like a teacher uses visual aids to get a point across to the children. So God has given us two visual aids. And so we can say that the sacraments are visible signs of invisible realities.

And, as I pointed out last week, in the sacraments, we do not have a different Christ. In the sacraments, God focuses attention on his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the very focus of the sacraments; who is the very center of the gospel. As I pointed out last week, the Puritans were fond of saying, *In the sacraments, we do not get a different Christ; we get the same Christ, but we get him better.* In the sacraments, God comes so near to us. The sacraments affirm God's desire, God's desire to make sure that his people get it; to make sure that they understand the essence of the gospel. That's why it says here in this Answer so beautifully, *that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.*

And then, of course, Question #68 tells us very simply that there are two sacraments; two sacraments appointed by God—the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the holy supper. Each sacrament has a unique focus. Baptism is the sacrament of incorporation, which affirms our membership in the church of Jesus Christ, and the holy supper is the sacrament of edification. So the focus of baptism is more on the new birth, and then the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on how that new life wrought by God is then also sustained and nourished.

And so, that brings us to Lord's Day 26. Let's read Lord's Day 26 of the Heidelberg Catechism, as we will now focus on the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Question #69: *How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?*

The Answer: *Thus: That Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.*

Question #70: *What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?*

The Answer is: *It is to receive of God the remission of sins freely, for the sake of Christ's blood which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.*

Question #71: *Where has Christ promised us, that He will as certainly wash us by His blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism?*

The Answer: *In the institution of baptism, which is thus expressed: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This promise is also repeated where the Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.*

And so, we're going to focus tonight on *Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel*. First of all, we're going to focus on *The Essence of this Promise*, namely, that in Christ, and by his precious blood, God's children are partakers of the full remission of their sins. That's the essential, and

basic, and foundational promise of the gospel. Secondly, *The Components of this Promise—What does it mean to be washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ?* And then, the Catechism beautifully unpacks that for us, focusing on what it means to be washed with the blood of Christ, and what it means to be washed by the Spirit of Christ. And we will see when we get there, that it focuses on the two aspects of redemption, the two sides of one coin, namely, justification, sanctification; the remission of sins, and the renewal of life, *The Components of this Promise*. And thirdly, *The Certainty of this Promise*, because, what is promised in the sacraments, what is promised in the sacrament of baptism is so significant that, literally, our salvation depends on it. That's why the question is asked, where is this promise? How can we know it's certainty, that this is what the sacrament of baptism signifies and seals. And then, of course, it gives us the passages of Scripture that point to the institution and the meaning of that sacrament. So, *Holy Baptism and the Promise of the Gospel; The Essence of this Promise; The Components of this Promise; and the Certainty of this Promise*.

Let me, first of all, say to everyone here, that the focus of this Lord's Day is not, in the first place, who should be baptized. That will be addressed in the next Lord's Day. But the focus of this Lord's Day is on baptism as a sacrament. Why is that so important? Because we need to recognize that when children are baptized, that the baptism of our children is a means to an end; that the baptism of our children is God's way of communicating to his people the essence of the gospel. And so, when baptism is administered, it's not, in the first place, about the child; it's not, in the first place, about the parents. In baptism, God makes a statement about himself. In baptism, God reveals, by means of those visible signs, who he is in Christ, and what Christ has accomplished. That's why, in the form for baptism, the opening section of the form does not deal with the children that are being baptized. But the opening section deals with what does that sacrament mean for the congregation of the Lord. What is it that God is communicating by means of that sacrament? And that's why the language of the form, that we should not do this out of custom or superstition is a very weighty statement. So I want you to understand this. So, what this Lord's Day focuses on, what is the essence of that sacrament? what is it that God is communicating to his church, to his people, by means of this sacrament?

### **1. The Essence of this Promise**

And so, this Lord's Day begins with one of those weighty and powerful questions again: *How art thou?* The Catechism is always very, very personal. What the Catechism wants us to understand is that it's not enough for us to embrace the doctrines of grace. But the question for you and me is, What does it mean for me? *How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?* And so, let's again take this question and let us now turn it into a declarative; rather than a question, let's now read it as a declarative statement. *Thou art admonished and assured by holy baptism—and of course, the focus is on the believer. Thou—the believer—art admonished and assured by holy baptism that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee.* That's it. There, we see it again. As I said last week, it is God's desire that his children, whom he has loved with an everlasting love, whom he has purchased with the price of his Son's blood; it is God's desire that his children would understand that what Christ has done is to their advantage. God wants his children to live in the assurance of that salvation. He wants his children to live in the enjoyment of that salvation.

And now, let's not overlook the question. Because the question itself is a very serious question, and that comes to all of us tonight. And that's the question, Do you know tonight; young people, do you know tonight that that one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to you? This

is literally a life and death question. Your and my future depends on the answer to that question. Because, unless the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to us, we will perish. And that's why it's so important for us to examine ourselves in light of God's Word whether we are truly believers in Christ. There are many in our day whose faith is merely superficial, whose faith is presumptive. There are many who narrowly think that they're destined for eternal glory, who discover at death, the day of judgment, that they never truly believed in the Christ of the Scriptures.

That's why Christ warns us in Matthew 7. And it's so, so very convicting, and so probing. "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but only he that doeth the will of my Father" (verse 21). And so, very plainly, Christ is saying, also when it comes to religion, talk is cheap. In other words, so many glibly say, "I'm a Christian" today. So many glibly say, "I believe that Christ also died for my sins." And yet, their lives tell an opposite story. Many who claim to believe in Christ who are not living Christian lives. As we'll see tonight, that's impossible. For a true believer is in Christ, and therefore, in his life, he'll begin to manifest the fruits of that union with Christ. It's impossible to be united to Christ, and not to begin to manifest by the fruits of your life a genuine Christ-likeness, as we will see in the second point. That's why reconciliation and renewal belong inseparably together.

And so, again, I ask you, and I ask myself, my dear friends, if you claim to be a Christian, I ask you, in light of Scripture, can you say so on biblical grounds? Have you been taught by the Spirit your need of this Christ? Have you been taught by the Spirit that you need a crucified Christ? Have you been taught, in any measure, what it means to be a sinner before God? Do you understand, by grace, what the psalmist meant in Psalm 130, when he said, Lord, if thou shouldst mark iniquity, if thou shouldst mark my iniquity, if thou wouldst hold me accountable for my sin, then I cannot stand before thee. But with thee, there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared (verses 3–4).

And so, I would never suggest that your Christianity is only real if you have a certain measure of conviction of sin. But there will never be true faith in Christ without conviction of sin. Because those who truly believe in Christ, those who truly trust in him, by the grace of God, they know why they need such a Savior. They know why this Christ is so very precious. And so, who are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness? Who are they who cannot be satisfied except with this Christ? Who are they that yearn in the depths of their soul after this precious Christ, who is offered to us freely in the gospel? Who are they? They who are poor in spirit, who recognize their spiritual poverty; they who mourn, who mourn deeply over their sinner-ship. They who are meek, who, as a result of that, have learned to humble themselves before God, who understand what David means in Psalm 130, Lord, if thou shouldst mark my iniquity, how can I stand before thee? And you see, it's against that background that the gospel becomes so glorious and so very precious. What an unspeakable joy it is that the Spirit of God then directs our attention that with the very God before whom we cannot stand, that with that God there is forgiveness, in order that he may be feared.

And so I ask you, my dear young friend, congregation, do you know Christ, do you know him experientially? Has Christ become precious to your soul? Can you truly say from the bottom of your heart, "Give me this Jesus, or else I die, or else I perish"? Has Christ, and has his name become for you the only name given under heaven whereby we must be saved? And by grace, you can wholeheartedly open your heart before God, and by grace, you can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that my heart yearns for that Christ. Lord, thou knowest that this Christ has become precious to my soul. Thou knowest that, for me, there is no other name given among men, whereby also I can be saved."

That's why we need to know that our faith is genuine. That's why the Bible calls us to self-examination, lest we be found to be a reprobate, the Apostle says. And God forbid that any of us

would end life's journey with an imaginary Christ, a Christ that has not become a personal and experiential reality for us. What will it profit us, what will it profit us if others view us as a Christian, and on the final day of judgment, Christ will say to me, and to you, "I've never known you. There was never a real, living relationship with me." That's another mark, you see, of true saving faith. When the Spirit of God works in us, not only are we drawn to this Christ, then by grace, we begin to live out of him. By grace, it becomes our desire to walk with him, to know more of him, to be instructed. I just really felt I had to explain this tonight. This is so weighty, congregation. This is so weighty. You and I, I'm not exempt from this. In Matthew 7, Christ talks about those who will have prophesied in his name—preachers, seminary professors. And Jesus will say to them, "I'm sorry, I never knew you." That's a very weighty matter. This is so serious. Your eternal, my eternal destiny depends on that question. Your and my eternal destiny is determined on whether that one sacrifice is of real advantage to you and to me.

And of course, the answer is, that this is true for the true believer. This is what God wants his children to know. He wants them to understand what Christ has accomplished for them. God wants his children to fully understand what it is that Christ has accomplished.

So, the Answer is very simple. It says, *That Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by his blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.* And so, boys and girls, this is something you can understand. You all know that we have to be washed on a regular basis. Time and again, every day, we become defiled. And so, we have to be washed. We have to take care of ourselves. So what this Answer is simply saying, just like our bodies need to be washed with water to remove the filthiness of the body, so the promise of baptism is that thereby God reminds his children that, as really as water washes away the filth of the body, so really are we *washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of our soul.* That is what baptism admonishes us and assures us. What does the word "admonish" mean? It means this. It really means here, "it reminds us." That's why the sacraments have to be administered on a regular basis. God wants his children; he reminds them by means of these visible signs; he reminds them on a regular basis of what it is that Christ has accomplished for them. And it is meant to assure them. So, the sacraments, they teach, and they assure. They remind us of the truth of the gospel, but also assure God's people that they are partakers of the blessings of the gospel.

I've said here repeatedly, God does not want his children to live in doubt. I realize that God's children often struggle with doubt, and they struggle with doubt because their faith is weak. But that's precisely why God has given us the sacraments. In the sacraments, he comes so very near to us. In the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and of baptism, God is saying to his people, "My people, I want you to focus on these visible signs. And I want you to make the application. I want to remind you. I want to teach you by means of these visible signs of what the essence of the gospel is," *that I am as certainly washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul.*

There's a beautiful passage in Isaiah 32, verse 17; it says, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace"—and listen carefully—"and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." That's beautiful. "And the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." That's why, in the form for baptism, when it talks about what it means to be baptized in the name of the Father, it says it so beautifully, that God is thereby reminding his people, and assuring his people that he makes an everlasting covenant with them. He reminds them that in Christ, that relationship that we may have with God; in Christ, that relationship is never in jeopardy. That relationship is absolutely sure.

And so, the water of baptism points us beautifully to the blood of Christ, especially focusing on the cleansing power of that precious blood. We sang Psalm 65, and there, David says, when he confesses what God's children all confess, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away" (verse 3). Because sin remains the painful reality of God's children until their last breath. And because of that painful reality, because so often it feels like a streak of foul transgression prevails against me. That's why we need to be pointed time and again to Christ; time and again to his finished work. That's why we need to hear the gospel time and time again. To hear the gospel that is summarized by 1 John 1, verse 7, that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

## **2. The Components of this Promise**

That brings us to Question and Answer #70, the second point, *The Components of this Promise*, where this is now unpacked for us. *What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?* And there are two components. #1: *It is to receive of God the remission of sins freely, for the sake of Christ's blood which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross.* So that's component #1. Component #2: *And also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ.* So first of all, *to be washed with the blood of Christ* means that God grants to his children the full and free remission of sins. It's remarkable how that truth comes back over and over again from so many different angles. And you know, congregation, you know that it is my burden to communicate that truth to you again and again; that you understand that, if by grace we may put our trust in Christ; if by grace, we take refuge to him, God wants his children to know that that results in the free remission of all of their sins. Does that mean that a young believer always has an abiding sense of that initially? No, initially often, that assurance can be very, very frail, and very intermittent. That's why it is our sacred task, as God's servants, to proclaim the gospel faithfully and consistently, and to administer the sacraments according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, so that that feeble faith will be strengthened, so that the believer will recognize and embrace that glorious reality; that that simple act of faith in Christ secures the believer the full and free remission of all of their sins. To receive it freely, it says so beautifully—freely, without money and without price. Let me again remind you that this is the foundation of the Christian life. This is the foundation of Christian experience, to know that my sins are pardoned because God saves his people for a purpose. That's why there is a second component to this Answer. So God redeems his people, God reconciles us to himself, in order that we might live unto him. We are redeemed for a purpose.

And therefore, woe be to me if I were ever to give the impression that to know that your sins are forgiven is an almost unattainable blessing. There's nothing that is more contrary to the Word of God. And I may, and I must tell you, dear believer, I must tell you in God's name, that the very fact that you have taken refuge to Christ; that the very fact that, by grace, your only hope is in him, means that God has granted to you freely the full remission of your sins. That's why he gives you the sacraments for. That's what he wants to reassure his people of.

And of course, the reason it is bestowed freely is because Christ paid the price for it. So even though grace is free, it is absolutely free, it is free because it was paid for, paid for in full by Christ. Christ gave his life for you, dear believer; he gave his life for you to secure for you the remission of your sins. As you know, that's why his first petition on the cross is "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). That was uppermost, uppermost on his mind. That's why Peter reminds us of the price, when he says, in 1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ"—the precious blood of Christ. And you see, that blood is only precious to those

who painfully realize their sinner-ship. And then, to know that that blood cleanses me from all sin; that that blood covers me in the sight of God; that that blood is a complete covering of all of my sins, and that when God sees that blood, he is entirely pleased, and he is entirely satisfied.

Now, what does it mean to be washed with the Spirit of Christ? So, to be washed with the blood of Christ focuses on the blessing of justification. Justification is that divine act, whereby God imputes to me, the sinner, the complete and accomplished work of Christ. So, by means of justification, we have God restores us in a relationship with himself. But now comes the outworking of that relationship, because, to be washed with the Spirit of Christ is *to be renewed by the Holy Ghost*. And also, it says, *to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ*—sanctification, inseparably connected to justification. And so, sanctification is that process whereby the Holy Spirit gradually transforms that redeemed sinner into the image of Christ.

So, the Dutch word is actually more expressive, sanctification: it's "holy making," making holy. So that means that when God redeems us in and through Christ, he will also see to it that we become like him. And that fits the original purpose for which God created us. God created us in his image. God created us to reflect his character. That's the great and overarching goal of redemption. So, in other words, when sinners are brought to a saving embrace of Christ, to experience the wonder of full remission of sins, it is in order that, on the basis of that reconciliation, on the basis of that remission of sins, we would begin to live a new life unto God. And that's why you cannot claim to be a Christian unless there is some evidence that you are also becoming Christ-like. Because the true Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ. And what is the great goal of the Spirit of Christ? His great goal is to glorify Christ. And he does that also, by working within the Christian. That's why the Holy Spirit will work restlessly in your life, to conform you to the image of his Son. Because, dear believer, you've been predestined, predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ. You have been chosen in Christ to become like Christ. And that's why those two blessings belong inseparably together. And so, in salvation, God restores us in a right relationship with him, but out of that new relationship comes a new life.

And that's what the second part of this Question deals with, *to be renewed by the Holy Ghost and sanctified to be members of Christ*. First of all, *that so we may more and more die unto sin*. That's what we call the passive side of sanctification; or the progressive dying of the old man, dying more and more unto sin. Well, let me hasten to add that it is not possible for a Christian to achieve sinlessness in this life. We will be sinners until we die. But if the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, there will be a progressive dying of the old man. That means that a progressive Christ-likeness will become visible in the life of the Christian. In his or her own estimation, we become a greater sinner, even though we sin less. And why is that? Because growing in Christ, growing in sanctification means there will be a growing sensitivity to sin. The more God's children grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, the more they become sensitive to sin; sensitive to sinful desires, sinful inclinations, sinful thoughts. And that's why Christ said, "Blessed are they that mourn." In that sense, until their dying day, God's children will mourn over that indwelling corruption within them until their dying day. What Paul describes in Romans 7, the second half of that chapter, is a real experiential reality for God's children, when they say, "O wretched man that"—not that I was, but—"that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verse 24). So, being washed by the Spirit is this progressive dying of the old man. Colossians 2, verse 11, Paul says, "In whom"—that is, Christ—"also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands"—and here it comes—"in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

And secondly, *to lead holy and unblamable lives*. So, the progressive dying of the old man and the progressive growth of the new man—and that's what Paul is talking about, of course, in

Romans 6. That's why Romans 6 is such an important chapter for the Christian, to really grasp what Paul is saying in that chapter—the progressive growth of the new man. That's how it ought to be, especially those of us who have been on the way for a long time. It should be evident to those who know us best—our wives, our husbands, those whom we know closely—they should notice in us a growing likeness to Christ. That's why it's so important that we learn to abide in Christ. That's what Jesus said to his disciples: don't just come to me, but you must abide in me. Because the more that you abide in me, the more I will abide in you, and you will bring forth much fruit, and "Herein is my Father glorified," he said, "that ye bear much fruit" (verses 4–8).

That's because the Father loves his Son, and he loves to see the image of his Son reflected in his people. And he's jealous of the honor of his Son. That's why he will not hesitate to chastise us, to lead us in ways in which our flesh has to be crucified. Because, in proportion to our flesh being crucified, in that proportion, we will begin to resemble the Lord Jesus Christ—and *sanctified to be members of Christ*.

### **3. The Certainty of this Promise**

One more thing I want to point out, then we need to wrap this up. And I've said this before, and I say it again. So, what's happening in sanctification is that the Holy Spirit gradually makes the believer what he already is in Christ. Sanctification means that we become what we already are in Christ. In Christ, we are complete. In Christ, we are righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. But you see now, in practice now, we have to become what we already are. It's so important to grasp this. That's why, in Romans 6, verse 11, a very important verse, Paul says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead...unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Reckon yourself to be who you are in Christ.

This is so important, because what's comforting, when we fail, and we do, we fail in our sanctification. Sometime we fail miserably. Sometimes we misbehave ourselves in such a way that we reflect the opposite of Christ-likeness. But the wonderful thing is, that even though we fail, that by the grace of God, we can arise and cry out to the Holy Spirit, "Oh blessed Spirit of Christ, please enable me today to be what I am." So that even when we fail, it doesn't change our relationship; it doesn't change our status. Just like as in a family, when a child sins, when a child offends the parents, it will interrupt their relationship, but it doesn't change their relationship. The only thing that happens, it impacts the function of that relationship, but the relationship remains intact. And so, that even though a child sins and offends his parents, he knows in the end, my dad is still my dad, and my mom is still my mom. And so, when we confess our sins to our parents, they will embrace us, and our relationship begins to function again. That's how it is with a Christian. When we sin, we bring darkness on our soul. God will hide his countenance from us. He may have to chastise us to bring us back, but that's the whole point here. Our relationship with him is never in jeopardy. And so, the imperfection of our sanctification never will effect the status of our justification. That's what David meant in Psalm 130. With thee, there is forgiveness, "that thou mayest be feared" (verse 4).

That's why God wants his people to be assured of the remission of their sins, so that, even though our sanctification is so important, that we may know that our justification will never be in jeopardy because of the imperfection of our sanctification. So baptism is God's warranty of these two inseparable blessings, two sides of one coin. Because, ultimately, as sinners, we have a double problem, and in Christ, God has provided a double whammy. As sinners, we are—and boys and girls, this is easy for you to remember—we are guilty, and we are filthy—guilty and filthy. Try to remember those two. Guilty means we deserve to be punished; but we're also filthy because sin

makes us dirty—guilty and filthy. And that’s why we need a Savior, through whom we receive double for all of our sins. We have a double problem, and there is a double remedy, namely, justification and sanctification. And this is all promised to us by the institution of the baptism.

So, in other words, this is not imaginary. This is what the Catechism is saying. In the institution of baptism, and those passages that affirm this. Titus 3, verse 5: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration”—and you could translate that “the baptism of regeneration”—“and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 22, verse 16: “Be baptized, and wash away thy sins, [by] calling on the name of the Lord.”

And so, congregation, what a precious sacrament is also the sacrament of baptism. By means of it, God wants to assure his people that their salvation is as real as the water of baptism, water that symbolizes the washing away of our sins, and the renewal by the Holy Spirit.

Congregation, are you a partake of that salvation? Young people, you have all received the sacrament of baptism. God has set you apart. God has put his mark upon you. In the days of your infancy, you have heard this gospel. God forbid that any of you would drown in the waters of your baptism. Because that will happen to those, who, in spite of their gospel privileges, still live and die in sin. But your baptism, your baptism is your personal warranty that if you seek the God in whose name you have been baptized, that he will be gracious to you. Your baptism is the warranty of the gospel. Your baptism, the fact that you were called by name, by your personal name, is the warranty that you will not seek this God in vain, that this God is so pleased and so honored when you seek him, the God of salvation in Christ, who in no wise will cast you out. Amen.

### **Let us pray.**

Our gracious God, we humbly thank thee that we could be in thy house today, that thy Word was proclaimed to us, that could hear how beautifully the sacrament of baptism reminds us, admonishes us, and assures us of the essential promise of the gospel signified by the water of baptism, pointing us to the double blessing Christ has secured for his people—the washing in his blood, and the renewal of life. O we pray that thou would bless the ministry of Word and sacrament in our hearts and lives. Lord, we pray for all who are not yet partakers of this Christ, who do not yet know that that sacrifice is to their advantage. O give them no rest until they find rest for their soul where it is only to be found, in Christ. Bless this evening, bless the presentation, and I pray that it will be helpful and beneficial to our dear young people. Go with us in this new week. Bless the labor of our hands. Keep and protect us, and hear us for Christ’s sake. Amen.