

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTION # 167.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #167. *How is our baptism to be improved by us?*

A. The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others;¹ by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein;² by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements;³ by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament;⁴ by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace;⁵ and by endeavoring to live by faith,⁶ to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness,⁷ as those that have therein given up their names to Christ;⁸ and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.⁹

Question 1—*Wherein is our obligation to improve our baptism?*

Answer—As on God's part baptism is a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, Rom. 4:11; on our part it is a covenant badge and bond representing the grace and tendering the assurance of that grant of pardon and life, Acts 22:16. Now baptism, which has come in the room of circumcision, signifies and seals to confirm the same, Col. 2:11, 12. Which baptism, being only administered once, since we are only once engrafted and regenerated, Tit. 3:5; it places us under a life-long obligation to its improvement, Rom. 6:3. Therefore, to the better impressing of the obligation to use it according to the ends for which it was appointed, it would be best to consider:

First, Baptism is a perpetual bond set upon us, obliging us to repentance and a holy life, Rom. 6:4; as the apostle is wont to argue, Rom. 6:2. He does not argue from what is impossible, but from what is ill-becoming of our renewed state, which we profess to enter into by baptism, Rom. 6:6. This new life is sealed by baptism which entails a vowed death to sin, and a bond wherewith we bind our souls to new obedience, Rom. 6:11. Thus, Paul, arguing from the import and signification of baptism, engages men to a new obedience, Col. 3:1. At point which he reiterates in the same chapter, Col. 3:3-5, 8, 9.

¹ Col. 2:11, 12; Rom. 6:4, 6, 11.

² Rom. 6:3-5.

³ 1 Cor. 1:11-13; Rom. 6:2, 3.

⁴ Rom. 4:11, 12; 1 Pet. 3:21.

⁵ Rom. 6:3-5.

⁶ Gal. 3:26, 27.

⁷ Rom. 6:22.

⁸ Acts 2:38.

⁹ 1 Cor. 12:13, 25-27.

Second, improvement of baptism is the best preparation for participation in the sacrament of the supper, John 13:8. Thus, those who have the fruit of baptism have the right to the benefits of it because only those sanctified by the Spirit of Christ have a right to the benefits purchased by his blood, Matt. 26:18.

Third, if we fail to improve our baptism, it will be a witness to solicit vengeance against us, as the gospel is preached as either a witness to us, Matt. 24:14; or as a witness against us, if we fail to obey, Mark 14:9. Then, in the judgment, those who have not improved their baptism will fare no better than the heathen, for they are those uncircumcised in the flesh, while we remain uncircumcised in heart, Jer. 9:25, 26.

The times when the obligation of our baptism ought most to be called to mind is during times of temptation, considering the most solemn engagement to God, to resist the devil, the world and the flesh, Gen. 34:14, Rom. 6:4; and when we are present at the administration of it to others, Rom. 2:25.

Question 2—*How is baptism to be improved by us?*

Answer—The things most conducive to this improving are: 1.) The raising of the heart in serious and thankful consideration of baptism, knowing that by it you were sealed with the seal of God's covenant, and had his name called upon you, Rom. 6:3-5; while so many in the world are utter strangers to the covenants of promise, Eph. 2:12. 2.) It should bring humiliation under your sins and miscarriages, as a falling short and walking contrary to your engagements to God therein, Rom. 6:2, 3; remembering that sins after solemn engagements to the contrary, are highly offensive to God, and attended with more aggravating circumstances, than if they had never been baptized, and under such solemn engagements, 1 Cor. 1:11-13. 3.) It should strengthen your faith and confidence in Jesus Christ, especially during down castings under a sense of guilt, because there is assurance of pardon of sin, 1 Pet. 3:21; and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament, Rom. 4:11, 12. 4.) By finding strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin and the quickening of grace, Rom. 6:3-5. 5.) By an endeavoring to live by faith, whereby we show ourselves clothed with Christ, Gal. 3:26, 27. 6.) To have our conversation, our entire walk and outward deportment, to be had in holiness and righteousness, Rom. 6:22. All of this is to be done as those who have given up their names to Christ, Acts 2:38. Hereby we are engaged to walk in brotherly love, as those professing to have been baptized by the same Spirit into one body, 1 Cor. 12:13, 25.

In order that we do this, *first*, we must, each one, personally and solemnly own the covenant made with God in infancy because, although Christ engaged himself for the common surety of the elect, Heb. 7:22; yet, it remains to each of us to take the bond upon himself before he can find the benefit of that bond, and that requires a yielding unto the Lord, 2 Chron. 30:8. It is not enough that the church engage for us as a body in visible covenant with God and Christ, Ezek. 16:8; but each must enter into covenant with God, and become his, Ezek. 20:37. *Second*, there needs to be a constant reckoning how you lay out yourself for God, Acts 27:23; because though few renounce their baptism, many forget their baptism, 2 Pet. 1:9. *Third*, there needs to be frequent self-reflection so that you know whether you are indeed washed from the guilt and filth of sin, 1 Cor. 6:11. Herein you see whether God's interest prevails in you, or the interest of the flesh, Gal. 5:16, 17. *Fourth*, there needs to be a sense that this dedication to God is a great help to the mortification of the flesh and the pursuit of holiness, 1 Cor. 6:15.