

Ephesians 4:

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Titus 3: “ Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”

The One Baptism

As we journey through our list of seven unities or givens here in the beginning of Ephesians 4, a chapter that will have many calls for unity, we come to the one baptism!

➤ **Now in the current state of the Church today, could we find a more divisive subject?**

I am sure there are some, but baptism has to be near the top and I can assure you I am not going to settle all the debates this morning!

So, before we tackle the one Baptism let me first reread some of the instructions the Apostle Paul’s gave Titus from our morning text, because I want to begin and end here:

Titus 3: “4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

➤ **Someone might point out that we did not find nor hear the word baptism in that passage and they would be right.**

What Paul did focus on was the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

[mention all those washings in the OT]

Paul shares this wisdom in the midst of a reminder of who we were and what we should be as Christians, which we will come back to.

➤ **But notice how similar what he shares there is to what we have been studying in Ephesians. We are saved by Grace & walk in the works we were created to walk in!**

This is why the Apostle reminds us here in Ephesians 4 about those seven unities: Unities that are both given and ones to strive toward.

Let me begin our discussion of baptism with another road illustration with those terrible ditches!

On the one side we have those who put too much emphasis on baptism.

There are churches, large and small, who insist that IF you are not baptized by them then your baptism is not valid and you may not really be saved!

- The salvation of the thief on the cross and the discussion of all the divisions in Corinth should end such thinking, but sadly it continues!

The ditch on the other side would obviously be putting little or no emphasis on baptism: Here we have the example of the Salvation Army where they sadly reject both sacraments because they view them as controversial and divisive.

I hope we can agree that baptism is important and at the same time understand that we should have a broad acceptance of many types of baptisms. So that leaves us with a broad road & lots of questions:

- Question like how much water should be used in a baptism?
- In Whose Name are we to be baptized.
- Should infants be baptized?
- Should adult converts be baptized immediately after their conversion?
- Who is authorized to perform a baptism?
- I can go on, but I think you get the point.

Now here at Church of the King we instruct new believers and our covenant children in what we believe are the proper Biblical answers to those questions which are reflected in our Creeds and the Heidelberg Catechism that we review each week.

Now we should know what we believe and be ready to defend what we believe, but we must always do so remembering the one baptism and the unity that the Apostle calls us too in this important chapter.

- So how can we address what the Apostle Paul speaks of as the one baptism?

One easy out is to spiritualize baptism so we avoid all this messy stuff: The one baptism is the baptism of the Holy Spirit!

- Now it is something we cannot see and not something we can do.

Our text from Titus might fit there except for that reference to washing!

Peter gives us a bit more insight when he boldly proclaims...

I Peter 3: “21 There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.”

Well, the thief on the cross was not baptized so Peter must be speaking about some spiritual baptism, right?

- Well again there is that reference to water that removes filth just as Paul spoke of a washing.

The bottom line is that we are in fact saved when we are made alive by the Spirit and we are then commanded to be baptized with water in God's name as He claims us for His own.

- That is the normal means that God uses: The Word is preached, the Spirit gives the hearer a new heart and that obedient heart seeks to be baptized.

It is God from start to finish as we saw last week and so yes that thief was truly saved and Lord forbid if something had happened to little Irene before we baptized her this morning her parents would still have the promise of God that they would be with her in eternity.

So again, we are to avoid those two ditches not on the one hand saying that a person must be baptized to be saved nor saying that baptism really does not matter.

And we must be compassionate with those Saints because they often do not reject the one Baptism: In both cases we can see how they might be trying to protect it from abuse, but sadly they end up abusing this important sacrament or keeping it at a distance. We must strive to bring them back to the Biblical road!

As we would expect the Scriptures can provide us with the illustrations that we need to have a proper understanding of the one Baptism.

In his first epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul turns to the Old Testament to help us understand this one baptism.

And remember that he is writing here to a very divided Church!

I Corinthians 10: "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

So, what was the one baptism for these Saints? Passing through the Red Sea.

Who was baptized in this one baptism?

Everyone, including the children, but again a discussion for another time.

Here we have some real unity and diversity, as we ponder that crossing...

- Some walked and some rode.
- Some may well have been sleeping while others watched those Egyptian soldiers very closely.
- And who partook of that one baptism? A mixed multitude we are told consisting of both Jews and God fearing Gentiles.

What type of Saints were they? Again a very mixed group.

-- There were men women & children.

-- You had the young people who would one day conquer the Promised Land.

-- You had Moses who was God's prophet.

-- You had Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who rebelled against Moses and were swallowed up by the earth. -- You had Caleb and Joshua who were the faithful spies and futures leaders as well as the ten unfaithful spies.

- Are you beginning to get the picture of the one baptism?

The Apostle goes on to give some stern warnings concluding in verse 12: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Can we trust God when temptations bear down on us in this life, even when trying to understand baptism. We should strive to see how the Word, the Water and the Spirit do God’s work, but also remember that we cannot have a perfect understanding nor practice.

- In all of history, there has only been one perfect baptism which of course is the ultimate picture of the one baptism Paul speaks of.

There is much debate over why Jesus had to be baptized and yet the account of His baptism is recorded for us in all three synoptic Gospel accounts. I believe it is stressed because it helps us to properly understand all that happens in the one baptism where there should always be Word, water and Spirit. All three accounts give us various details, but let me read Matthew as our example this morning...

Matthew 3: “13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. 14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

- Why did the sinless Son of Man have need of baptism?

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

- His is the perfect baptism that informs all other baptisms!

“Then he allowed Him. 16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

- There we have water, Spirit and Word as the Spirit descends and the Father speaks His approval.

We may use various amounts of water and speak various portions of the Word of God as we bring our converts or little ones to the Lord in Baptism, but it is always the Spirit Who must descend and put His seal upon them, and it is in His work in their baptism & their lives that we must always trust!

- This is what it means to trust in the promises of God!

This is why we joined with the Avanto family in singing...

“Beneath the blood-stained doorpost I with my children stand;
A messenger of evil is passing through the land. There is no other refuge from the destroyer's face;
Beneath the blood-stained doorpost shall be our hiding place.”

- This is why the Apostle Paul gave those warnings to the Corinthians and why we often call a wondering Christian back to their baptism, and by it reminding them to whom they belong!

So with all that in mind let me return to where I began as we ponder the wonder of the one baptism that washes away our sins and places us in Christ giving us the power by the Spirit to walk in faithful works...

Titus 3: “ Remind [the Saints] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

[we are all born as members of Adam’s fallen race!]

4 “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

➤ **We are saved by Grace!**

“He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”

Understanding the one baptism is our goal not so we can win all the debates...

➤ **But rather so that we, who are saved by grace and washed in the waters of baptism, can truly be those who walk in the good works that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have created us in Christ to walk in, in this life and for all eternity!**

Communion Meditation:

I Corinthians 10: “14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the [e] communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”