

I Peter 3:21; Lord's Day 26
DOES BAPTISM SAVE US?

- I. The answer.
 - A. We must be careful not to answer quickly, “No” to reject Rome’s contention that baptism saves all who are baptized.
 - B. Reformed believers say baptism saves us, but not like Rome says it.
 - 1. The sacraments are a means of grace – spiritual (not physical) which confirms our faith (HC, q. 65).
 - 2. Baptism saves us, for by it God gives us, and He uses it to strengthen our faith.
- II. Baptism is a means the Holy Spirit uses to give us grace and to further our salvation; it can save us instrumentally.
 - A. Negatively, baptism does not have an inherent power of itself.
 - B. There is more to salvation than its beginning; there is also its maintenance, its enrichment, its experience.
 - 1. Baptism confirms faith, enriches and deepens it, and it gives the experience of faith.
 - 2. Baptism also gives great power to motivate us to antithetically.
 - 3. And knowledge of our baptism strengthens us to bear life’s burdens and to fulfill our calling.
 - C. In summary, we are to remind ourselves that we were baptized, i.e., we have been washed by and with Christ.
- III. Baptism saves believers, not all who have been baptized.
 - A. The Spirit does not so tie Himself to the ceremony as if the ceremony regenerates.
 - B. Baptism saves, not everyone baptized, but only “us,” i.e., those who believe.
 - 1. Only those with faith and exercising it can see the reality portrayed in the sign and seal.
 - 2. Faith sees the water and realizes the spiritual meaning by holding for truth God’s promise of salvation in Christ.
 - C. When we fall into sin, we must not despair of God’s unchanging mercy and covenant and forgiveness.
 - 1. Remember: our salvation is because of God and His covenant, not because of our struggles with sin or our repentance.
 - 2. Remind ourselves that we were baptized and what it signifies: we have been washed by and with Christ.