



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Advanced Bible Correspondence Course**

### **Lesson 25: Holy Baptism**

#### **Lord's Days 25 –27**

We have seen how important faith is in the life of a child of God. Without faith a person is not a child of God. Therefore the question is: If faith is indispensable to be saved, how can I obtain that faith? And he, who has received that faith, feels so often how weak his faith is! What little comfort do I have! Therefore it is not only necessary to have faith, but it is also necessary for this faith to grow and become stronger. For this purpose, the Lord has given us the means: His word and the sacraments. The Holy Ghost uses the Word to work faith in the heart and the Word and the sacraments to strengthen it. That is the subject of this lesson.

#### **LORD'S DAY 25**

**Q. 65. SINCE THEN WE ARE MADE PARTAKERS OF CHRIST AND ALL HIS BENEFITS BY FAITH ONLY, WHENCE DOES THIS FAITH PROCEED?**

**ANSWER: FROM THE HOLY GHOST (A), WHO WORKS FAITH IN OUR HEARTS BY THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, AND CONFIRMS IT BY THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS (B).**

**(A) EPHESIANS 2:8, 6:23, JOHN 3:5, PHILIPPIANS 1:29: (B) MATTHEW 28:19, 1 PETER 1: 22-23.**

#### **Faith**

What we have learned in the previous Lord's Days we find summarized in question 65: Faith makes me a partaker of Christ and all His benefits. Expressed in a different way: Faith is the hand by which a beggar receives a gift. I need faith to obtain salvation. Without faith I stand as it were in front of a display window, behind which those grand objects are which I cannot reach. How do I then obtain this indispensable faith?

## **The Author of faith**

The Holy Ghost works faith in the heart by means of the Word. In the Bible we read: “*So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17; see also the example of Lydia in Acts 16). The Holy Ghost then opens the heart so that the hearer begins to understand the Word. For instance, someone is sitting in church. It is a question whether he is really listening. Suddenly he hears something that strikes him. He knows that it is true what he hears. He feels that this is addressed to him. He cannot dissociate himself from it. Death and eternity become reality. The Holy Ghost reproves of sin. He sees his lost state and cries out: “What must I do to be saved?” This need drives him to Christ. The gospel gives hope. In Christ he sees the possibility to be saved. By faith he is united with Christ and becomes a partaker of His benefits. In this way he learns to know Christ and receives the blessed knowledge that he is safe in Him.

In the beginning this faith is often very weak. But it begins to grow. It grows into a firm trust, because it rests on the sure promise of God’s Word. God’s Word is the food, which makes it grow. The contents of that Word are visibly presented in the two sacraments: Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. The Holy Ghost uses the Word of God, but also the sacrament as means to strengthen faith.

## **Q. 66. WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS?**

**ANSWER: 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 (A).**

**(A) GENESIS 17:11, ROMANS 4:11, DEUTERONOMY 30:6, LEVITICUS 6:25, HEBREWS 9 7-9, 24, EZEKIEL 20:12, ISAIAH 6:6-7, 54:9.**

## **What are sacraments?**

Faith is also strengthened by the sacraments. We ought to know well what sacraments are, for otherwise we have only vague ideas of the functions.

The sacraments have a double function:

1. They are visible signs, visible images of invisible matters. For example, sprinkling water on the head of a small child is a visible image of the washing away of sins through the blood and the Spirit of Christ. Eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Lord’s Supper indicate that one has communion with Christ and is a partaker of His benefits.
2. The sacraments are seals. A seal is a token of authenticity. When the Lord offers us His grace, He desires to make clear to us by means of holy baptism that His promises are true and trustworthy. Baptism is a seal on the promises of the gospel. In the Holy Supper the meal is partaken of with Christ. Indeed, He

Himself is eaten and drunk by faith. This indicates that a Christian is truly closely united with Him.

### **Relationship between Word and sacraments**

This description shows that the sacraments do not present new things which are not mentioned in the preaching. In the sacraments the Word is fully present. The Holy Ghost uses the sacraments to give a clearer knowledge of the Word, and to work a greater assurance in the heart that the Word is true. In this way He strengthens faith, because that faith rests on God's promises of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. And that again gives greater peace and comfort.

A Christian has only one basis to believe that he is a child of God and that he will go to heaven one day. And that is the only sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross. There is no other basis. Both Word and sacraments testify this.

**Q. 67. ARE BOTH WORD AND SACRAMENTS, THEN, ORDAINED AND APPOINTED FOR THIS END, THAT THEY MAY DIRECT OUR FAITH TO THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS AS THE ONLY GROUND OF OUR SALVATION (A)?**

**ANSWER: YES, INDEED, FOR THE HOLY GHOST TEACHES US IN THE GOSPEL, AND ASSURES US BY THE SACRAMENTS, THAT THE WHOLE OF OUR SALVATION DEPENDS UPON THAT ONE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST WHICH HE OFFERED FOR US ON THE CROSS.**

**(A) ROMANS 6:3, GALATIANS 3:27**

### **Christ only**

The apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:14: "*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Our catechism is in full agreement with these words of Scripture. We can only be saved because Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross. Nothing of man is to be added. Good works, prayer, sufferings, and tears do not carry any weight. Otherwise it would be a lost cause. For what would we be able to contribute? Absolutely nothing! To emphasize this, answer 67 states again that which was already said in answer 66.

The question is: Is it really true that Word and sacrament only point to what Christ has accomplished on the cross? Must faith then only rest on this? Yes, faith rests only on the merits of Christ in His suffering and death. They are the central point in the word. And in the sacraments the suffering and death of Christ and our deliverance through them are visually represented. The sacraments say: It is undoubtedly true what the gospel proclaims. And only on this basis does the Lord offer us His salvation. It is the only basis on which a lost sinner can rely. It is as if the catechism wants to say: Believe this, because your eternal salvation depends on it!

**Q. 68. HOW MANY SACRAMENTS HAS CHRIST INSTITUTED IN THE NEW COVENANT OR TESTAMENT?**

**ANSWER: TWO, NAMELY, HOLY BAPTISM AND THE HOLY SUPPER.**

**How many sacraments?**

The sacraments are signs and seals in relation to the covenant of grace. In the Old Testament there were also two sacraments: circumcision and the Passover.

Circumcision was instituted with Abraham, and in essence it signifies the same as Holy Baptism. The Passover was instituted just before the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and it points to the same thing as the Lord's Supper does.

In the sacraments of the Old Testament blood used to flow, because the blood of Christ had not yet been shed. Just as the sacrifices in Israel they pointed to Christ, who was yet to come.

***Questions:***

*1. What is the function of faith in receiving salvation?*\_\_\_\_\_

*2. Why is church attendance necessary to receive faith?*\_\_\_\_\_

*3. Where in scripture do we read that the Lord opened someone's heart?*\_\_\_\_\_

*4. What is the difference between Word and Sacraments in regard to faith?*\_\_\_\_\_

*5. Can a person earn the right to the merits of Christ by faith?*\_\_\_\_\_

*6. When is a certain ceremony a sacrament? (two requisites)*\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Meditation:

"Dear anxious soul, why do you keep away from Christ? You say Christ is far from you; alas, He has been at your door all day."

Taken from: "Gems of Robert Murray McCheyne"