

or the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase to which Martin Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness.

The operation of water-baptism does not even touch the point involved in the regeneration of the soul. What is the necessary connection between water and the overcoming of sin? I cannot see any connection which can exist between sprinkling, or immersion, and regeneration, so that the one shall necessarily be tied to the other in the absence of faith. Used by faith, had God commanded it, miracles might be wrought; but without faith or even consciousness, as in the case of babes, how can spiritual benefits be connected necessarily with the sprinkling of water? If this be your teaching, that regeneration goes with baptism, it looks like the teaching of a spurious church, which has craftily invented a mechanical salvation to deceive ignorant, sensual, and grovelling minds, rather than the teaching of the most profoundly spiritual of all teachers, who rebuked scribes and Pharisees for regarding outward rites as more important than inward grace.

But it strikes me that a more forcible argument is that the dogma is not supported by facts. Are all persons who are baptized children of God? Well, let us look at the divine family. Let us mark their resemblance to their glorious Parent! Am I untruthful if I say that thousands of those who were baptized in their infancy are now in our jails? You can ascertain the fact if you please, by application to prison authorities. Do you believe that these men, many of whom have been living by plunder, felony, burglary, or forgery, are regenerate? If so, the Lord deliver us from such regeneration. Are these villains members of Christ? If so, Christ has sadly altered since the day when he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Has he really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of his body? Do you not revolt at the supposition? It is a well-known fact that baptized persons have been hanged. Surely it can hardly be right to hang the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Our sheriffs have much to answer for when they officiate at the execution of the children of God, and suspend the members of Christ on the gallows!

What a detestable farce is that which is transacted at the open grave, when "a dear brother" who has died drunk is buried in a "sure and certain hope of the resurrection of eternal life," and the prayer that "when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ, as our hope is that this our brother doth." Here is a regenerate brother, who having defiled the village by constant uncleanness and drunkenness, died without a sign of repentance, and yet the professed minister of God solemnly accords him funeral rites which are denied to unbaptized innocents, and puts the reprobate into the earth in "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." If old Rome in her worst days ever perpetrated a grosser piece of imposture than this, I do not read things aright; if it does not require a Luther to cry down this hypocrisy, then I do not even know that twice two make four.

Do we find—we who baptize on profession of faith in the name of the sacred Trinity—do we find that baptism regenerates? We do not. Neither in the righteous nor the wicked do we find regeneration wrought by baptism. We have never met with one believer, however instructed in divine things, who could trace his regeneration to his baptism; and on the other hand, we confess it with sorrow, but still with no surprise, that we have seen those whom we have ourselves baptized, according to apostolic precedent, go back into the world and wander into the foulest sin, and their baptism has scarcely been so much as a restraint to them, because they have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Facts all show that whatever good there may be in baptism, it certainly does not make a man "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," or else many thieves, whoremongers, drunkards, fornicators, and murderers, are members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Facts are against such a doctrine; and facts are stubborn things.

But you will say, "Why do you cry out against it?" I cry out against it because I believe that baptism does not save the soul, and that the preaching of it has a wrong and evil influence upon men. We meet with

persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptized. The number of these persons is increasing, fearfully increasing, until all grades of society are misled by this belief. How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say, "Ye must be born again" to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own "unfeigned assent and consent" to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in baptism. What is he to do with them? Why, my dear friends, the gospel then has no voice; they have rammed this ceremony down its throat and it cannot speak to rebuke sin.

The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, "I am saved, I am a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke me? call me to repentance? to a new life? What better life can I have? For I am a member of Christ—a part of Christ's body. No matter what my walk and conversation is, I am a child of God. It is true, I drink and swear, and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, for when I die, though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave, and tell everybody that I died 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life.'" Now, what can be the influence of such preaching as this? What but the worst of ills? I cannot be silent here, I dare not; and having soon to render an account before my God, I must free myself from this evil as well as from every other, or else on my head may be the doom of souls.

I have spoken thus much, and there will be some who will say—spoken thus much bitterly. Very well, be it so. Physic is often bitter, but it shall work well, and the physician is not bitter because his medicine is so; or if he be accounted so, it matters not, so long as the patient is cured; at all events, it is no business of the patient whether the physician is bitter or not, his business is with his own soul's health. There is the truth, and I have told it to you; and if there should be one among you who is resting on baptism, or resting upon ceremonies of any sort, I do beseech you, shake off this venomous faith into the fire as Paul did the

viper which fastened on his hand. I pray you do not rest on baptism.

*"No outward forms can make you clean,  
The leprosy lies deep within."*

I do beseech you to remember that you must have a new heart and a right spirit, and baptism cannot give you these. You must turn from your sins and follow after Christ; you must have such a faith as shall make your life holy and your speech devout, or else you have not the faith of God's elect, and into God's kingdom you shall never come. I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful invention of antichrist. O, may God save you from it, and bring you to seek the true rock of refuge for weary souls.

So we have it: faith is the INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SALVATION. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." What is this believing? Believing consists in two things; first, there is an accrediting of the testimony of God concerning his Son. God tells you that his Son came into the world and was made flesh, that he lived upon earth for men's sake, that after having spent his life in holiness he was offered up a propitiation for sin, that upon the cross he there and then made expiation for the sins of the world that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If you would be saved, you must accredit this testimony which God gives concerning his own Son.

Having received this testimony, the next thing is to confide in it—indeed here lies, I think, the essence of saving faith, to rest yourself for eternal salvation upon the atonement and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to have done once for all with all reliance upon feelings or upon doings, and to trust in Jesus Christ and in what he did for your salvation. This is faith, receiving of the truth of Christ: first, knowing it to be true, and then acting upon that belief. Such real faith as this makes the man henceforth hate sin. How can he love the thing which made the Savior bleed? It makes him live in holiness. How can he but seek to honor that God who has loved him so much as to give his Son to die for him.

This faith is spiritual in its nature and effects; it operates upon the entire man; it changes his heart, enlightens his judgment, and subdues his will; it subjects him to God's supremacy, and makes him receive God's Word as a little child, it sanctifies his intellect; it cleanses within; it makes clean the inside of the cup and platter, and it beautifies without; it makes clean the exterior conduct and the inner motive, so that the man, if his faith be true and real, becomes henceforth another man to what he ever was before.

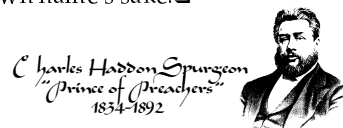
Now that such a faith as this should save the soul, is, I believe, reasonable; yea, more, it is certain, for we have seen men saved by it in this very house of prayer. We have seen the harlot lifted out of the ditch of her sin, and made an honest woman; we have seen the thief reclaimed; we have known the drunkard in hundreds of instances to be sobered; we have observed faith to work such a change, that all the neighbors who have seen it have gazed and admired, even though they hated it; we have seen faith deliver men in the hour of temptation, and help them to consecrate themselves and their substance to God; we have seen, and hope still to see yet more widely, deeds of heroic consecration to God and displays of witness-bearing against the common current of the times, which have proved to us that faith does affect the man, does save the soul.

My hearers, if you would be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me urge you with all my heart to look nowhere but to Christ crucified for your salvation. Oh! if you rest upon any ceremony, whether baptism or otherwise—if you rest upon any other than Jesus Christ, you must perish, as surely as this Book is true. I pray you believe not every spirit, but though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine than this, let him be accursed, for this, and this alone, is the soul-saving truth which shall regenerate the world—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Away from all the gorgeous pomp of religion! We bid you turn your eyes to that naked cross, where hangs as a bleeding man the Son of God. There is life in a look

at the Crucified One; there is life at this moment for you. Whoever among you can believe in the great love of God towards man in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved. If you can believe that our great Father desires us to come to him—that he panteth for us—that he calleth us every day with the loud voice of his Son's wounds; if you can believe now that in Christ there is pardon for transgressions past, and cleansing for years to come; if you can trust him to save you, you already have the marks of regeneration. The work of salvation is commenced in you so far as the Spirit's work is concerned: it is finished in you so far as Christ's work is concerned. Oh, I would plead with you—lay hold on Jesus Christ. This is the foundation: build on it. This is the rock of refuge: fly to it.

I pray you fly to it now. Life is short: time speeds with eagle's-wing. Swift as the dove pursued by the hawk, fly, fly poor sinner, to God's dear Son; now touch the hem of his garment; now look into that dear face, once marred with sorrows for you; look into those eyes, once shedding tears for you. Trust him—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." God give us this vital, essential faith, without which there is no salvation. Baptized, re-baptized, circumcised, confirmed, fed upon sacraments, and buried in consecrated ground—ye shall all perish except ye believe in him. The word is express and plain—he that believeth not may plead his baptism, may plead anything he likes, "But he that believeth not shall be damned"; for him there is nothing but the wrath of God, the flames of hell, eternal perdition. So Christ declares, and so must it be. May the Lord bless this word for his own name's sake. □



**NOTE:** This very popular message by Spurgeon has been noticeably abbreviated. In it he was aiming primarily at the Church of England and what their catechism taught. This message, though, equally applies to the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Christ, or any other church that joins regeneration with water baptism.

## the gospel

The gospel of Christ is good news of pardon to the guilty, addressing all as equally guilty before God. It reveals an atonement sufficient for all; and everyone is commanded to receive it as a faithful saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15).

The gospel is addressed to those who are "far from righteousness" (Isa 46:12); who are poor, and blind, and naked; who have no money to purchase salvation, no merit to recommend them to the favor of God (Isa 55:1; Luke 7:42).

Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matt 9:13). If we are not sinners, we have nothing to do with the gospel; and if we are sinners, let us not reject the counsel of God against ourselves, by vainly supposing that anything about us gives us a peculiar claim to his favor, or by imagining that our sins are too great to be forgiven. The thief upon the cross was saved by faith in Jesus, and none shall enter heaven in any other way. Our only plea is this—"God be merciful to me a sinner."

Although the Scriptures are so clear on this subject, it is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the great body of those who hear the gospel. It offends their pride to be put upon a level with the outcasts of society; surely, they think, some difference will be made; but they err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor understanding the malignity of sin or the grace of God.

They view salvation as a kind of bargain which God proposes to make with his creatures, that on certain conditions he will accept them; while in fact it is the message of reconciliation, equally addressed to all mankind, declaring that a full atonement for sin has been made upon the cross, and inviting every sinner of Adam's race instantly to approach God through Christ.

When Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, it was a remedy equally adapted for all who had been bitten (Num 21:8; John 3:14-15). By looking to the serpent the patient was healed; and in reference to this emblem, Christ, indiscriminately addressing all mankind, says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else"—"a just God and a Saviour" (Isa 45:21-22). □

## BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

by C. H. Spurgeon

**"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"—Mark 16:16**

There is a great error being taught which is in direct opposition to this text, well known to you as the doctrine of "baptismal regeneration." We will confront this dogma with the assertion that BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH SAVES NO ONE. The text says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; but whether a man be baptized or no, it asserts "he that believeth not shall be damned": so that baptism does not save the unbeliever, nay, it does not in any degree exempt him from the common doom of all the ungodly. He may have baptism, or he may not have baptism, but if he believeth not, he shall be in any case most surely damned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling, in his infancy, or in his adult age, if he be not led to put his trust in Jesus Christ—if he remain an unbeliever, then this terrible doom is pronounced upon him—"He that believeth not shall be damned."

First of all, teaching that persons are saved by baptism seems out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach. It makes salvation depend upon mere ceremony. The false religions of the heathen might inculcate salvation by a physical process, but Jesus Christ claims for his faith that it is purely spiritual, and how could he connect regeneration with a peculiar application of water? I cannot see how it would be a spiritual gospel, but I can see how it would be mechanical, if I were sent forth to teach that the mere dropping of so many drops upon the brow, or even the plunging of a person in water could save the soul. This seems to me to be a most mechanical religions belief, and to be on a par with the praying windmills of Thibet,