

BELGIC CONFESSION - ARTICLE 34

Holy Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, has made an end, by the shedding of His blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin; and that He, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, has instituted the sacrament of baptism instead,¹ by which we are received into the Church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to Him whose ensign and banner we bear, and which serves as a testimony to us that He will forever be our gracious God and Father.

Therefore He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with pure water, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,*² thereby signifying to us, that just as water washes away the filth of the body when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled upon him, so does the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God.³ Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.⁴

Therefore the ministers on their part administer the sacrament and that which is visible, but our Lord gives that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving to us a true assurance of His fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds.

Therefore we believe that every man who is earnestly studious of obtaining life eternal ought to be baptized only once with this true baptism, without ever repeating it, since we cannot be born twice. Neither is this baptism only profitable to us at the time when the water is poured upon us and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life.

Therefore we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism they have once received and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant,⁵ as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the same promises which are made unto our children.⁶ Indeed, Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of believers than for adult persons; and therefore, they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ has done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ. Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.

Verses for Consideration

1. Colossians 2:11–12; 1 Peter 3:18–21
2. Matthew 28:19
3. 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5
4. 1 Corinthians 10:1–5
5. 1 Corinthians 7:14; Acts 2:38–39
6. Genesis 17:10–13