

Andrew Murray:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" Matthew 28:19.

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" Mark 16:16.

We find the meaning of the institution of baptism summarised in these words. The word "teach" means, "make disciples of all the nations, baptising them." The believing disciple, as he is baptised in the water, is also to be baptised or introduced into the name of the Trinity.

By the name of the Father, the new birth and life as a child in the love of the Father are secured to him.¹ By the name of the Son, participation in the forgiveness of sins and the life that is in Christ are promised to him.² By the name of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling and progressive renewal of the Spirit are assured him.³ And every baptised believer must always look upon baptism as his entrance into a covenant with the Trinity, and as a pledge that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit will, in course of time, do for him all that they have promised. It requires a lifelong study to know and enjoy all the blessing that is presented in baptism.

In other passages of Scripture, the blessing is again set forth. We find bound up with it the new birth required to make a child of God. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5). The baptised disciple has in God a Father, and he has to live as a child in the love of this Father.⁴

Then, again, baptism is brought more directly into connection with the redemption that is in Christ. Consequently, the first and simplest representation of it is the forgiveness or washing away of sins. Forgiveness is always the gateway or entrance into all blessing. Therefore, baptism is also the sacrament of the beginning of the Christian life---a beginning that is maintained through the whole life. It is on this account that in Romans, chapter 6, baptism is represented as the secret of the whole of sanctification, the entrance into a life in union with Jesus. "Know ye not that all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?" (Romans 6:3). The more precise explanation of what it is to be baptised into the death of Jesus, and to arise out of this with Him, for a new life in Him follows in verses 4-11. This is very powerfully comprehended elsewhere in this word, "As many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). This alone is the right life of a baptised disciple. He has put on Christ.⁵ As one is plunged into water and passes under it, so is the believing confessor baptised into the death of Christ, in order then to live and walk clothed with the new life of Christ.

And there are other passages where again the promise of the Spirit is connected with baptism. It is promised not only as the Spirit of regeneration but also as the gift from heaven bestowed on believers for indwelling and sealing--for progressive renewal. "He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly" (Titus 3:5,6). Here, renewal is the activity of the Spirit, by which the new life that is planted in the new birth penetrates our whole being, so that all our thinking and doing is sanctified by Him.⁶

And all this rich blessing which lies in baptism is received by faith. "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved." Baptism was not only a confession on man's part of the faith that he already had, but equally a seal on God's part for the confirmation of faith--a covenant sign in which the whole treasury of grace lay open, to be enjoyed throughout life. As often as a baptised believer sees a baptism administered, or reflects on it, it is to be to him an encouragement to press, by an ever-growing faith, into the full life of salvation that the Trinity desires to work in him. The Holy Spirit is given to appropriate within us all the love of the Father and all the grace of the Son. The believing candidate for baptism is baptised into the death of Christ and has put on Christ. The Holy Spirit is in the disciple to give him all this as his daily experience.⁷

Lord God, make Your holy baptism always operative in my soul as the experience that I am baptised into the death of Christ. And let Your people everywhere understand by Your Spirit what rich blessing lies in this baptism. Amen.