

The Subject of Baptism (5th)

(Today we continue to look at some of the other basic passages which the Protestants use to support the baptism of infants of believing parents.)

In our last study we quoted from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* where it states that “the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized,” and listed the supporting passages for their belief. The passages referenced are Gen. 17:7, 9 with Gal. 3:9, 14; Col. 2:11-12; Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 4:11-12; I Cor. 7:14; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15. We discussed briefly Gen. 17:7, 9; Gal. 3:9, 14; and Col. 2:11-12. Today we will look at Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 4:11-12; and I Cor. 7:14.

You may remember that we addressed Acts 2:38-39 in a previous study where the Greeks words for baptisms were addressed. To those that cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter told them to repent and be baptized and that the promise was to them and their children; that is, to “as many as the Lord our God shall call.” He further said to save themselves “from this untoward generation.” Then it is stated that “they that gladly received his word were baptized.” From what we find in the Scriptures (1) the promise is limited to “as many as the Lord our God shall call; (2) they were to repent prior to baptism; (3) the command to be baptized was given to those who inquired—“what shall we do”; (4) the injunction was given to the inquirers to “save themselves from this untoward generation”; (5) those who were baptized “gladly received” Peter’s word. This is not the description of infants. Furthermore, if infants were to have been baptized why is it that God did not give record of this on the day of Pentecost? This would have been a perfect time to answer this question. Though the promise is to our children who are called, they must first gladly received the gospel and repent of their sins prior to baptism. Equally, they are to be knowledgeable enough to live in such a way that they are being delivered from this evil and wicked world (untoward generation).

The next passage listed above is that of Romans 4:11-12. This passage, if you will remember, John Calvin used to link the Old Covenant to the New Covenant to indicate that the new is an extension of the old. Regarding verse eleven, Charles Hodge said, “All therefore who were circumcised, professed to embrace the covenant of grace. All the Jews were professors of the true religion, and constituted the visible Church, in which by divine appointment their children were included. This is the broad and enduring basis of infant church-membership.” *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, p. 117. Note that Hodge said that “all … who were circumcised professed to embrace the covenant of grace.” What about the females who were not circumcised? Where they outside the covenant of grace? When we read the passage, it says that the sign of circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith that Abraham had and not that it was a sign or a seal of his descendants. Nor was it a sign of Abraham’s servants because the Scriptures declare that circumcision was to be performed on “every man child … born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised,” Gen. 17:12-13. As you can see, much is inferred and much is overlooked in this passage as it is supplied as a support for by the protestants for their practice of infant baptism.

Regarding Romans 4:11-12, let us hear from the Baptist, Robert Haldane, from his commentary on *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 174. Haldane said, “This blessedness is described by David as consisting, in the imputation of righteousness without works. But this was not all: circumcision was not only a sign, but a seal of that righteousness which was imputed to Abraham through faith while he was uncircumcised. This does not mean, as is generally understood, that it was a seal of Abraham’s faith. This is not said. It is said that it was a seal of the ‘righteousness’ of the faith which he had; that is, a seal of that righteousness itself, namely, the righteousness of God, which he had received by his faith.”

Further, allow me to quote from the notable Baptist, John Gill, regarding Romans 4:11, “It may be inquired whether circumcision being called a seal, will prove that baptism is a seal of the covenant? I answer, that circumcision was only a seal to Abraham of a peculiar covenant made with him, and of a particular promise made to him, and was it to be admitted a seal of the covenant of grace, it will not prove baptism to be such; since, as has been observed, baptism does not succeed it in place, in time, and use; and could this be allowed that it succeeds it, and is a seal of the righteousness of faith, as that was, it can only be a seal to them that have both faith and righteousness, and not to them that have neither; it would only at most be a seal to believers. But, alas! not ordinances, but other things more valuable than they, are the seals of the covenant, and of believers; the blood of Christ is the seal, and the only seal of the covenant of grace, by which its promises and blessings are ratified and confirmed; and the Holy Spirit is the only earnest, pledge, seal, and sealer of the saints, until the day of redemption.”

The next passage given to support “the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized,” is I Corinthians 7:14. It reads as follows: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” You will remember in our last session that Robert Shaw said, “That the infants of believing parents ought to be baptised; and that it is sufficient if one of the parents be a member of the visible Church, is evident from 1 Cor. vii. 14.” But what is the context of this verse? Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is instructing believers regarding a situation where one of the spouses in a marriage is a Christian and the other is not. Evidently the congregation at Corinth had asked Paul about this and other questions regarding marriage and divorce because in the first verse of the chapter he said, “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.” After giving some instructions regarding these questions, in verse twelve he begins to address the situation where both parties in a marriage are not believers. Thus far nothing is said regarding baptism, especially infant baptism. Paul instructs the congregation that in such cases, if the unbeliever desires to live with the believer the marriage is to continue. In other words, the marriage is just as valid and legal (holy) as if both were believers. Also, in such cases, their children were legitimate (holy) and not ill-legitimate or bastards. The unbelieving spouse is sanctified; that is, living in a holy state of marriage. (The words for sanctified and holy are from the same Greek word.) Therefore, the marriage is legitimate and the children from such people are legitimate. Equally, the unbelieving spouse is living in a legitimate (holy/sanctified) marriage. There is no warrant to impose infant baptism into such a passage. Agreeing with this interpretation, we quote from Adoniram Judson’s work on *Christian Baptism*. Remember that Judson was of the protestant persuasion prior to him becoming a Baptist. He wrote as follows:

The holiness ascribed to the children cannot be moral holiness, for it is ascribed to the unbelieving parent also. Nor can it be ceremonial or federal holiness, securing a title to church membership, or any church privilege; for though it is ascribed to the unbelieving parent, he is not considered a member of the church, or entitled to any church privilege. Nor is this interpretation consistent with the apostle’s reasoning. It appears that the Corinthians have inquired of the apostle, whether it was lawful for believers, who were married to unbelievers, to continue the marriage connection. The apostle determines that it is lawful; for, says he, the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer, that is as “every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is *sanctified* by the word of God and prayer.” (I Tim. 4:4-5) In this sense, the unbeliever is sanctified, so that it is lawful for the parties to dwell together. Now if it was not lawful to dwell together, your children would, of consequence, be unclean. But they are not unclean. Therefore, you may be satisfied that your cohabitation is lawful marriage. But to urge the church membership of

children, or their title to any church privilege, as proof that the unbeliever is sanctified to the believer, so that it is lawful for them to dwell together, would have been quite irrelevant.

At this point, Judson quotes many ancient writers that agree with his interpretation of the Greek word for holy in this place.

Our time is up for today. The Lord willing, we will look at the remaining three passages in our next podcast.