

# #1 We Are Children of the Heavenly Father: Holy Baptism

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“Even in Baptismal waters the Old Adam is a pretty good swimmer.” That’s what Dr. Martin Luther wrote. But what does this mean? There is a lot to unpack there (but, then again, we’ve had two years of Confirmation classes to work through questions like this).

First of all, Baptism is not just plain water but the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s powerful Word. Baptism is a Sacrament. A Sacrament is a sacred act instituted by God, in which God Himself has joined His Word of promise to a visible element (water), and by which He offers, gives, and seals the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ. The word “Sacrament” comes to us from the Latin Bible. In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, it is the word, *mysterion*, or “mystery.” To baptize with the Holy Spirit, then, is the mystery of the New Creation. Just like we marvel at a newborn baby in his physical birth, we have even more reason to marvel at the spiritual birth of a cleansed child of God.

Baptism breaks down to three key elements. The first is the very Nature of Baptism. Baptism is for all people, just as Jesus Christ Himself instituted when He told His disciples to “baptize all nations” (Matthew 28:19). In Acts Chapter 2, Peter says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off- for all whom the Lord our God will call.” It is good to point out, that even babies are baptized because Jesus invited little children to come to Him, and babies still have the Old Adam, or Original Sin, (which is included in what Baptism forgives).

The second element of Baptism is Blessing. Baptism rescues us and saves us from sin and the devil, and gives us eternal salvation. Galatians 3:27 states, “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Un-baptized people can also be saved if they believe - then, they, too are invited to Baptismal waters. Only unbelief condemns, because without faith the free offer of salvation is still rejected. So, Baptism is one of God’s means of grace. In other words, it is one of the ways God reaches down and connects us with His grace.

The third key element of Baptism is Power. Baptism is the power that washes the inherited Original sin away from us. And it also washes away our actual sins. The power behind Baptism is really just the Word, not the water, but the Word. Ephesians 5:25b-26 explains it like this: “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up to make her Holy, cleansing her by the washing with water THROUGH the word.” The power of Baptism doesn’t exist in any magical water, but the Word of God, combined with water, is like an Anti-Sin Fountain of Youth. The same power spoken at the dawn of Creation is used in Baptism to make us a New Creation in Christ.

I was baptized just last year. Though I am still growing in my faith and stumble from time to time, I live in the promises I received at my Baptism. God does not go back on His Word. I am His baptized child, and He is my Heavenly Father who still forgives and empowers me to live for Him.