

"You Will Be Baptized" (Mark 10:39)

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Introduction: The Trauma of Being Baptized, Fully Covered In Water...

- A. Not referring to my holy baptism on September 18th, 1965, but another instance when water covered me when I was around 10 or 11 or so; the time I didn't tell my parents exactly where I was going. It was the last time I went to Lake Woollomes in Delano. On that occasion I reasoned that I could be cool and keep up with my friend even though I had not properly learned how to tread water...I experienced what some people described as "my life flashed before my eyes."**
- B. It was terrifying and traumatic. I thought I was going to die.**
- C. Water is no minor theme in Scripture. It is the means for salvation and it is the means for destruction. It kills (think of the flood of Noah) and it livens (think of the Sacrament). It sustains life and it can take life in a flash flood.**
- D. Furthermore, it is easy to forget that there is also a destructive element in holy baptism. Two things occur: a putting to death and drowning of the Old Man, and a creation and resurrection of the New Man. The first event is violent. It is destructive. It needs to be. We are not called to coddle our flesh, but to crucify it, drown it, and kill it. Otherwise, it will kill you!**

Part I: This is the reminder we need when we approach Jesus and to keep in mind that perhaps we ought not approach Him as the original disciples did as recorded in Mark 10.

- A. In Mark 10:37 the disciples' vision of the Kingdom and their service in the Kingdom and following Christ was marked by delusions of grandeur and blind ambition.**
- B. The flesh likes religion in this sense. How will this "spirituality" make ME better? We must be careful to be mindful that much of what has been done in the name of "religion" has been misguided and has served the ambition of men as opposed to faithfulness to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- C. The core of this problem, however, is ambition itself and ambition is a monster. It can eat us alive. Timothy Keller shared this tidbit:**

"The main sign that we are into success idolatry...is that we find we cannot maintain our self-confidence in life unless we remain at the top of our chosen field. Chris Evert was a leading tennis player in the 1970s and 1980s. Her career win-loss record was the best of any singles player in history. But as she contemplated retirement, she was petrified. She said to an interviewer: *'I had no idea who I was, or what I could be away from tennis. I was depressed and afraid because so much of my life had been defined by my being a tennis champion. I was completely lost. Winning made me feel like I was somebody. It made me feel pretty. It was like being hooked on a drug. I needed the wins, the applause, in order to have an identity.'*" (Counterfeit Gods, 76-77)

Part II: But Christ was merciful in permitting the disciples to find a way to be saved from their ambition! He prophetically predicted that these ambitious disciples would drink of His cup and would be baptized in His baptism.

- A. Tradition has attributed symbols to the Apostles.**
- B. One of the apostles who made this ambitious request of Jesus was St. John.**
- C. Here is his symbol:**



- D. There is an interesting story connected to this symbol that describes an attempt on John's life. Someone tried to poison him, but the poison vanished when it was transformed into a serpent. The more probable explanation of this symbol is that it symbolizes what Jesus spoke of in Mark**

10: John (and James) would experience the way of the cross, a baptism that would be painful and the drinking of a cup that represented suffering.

E. WHY?

Part III: Because Christ calls us to lives of servant-hood, not lives dedicated to pursuing greatness, but dedicated to putting others first and giving others what they need more than anything else. *BUT THE BAPTISM AND THE DRINKING OF THE CUP IS NEEDED TO POISON AND KILL THE FLESH WHICH STRIVES TO STOP YOUR SERVICE TO OTHERS.*

A. Just as you try to kill the monster of ambition and to be faithful to helping to spread the Gospel, however, two things confront you:

- 1. The desires of our flesh. We don't want Jesus to be magnified; we want OURSELVES to be magnified. Thus we are called to conduct a perpetual crucifying, a daily drowning, a constant mortification (putting to death) of our sinful nature which tries to take our lives over every, single day!**
Biblical bases:

Matthew 16:24: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Mark 10:44: "and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all."

- a. How excited do you get -- be honest -- about these Scriptures? These are difficult words!**
- b. You are in fact called to deny yourself! For example, you are called to deny your ambitions for the sake of being able to serve your neighbor!**
- c. As Luther explicated: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." (AE 31:344, "The Freedom of a Christian")**
- d. The Gospel makes us free men and yet it leads to a life in which we are called slaves of all...that is to be as our Savior. Mark 10:45 teaches us that Jesus Himself did not come to be served, but to serve.**
- e. Therefore we are called to put down the flesh that resists your life in Christ.**

- f. This putting down of the flesh is not for returning to works, this is not a system of self-salvation; we do this because Christ served us and we do it so that our flesh would not destroy our faith through sinful ambition.

2. But what we've covered so far is only half the challenge. You may be given grace to crucify your flesh and go forth to share Christ, but the second challenge is *how you will be received by the world as you go forth!*

- a. The baptism some have experienced has been painful indeed...to say the very least.
- b. Consider the martyrs and the one I mention here is Blandina, a young Christian woman:
- c. "The holy martyrs, after this, finally endured tortures, beyond all description; Satan striving with all his power, that some blasphemy might be uttered by them...Blandina, also, in whom Christ made manifest, that the things that appear mean and deformed and contemptible among men, are esteemed of great glory with God, on account of love to him, which is really and powerfully displayed, and glories not in mere appearance...Blandina was filled with such power, that her ingenious tormentors who relieved and succeeded each other from morning till night, confessed that they were overcome, and had nothing more that they could inflict upon her. Only amazed that she still continued to breathe after her whole body was torn asunder and pierced, they gave their testimony that one single kind of torture inflicted was of itself sufficient to destroy life, without resorting to so many and such excruciating sufferings as these. But this blessed saint, as a noble wrestler, in the midst of her confession itself renewed her strength, and to repeat, 'I am a Christian, no wickedness is carried on by us,' was to her rest, refreshment and relief from pain." (Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, 150)

- B. We are left with the question: "How in the world can we possibly stand against these two threats? The threat of our ambitious flesh and the threat of the world that hates the servants of God (we have heard how much faithful Blandina was hated)."

Conclusion: The HOW is in the fact that Jesus was baptized for YOU; the fact that Jesus drank the cup for YOU! He did this because He came to serve you; giving His life as a ransom to save you from sin and death!

- A. The poison of death in His cup was fully expended: it went into our Savior.**
- B. His baptism into death itself was a baptism that because it covered the Lord of Life was a baptism that drowned death itself!**
- C. And now through His victory, your cup and your baptism can only go so far. These cannot destroy you, you who are in Christ -- *AND YOU ARE IN CHRIST!* -- because His cup is now given to you, so that the very blood that came through His saving death is put into you...you drink salvation that cannot be overcome!**
- D. And through your baptism into Christ, His baptism that conquered death has been transferred to you.**
- E. Having received this ultimate victory, what of the trials of today? The devil goes to great lengths to convince us that they are terrible indeed, but he is a yelping dog who always lies. Point blank: these trials compared to Christ's cup and baptism are nothing; and they will only be used to strengthen our faith in Jesus.**