

Luke 23:33-43

sec 5. “Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”

A. Let us first focus on the truth that is “a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance” or sacrament baptism.

1. An ordinance is something that God commands should be done.
 - a. According to the Great Commission, making disciples by teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded is an ordinance.
 - b. Christ commanded baptism so it is also an ordinance, yet it is also a sacrament.
2. The word “contemn” above is an older way to say to “treat with contempt.”
 - a. One definition of “contempt” is to have feeling that something or someone is beneath consideration or worthless.
 - b. Don’t be surprised if some treat baptism with contempt. Some treat everything regarding the church contempt as well. Some outright mock preachers & other Christians.
 - c. Sec 5 here seems to focus on someone who comes to church yet does not see baptism as important; that is why they neglect it.
3. → Turn to **Ex 4:24-26**
 - a. See G.I. Williamson regarding WCF 28, sec 5.
 - b. This argument is based on baptism as the NT replacement for circumcision.

B. Although it is a great sin to neglect baptism, “yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed [attached] unto it [baptism].

1. The believing thief on the cross is a classic example of this truth. Let’s read **Luke 23:33-43** again.
2. J. C. Ryle wrote concerning these 2 thieves crucified besides Christ.

“... We are to make a diligent use of all the means which God has appointed for the good of souls. ... God’s sovereignty was never meant to destroy man’s responsibility. One thief was saved that no sinner might despair, but only one, that no sinner might presume.”¹

 - a. To put this another way, I want to consider what is commonly called the “death bed.” Yes, death bed conversions can & do happen; that helps no sinner to despair; however, it is presumptuous & dangerous to put-off coming to Christ for salvation until you are on your death bed.
 - b. J.C. Ryle wrote, “We are to make a diligent use of all the means which God has appointed for the good of souls.” That includes the diligent use of the means of grace which are primarily the Word of God (preached, read, & heard), the sacraments, & prayer. The chief sacrament to consider here is baptism.
 - c. It would be presumptuous to put off baptism because here in **Luke 23** there is one passage where a man is assured of everlasting life without ever being baptized.
 - 1) The man was totally unable to be baptized.
 - 2) He would have desired baptism if he was able to receive the sacrament.

¹ Ryle, J. C., *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, vol 2, pp. 470-471

Sec 5 “grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.”

A. Sec 5 says, one can be born again yet not have ever received baptism; however, if properly taught by Scripture, such a believer should be convinced that he or she should receive the sacrament.

B. Having received baptism does not automatically mean one is born again.

1. We believe the sacrament of baptism is for our newborns. That will be the entire subject of next Sunday evening.
2. Having this said, the OPC Book of Church Order (BCO) upholds a great deal of responsibility for parents to diligently teach and pray for their children.
 - a. No one in the OPC presumes, “Your child is baptized; rest in that. Teach your child to look to her baptism to help her grow in her assurance of salvation.” We tell our children to look to Christ in His holy gospel. That gospel does point to the richness of the sacrament of baptism.
 - b. Here is a portion of the BCO: “parents [are] to vow publicly their duty as Christian parents to present their children for baptism and to nurture them in the Christian faith, by answering these or equivalent questions in the affirmative:
 - (1) Do you acknowledge that although our children are conceived and born in sin and therefore are subject to condemnation, they are holy in Christ by virtue of the covenant of grace, and as children of the covenant are to be baptized?
 - (2) Do you promise to teach diligently to [Greg] the principles of our holy Christian faith, revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church?
 - (3) Do you promise to pray regularly with and for [Greg], and to set an example of piety and godliness before (him)?
 - (4) Do you promise to endeavor, by all the means that God has appointed, to bring [Greg] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, encouraging (him) to appropriate for (himself) the blessings and fulfill the obligations of the covenant?”²
 - c. The last question from the OPC’s BCO encourages Greg as he grows to take responsibility to embrace Christ for himself. Greg needs to be told to “appropriate” or take hold of the holy Christian faith as his own to obtain the “blessings and fulfill the obligations of the covenant.” That is far from what is taught in baptismal regeneration which assumes the child is baptized merely because he was once baptized.

² https://www.opc.org/BCO/DPW.html#Chapter_III