

### **Lecture 3: On Baptism**

Romans vi. 3, 4

*Or know ye not that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? were buried therefore with Him by our baptism into death,*

1. Rejoice, ye heavens, and let the earth be glad [566] , for those who are to be sprinkled with hyssop, and cleansed with the spiritual [567] hyssop, the power of Him to whom at His Passion drink was offered on hyssop and a reed [568] . And while the Heavenly Powers rejoice, let the souls that are to be united to the spiritual Bridegroom make themselves ready. For the voice is heard of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord [569] . For this is no light matter, no ordinary and indiscriminate union according to the flesh [570] , but the All-searching Spirit's election according to faith. For the inter-marriages and contracts of the world are not made altogether with judgment: but wherever there is wealth or beauty, there the bridegroom speedily approves: but here it is not beauty of person, but the soul's clear conscience; not the condemned Mammon, but the wealth of the soul in godliness.

2. Listen then, O ye children of righteousness, to John's exhortation when he says, Make straight the way of the Lord. Take away all obstacles and stumbling-blocks, that ye may walk straight onward to eternal life. Make ready the vessels [571] of the soul, cleansed by unfeigned faith, for reception of the Holy Ghost. Begin at once to wash your robes in repentance, that when called to the bride-chamber ye may be found clean. For the Bridegroom invites all without distinction, because His grace is bounteous; and the cry of loud-voiced heralds assembles them all: but the same Bridegroom afterwards separates those who have come in to the figurative marriage. O may none of those whose names have now been enrolled hear the words, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment [572] ? But may you all hear, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord [573] . For now meanwhile thou standest outside the door: but God grant that you all may say, The King hath brought me into His chamber [574] . Let my soul rejoice in the Lord: for He hath clothed me with a garment of salvation, and a robe of gladness: He hath crowned me with a garland as a bridegroom [575] , and decked me with ornaments as a bride: that the soul of every one of you may be found not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing [576] ; I do not mean before you have received the grace, for how could that be? since it is for remission of sins that ye have been called; but that, when the grace is to be given, your conscience being found uncondemned may concur with the grace.

3. This is in truth a serious matter, brethren, and you must approach it with good heed. Each one of you is about to be presented to God before tens of thousands of the Angelic Hosts: the Holy Ghost is about to seal [577] your souls: ye are to be enrolled in the army of the Great King. Therefore make you ready, and equip yourselves, by putting on I mean, not bright apparel [578] , but piety of soul with a good conscience. Regard not the Laver as simple water, but rather regard the spiritual grace that is given with the water. For just as the offerings brought to the heathen altars [579] , though simple in their nature, become defiled by the invocation of the idols [580] , so contrariwise the simple water having received the invocation of the Holy Ghost, and of Christ, and of the Father, acquires a new power of holiness.

4. For since man is of twofold nature, soul and body, the purification also is twofold, the one incorporeal for the incorporeal part, and the other bodily for the body: the water cleanses the body, and the Spirit seals the soul; that we may draw near unto God, having our heart sprinkled by the Spirit, and our body washed with pure water [581] . When going down, therefore, into the water, think not of the bare element, but look for salvation by the power of the Holy Ghost: for without both thou canst not possibly be made perfect [582] . It is not I that say this, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the power in this matter: for He saith, Except a man be born anew (and He adds the words) of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [583] . Neither doth he that is baptized with water, but not found worthy of the Spirit, receive the grace in perfection; nor if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but receive not the seal by water, shall he enter into the kingdom of heaven. A bold saying, but not mine, for it is Jesus who hath declared it: and here is the proof of the statement from Holy Scripture. Cornelius was a just man, who was honoured with a vision of Angels, and had set up his prayers and alms-deeds as a good memorial [584] before God in heaven. Peter came, and the Spirit was poured out upon them that believed, and they spake with other tongues, and prophesied: and after the grace of the Spirit the Scripture saith that Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [585] ; in order that, the soul having been born again by faith [586] , the body also might by the water partake of the grace.

5. But if any one wishes to know why the grace is given by water and not by a different element, let him take up the Divine Scriptures and he shall learn. For water is a grand thing, and the noblest of the four visible elements of the world. Heaven is the dwelling-place of Angels, but the heavens are from the waters [587] : the earth is the place of men, but the earth is from the waters: and before the whole six days' formation of the things that were made, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water [588] . The water was the

beginning of the world, and Jordan the beginning of the Gospel tidings: for Israel deliverance from Pharaoh was through the sea, and for the world deliverance from sins by the washing of water with the word [589] of God. Where a covenant is made with any, there is water also. After the flood, a covenant was made with Noah: a covenant for Israel from Mount Sinai, but with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop [590] . Elias is taken up, but not apart from water: for first he crosses the Jordan, then in a chariot mounts the heaven. The high-priest is first washed, then offers incense; for Aaron first washed, then was made high-priest: for how could one who had not yet been purified by water pray for the rest? Also as a symbol of Baptism there was a laver set apart within the Tabernacle.

6. Baptism is the end of the Old Testament, and beginning of the New. For its author was John, than whom was none greater among them that are born of women. The end he was of the Prophets: for all the Prophets and the law were until John [591] : but of the Gospel history he was the first-fruit. For it saith, The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, &c.: John came baptizing in the wilderness [592] . You may mention Elias the Tishbite who was taken up into heaven, yet he is not greater than John: Enoch was translated, but he is not greater than John: Moses was a very great lawgiver, and all the Prophets were admirable, but not greater than John. It is not I that dare to compare Prophets with Prophets: but their Master and ours, the Lord Jesus, declared it: Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John [593] : He saith not "among them that are born of virgins," but of women [594] . The comparison is between the great servant and his fellow-servants: but the pre-eminence and the grace of the Son is beyond comparison with servants. Seest thou how great a man God chose as the first minister of this grace?--a man possessing nothing, and a lover of the desert, yet no hater of mankind: who ate locusts, and winged his soul for heaven [595] : feeding upon honey, and speaking things both sweeter and more salutary than honey: clothed with a garment of camel's hair, and shewing in himself the pattern of the ascetic life; who also was sanctified by the Holy Ghost while yet he was carried in his mother's womb. Jeremiah was sanctified, but did not prophesy, in the womb [596] : John alone while carried in the womb leaped for joy [597] , and though he saw not with the eyes of flesh, knew his Master by the Spirit: for since the grace of Baptism was great, it required greatness in its founder also.

7. This man was baptizing in Jordan, and there went out unto him all Jerusalem [598] , to enjoy the first-fruits of baptisms: for in Jerusalem is the prerogative of all things good. But learn, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, how they that came out were baptized by him: confessing their sins, it is said [599] . First they shewed their wounds, then he applied the remedies, and to them

that believed gave redemption from eternal fire. And if thou wilt be convinced of this very point, that the baptism of John is a redemption from the threat of the fire, hear how he says, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come [600] ? Be not then henceforth a viper, but as thou hast been formerly a viper's brood, put off, saith he, the slough [601] of thy former sinful life. For every serpent creeps into a hole and casts its old slough, and having rubbed off the old skin, grows young again in body. In like manner enter thou also through the strait and narrow gate [602] : rub off thy former self by fasting, and drive out that which is destroying thee. Put off the old man with his doings [603] , and quote that saying in the Canticles, I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on [604] ? But there is perhaps among you some hypocrite, a man-pleaser, and one who makes a pretence of piety, but believes not from the heart; having the hypocrisy of Simon Magus; one who has come hither not in order to receive of the grace, but to spy out what is given: let him also learn from John: And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire [605] . The Judge is inexorable; put away thine hypocrisy.

8. What then must you do? And what are the fruits of repentance? Let him that hath two coats give to him that hath none [606] : the teacher was worthy of credit, since he was also the first to practise what he taught: he was not ashamed to speak, for conscience hindered not his tongue: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Wouldst thou enjoy the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet judgest the poor not worthy of bodily food? Seekest thou the great gifts, and impartest not of the small? Though thou be a publican, or a fornicator, have hope of salvation: the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you [607] . Paul also is witness, saying, Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the rest, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified [608] . He said not, such are some of you, but such were some of you. Sin committed in the state of ignorance is pardoned, but persistent wickedness is condemned.

9. Thou hast as the glory of Baptism the Son Himself, the Only-begotten of God. For why should I speak any more of man? John was great, but what is he to the Lord? His was a loud-sounding voice, but what in comparison with the Word? Very noble was the herald, but what in comparison with the King? Noble was he that baptized with water, but what to Him that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost and with fire [609] ? The Saviour baptized the Apostles with the Holy Ghost and with fire, when suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire: and it sat upon each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost [610] .

10. If any man receive not Baptism, he hath not salvation; except only Martyrs, who even without the water receive the kingdom. For when the Saviour, in redeeming the world by His Cross, was pierced in the side, He shed forth blood and water; that men, living in times of peace, might be baptized in water, and, in times of persecution, in their own blood. For martyrdom also the Saviour is wont to call a baptism, saying, Can ye drink the cup which I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with [611] ? And the Martyrs confess, by being made a spectacle unto the world, and to Angels, and to men [612] ; and thou wilt soon confess:--but it is not yet the time for thee to hear of this.

11. Jesus sanctified Baptism by being Himself baptized. If the Son of God was baptized, what godly man is he that despiseth Baptism? But He was baptized not that He might receive remission of sins, for He was sinless; but being sinless, He was baptized, that He might give to them that are baptized a divine and excellent grace. For since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise partook of the same [613] , that having been made partakers of His presence in the flesh we might be made partakers also of His Divine grace: thus Jesus was baptized, that thereby we again by our participation might receive both salvation and honour. According to Job, there was in the waters the dragon that draweth up Jordan into his mouth [614] . Since, therefore, it was necessary to break the heads of the dragon in pieces [615] , He went down and bound the strong one in the waters, that we might receive power to tread upon serpents and scorpions [616] . The beast was great and terrible. No fishing-vessel was able to carry one scale of his tail [617] : destruction ran before him [618] , ravaging all that met him. The Life encountered him, that the mouth of Death might henceforth be stopped, and all we that are saved might say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory [619] ? The sting of death is drawn by Baptism.

12. For thou goest down into the water, bearing thy sins, but the invocation of grace [620] , having sealed thy soul, suffereth thee not afterwards to be swallowed up by the terrible dragon. Having gone down dead in sins, thou comest up quickened in righteousness. For if thou hast been united with the likeness of the Saviour's death [621] , thou shalt also be deemed worthy of His Resurrection. For as Jesus took upon Him the sins of the world, and died, that by putting sin to death He might rise again in righteousness; so thou by going down into the water, and being in a manner buried in the waters, as He was in the rock, art raised again walking in newness of life [622] .

13. Moreover, when thou hast been deemed worthy of the grace, He then giveth thee strength to wrestle against the adverse powers. For as after His Baptism He was tempted forty days (not that He was unable to gain the

victory before, but because He wished to do all things in due order and succession), so thou likewise, though not daring before thy baptism to wrestle with the adversaries, yet after thou hast received the grace and art henceforth confident in the armour of righteousness [623] , must then do battle, and preach the Gospel, if thou wilt.

14. Jesus Christ was the Son of God, yet He preached not the Gospel before His Baptism. If the Master Himself followed the right time in due order, ought we, His servants, to venture out of order? From that time Jesus began to preach [624] , when the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him in a bodily shape, like a dove [625] ; not that Jesus might see Him first, for He knew Him even before He came in a bodily shape, but that John, who was baptizing Him, might behold Him. For I, saith he, knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, He said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, that is He [626] . If thou too hast unfeigned piety, the Holy Ghost cometh down on thee also, and a Father's voice sounds over thee from on high--not, "This is My Son," but, "This has now been made My son;" for the "is" belongs to Him alone, because In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God [627] . To Him belongs the "is," since He is always the Son of God: but to thee "has now been made:" since thou hast not the sonship by nature, but receivest it by adoption. He eternally "is;" but thou receivest the grace by advancement.

15. Make ready then the vessel of thy soul, that thou mayest become a son of God, and an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ [628] ; if, indeed, thou art preparing thyself that thou mayest receive; if thou art drawing nigh in faith that thou mayest be made faithful; if of set purpose thou art putting off the old man. For all things whatsoever thou hast done shall be forgiven thee, whether it be fornication, or adultery, or any other such form of licentiousness. What can be a greater sin than to crucify Christ? Yet even of this Baptism can purify. For so spake Peter to the three thousand who came to him, to those who had crucified the Lord, when they asked him, saying, Men and brethren, what shall we do [629] ? For the wound is great. Thou hast made us think of our fall, O Peter, by saying, Ye killed the Prince of Life [630] . What salve is there for so great a wound? What cleansing for such foulness? What is the salvation for such perdition? Repent, saith he, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [631] . O unspeakable loving-kindness of God! They have no hope of being saved, and yet they are thought worthy of the Holy Ghost. Thou seest the power of Baptism! If any of you has crucified the Christ by blasphemous words; if any of you in ignorance has denied Him before men;

if any by wicked works has caused the doctrine to be blasphemed; let him repent and be of good hope, for the same grace is present even now.

16. Be of good courage, O Jerusalem; the Lord will take away all thine iniquities [632] . The Lord will wash away the filth of His sons and of His daughters by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning [633] . He will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be cleansed from all your sin [634] . Angels shall dance around you, and say, Who is this that cometh up in white array, leaning upon her beloved [635] ? For the soul that was formerly a slave has now adopted her Master Himself as her kinsman: and He accepting the unfeigned purpose will answer: Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair: thy teeth are like flocks of sheep new shorn, (because of the confession of a good conscience: and further) which have all of them twins [636] ; because of the twofold grace, I mean that which is perfected of water and of the Spirit [637] , or that which is announced by the Old and by the New Testament. And God grant that all of you when you have finished the course of the fast, may remember what I say, and bringing forth fruit in good works, may stand blameless beside the Spiritual Bridegroom, and obtain the remission of your sins from God; to whom with the Son and Holy Spirit be the glory for ever. Amen.

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[566] Ps. xcvi. 11.

[567] The invisible or spiritual (noetos) hyssop is the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost in Baptism. Compare Ps. li. 7.

[568] S. Cyril here, and still more emphatically in xiii. 39, distinguishes the hyssop (John xix. 29) from the reed (Matt. xxvii. 48), implying that the sponge filled with vinegar was bound round with hyssop, and then fixed on a reed. Another opinion is that the reed itself was that of hyssop. See Dictionary of the Bible, "Hyssop."

[569] Is. xl. 3.

[570] somaton.

[571] So in § 15, the soul is regarded as a vessel for receiving grace.

[572] Matt. xxii. 12.

[573] Matt. xxv. 21.

[574] Cant. i. 4.

[575] Is. lxi. 10. Compare Cant. iii. 11: Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him in the day of his espousals. In the passage of Isaiah the bridegroom's crown is likened to the priestly mitre.

[576] Eph. v. 27.

[577] See Index, "Seal."

[578] Index, "White."

[579] bomois used of heathen altars only, in Septuagint and N.T.

[580] Both here and in xix. 7, Cyril speaks of things offered to idols just as S. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 20. The Benediction of the water of Baptism is found in the Apostolic Constitutions, vii. 43: "Look down from heaven, and sanctify this water, and give it grace and power, that so he that is to be baptized according to the command of Thy Christ, may be crucified with Him, and may die with Him, and be buried with Him, and may rise with him to the adoption which is in him, that he may be dead to sin and live to righteousness."

[581] Heb. x. 22.

[582] See the note on "the twofold grace perfected by water and the Spirit," at the end of this Lecture.

[583] John iii. 3.

[584] stele, Sept. A pillar of stone, bearing an inscription, was a common form of memorial among the Israelites and other ancient nations. See Dictionary of the Bible, "Pillar."

[585] Acts x. 48.

[586] S. Cyril considers that Cornelius and his friends were regenerated, as the Apostles were, apart from Baptism; as August. Serm. 269, n. 2, and Chrysost. in Act. Apost. Hom. 25, seem to do. R.W.C.

[587] Compare ix. 5.

[588] Gen. i. 2.

[589] Ephes. v. 26.

[590] Heb. ix. 19.

[591] Matt. xi. 13.

[592] Mark i. 1, 4.

[593] Matt. xi. 11.

[594] From the Clementine Recognitions, I. 54 and 60, we learn that there were some who asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all men, and all Prophets. The answer is there given, that John was greater than all who are born of women, yet not greater than the Son of Man.

[595] The locust being winged suggest the idea of growing wings for the soul. Is. xl. 31: pterophuesousin hos aetoi.

[596] Jer. i. 5.

[597] Luke i. 44.

[598] Matt. iii. 5.

[599] Matt. iii. 6.

[600] Ib. iii. 7.

[601] The Greek word (hupostasis) is used by Polybius (xxxiv. 9) for the deposit of silver from crushed ore, and by Hippocrates for any sediment or deposit. Here it means, as the context clearly shews, the old skin cast by a snake. Compare ii. 5.

[602] Matt. vii. 13, 14.

[603] Col. iii. 9.

[604] Cant. v. 3. In the Song, this saying is an excuse for not rising from bed. S. Cyril applies it in a different way.

[605] Matt. iii. 10.

[606] Luke iii. 11.

[607] Matt. xxi. 31.

[608] 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

[609] Matt. iii. 11.

[610] Acts ii. 2.

[611] Mark x. 38.

[612] 1 Cor. iv. 9.

[613] Heb. ii. 14.

[614] Job xl. 23.

[615] Ps. lxxiv. 14.

[616] Luke x. 19.

[617] Job xl. 26, in the Sept. in place of xli. 7: Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears? (A.V. and R.V.) [618] Job xli. 13, Sept. but in R.V. xli. 22: And terror danceth before him. [619] 1 Cor. xv. 55. [620] Compare III. 3, and see Index, "Baptism." [621] Rom. vi. 5. [622] Rom. vi. 4. Instead of "might rise again" (Roe, Casaub. Mon.), the older Editions have "might raise thee up," which is less appropriate in this part of the sentence. [623] 2 Cor. vi. 7. [624] Matt. iv. 17. [625] Luke iii. 22. [626] John i. 33. [627] Ib. i. 1. [628] Rom. viii. 17. [629] Acts ii. 37. [630] Ib. iii. 15. [631] Ib. ii. 58. [632] Zeph. iii. 14, 15. [633] Is. iv. 4. [634] Ezek. xxxvi. 25. [635] Cant. viii. 4, Gr. adelphidon, "brother," "kinsman." [636] Ib. iv. 1, 2. [637] The Fathers sometimes speak as if Baptism was primarily the Sacrament of remission of sins, and upon that came the gift of the Spirit, which notwithstanding was but begun in Baptism and completed in Confirmation. Vid. Tertullian. de Bapt. 7, 8, supr. i. 5 fin. Hence, as in the text, Baptism may be said to be made up of two gifts, Water, which is Christ's blood, and the Spirit. There is no real difference between this and the ordinary way of speaking on the subject;--Water, which conveys both gifts, is considered as a type of one especially,--conveys both remission of sins through Christ's blood and the grace of the Spirit, but is the type of one, viz. the blood of Christ, as the Oil in Confirmation is of the other. And again, remission of sins is a complete gift given at once, sanctification an increasing one. (R.W.C.) See Index, "Baptism."