

Sermon Draft

Text: Colossians 2:6–15

Sermon: “In Baptism:

In our text Paul is writing to the Colossians in response to difficulties told to him by Epaphras, the evangelist who founded the congregation.

The false teaching making inroads had several aspects. Paul is concerned that the Colossians might be swept away by the false teachers and their lies.

The Christian faith given to believers by the Holy Spirit will come under attack from a variety of directions. Each attempt on the believer’s faith is made through an appeal that is attractive to the feelings or to the intellect. As such, each has the potential not only to damage faith, but also to destroy it.

Paul doesn’t want panic to ensue among his readers, however, as if they were without defense, helpless before the onslaught. Paul reminds the believers of who Jesus really is and that they “*have been given fullness in Christ*” (v 9).

The difficulty of something isn't always the best measure of its value. Sometimes the very simple has great impact. The Gettysburg Address, for example, contains only 266 words. Yet it has inspired millions to greater enthusiasm for liberty and freedom. The Lord's Prayer contains only 56 words. Yet it summarizes all for which we need to pray.

In Baptism only 18 words are used, not counting the name of the one being baptized and the "Amen." Baptismal certificates aren't very elaborate, either. **(Display a certificate and describe the ordinary details that are filled in.)**

Baptism looks so simple. Yet ***"Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word."*** Baptism unites us with our Lord Jesus Christ in a special way. In our Baptism, God takes the death of Jesus and the resurrection life of Jesus and makes them our own.

"I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," says the pastor. Short and simple, but so important.

Today we recall how our Baptism identifies us with our Lord Jesus Christ so closely that we can speak of “The Communion of Baptism.”

Faith was under fire at Colossae. The church at Colossae had been founded by Epaphras. Through his ministry the congregation had become “*rooted and built up*” (v 7) in faith in Jesus. But their faith now was under fire. Epaphras returned to his mentor. As Paul writes his response, we see three areas where their faith was being put to the test. In each one the Colossians were being led to believe that something was lacking in their faith. Though they had been baptized into Jesus, their Savior, false teachers were telling them they needed more. They appealed to natural human reason (the *opinio legis*), which says, “If I am to be saved, I must do something myself. Show me what I must do.”

Some were saying, “*You don’t know enough*” (v 8). They appealed to curiosity and intellect. They contrasted their sophisticated, hidden knowledge with the simplicity of the Gospel, leading believers to wonder, “Maybe the simple Gospel we have been taught isn’t enough.”

Some were saying, “You must do certain things. Without circumcision, the right foods, and ceremonies at the right times, you aren’t part of the true church” (vs 11, 16). They made their appeal to the Old Testament roots of the Christian faith, leading believers to wonder, “Since God’s people, Israel, used to have required rituals, foods, and festivals, perhaps we must too.”

Some were saying, “You don’t have the right connections. There are other spiritual authorities and powers besides Christ whom you must contact” (the “elemental spirits” of v 8, and v 15).

Each of these errors was leading the Colossians to think something was missing in their faith. The new teachers were all too willing to supply what they lacked. Paul warns them (v 8) that all these apparent deficiencies in their faith are nothing but lies. Baptism into Christ gives them everything they need. Faith under fire returns to Baptism.

To unravel and expose the lies, Paul directs their attention to Jesus. In Christ, all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.

They received this fullness when they received Jesus (vs 9–10), through Baptism (v 12), the simple washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit. God's Word explains how truly powerful this simple washing is (Romans 6:4; Titus 3:5).

Before baptism they were dead in sin in the uncircumcision of sinful human nature (v 13; Ephesians 2:1). What do you do with something dead? You bury it! That is exactly what God did. He took their spiritually dead nature and buried it. But he didn't use earth. He dug no tomb. He used the water of Baptism, by which each one of them was united with the death and burial of God's own Son. United with Jesus in his death, they were also united with Jesus in his resurrection. They had been dead, but now were alive again in Christ!

Now they had their answer for those who told them their faith was lacking. They had the full Gospel when they had the forgiveness of their sins, new life, and salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus had taken them from death to life. How could secret or hidden knowledge add anything more?

What ritual could ever be necessary to validate their baptismal burial and baptismal resurrection with Jesus? Could any other spiritual power have higher authority or add to what Christ has already done? To each question the Colossians could answer with certainty, “No, nothing can be added to what God has done in Christ Jesus our Lord. He has the victory” (v 15). Faith under fire believes the promise.

Do you have your answer to each of these questions? When Satan desires to weaken your faith and create doubt, he will often use the same means he did in Colossae. Someone will approach and offer a “full Gospel.” Of course, we then may wonder if we have only a “half-full gospel.” The false teacher will want to fill our half-full gospel.

Perhaps his trick will be that of extra or superior knowledge, the path of secret societies, lodges, and cults that only reveal their secrets once we are shut up inside.

Perhaps the false teacher will take the ritual route. Our cup will be full only when we observe certain rituals, foods, and times, or lead a sanctified life with certain distinctive habits.

Or he may appeal to other spiritual powers. We must display certain charismatic gifts as proof of the Spirit. Or we should contact other spiritual powers and authorities through astrology, psychics, or channeling.

Believers in Jesus, know this from God's Word: ***“having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”*** (v 15). Baptized into him, our cup is already full. Our Gospel is complete. WE can't put any more into a cup that's already overflowing.

We also were dead in transgressions and our sin was stinking up our whole life. So, God used the water of Baptism to unite us with the death and burial of his Son. Peter put it plainly, ***“Baptism . . . now saves you . . . It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 3:21). This is the communion of Baptism: salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

A family came forward during the worship service for the Baptism of their third child. The two older children were fascinated by what they saw, and kept quiet. But after the pastor poured the water three times, saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the five-year-old looked up and asked, “Mom, is that all there is to it?”

Outwardly, that’s all there is to it! It looks like simple water with a few words attached. But the spiritual reality is so much more! We have been buried and brought back to life. We have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and share the life of Jesus. The complexity of something isn’t always the best measure of its value. Sometimes the very simple has the greatest impact, like our communion with Jesus in Baptism.

Amen