



Martin Luther writes in a devotional that the person who is baptized is made clean and innocent indicating that sins are dead and the person will one day die in God's grace and rise on the Last Day and live eternally. We know Baptism makes us God's children, members of the Kingdom of Grace, that forgiveness is bestowed and we are marked as one redeemed by Christ the crucified. Yet, we still daily struggle with the sinful flesh because we are sinners. Luther then poses the question we might ask: "But what help is Baptism to me if it does not completely slay my sin and wash me clean?"

Luther continues offering two points. The first is that through Baptism, we desire to die to sin and live new lives in Christ serving Him only. The second point is that we promise to remain faithful to God's Word as long as we live as God prepares us throughout life for life everlasting.

God has made us His own in Baptism by beginning in us the new creation, restoring the image of God lost in the fall into sin. The image of God is described in the Catechism: "The spiritual likeness of God in which man and woman were created and in which they lived, before the fall into sin, in perfect righteousness and holiness of life and in a perfect relationship with God, with each other and with creation" (page 395, 2017 edition).

"The Holy Spirit works in and through Baptism to create faith in Christ Jesus, adopting us as children of the Father and making us new creatures in Christ who now live not according to the flesh by the Spirit" (Q. 316, 2017 edition of the Catechism). **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" 2 Corinthians 5:17.** In **Titus 3:5-8**, the sacred writer teaches we are saved not because of works done by us, but by God's mercy and renewal of The Holy Spirit whom God poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ that we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Thus, Baptism works the forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe in God's saving promises in Christ. God adopts us as His children and heirs of His promises given through Christ our Savior.

Having been made members of God's Kingdom of Grace, having received forgiveness of sins through His mercy, we then desire to serve Him in faithfulness to His Word and live according to His will in our daily lives as we serve Him and our neighbor. As new

creatures made such through His mercy in Baptism, we daily strive to overcome sin resisting every evil impulse of the sinful nature as we continue to live to the glory of God's Name. Paul writes in **Ephesians 4:22** “**Put off your old self, which belongs to the former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.**” The Old Adam within us (our inherited sinful nature) struggles against the “new man” (the new creation begun in Baptism) every day as Paul reminds us in **Galatians 5:17** “**For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.**”

The catechism also asks: (Q. 324) “How do we rightly use our Baptism? We rightly use our Baptism when we live in repentance and faith in the Triune God, who has made us His beloved children. “In this way, one sees what a great, excellent thing Baptism is. It delivers us from the devil's jaws and makes us God's own. It suppresses and takes away sin and then daily strengthens the new man. It is working and always continues working until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory” (Large Catechism IV 83).

Yes, life is a struggle as we face constant temptation. However, in Baptism our sins are forgiven through Christ's death and resurrection and we are given the promise of life everlasting by God's grace. We become God's children in Baptism as God continues blessing us through His Word and Sacrament that our faith is nourished and strengthened in this world.

The hymn writer speaks of the comfort and assurance we are given in Baptism as our sins are forgiven in Christ.

From Your own mouth comes forth a word;
Your shepherd speaks, but You are heard;
Through him Your hand now stretches out,
Forgiving sin, destroying doubt.

Baptismal waters cover me;
Christ's wounded hand has set me free.
Held in my Father's strong embrace,
With joy I praise Him for His grace.

LSB 616 “Baptismal Waters Cover Me” stanzas 4-5

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt