

IN RESPONSE - THE FULFILLMENT OF BAPTISM

by Dennis Prutow

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We have accomplished three things thus far. We have shown sprinkling to be an acceptable mode of baptism. We have shown the gospel, the covenant of grace, to be the same in both Old and New Testaments. And we have shown that baptism does replace circumcision as the sign of the gospel covenant in the New Testament. In this fashion, we have argued the propriety of the baptism of the infants of professing believers.

In this lesson, I'm interested in speaking to the perspective of many who insist baptism is solely a profession of faith on the part of those who have come to Christ. This emphasis is prevalent among immersionists as well as those who practice infant baptism. And those opposed to paedobaptism point to this as a fatal inconsistency.

But is baptism primarily an act in which believers make public their commitment to Christ? The answer is negative. To be sure, believers are called upon to submit to baptism and they are called upon to submit their infant children to baptism. But this is the point. People *are baptized*. Action is taken *upon them*. The symbolism involves the work of God in bringing people to salvation.

This is reflected in the baptismal formula given by Christ. People are made disciples by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Men and women are to receive the sign of the election of the Father. They are to receive the outward sign of the work of the Son. And they are to receive the outward seal of the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

What we are saying is that baptism is God centered rather than man centered. It speaks to what God has done rather than to what any man or woman has done. It does signify the election of the Father. It does signify the work of Christ in dying for sinners. It does signify the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. And each of these works of God is sovereign. The election of the Father is sovereign. "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Romans 9:16). Romans 9:18 brings this home in terms of election when it adds, "So then He has mercy on

whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." Given this sovereign election, when someone is converted, thanksgiving should be given for the elective mercy of God. And God's election is celebrated through baptism in the name of the Father.

The work of Jesus Christ on behalf of God's elect is also sovereign. Christ does not simply make the salvation of sinners possible, He affects that salvation through His death and resurrection. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Let there be no misunderstanding. The contingency implied in this passage does not refer to the response of sinners to the work of Christ. Peter does not say Christ died and Christ can bring us to God *if we properly respond*. Proper response to the gospel is absolutely necessary. And that response includes repentance of sin and faith in Christ as the only Savior from sin. This is all true. But the emphasis in 1 Peter 3:18 is upon the work of Christ. His design is to actually bring sinners into the presence of God. The picture is that of Christ taking us by the hand and leading us into the throne room of God.

But in order to accomplish this purpose, Christ had to die. His sacrifice had to be sufficient, once for all time. And as the only human person who was fully just, He had to die in the place of sinners and pay the penalty of death due to these sinners. As a result, the everlasting torment of the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-13) will never be experienced by these people. Christ takes them by the hand and leads them in to the Father. This sovereign work of Christ in actually saving sinners is celebrated through baptism in the name of the Son.

Finally, the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating men and women, and boys and girls, is sovereign. As Jesus says, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). As we do not control the wind, we do not control the Spirit. He moves and acts as He wishes. And He regenerates those for whom Christ died. We also celebrate this sovereign work

through baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Having said all of this, what about infants who are baptized? Does what we have said apply to them as well. Yes indeed. And here we may speak of what has been called the evangelistic office of baptism. At first sight, such a function may seem not only strange but in fact anti-scriptural. But before you discard the notion, let me ask you a question. When is your baptism fulfilled?

Do you remember the words of the Lord Jesus in conjunction with the Passover?

And He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22:15-16).

And when is the Passover fulfilled? William Hendriksen comments,

That is, 'I shall never eat it again until its typical and symbolical meaning has become fully realized in the new heaven and earth.' It is there that the deliverance of his people, not from Egypt, but from all sin and evil, will have been fully accomplished. It is there that they will at last have been fully redeemed. It is there also that the fellowship between himself and all the redeemed will have been perfected.¹

Here is specific teaching that the sacraments are fulfilled, not in this life, but, in the life to come. Is this also true with baptism? Think about it. When is the election of the Father fulfilled? It is fulfilled when men and women are finally brought to glory. When is the work of Christ fulfilled? The work of the Son is fulfilled in bringing many sons to glory. When is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit fulfilled? It is fulfilled through the work of sanctification and the final separation of men and women from this life in glory.

All of this brings an entirely different perspective to baptism. Baptism is a once for all event which points us toward heaven. Our baptism continually calls us to a fulfillment of its ramifications. In the Old Testament, the people were continually exhorted, "Circumcise your

heart, and stiffen your neck no more” (Deuteronomy 10:16). In other words, the people were to live up to the sign of the covenant placed in their flesh. That fleshly circumcision continually called them to be circumcised in their hearts and to live in conformity to the outward sign. Circumcision therefore had an evangelistic function. Unfortunately, for many Israelites, their circumcision became uncircumcision (Romans 2:25, Jeremiah 9:25-26).

In a similar fashion, baptism summons all those who are baptized to the fulfillment of their baptism. Children who have been baptized are called to understand the election of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son for sinners, and the need of new birth by the Spirit. These children are reminded that their baptism calls them to trust in the only Savior. They are warned not to despise their baptism by denying Christ. They are told that God is calling them to live up to the sign of the gospel placed upon them by turning to Christ and following Him. In this way, baptism does have an evangelistic office.

But that office never ceases to function while a baptized person has breath. Every baptized person continues to be called to the fulfillment of his or her baptism. Since baptism symbolizes the election of the Father, every baptized person is urged to make his calling and election sure.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Since baptism symbolizes the death of Christ, Jesus says to every baptized person, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Mark 8:34). And since baptism symbolizes the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit, every baptized person is exhorted, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

In other words, baptism continues to have an evangelistic function throughout the life of every baptized person. It continually calls the person to faithfully follow Christ. It does this before a public

profession of faith is made. It urges this profession upon the baptized. It warns the baptized not to enter eternity without real spiritual baptism. And since baptism finds fulfillment in heaven, it continues to make appeals after public profession of faith and perpetually thenceforth throughout life. Those emphasizing the testimonial nature of baptism tend to neglect this more glorious aspect of the sacrament.

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¹ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 960-961.

IN RESPONSE - WOMEN IN THE OFFICE OF PASTOR/TEACHER, PART II

by Dennis Prutow
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We are looking at the two primary Bible texts which nag many evangelical Christians on both sides of the issue of so called biblical feminism. The first is 1 Timothy 2:12, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." The other is 1 Corinthians 14:34 "Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says." In dealing with these texts, I am very anxious for us to understand women are not denied any place of teaching within the Christian community.

By way of review, we have established that 1 Corinthians 14:34 does not prohibit all types of speaking. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul says, "Every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head." Clearly praying and prophesying are types of speech which are authorized. Rather, the specific type of speech prohibited by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12 is teaching.¹

And Paul's prohibition does not include all teaching. For example, Paul exhorts the older women to teach the younger women.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored (Titus 2:3-5).

As indicated in the previous lesson, it is also helpful to see the directions given in 1 Corinthians 14 are to the *assembled people* of God where "the spirits of the prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Corinthians 14:32). In the context where people are gathered for public worship, Paul does "not allow a woman to teach." It is this specific form of speaking "in the churches" (1 Corinthians 14:34) or "in church" (1 Corinthians 14:35) which Paul prohibits.

This is why we see Priscilla, with her husband, *outside of the context of the gathered church*, give guidance to

Apollos. "But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). And so women are not denied every place of teaching within the Christian community.

We then ask this question: Is there independent confirmation of what we have already outlined? Is the teaching to which Paul refers in 1 Timothy 2:12 the official proclamation of the Word of God within the context of the gathered church? More specifically, is this teaching the prerogative of those called by God for such service within the church? And are women prohibited from acting in such an office?

We are drawn immediately to Paul's words in 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."² Here we have a substantival form of the verb used by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12. And so we are driven into the subject of office. Interestingly enough, we have another form of the same word used by Paul in Ephesians 4:11, "And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers." The final word in Ephesians 4:11 is another form built on the same stem. And so we have three forms of the same word. In 1 Timothy 2:12 we have the verb 'to teach.' In 1 Timothy 5:17 we have the noun 'teach.' And in Ephesians 4:11 we have the noun 'teacher.' The question then concerns the propriety of women holding the office of pastor and teacher within the church.³ We are not far a field here. The discussion does come back to this issue.

Laying this aside for the moment, Christ does appoint pastors and teachers within His church (Ephesians 4:11). Part of the task of these individuals is to teach (1 Timothy 5:17). These people are denoted elders. They have the public duty of teaching. It is an official obligation of those specifically set aside for such a purpose.

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one

wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:5-9).

Here Paul gives direction to Titus to insure the church has elders. Then he sets forth the qualifications for these elders. The New American Standard says, "If any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife...." The New International Version renders the same text, "An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife...." Literally we may translate the words, "If someone is blameless, the husband of one wife...." Although Paul uses an indefinite pronoun here and does not *specifically* refer to "a man," the tacit assumption is that the elder is a man. As a matter of course, this is how the indefinite pronoun is translated. We find the same thing in 1 Timothy 3:1 where the New International Version says, "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." The word "anyone" translates the indefinite pronoun. But the male appellation is not incorrect. Verse 2 adds, "An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife...."

The point is that the qualification of being the husband of one wife establishes the elder as male. Does this mean the elder must be married. No it does not. Paul uses the very same language to describe widows. "Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man... (1 Timothy 5:9). The italics indicate the words "having been" are not in the original language. The simple requirement for a widow is that she be "the wife of one man." Obviously a widow is not married. The requirement is that she lived in a holy monogamous relationship. Elders are likewise to be monogamous rather than bigamous. It seems foolish to

make this point but it is necessary. We have no qualms understanding the widow is a woman; the language and our heads both assent to this fact. By the same token, we should have no difficulty understanding the same language, with a switch in gender to refer to elders, means the elders are considered to be men. Our heads should assent to the language in this latter case as they do in the former.

The elder is tasked with teaching. Paul tells us this very specifically in 1 Timothy 5:17. He alludes to the same thing in Titus 1:9 where he describes the elder as “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.” Here, when Paul describes the needed ability of the elder, he uses the masculine of the adjective. This being the case, it would be absolutely incorrect to translate the text, “that *she* may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.” Or with the more bland, “that *they* may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict.” There is no mistake about this. The elder, who is especially to teach, is male.

All of this fits with what we have already learned from our examination of 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34 in comparison with other Scripture. And this is the method we must use if we are to properly come to grips with the teaching of the apostle. The rules of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, are that Scripture interprets Scripture and that clear passages interpret the less clear.

The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture is scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of scripture, (which is not manifold, but one,) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.⁴

Comparing Scripture in this way, it seems the teaching the apostle Paul has in view in 1 Timothy 2:12 is the official and authoritative proclamation of the Word *on behalf of the church* and the setting forth of *the teaching of the church* in public before a watching world. In other words, as stated in the previous lesson, we have teaching here in a more technical sense where the teacher is the designated representative of Christ commissioned by the church and

authorized by Christ through the church to represent the church.

It is this function which is specifically prohibited by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12, “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” Next time we’ll show the prophecy which is not prohibited to women is a gift which is no longer extant.

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¹ As indicated in the previous lesson, it is my intention to show that prophecy and teaching are not synonymous. The former is a supernatural revelatory gift which is no longer extant. The latter is an abiding perpetual gift to the church.

² Literally “in word and teaching.”

³ I am assuming Paul has reference to one office when he speaks of the pastor and teacher.

⁴ Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I, Section IX.