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| Lesson Aim | To understand three things: First, how baptism marks us as belonging to God, second, how baptism signifies and seals the washing away of sins, and third, how baptism benefits us throughout our lives. |
| Steps to Learning | Read Belgic Confession, Article 34 and 1 Peter 3:18-22 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions. |
| Discuss | <p>How did circumcision function in the Old Testament? Circumcision functioned to mark out the people of Israel as belonging to God. It also signified and sealed the forgiveness of sin by cutting the skin and through the shedding of blood.</p> <p>Baptism replaces circumcision. Why do we now use a water rite to signify and seal the forgiveness of sins rather than circumcision? The Scriptures make it plain that there must be the shedding of blood to forgive sins (see Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). In the Old Testament, the bloody sacrifices and circumcision taught Israel that blood must be shed for the forgiveness of sins. When Christ was crucified and his blood was shed, this ended the need for bloody sacrifices and circumcision. Therefore, the church uses water baptism to signify and seal the forgiveness of sins made by Christ’s one sacrifice on the cross.</p> <p>How does baptism signify and seal the washing away of sins? The Belgic Confession and 1 Peter 3:18ff point out that the material of water can’t wash away sins. Rather, the water in baptism signs and seals, or points to and promises, that God washes us of our sins through the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Therefore, there is a spiritual union between the physical sign and the actual reality of being washed from sin.</p> <p>What do we mean that the blood and Spirit of Jesus washes our sins away? In baptism, through faith, both the guilt of sin is taken away (we are justified) and the pollution of our sin, over time, is taken away (we are sanctified).</p> <p>How does baptism benefit us throughout our lives? The benefits of baptism are present because baptism is a means of grace. That is, when we think of our own baptism when we see someone in our church baptized, our faith is strengthened that we belong to God and that our sins are forgiven through faith in Christ. With Luther, when we are tormented by doubts or temptations, we can remember that we’ve been baptized.</p> |
| Bible Reading | Nehemiah 1-7 [The exiles return to the Promised Land and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem] (covering the great Bible stories) |