

March 13

The Obvious Application of an Overlooked Baptismal Passage

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25 – 27)

Who would have thought my baptism had anything to do with how I treat my wife?! Apparently, God thought so. This passage brings together the following themes: blessed heterosexual marriage; wholesome marital relationships; nurturing those relationships through intentionally placed love; Christ as the center and hub of the passage; the power of Biblical baptism: ***“the washing of water with the word”***; the implied future intent to retain that holiness.

The sacraments flow from the Word – through the cross – and into and on physical bodies. Yet the applications splash out upon the rest of our life. Christ’s love for us moved Him to make a personal sacrifice we can touch and see! The waters of baptism are powerful, made alive through the Holy Spirit in the “living” Word of God. The result is that the perfect cleansing work of Christ, done for everyone in the kingdom of God, guides everyone to a spiritually intimate relationship with God – something akin to marriage.

I have a lot of baptismal passages available to me in the back pocket of my memory, but this beautiful baptismal passage I rarely pull out. Why? I’m not sure – possibly there are too many applications. But that’s a lame excuse. Think of how those applications affect each of us.

- a. If I’m a baptized Christian and blessed to be in a marriage, I now have an example of love and sacrifice from Christ – which I can place upon my spouse – and it actually benefits both of us! Just as St. John said in his first epistle, “we love because He first loved us,” we learn that love is naturally reciprocal and reflective. We reap what we sow in our relationships.
- b. In marriage, sacrifices are necessary – born out of love, not out of the mandate. This “agape” -willful love is inspired by Christ Who not only gave me the example to love my spouse, but also sanctified my heart so that I feel compelled and inspired to place His love upon her and others.
- c. When we feel unholy, unclean, and unfit to be in a relationship with God, we remember that in our Baptism Christ did our cleansing. Another Ephesians passage (2:10) calls the sanctification being made a “new creation.” Scripture also says there is “one baptism” (Ephesians 4) – so we don’t need to be rebaptized every time we sin. God gave us a sacrament that changes our soul’s identity now and forever – unless we outright reject that identity and the Lord to whom it is connected. Feeling unclean is not being unclean. My *being* is sanctified. Yet I still get dirty.

Baptism, in a sense, makes us married to God. Like any healthy marriage, that relationship affects all of our life and all other relationships.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, You have done a good work when You cleaned and re-created us in the waters of Baptism. Praise! Bless me that my intent would always be to keep my baptismal robes of righteousness clean; and aware that holy outfit sanctifies all my relationships with Your love. Amen.*