

a sermon:

SALVATION IN CHRIST CALLS US TO BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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## I. A PRAYER

O LORD, fill us with Thy HOLY SPIRIT, guide us by Thy Holy Word and shepherd us within Thy faithful Church. “Grant... [us] Grace, o merciful GOD, to desire ardently all that is pleasing to Thee, to examine it prudently, to acknowledge it truthfully, and to accomplish it perfectly, for the praise and glory of Thy Name! AMEN.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. A PROPOSITION

He who belongs to CHRIST will be sealed in holy Baptism and take his place in His Body on earth, which is The visible Church, as commanded by The Lord!

## III. A SCRIPTURE - MATTHEW 28:19-20

19: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Ghost:

<sup>20</sup> Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## IV. INTRODUCTION

Can we be part of The Church without baptism in our Lord JESUS CHRIST? And can we be sure of securing our salvation in our Lord JESUS CHRIST without baptism? The answer to both these questions is, “No, certainly not!” Our salvation in The Saviour requires us to be baptized and to become a member of His Church on earth. For “there are two [primary] Sacraments ordained of CHRIST our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and The Supper of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> These are not mere suggestions, but Divine Commands to all Christians by our Lord Himself. For Saint Matthew records The Words of The blessed Saviour, where He gives all Christians and all The faithful Church His ‘Great Commission,’ in MATTHEW 28:19-20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in The Name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world! Amen.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Catholic Family Prayer Book, “A Prayer of Saint Thomas Aquinas,” p 183.

<sup>2</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 28:19.

<sup>3</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXV, Of the Sacraments.

Can we then who are called by our Master's Name - Christians - presume to disobey what GOD has commended His saints to do? Shall we give mere words of profession to The Almighty and neglect to offer Him works of obedience to what He has commanded? GOD forbid! Baptism is "the symbolic rite by which one publicly acknowledges his personal commitment to the Christian" faith.<sup>5</sup> And where but in The Church can one go to be baptized? And having been baptized in The Name of The Trinity, do we not become members of CHRIST's body on earth, what is The Church? Let us then diligently examine the nature of The Church, baptism and salvation in CHRIST, that we may be joyfully obedient to our Creator - blessed be His Name!

#### V. OF THE CHURCH

It is said that The Church of CHRIST on earth is "congregation of faithful men, in which The pure Word of GOD is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to CHRIST's ordinance."<sup>6</sup> For it is only within The Church that the saving power of CHRIST works in the penitent believing sinner to bring about "a 'thorough change' toward GOD from enmity and aversion to love and trust!"<sup>7</sup> But more than this, The Church is The very Body of CHRIST on earth, in which we who confess Him as Lord are to be a part.

Saint Paul talks of rejoicing in his suffering that he endured on behalf of the Colossian Church that he labored in The Spirit to plant. So he records in COLOSSIANS 1:24, "Who now [I, Paul] rejoice in my suffering for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is The Church!"<sup>8</sup> How then can we, if we presume to call ourselves Christians, not be part of The visible Church in this life? Shall we shun the congregation of Our Lord and make a mockery of His work on The Cross for our sakes? GOD forbid! And so we see being part of the Church is necessary for the saints of GOD in CHRIST.

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<sup>4</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 28:19-20.

<sup>5</sup> 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, MATTHEW 28:16-20, p 985.

<sup>6</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XIX, Of the Church.

<sup>7</sup> 5, Scofield Study Bible – King James Version, footnote 1 - Reconciliation, p 1263.

## VI. BAPTISM IS NOT OPTIONAL IN OUR SALVATION!

“Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby... they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into The Church.” Baptism brings many blessings to The Faithful that are essential for the Christian life. Baptism is the visible sign of a) “the promises of the forgiveness of sin;” b) “our adoption to be sons of GOD by The Holy Ghost;” c) by which our “Faith is confirmed;” d) the working of “Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto GOD” in us.<sup>9</sup>

Baptism brings us into the community of The Faithful in CHRIST in this life. And it is not a mere option that Christians may choose or disregard at their own pleasure. Recall that blessed first Pentecost when Peter and the other Apostles proclaimed the crucified and risen JESUS is both Lord and CHRIST to the children of Israel. For Saint Luke sets down These Words for us in ACTS 2:37-38, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of The Holy Ghost!”<sup>10</sup>

Here Peter and his fellow Apostles proclaimed The Gospel to a multitude of people who were convicted in their hearts that they have had a hand in crucifying JESUS Who is both Lord and The Messiah. And so the people cry out in despair, “What then shall we do?” Can we not imagine Peter proclaiming to these earnest men, “Repent of your sin, and it shall not be your ruin; be baptized into the faith of CHRIST, and in truth you shall be justified, which you could never be by the Law of Moses.”<sup>11</sup> How then can we, if we presume to call ourselves Christians, not be baptized into The Church in this life? Shall we shun the Biblical Command of baptism instituted by Divine Command in the Holy Scriptures, thus mocking The Blood and Body of The Saviour that was given for

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<sup>8</sup> 2, KJV, COLOSSIANS 1:24.

<sup>9</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXVII, Of Baptism.

<sup>10</sup> 2, KJV, ACTS 2:37-38.

<sup>11</sup> 6, Matthew Henry’s Bible Commentary, ACTS 2:37-41, column 3, entry 2, p 2070.

us? GOD forbid! And so we see being baptized in The Name of GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost is necessary for the saints of GOD in CHRIST.

## VII. OUR SALVATION IN CHRIST IS NOT TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY!

From what does man need to be saved? If from eternal separation of our souls from GOD our Maker after physical death, can we not choose to do enough good works in this earthly life to be judged righteous and worthy before Him? Most certainly not! For “we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to GOD, without the Grace of GOD by CHRIST” working in us.<sup>12</sup>

It is our sins that condemn us before GOD, robbing all good works of sufficient merit to be justified before The LORD. It is only when our sins are covered by the sinless righteousness of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST that we are judged as without sin and worthy of eternal life in Heaven. “We are accounted righteous before GOD, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST by Faith, and not for our own works.” For “we are justified by Faith only” and thus obtain salvation from everlasting damnation only by the Grace of GOD at The Cross.<sup>13</sup>

To the prophet Isaiah GOD revealed that The Messiah would suffer for the sins of many men and bear their iniquities. In doing so, This Messiah would heal many of their sin before GOD, thus rendering them righteous before the Throne of The Almighty. This Perfect One is our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who bestows salvation upon those who confess Him and serve Him as Lord. For the prophet Isaiah declares in his foreseeing of The Messiah by The Spirit in ISAIAH 53:5,11, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities!”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article X, Of Free-Will.

<sup>13</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XI, Of the Justification of Man.

Thus St. Paul writes that by the suffering, death and resurrection of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST, all those who humbly repent and call Him Lord shall be found guiltless by GOD. And being so justified, GOD's saints are then reconciled to Him and granted eternal life. For "CHRIST died under our sins; that He was raised and exalted to GOD's right hand..., [that] we, for whom He suffered, are completely justified" before GOD The Father!<sup>15</sup> For Saint Paul writes in ROMANS 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our Lord JESUS CHRIST!"<sup>16</sup>

If then CHRIST suffered, died and rose again on our behalf to restore us to fellowship with our Maker and save us from the everlasting fires of hell, how can we not fall down before Him and sing praises to His Name? Shall we make little of the sacrifice that GOD The Father made in sending His Son to bring salvation to all who would hear? GOD forbid! And so we most certainly should desire this salvation of our eternal souls and restoration of our lives to fellowship with The LORD!

#### VIII. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS NOT OPTIONAL IN OUR SALVATION!

And where is it we may ask that a man may find salvation? And where is baptism practiced? Is it not in The Church herself, as ordained by GOD? A man can not possess salvation or baptism outside of The Church. Nor can a man truly be part of The Church without having been saved in CHRIST and sealed with the sign and workings of baptism. Why then would anyone of humble mind and earnest spirit seek to be cut off from the blessings of salvation, the signs and workings of baptism and the fellowship of The Church? For when a man excommunicates himself from The Church by turning his back on the salvation and baptism offered in the House of GOD, he "by open denunciation of The Church is rightly cut off from the unity of The Church" by his own hand!<sup>17</sup>

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians that every true Christian is to be a faithful member of CHRIST's body, which is the local Church. And to each member The Holy

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<sup>14</sup> 2, KJV, ISAIAH 53:5,11.

<sup>15</sup> 5, Scofield Study Bible – King James Version, ROMANS 6, footnote 1, p 1197.

<sup>16</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 5:1.

<sup>17</sup> 3, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXXIII, Of Excommunicate Person.

Spirit endows a specific gift, so that each Christian member together makes up one local Church. Some are called to be apostles, others prophets, yet others teachers, while still others raised to govern. We do not all have equal gifts, yet every Christian needs all the gifts of GOD, which can only be found in the local Church. For Saint Paul records This Truth in I CORINTHIANS 12:12,18,27: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is CHRIST. But now hath GOD set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. Now ye are The Body of CHRIST, and members in particular!”<sup>18</sup>

#### **IX. GOD FORBID THAT WE SHOULD SHUN THE CHURCH & BAPTISM!**

Our Lord speaks of Himself, and thus His Church, as the vine of life. And each Christian is but a branch on that vine. The vine of faith, that is JESUS CHRIST, is the sustainer and life giver of all His branches. And those branches secure in The Church bear much good fruit. But when a branch is broken off of the vine, that individual branch withers and dies. For in being cut off from the vine, the severed branch is cut off from the sustainer and life giver, Who is CHRIST Himself through His Church. So Saint John records The Words of CHRIST for us in JOHN 15:5-8, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned... Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples!”<sup>19</sup>

For “from the vine comes the life; from the branches, as a result, comes the fruit... Our abiding in CHRIST connects us with the source of life. His abiding in us brings a steady supply of fruit” of good works, Christian love and spiritual blessings. To cut oneself off from The Church and baptism is to mock GOD. For if “we [are] fulfilling the pattern of disciples [and] ...learn of CHRIST in order to be like Him,” then “GOD is glorified.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:12,18,27.

<sup>19</sup> 2, KJV, JOHN 15:5,6,8.

## X. BAPTISM & CHURCH MEMBERSHIP - WORKS OF GOD'S GRACE IN US!

And of all the precious gifts that GOD bestows upon His saints within The Church, there is no greater gift than love. If a man loves GOD, he will love His Son JESUS CHRIST and will also love his brethren within The Church. And so would a true Christian willfully cut himself off from the very Source of love, the body of CHRIST on earth, which is The Church? For again the beloved Apostle records The Words of our Lord for us in JOHN 15:9-12, "As The Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is My Commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you!"<sup>21</sup>

"The Cross is not something imposed [upon us], but something embraced [by us]." Why did CHRIST go to The Cross for us? Because of His love for us! For when we repent of our sins, are baptized into the body of CHRIST and become a faithful part of the Church, GOD's love for us is to be seen working in our lives. This is "the very love enjoyed by CHRIST from The Father." And the more we then continue in CHRIST's love, the more we become "thereby divine in character!" For as we become more and more in character like our Father in Heaven, our joy in being so loved by GOD and loving our fellow brethren in CHRIST grows ever stronger and deeper!<sup>22</sup>

## XI. IN CONCLUSION

We saw that baptism is a command from our Lord JESUS CHRIST to all Christians.<sup>23</sup> We looked at The Church, which we see is the figurative body of CHRIST on earth.<sup>24</sup> We see that baptism is part of the requirement for obtaining salvation in CHRIST within The Church.<sup>25</sup> We looked at the nature of salvation offered to all men by CHRIST. This salvation was foreseen by the prophet Isaiah and expounded upon by

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<sup>20</sup> 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, JOHN 15, 7-8, p 1107.

<sup>21</sup> 2, KJV, JOHN 15:9-12.

<sup>22</sup> 4, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, JOHN 15:9-13, p 1107.

<sup>23</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 28:19.

<sup>24</sup> 2, KJV, COLOSSIANS 1:24.

<sup>25</sup> 2, KJV, ACTS 2:37-38.

St. Paul. <sup>26 27</sup> And we see that being a member in the local Church is necessary, for no one Christian has all the gifts necessary to live a full Christian life. <sup>28</sup> We saw that CHRIST is the life giving and sustaining vine into which all Christians must be connected in order to live and produce good fruit. <sup>29</sup> And it is via CHRIST - in and through His Church - that true Christian love flourishes. For when we love GOD in all joy for being saved in CHRIST, we also love the brethren. <sup>30</sup>

The Christian can not be part of The Church without baptism in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Nor is our salvation secure without baptism in our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Being an active, living member in the local, visible Church in this life brings the Christian to both secure his salvation in CHRIST and seal it in baptism. GOD forbid that we as Christians might mock the blood and body of CHRIST by refusing GOD's commands that we should be baptized in The Trinity and become an active member of the local visible Church! Let then the people of The LORD rise up to faithfully obey the commands of GOD with all joy and thankfulness for the precious gift of salvation given to us in our Lord JESUS CHRIST!

Let us therefore go forth in faith and obedience to our blessed Saviour, Who - as we have seen - commands all Christians and all The faithful Church in MATTHEW 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in The Name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world! Amen." <sup>31</sup> For he who belongs to CHRIST will be sealed in holy Baptism and take his place in His Body on earth, which is The visible Church, as commanded by The Lord! In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost! AMEN.

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<sup>26</sup> 2, KJV, ISAIAH 53:5,11.

<sup>27</sup> 2, KJV, ROMANS 5:1.

<sup>28</sup> 2, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 12:12,18,27.

<sup>29</sup> 2, KJV, JOHN 15:5-8.

<sup>30</sup> 2, KJV, JOHN 5:9-12.

<sup>31</sup> 2, KJV, MATTHEW 28:19-20.

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