

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a Bishop and Pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

Titus 3:3-7 (EHV)

³For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another.⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind appeared, ⁵he saved us—not by righteous works that we did ourselves, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and the renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs in keeping with the hope of eternal life.



Has anyone here every won a lifetime supply? Not too long ago, someone followed up on people’s experiences with the valued prize of a lifetime supply. What they found is that a company doesn’t just install a magic faucet in their house, as if you can flip the switch and turn on the lifetime supply whenever you like. One person won a lifetime supply at Arby’s. He received a \$25 gift card that gets topped off daily. Another person won a lifetime supply at Sonic. Every month he gets a Sonic gift card for \$200. This person chose to take all his friends up to Sonic and buys a free meal. Then he spends the rest right away buying random people’s meals.

One person relayed how the family won a lifetime supply of cable from a company that has since been bought out. The new company didn’t respect the deal. That family learned very fast that the kingdom of this world cannot always keep that promise of a lifetime. Not only that, but how would the promise of a lifetime help out when our lifetime itself runs out?

Did you know God also offers a lifetime supply? When it comes to evil, sin, and death, it’s very important to have something like that. It’s good for God to offer us permanent promises He can keep. And He keeps them better than any company out there. One way He offers us promises upon promises is what we see in action today—Holy Baptism. It happens all in ...

One Pour – A Lifetime Supply Of Promises

The way our text starts, **you would think we were doomed to a lifetime of loss and wreckage.** Listen again to Paul as he writes to Titus and gives evidence of the Fall into sin. *³For at one time we ourselves were also foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by many kinds of evil desires and pleasures, living in malice and jealousy, being hated and hating one another.* Would you own that? Paul owns it for himself, including himself, “we,” in his harsh comments regarding sin.

This is no different than the words of Jesus, who says that people who are born are born into sin, *“Flesh gives birth to flesh.”* *“Surely I am fearfully and wonderfully made,”* says the psalmist, proclaiming the beauty of God’s creation; but the psalmist also preached how sin has twisted creation, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* Now apply Paul and substitute any of these words for “sinful”: *foolish, disobedient, malicious, envious, hateful.*

Not only that, but our will was bound to our sin. When someone is “*deceived and enslaved by many kinds evil desires and pleasures,*” that individual’s will is in bondage and captivity. We hear many misguided Christians saying our salvation is dependent upon our free will, as if a sinner can decide upon God like we decide upon flavor of ice cream or make and model of the car we drive. Born naturally, we are God’s enemies, hostile toward Him in thought, word, and deed.

We start to get an idea about this. ***What would it mean to miss out on this promise of a lifetime?*** In one story about the aftermath of a lifetime supply, a person’s little brother entered a contest for a lifetime supply of a certain line of cereal. When Kellogg’s called, his mother refused the lifetime supply, and they forever blame their mother that they aren’t still eating that cereal.

In the same way, what if we were to withhold baptism from **Theo** or any other soul?

- We learn in 2 Timothy how from infancy Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures.
- We learn from Peter on the day of Pentecost that the promise is for his hearers and for their children and all who are far off.
- We learn from the psalmist that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has ordained praise.

So we know that faith starts in the smallest of hearts.

The problem must be that – while at times we act guilty and grief-stricken over our sins – other times we try to downplay them, as if they really aren’t so bad. **We act as if we don’t need God’s lifetime supply.** After all, if we are baptized into Jesus Christ, in the eyes of the world we appear as He did – hacked to pieces, marked with scratches, despised, crucified, mocked, a shameful sight. So we pretend sin isn’t as bad of an enemy God tells us it is, and the Law of God has lost its effect on us. That is dangerous, because, as Paul says, we might soon get the impression that we can be saved by our own “righteous works.”

No, there is no righteous act of ourselves that can put us back in God’s good graces. Sin is so dirty that we cannot just paint over it, we cannot just wash up with an interval of water or a cycle of laundry detergent, and we cannot just imagine it’s not there.

But Paul says that’s not **baby Theo** today. And that’s not any Christian since that special day of baptism. Hear His words again: *He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously.*

- Notice that He doesn’t say He pours out water generously, as a symbol, as if it merely stands for God’s goodness to us.
- Nor does He pour out his grace generously; as though, once He gives us grace, we have to *use* it to be okay and right with God.
- Notice I didn’t try and wash **Theo** thoroughly. This isn’t a cleanse of his body. We leave routine baths for later.

No, **God says He pours out Himself,** His own Spirit, generously, in an intimate, eternal, and unbreakable connection. This is a special outpouring of God’s promises—that is to say, the Holy Spirit is poured out on His child like you pour water out of a faucet or like the rain pours out of the sky.

If we could see with our naked eyes what the Holy Spirit is doing in baptism, we would be watching God poured out in a portion so generous it would rival the Niagara falls or the rushing Mississippi River.

- We don’t have to see it with physical eyesight.
- We can perceive this promise with eyes of faith, and ...
- we can know it with our own new hearts.

This is the washing of a soul. This is the removal of sin's dirt.

- This is rebirth, a newness of God-given life.
- This is when faith, and therefore eternal life, truly begins.
- This second birth chases away the second death.
- This is a promise with power; with a renewed purity, holiness, and spotlessness before God.

"It is certainly not the water that does such great things, but God's Word which is in and with the water and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not Baptism. But with this Word it is Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit" [The Power of Baptism, 3rd, in Luther's Small Catechism].

We pray today that people do not refuse God's lifetime supply. It is God's **justification**. Justification is God's courtroom approval, telling us the evidence points not against us but against Jesus, who suffered as the guilty One, condemned for our sins, and hung out to dry on that crooked wooden cross.

- When He suffered, it was just as if the baptized of God suffered;
- when God saw Jesus' innocence, it was just as if the believer in Christ was innocent.
- When Jesus was declared alive again, He really lived!
- Therefore our literal, bodily resurrection is as good as God's Word.

And so through one pouring out of the Spirit through Jesus, God the Father justifies you. So I put it out there to any who are unbaptized, Bethlehem offers free baptisms. No admission, no cost. How can we possibly offer this lifetime supply? We can do this because we draw on the power not of ourselves, but on the power of God in the promises of His Word.

One pour, a lifetime supply of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is an expression of all of it. And we baptize into the name of Jesus around here, because ...

- we know that Jesus appeared and ...
- we know that Jesus was true God and true man.
- We know that God's love for us is only in Jesus.
- We know that God's life for us is based upon the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus.
- We know that Jesus took pains to pay for us each individually, because ...
 - wherever his Word and sacraments are, there is Jesus.
 - Wherever his baptized believers are, there is Jesus.

The man who took the place of **Theo's** sinful nature, loaded himself with the whole wrath of God (what we merited despite all our works) and who rendered it satisfaction – This is our Jesus set forth in the Gospel.

In the lifetime supply stories, a repeated theme was surprising; **the lifetime supplies could be too much**. One person related how, as a child, she received a lifetime supply of apples, which meant 110 apples a month. After a short time, her parents begged the company to stop because there was just no way they could handle that many apples at a time.

Let it never be that way with God's promises! **We can never worry that He has given us too much**. It's not our place to think that way. We can certainly wonder at it. As sinners, we tend to soil our clothing. But as God's baptized children, holy and beloved, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. This lifetime supply is God's love. We put on His compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness; and, above all, love, that His peace might rule in our hearts with thanksgiving.

Amen.