

Baptism

A Spiritual D-Day



Most Americans still recognize the significance of a day called D-Day. On that day thousands of Allied soldiers began the invasion of occupied Europe. It was a day of horrendous death and destruction. But that day also marked the beginning of deliverance from tyranny.

In one sense, the day of your baptism was a spiritual D-Day. On that day the Lord God initiated an invasion through water and Word. That day was also marked by death and deliverance. But that deliverance didn't take place gradually. On that day you were rescued from hellish tyranny.

Both Peter and Paul invoke this imagery of death yet deliverance in connection with Baptism. The context of Peter's declaration that "baptism...now saves you also" (1 Peter 3:21) is a reference to the universal flood. The flood waters destroyed a world characterized by rampant wickedness. Yet that same water lifted the ark and carried eight people to safety. That water safeguarded the promise first enunciated in the Garden of Eden. Something just as extraordinary happens in the flood at the font. "In it [the ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20, 21). Luther captures the idea well. "Now baptism is by far a greater flood than was that of Noah. For that flood drowned men during no more than one year, but baptism drowns all sorts of men throughout the world, from the birth of Christ even till the day of Judgment" (Luther's Works, Vol. 35, page 32).

Paul also invokes an Old Testament allusion that most believers will recognize. "I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10: 1,2). The mighty waters of the Red Sea destroyed the enemies of God's people. Those same waters brought freedom and deliverance to the Israelites.

We can't miss the evidence of God's steady hand of grace. At the font the old Adam is drowned and God delivers us from a death that we inherited at birth. Destruction yet deliverance—the font is a flood that achieves both through the power and Word of the living Lord. Mark the date of your baptism, and each year celebrate that anniversary. On that day God initiated an invasion in order to destroy sin and to deliver you through the blood of Jesus.