

Message for the Baptism of Aaron Fairchild, given by Pastor Paul Rendall before he baptized him at the Reformed Baptist Church of Tama, Iowa, on June 7th, 2015.

I would like to read to you from Colossians 2: 11-14 where we will take our vantage point this afternoon to contemplate the meaning of what we are about to do here. The Apostle Paul says:

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all your trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.” “And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross .”

The salvation of any person takes place as it says here in the text, “by faith in the working of God.” It is not faith in a ceremony called baptism that saves us. It is faith in the working of God. It is this working of God, as we come to understand it in relation to ourselves, that He has done something for us through Christ; He has forgiven all of our sins. He has done this gracious work in the one who believes, based upon Christ’s perfect obedience and His sufferings. It is this finished work of Christ that we have believed in, and this is what saves our souls. Baptism is the outward picture and sign of the inward reality of this working of God. It pictures what has been done for us by Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We have become united to Him through His death; united also with Him in His resurrection. We have the explanation of this in the verses that we have just read. Christ, in order to save us from our sins had to do 3 things for us as believers which are pictured for us in Baptism.

1st – The Lord Jesus had to die on the cross in order that we could receive a heart operation.

In Christ, the believer is circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. This is a spiritual operation upon the heart of every believer. Christ went to the cross and died there so that He could purchase for sinners a new heart. Without a new heart you cannot serve God. Unless you are born again of the Spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of God, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. The water of Baptism is a picture of the washing of water with the Word that takes place in regeneration. Jesus puts it this way in John 3: 5 –“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit He cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Aaron has come to believe that he has been given the gift of regeneration; a new heart, and a cleansed heart, so that he might be able to serve God in an acceptable way.

2nd – Christ had to be buried in the earth so that our sins could be buried with Him in baptism.

It says in verse 12, “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.” To help us to understand what is meant here I think that I need to read to you a passage from Romans 6: 3 and following. It says there, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death...” This again is a picture of what Christ did for us in his death and burial. He was taking our sins upon Himself so that we who believe in Him could be forgiven and bear them no more. But it goes on to say in verse 10, “For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all.” This is the meaning of our being lowered under the water in baptism. We are lowered down under the water to show our complete faith in Christ’s death as being the basis of our once for all death to sin as well. All of our past sins are forgiven

and they are buried in the deepest sea. All the present dominion of sin is broken and taken away so that we are no longer slaves of sin. When Christ died, as believers we know that our Old Man was crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Aaron has been set free from the power of sin by faith in Jesus Christ.

And then, 3rd – Christ had to be raised from the dead so that we could be raised from our death in sins and walk in newness of life.

It says in verse 12 of Colossians 2, that those who believe in Christ were “buried with Him in baptism”, and they were also raised with Him “through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” Aaron will be raised out of the water in baptism to show forth his complete identification with Christ’s resurrection. This faith in Christ’s resurrection will bring him the power to live and to serve God “in newness of life.” At the cross Christ took the handwriting of requirements which was against us and He took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. The righteous requirement of the Law is that we would render unto God a perfect obedience, and that by our works that we would pay the debt which our sins owe by a suitable sacrifice. However Christ knew that we could never do this, and so he went to the cross and suffered and died on our behalf. In this ordinance Christ shows what He did for Aaron. He loved him by rendering to God on his behalf a perfect and sinless obedience from the heart. And so, because of this perfect obedience, and because he died for him, God awarded Jesus in His resurrection from the dead, the title deed to Aaron’s heart. He therefore has raised him from the dead spiritually to newness of life, so that he might serve Him in the newness of the Spirit’s power, and not in the oldness of the letter. What joy does the understanding of what Christ did for us bring to Christian Baptism. I hope that you will think with me about all the good things that Christ has done and how by faith we see what He has done and is doing for Aaron today, in taking away his sins and giving him a new heart.

Aaron will now give his testimony:

Hello, and good morning; before my baptism, I would like to proclaim some of the many good things that the Lord has done in my life and how he lead me here today to be baptized. I was a sinner since my birth and I needed a savior to clean me from my sins so that I may not perish and live my life to its fullest for the glory of our Lord. I had in the past, and I am still dealing with many struggles against my own flesh and the Lord has been very good to me by leading me into his righteous path. I remember a time when I was maybe three years old living with my parents in Elgin, Illinois. There were many trees and some of them had pretty berries growing on them. My parents told me not to eat the wild bird berries that were very lustrous and colorful. And, when I was alone, I ate many of these berries. Despite the pretty colors, they were quite bitter. My sisters told my parents what I had done and when I was confronted by them, I lied by saying that I did not eat them. And this was a blatant lie because my face was covered in mashed berry guts still bright in color.

Through the Lord’s good will in my life, my parents read scripture to me and instilled many good things into my mind. I was exposed to the truth and yet I did not comprehend it. My sinfulness was unknown to me and I did not understand repentance (Matthew 13:14-15).

At the age of 10, my two sisters desired to be baptized and my brother and I were encouraged to do so as well. The pastor at this church proceeded to ask us a few questions. I was asked this: “How has your life changed since you have become a Christian?” My response was something like this: “Oh, I am a very good person now and I like to do the right thing. I am a happier person ever since I believed.” He was convinced and I was scheduled to be baptized. I was baptized by water but had not been baptized in

Spirit. I thought that my salvation rested in my hands. I could not hold myself up as righteous although I would try. Yes, I was missing something very important and it was Christ and his work which is perfect and sufficient for all of us. I was self-righteous and thought that my good works merited me favor in the eyes of our Lord (1 John 4:10).

I would tell my friends that they needed to believe in God and yet I offered them no tangible solution if it ever got that far. Where was my Bible and why hadn't I been reading it? One cannot be merely persuaded by men to saving faith. The Lord designed his gospel to draw men into light and I didn't know it much at all. The Lord's Holy Spirit was not with me and I was not enabled to do good works. I liked the idea of heaven and knew some basics but I did not exalt Christ. I had thought that I was righteous and useful for our Lord (Romans 3:11-18).

Although I may have appeared to be a good person that went to church, there were many signs that I can look back at and confirm that I was not a Christian. I have already mentioned my self-righteousness and that was an inward sin that got by unnoticed and even to myself. My attempts at reading the Bible were also a sign; I did not desire to read it very often and when I would read it, I did not understand it. I had no emotion or reverence towards Christ and His Holy Word (1 Corinthians 2: 14); I did not fear the Lord because I had no real understanding of him and how can one fear that which he doesn't understand? I would even go as far as to make insidious jokes towards our Lord and his good works.

My spiritual growth was stagnant; I always felt like I should study my Bible more and pray, but this didn't go very far since I was more worried about doing well in school and gaining work experience (Matthew 13: 7). The worries of the world held me back.

My sister, Chelsea, brought home a friend from college for Christmas break in 2010 and her name was Beth; we would all go to a Lutheran church's services and Bible studies together. I found myself interested in Beth; she appeared to like me and I thought that we would be good together since she went to church and we had a good time together.

I asked her out and we started off dating distantly since we went to different schools. Later, I found out that she did not want to continue going to church and her main reason for going was because Chelsea invited her. Beth didn't understand Christianity and thought that it wasn't worth it. I realized that I was very similar and for the first time, I was enticed by my own desire to leave that which I held on to so tightly without any understanding.

On July 10th, 2010, my sister Allison married Benson and he was a mature Christian. From time to time, Benson would lead Bible studies and I would hear many good truths in their fullness. Previously there were many truths that were not made clear to me (John 4: 13-14). Everything I knew of God's Word was more palatable and it did not give rise to Godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7: 9-11). The more I learned God's Word, the more I was without peace. I found myself praying late at night and regularly. I knew I was without faith and yet I couldn't deny that there was something more. I would ask this: "Lord, show me what I need to see, so that I may believe" (Psalm 145: 18-19). After many nights of praying, there was no light that I could see, and I still felt weak and lost. My struggles and burdens were not alleviated; I would try to read my Bible and pray more (Proverbs 1: 28-33).

It was hard for me to understand God because I didn't fully understand love; it seemed like I'd care for others but it was because I liked them for my own reasons. They could make me happy and I could

make them happy. It was a symbiotic and selfish relationship with others that is often mistaken for love (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8). I had thought in the past that I was beneficial to God because I promoted him and did “good” works. My experiences and revelations from the Lord led me to see; it became clear that The Lord did not need me. I have nothing good to offer in myself. It is only the Holy Spirit who leads me to do good works for the glory of our Lord.

In my last full year of college, I started to struggle; it was biochemistry. This was the first time that I perceived the Lord’s hand holding my life and I was unsure where he would place me. I found myself doing well on exams that I had not prepared for and bombing the ones that I studied meticulously. Because I believed that the Lord was leading me in this struggle, I continued to pray, read my Bible, and attend church (Proverbs 3: 5-8). I would even try evangelizing although it didn’t seem to bear any fruit. Was I being tested? Or, was the Lord planning on pulling me out of school so that I could serve his purpose elsewhere? Perhaps I was incapable of being a faithful servant with a college degree that could lead me into more empty pursuits? Was I suffering now as punishment for my hypocritical life? I wasn’t sure, but I knew that I needed to be flexible and have no anxiety over the outcome and it was very difficult.

During my final semester I was convinced that I was going to fail my Organic Chemistry Level II course. Through the career fair at Iowa State, I received an excellent career opportunity with Fisher Controls in Marshalltown, Iowa. It was necessary for me to pass my organic chemistry course so that I could keep this job as an environmental engineer. In order to reserve my job, I had to start working part time immediately and that made studying much more difficult. I had a failing grade in this course up until the final exam and through much grace from the Lord, I passed this course by a few points. I believe that the Lord used this to make me humble and destroy my self-reliance and idolization of worldly success.

The Lord pulled me out of my own darkness and I felt loved; I lost my attachment to Beth, I graduated from college, and I kept my job with Fisher Controls. Thinking about this would make me weep. It felt good too; I had always had a cold and bionic heart that would care for the wellbeing of others but lacked empathy and strong feelings. I became more sensitive and I wasn’t sure I liked it. I’d watch TV and when something good happened, my eyes would start to tear. I thought to myself, “What is wrong with me?” Needless to say, it felt good to cry and I was embarrassed by this so I would try to hide myself when these things would start to happen.

In May 2014, I started my job as full time and moved into Marshalltown, Iowa. I looked into several Baptist churches in town. My brother-in-law, Benson, was visiting and we found The Reformed Baptist Church of Tama, online. Pastor Allen Huber was teaching that day and it seemed good. I told Benson that the families here were very kind and appear to know the Bible very well and we were both encouraged. I was blessed with a good job and a wonderful church. Many of you have brought me into your homes and fed me many good meals and I have been truly blessed to have fellowship here and meet many strong and developed followers of Christ.

After a few weeks, Pastor Rendall and myself would meet and discuss things about my past. At this point in time, I wasn't sure if I was a redeemed Christian empowered by the Holy Spirit. All my life I thought I was a true Christian until I dated Beth and renounced my faith. I had never really stopped to analyze myself. There was too much going on with school and not enough rest, and I wasn't very conscious of the changes that had taken place in my life. I thought that I was the same person that I had always been. How could I be a redeemed follower of Christ if there is no change? How could I have the Holy Spirit dwelling in me and not be empowered? I was convinced that I did not yet know the Lord

since I could only remember my past achievements, which seemed good, but I did not know my own heart. Could I have been saved at a young age and had I fallen into a bad season as a believer? There were many questions that I had and I needed to stop, think, and write daily to recollect my past.

After writing many drafts and trying to order my life events, it became clear that I didn't know the Lord in my early youth. I had not really believed before and I can now see that clearly. I understood that the Lord graciously used these many struggles to lead me closer to him.

The point of my conversion is not fully clear and I would place it sometime in my last full year of college when my desire for academic success fell off the throne. My life was full of phases and levels of development. I initially believed that I chose to serve God by my own abilities and they failed me. I thought that I could be faithful to our Lord and I fell away and doubted him. I thought that my sin was not that bad and my good works outweighed my debt; I was lost and blind. I wanted to follow God but struggled with my life endeavors and I placed precedence on fallible things. The Lord pulled me from darkness when I lost sight of Him and He led me into His ways of righteousness and He has placed me where I can grow and he patiently waited for me so that I could be developed into saving faith and not perish (Matthew 24: 30).

Questions to Aaron before Baptism:

Now, Aaron, you have now confessed your faith in Christ in the presence of many witnesses. I would now ask you to give your answer to these 2 simple but solemn questions.

Have you repented of your sins and taken the Lord Jesus Christ to be your only Savior from sin?

Aaron will say: Yes I have.

And, is it now your greatest desire and sincere intention to walk with Him in newness of life; living your life to Him and attempting by His grace to keep all of His commandments?

Then upon your profession of faith I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

We will now sing hymns # 133 and 402.

Receiving Aaron Fairchild in to the Membership of RBC of Tama on June 7th, 2015.

Aaron, 1 Corinthians 12: 12 says, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many are one body, so also is Christ." "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." This is the baptism of the Spirit which takes place at our conversion and it is a work that He alone can do, placing us into the spiritual body of Christ, which is His church. His church is composed of all true believers in every place, but it also does have local expressions, local assemblies. Almost all of the Apostle Paul's letters were written to an individual local church. A local church is a body of believers in Jesus Christ who become members of that local expression of the body of Christ. They commit themselves together to follow Christ in accordance with His word. Here in chapter 12 Paul is speaking about the need that we have for one another. Verse 14 says, "In fact the body is not one member but many." "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?" "If the

whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing.” “If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?” “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” God does all these great things but He also commands those who are the pastors and all the members in a local church to “make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded them.”

None of this can really be done without a formal commitment to a local church. Our following Christ’s commands, leads us to commitment in the local church. First, we are baptized in obedience to Christ command. Then we begin to observe all that He has commanded us to do in His word. This brings us into relationship; not only with Him, but also into a loving, serving relationship with others in the body. We have something give to them and to receive from them, and they have something to give to us and to receive from us. It is God who adds to the church. He places believers where He pleases in terms of their gifts and abilities. We are thankful, Aaron, that the Lord has brought you to saving faith in Himself and that you have been able to confess your faith in Christ before this gathered company. We are thankful for all that we see in you in terms of your Christian character, and we look forward to seeing how He will use the gifts and abilities which He has given to you to further His kingdom in this place. And now, since you do desire to become a member of our church and to unite with us in building the kingdom of God in this place; I would like to ask you to answer these two questions for me: Aaron, can you express your substantial agreement with the doctrines of this church as they are expressed in our 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith?

Aaron: “I do express my agreement.”

And Aaron, are you in agreement with the aims of this church, which are to worship the Triune God in to live in accordance with Christ’s word; to extend His kingdom through the preaching and sharing of that word, so that disciples can be made unto Him. Can you give your whole-hearted support to this church, and are you willing to submit to its government?

Aaron will answer - “Yes, I am willing.”

I, then, as the Pastor of this church, having been satisfied that you meet the requirements for membership; I hereby formally receive you into the membership of this church. On behalf of all the members of this church I give you the right hand of fellowship and welcome you into our midst. May the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you Aaron, and with all of us, as we join together in our worship and service. We will now close by singing together Hymn # 375 – O Lord Our God Arise!