

## Paralysed Faith

The faith of Catholicism is a paralysed arm that is unable to reach out and receive the gift of salvation.

Baptism is called “the sacrament of faith” because faith, by itself, is insufficient to save. In adult converts, faith is considered merely as a required “disposition” – the repentant and believing catechumen remains unregenerate and unforgiven until and unless he is baptised with water.

Not so in Scripture!

Abraham was saved by faith. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” He was justified by faith *before* he ever received the sign of circumcision. Abraham “received the sign of circumcision, a seal of *the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised*, that he might be the father of all those who believe.” All are justified like Abraham – by faith; not by an external rite, whether circumcision in the Old Testament or baptism in the New.

The woman in Luke 7 was saved by faith. Jesus said to her, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” Since faith was sufficient to save this woman, why should we think that faith has lost its power in our age? Certainly baptism does not cripple the gift of faith!

Cornelius was saved by faith. The apostle Peter baptized Cornelius and the other Gentile converts when he was convinced that they had believed in Christ. Peter did not baptize them in order to cleanse them from sin because he knew that God had already accepted them and purified their heart by faith. “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” Therefore he argued, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

Cornelius and the Gentiles heard the Gospel, believed in Christ, were forgiven and purified by faith, and last of all, they were baptised. They were by no means an exceptional case. On the contrary, their experience is the norm and pattern for everyone according to the apostle Peter: “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ *we shall be saved in the same manner as they.*”

We do not speak a single word against baptism. Every believer is duty bound to submit to baptism soon after conversion as the Lord has commanded. We do criticize, however, the *wrong use* of this holy ordinance. It is a terrible distortion of biblical truth when personal faith is effectively substituted by baptism, as happens in the Catholic church. If spiritual cleaning is achieved by baptism, faith is rendered ineffective and the Scripture is negated.

Faith saves. Not because faith is meritorious or powerful in itself. Faith saves because it unites the weak and guilty person with the all-powerful and righteous Saviour. God saves by grace *through faith*. Baptism does not cause what is already achieved by faith.

We appeal to our Catholic friends to turn to the Lord Jesus and trust in Him completely for salvation. Only then can we be assured of forgiveness and God’s welcome. Salvation is by grace through faith! Let baptism, and all sort of good works, follow and fill the life of every believer. But let no believer depends for salvation on anything he does. Faith must always be in Christ alone.