
Meditation

“A Living Hope: **Always Be Ready**”

::: ZERO :::

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As you have heard these impressive words from 1 Peter 3, what could I, Pastor Alex vW, add to that?

And I won't. All I want to do, is take you by the hand and take some time to think about this very special occasion today,...

...and what it means... to us, as Christ's followers, and to our little ones whom we have just baptized...

in the name of God, the Creator;
in the name of Jesus Christ the Saviour;
in the name of the Holy Spirit, the Keeper and
Sustainer.

∴ TWO ∴

As a student of theology there is no way of getting around the question of baptism, and of course, biblical references like 1 Peter 3:21:

”Baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Or in the words of the *New International Version*:

[The] water [of the flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

∴ **THREE** ∴

I have been in dispute with many people about the question whether you should be baptized as an infant, as a little one, or as a person who can decide for themselves whether they want to be baptized—or not.

I have actually never paid a lot of attention to my own baptism—about the ‘when’ and ‘how’.

But on my former charge, in Backnang, I had a senior, retired pastor as member of my congregation—and he was the one who had baptized me as a 1 ½ month old baby 42 years ago, by then!

And of course, like, I guess, most of you, I cannot remember my baptism. But he could... and of course, my parents can, and many other who were dear members of the UMC congregation in Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt by then.

And we know, Grace and Samuel will not remember their baptism, when they get older.

But we will. The dear members of Peace Church, the community of believers and seekers, present here today.

::: FOUR :::

It took me a long time and a lot of theological thinking and experience to finally understand:

Baptism is not merely an act for the individual but an act of God to the baptizand in the middle of a congregation.

It is an act to lead the baptizands on their way as beloved children of God in the middle of people—loving parents and a caring community—who promise to be carers and supporters on the path of life,...

...so that the baptized will learn how God's love is the foundation of their life.

::: FIVE :::

The baptism is, where the living hope is tangibly bestowed on the baptizand—...

...and where we again see, how this living hope is also the hope which lets our life dwell in God's love.

∴ SIX ∴

Now, in the words of Peter—or those who deliver his thoughts to us, following the NIV:

“[In] your hearts revere Christ as Lord. ALWAYS BE [READY, be] prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

Sometimes I envy Aylin, my 10-year-old daughter.

Because for her, God is such a natural part of her life. And she's not hesitant at all to speak about God place in her life. It is amazing.

::: SEVEN :::

At a certain time in my life, I found it not really possible at all to speak about God in my life. Too many questions, too many doubts were covering everything.

And it took a long time—and a whole study of theology before I could actually really speak about God's place in my life again.

But even through times of doubt, through times of despair, the reality of us being created out of the love and the image of God remains true. Even if it is a truth that remains hidden from ourselves.

That's why we are baptized in a community of carers and supporters, in a congregation of believers and seekers, the Church of Jesus Christ.

Because this community can help us find back into a life close to and in connection with our God, our loving father, our ever-caring mother.

This community can help us find back into a life, where we then are ready, always ready to speak of God's love to others, and even more so, let our actions speak of God's love to all people.

::: Amen.