

Bishop Craig Bates on Infant Baptism

Article by BISHOP CRAIG BATES

The last few months I have been approached by several young Christians and asked to defend "infant baptism." I am not sure, however, that as a Biblical Christian I need to defend a practice that has long been accepted by the vast majority of Christians, including most Evangelical Christians. The fact is that those who support the position of "believer's baptism" as an act of obedience rather than as sacrament are in the minority. The position they take would ignore the reality that the early Church indeed baptized infants and that this practice was not only the norm but was universally practiced by

all Christians until the late sixteenth century. Not only do they find themselves in disagreement with the Church Fathers like Athanasius and Augustine, who were most certainly men of Scripture, but also with the Reformers like Martin Luther and Calvin. Those of who defend the Christian and Biblical practice of baptizing infants need merely offer the defense that this teaching and practice is not only Biblical but is the practice of the Church from Apostolic times. Those who hold to so called "believer's baptism" are in the ones who need to defend their position.



Bishop Craig Bates

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Trust Under Pressure

August 3, 2011

Meditation by FATHER MIKE BIRDSONG

Pressure pushing down on me,
Pressing down on you
no man ask for. - David Bowie and Freddie

Mercury, 1981

It amazes me at times what God can use to speak to his people. While riding in my car two weeks ago the all famous bass line from the song "Under Pressure" started playing and my first

reaction was, "I know that's not Vanilla Ice."

Thankfully, it wasn't, because in my world and time in history that would have been considered heresy.

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Special points of interest:

- Infant Baptism
- Trust Under Pressure

What's Happenin !

Bible Study & Future Events

Sunday Morning Bible

Study – 9:30am in the Student Council Building Fr. Scott Looker is teaching on the Life of Saints.

4th Day Ultreya – 2nd

Tuesday of the month , 6:00 pm at the home of Greg and Diane Looker. They are located in The Woods community at 13036 Palmetto Glade Dr., 221-7550. Please RSVP

Wednesday Night Soup

Supper & Prayer – every

Wednesday, 6pm at the Law offices of Lansing Roy, 1710 Shadowood Lane Suite 210, office #391-0030.

Youth Fellowship – Check out: www.mycomjax.com and click on Youth Group in the upper left corner.

Youth .Night of Joy Sept. 10 with an overnight and Sunday Service in Deland. The cost is \$60 for ticket and transportation. Leaving at

12:30pm and returning 9/11 at 3:30pm.

Tres Arroyos Training Sept. 23 & 24

Women's Retreat – Sept. 30th returning Sunday Morning for Service, Oct 2nd. The Courageous Women: Strong Yet Feminine. At Epworth By the Sea. A \$25 deposit by Sept. 15th will hold your spot. Registration in the lobby on Sundays or see Brooke Shimp or Janice Paysinger.

Infant Baptism Continued

The fact is that their position originates in the post-Reformation Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century. And, again their position has been rejected not only by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Anglicans, but the vast majority of Churches that grew out of the Reformation. It is correct that the Holy Scriptures does not specially command the baptism of

infants nor are there any specific examples in the Book of Acts of an infant being baptized. Though we do find examples of "households" being baptized. The lack of evidence of infants being baptized can easily be explained. The Book of Acts is the record of first generation Christians all of whom were adults. It is not clear what these new converts did with their

children.

The proponents of "believer's baptism" would suggest that infants are excluded from receiving baptism since as an infant they cannot make a profession of faith. I wonder how they would deal with the text from the Psalmist,

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Birthdays

September

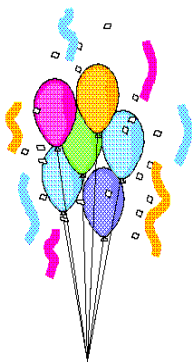
9/9 Alanna Black
9/7 Aylene Barr
9/17 Lizz Looker
9/17 Samuel Wooded
9/20 Courtney Brabson
9/20 JoAnn Roy
9/25 Natalie Ellison
9/25 Cathie Shimp
9/29 Ryan Ellison Renk

October

10/2 Sherry Elmer
10/4 Mary Pardee
10/8 Nathaniel Looker
10/13 Simon Barr
10/14 Fr. Lon Pardee
10/22 Amanda Paysinger

November

11/2 Ava Baker
11/8 Roger Barr
11/11 Kathleen Thomson
11/22 Jennifer Paysinger
11/23 Dean Black
11/23 Nathan Christel



Trust Under Pressure Continued

As I see on FaceBook all the time, "Just sayin."

Listening closer to the words of the song I started thinking of the difficult days that many friends, family and loved ones have had and, in some cases, are still going through. In fact, there are many who are facing difficult times who are in need of some assurance that things are going to be okay. Yet, I'm reminded everyday as I

stand on my back porch watching the birds and all creation worship the Father that "I have never seen the righteous forsaken or His seed begging for bread." Though we live in a time of great economic uncertainty and political upheaval, I can assure you that the Father will take care of those who truly love him.

We are all going to have struggles from time-to-time.

But many people I know are in one of the greatest struggles that they have ever had to face. Friends, we cannot lose sight of the goal. We must push forward. We must do what all Christians are called to do in the face of difficult time – trust the Lord. Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us:



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Prayer Needed

Please pray against Cancer, infection and for total healing for:

BP. Simpson, Kim Black, Fr. Morgan Speer, Ralph Bitancor, Olivia Jones.

Kim. Please continue to pray against the remaining slow growing tumor.

Fr. Morgan Speer's body rejected the last chemo. Hospice has been called in. Please pray for Fr. Morgan

and his family.

Ralph Bitancor. While the scan showed no cancer, Ralph still has one more full treatment to go and then the doctors want to put him on some sort of maintenance plan. Pray for wisdom and God's will and plan to be followed.

Continue to pray for Olivia Jones' complete healing.

BP. Simpson has finished his treatments. Continue to pray against any return of the cancer and for complete restoration from treatments..

Please pray for the next Tres Arroyos, Rector for the Men's weekend Kevin Paysinger, and Rectora for the Women's weekend Cathie Shimp.

**THIS BLOOD'S
FOR YOU**

Please include these people in your prayers

Trust Under Pressure Continued

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)

We can say many things but it all boils down to this simple word that everyone

must finally face in their walk with the Lord. "Trust" Many times people say, "I don't have the strength." Yet the Word of God tells us, "it is not by might, nor by power, but by my strength says the Lord." Then, many will say, "I don't have faith."

Yes you do. Everyone has been given a measure of faith. Is it not by "faith" that you have been saved by grace?

So, today dear saints, ask the Father to bless you with the ability to trust in Him.

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Infant Baptism Continued

"For you are He who drew me from the mother's womb, my hope from my mother's breasts; I was cast upon You from the womb; from my mother's womb you are My God." (Psalm 21.10-11) It is clear that in the Covenant God made with Abraham – marked by circumcision – which infants not only could be in covenantal relationship with God but were in covenantal relationship with God. (Genesis 17.10-13) It would seem strange would it not that the same God who brings infants into relationship with himself in the covenant of Abraham would now withhold that relationship from those in the covenant of Christ Jesus who said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10.14) The word for here for "children" is the Greek word "paidia" which can be translated "babes in arms" or "infants".

Isn't this the very reason that many who hold to "believer's baptism" practice "baby dedications" which has little if any Scriptural support and was not practiced until late in the seventeenth century? If we want to obey Jesus and bring the "babes in arms" to Him then isn't the way to do this baptism?

There are five specific references in Scripture to the baptism of entire households.

- Peter baptized the household of

Cornelius (Acts 11.14)

- Paul baptized the household of Lydia and the household of the Jailer (Acts 16.15,33)
- Paul baptized the household of Crispus, the ruler of the Synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:8)
- And Paul baptized the household of Stephanas. (1 Corinthians 1.16)

The Greek word for "household" is "oikon" and refers to all who abide in the household including wives, slaves, servants, infants, and children. If children were excluded would not the text had read that only the adult members of the household were baptized? Would we be so naïve as to suggest that in the household of Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer, Crispus and Stephanas there were no children or infants?

From the beginnings the Church Fathers – those closest to the actual events of the Scriptures and often the disciples of the Apostles – related baptism to the covenantal act of circumcision. In Colossians 2.9-12, Paul compares the effect of baptism to the effect of circumcision, which took place at eight days old. And, we can see in reading the Father's that the practice of baptizing children and infants was a common practice as early as the later part of the first century –

Apostolic times.

What about the text in Mark 16.16, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Or, the text in Matthew 28.19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The proponents of "believer's baptism" would argue that these texts should be read chronologically. That is, they would suggest that one must first believe and then be baptized. They conclude, that since an infant is not able to "confess their faith", because they have not reached an age of reason, they cannot be baptized. Hence they are excluded until reaching a proper age. The problem is that these texts are not to be read chronologically since the verbs "believe" and "baptized" are participles. So, as a person who was baptized as an infant I can legitimately say, "I believe, and I have been baptized." Matthew 28, the Great Commission, says that we make disciples or followers of Jesus through "baptism" and "teaching". Does teaching necessarily follow baptism? Of course not! They are not chronological. If the issue were chronological, i.e., "believe, confess faith, be saved, and then be baptized", the text in Mark

would have to read, "Whoever believes and is saved will be baptized."

Baptism is an act of grace that precedes faith. Ephesians 2.8-9 reads, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Salvation is not an act of man, certainly not of man's reason or intellectual consent, but an act of the love, mercy, and grace of God. Both faith and grace are works of God into the sinful, stubborn, and prideful heart of humanity. Can we deny that the God who gives the most arrogant and hardhearted man the faith and grace to be saved would deny that same grace to an infant? Faith is a glorious gift of God given by the Holy Spirit. Certainly an infant who has been baptized will need to receive and respond to the grace given to them throughout their entire lives. And, for some that will be a "dramatic" or "profound spiritual awakening". But the gift of grace always precedes the gift of faith.

I would suggest that those who hold to "believers baptism" have falsely placed the emphasis on the response of man rather than the grace of God. They will over and over again talk about how "they went forward", "they made a decision" and "they got saved" rather than on the marvelous and life transforming grace of God found in Jesus.

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Infant Baptism Continued

They falsely argue that we are “saved by faith through grace” not as Paul so clearly and accurately taught, “we are saved by grace through faith”. Should we not bring our infants under the grace of God? Then certainly we must face our parental responsibility to teach our children the truth and train them to “walk by faith.”

I do not deny the reality that many people, including myself, came to a transforming moment in their life when their relationship with Christ Jesus came alive. They went from having the faith of their parents and church family to having a faith of their own. For many, this moment in time so transformed them that they were set free from the bondages of alcohol, sexual promiscuity, drug addiction and other life controlling problems or sins. Indeed, every Christian should be in a personal relationship with Christ Jesus as their Lord. But is this a failure of their baptism? Or is this a failure of the Church and families to lead our children to such a personal relationship? Isn't the most powerful “testimony” of God's love a person who can say, “I have always known Christ as my Lord and Savior?” Yes, I believe the Church needs to be active in awakening people to the reality of the Risen Christ and a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. But this doesn't negate infant baptism.

There is no question that the Church has over the centuries misused the sacrament of baptism. There is no question that many have been baptized out of superstition. It is also sad that many parents fail to teach their children the things necessary to walk in the truth or nurture them in the knowledge and love of the Lord. It is a sad fact that there are “baptized persons” all around us that have never come to a living relationship with Jesus nor known the joy of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is not because they were baptized as infants. How many have made “altar calls” or gone to crusades to “make a decision” and have fallen from the faith? We need remember the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 13:1-19, 18-23.

The early Christians, who saw Scripture as their authority, were clear that infants were not to be excluded from baptism for to do so would exclude them from the grace of God in the sacrament as well as exclusion from initiation into the household of God, the family of God, the bride of Christ, and the Body of Christ.

The Supreme Court of the United States and now legislators around the world have declared that infants in the mother's womb are not persons. Therefore these precious infants, who are formed and created in the mind of God for His purpose

and plan, are denied the basic God given rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are excluded from the community of man. Mothers and fathers have been deceived into believing that life begins at some man-determined time and therefore they can destroy the life of their child. It seems to me, now more than ever, that as the Church we continue to administer the Biblical and historic practice of baptism to infants and so affirm the truth that all life is sacred from fertilization to natural death. Baptism not only conveys the incredible and scandalous grace of God but also strengthens the family and the household of God.

The Most Rev'd Craig Bates is the Patriarch of the International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church, the Primate of the Charismatic Episcopal Church of North America, Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese of the Northeast, and Rector of Cathedral Church of the Intercessor in Malverne, New York.

Trust Under Pressure Continued

Matthew 11:28-30 tells us: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (NIV)

Your Father loves you so much and it is His desire to bless you. The last verse of the song “Under Pressure” that I was speaking of above is, “This is ourselves, under pressure.” How will you react from this point forward to times of hardship? Will we go around in a frenzy and panic, wondering what we will do or will we just simply trust in the Lord?

Consider the birds of the air, consider the flowers of the field and simply ask of the Lord and trust.

Blessings to you all,

The Rev'd Father Mike Birdsong is the vicar of St. Michael and All Angels Church in Thomaston, Georgia and a member of the Commission on Ordained Ministry for the Diocese of the Mid-South.

OUR MISSION & PRIORITIES



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The mission of our church is to bring the rich sacramental and liturgical heritage of the early church, the power of Pentecost, and the infallible truth of Scripture together in one expression of Christ's church for this generation, providing a home for all Christians who seek a vital, powerful energetic, and yet stable church in which to grow in love with one another and in our knowledge and love of God.

SEPT. DAILY OFFICE

Date	AM Psalm	PM Psalm	Old Testament	New Testament	Gospel
1-Thursday	37:1-18	37:19-42	1Kings 11:1-13	James 3:13-4:12	Mark 15:12-21
2-Friday	31	35	1Kings 11:26-43	James 4:13-5:6	Mark 15:22-32
3-Saturday	30,32	42,43	1Kings 12:1-20	James 5:7-12,19-20	Mark 15:33-39
4-Sunday	63,98	103	1Kings 12:21-33	Acts 4:18-31	John 10:31-42
5-Monday	41,52	44	1Kings 13:1-10	Philippians 1:1-11	Mark 15:40-47
6-Tuesday	45	47,48	1Kings 16:23-34	Philippians 1:12-30	Mark 16:1-8(9-20)
7-Wednesday	119:49-72	49	1Kings 17:1-24	Philippians 2:1-11	Matthew 2:1-12
8-Thursday	50	93,96	1Kings 18:1-19	Philippians 2:12-30	Matthew 2:13-23
9-Friday	40,54	51	1Kings 18:20-40	Philippians 3:1-16	Matthew 3:1-12
10-Saturday	55	138,139	1Kings 18:41-19:8	Philippians 3:17-4:7	Matthew 3:13-17
11-Sunday	24,29	8,84	1Kings 19:8-21	Acts 5:34-42	John 11:45-57
12-Monday	56,57	64,65	1Kings 21:1-16	1Corinthians 1:1-19	Matthew 4:1-11
13-Tuesday	61,62	68	1Kings 21:17-29	1Corinthians 1:20-31	Matthew 4:12-17
14-Wednesday	72	119:73-96	1Kings 22:1-28	1Corinthians 2:1-13	Matthew 4:18-25
15-Thursday	71	74	1Kings 22:29-45	1Cor. 2:14-3:15	Matthew 5:1-10
16-Friday	69	73	2Kings 1:2-17	1Corinthians 3:16-23	Matthew 5:11-16
17-Saturday	75,76	23,27	2Kings 2:1-18	1Corinthians 4:1-7	Matthew 5:17-20
18-Sunday	93,96	34	2Kings 4:8-37	Acts 9:10-31	Luke 3:7-18
19-Monday	80	77	2Kings 5:1-19	1Corinthians 4:8-21	Matthew 5:21-26
20-Tuesday	78:1-39	78:40-72	2Kings 5:19-27	1Corinthians 5:1-8	Matthew 5:27-37
21-Wednesday	119:97-120	81,82	2Kings 6:1-23	1Corinthians 5:9-6:8	Matthew 5:38-48
22-Thursday	146,147	85,86	2Kings 9:1-16	1Corinthians 6:12-20	Matt. 6:1-6,16-18
23-Friday	88	91,92	2Kings 9:17-37	1Corinthians 7:1-9	Matthew 6:7-15
24-Saturday	87,90	136	2Kings 11:1-20	1Corinthians 7:10-24	Matthew 6:19-24
25-Sunday	66,67	19,46	2Kings 17:1-18	Acts 9:36-43	Luke 5:1-11
26-Monday	89:1-18	89:19-52	2Kings 17:24-41	1Corinthians 7:25-31	Matthew 6:25-34
27-Tuesday	97,99	94	2Chron. 29:1-3; 30:1,10-27	1Corinthians 7:32-40	Matthew 7:1-12
28-Wednesday	101,109	119:121-144	2Kings 18:9-25	1Corinthians 8:1-13	Matthew 7:13-21
29-Thursday	105:1-22	105:23-45	2Kings 18:28-37	1Corinthians 9:1-15	Matthew 7:22-29
30-Friday	102	107:1-32	2Kings 19:1-20	1Corinthians 9:16-27	Matthew 8:1-17