Q1. (Faith) Twice in this chapter we see whole household being baptized without any restriction on “children below the age of reason.” The Catholic Church is frequently criticized for baptizing infants even though there is Scriptural evidence, as in these instances, that there was no restriction against it. How does this practice demonstrate that our faith and salvation is free gift from God?

Acts 16:15, 31-33

15 After she and her household had been baptized

31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved.”

32 So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house.

33 He took them in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized at once.

CCC1250

Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.51

CCC1252

The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.(Acts 16:15, 33)

Q2. (Hope) In this lesson we see people coming to faith through miraculous actions, through the preaching of the Gospel and simply by observing the Gospel being lived by St. Paul and his company. While we may not often perform miracles, we can all teach the faith and demonstrate the faith by our lives. How does this give you the hope of salvation for a loved one who has fallen from the faith or never believed at all?

Q3. (Love) St Paul is delivering the decision of the Council of Jerusalem that Gentiles did not have to be circumscribed, yet, he has St. Timothy circumcised “on account of the Jews.” How does this illustrate how love is the greatest of virtues? See 1 Corinthians 8:8-10 and CCC25

Acts 16:1-4

1 He reached (also) Derbe and Lystra where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

2 The brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him,

3 and Paul wanted him to come along with him. On account of the Jews of that region, Paul had him circumcised, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 As they traveled from city to city, they handed on to the people for observance the decisions reached by the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 8:8-10

8 Now food will not bring us closer to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, nor are we better off if we do.

9 But make sure that this liberty of yours in no way becomes a stumbling block to the weak.

10 If someone sees you, with your knowledge, reclining at table in the temple of an idol, may not his conscience too, weak as it is, be "built up" to eat the meat sacrificed to idols?

CCC25

To conclude this Prologue, it is fitting to recall this pastoral principle stated by the Roman Catechism:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.

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At Baptism, an infant has no capacity to understand and assent to the faith. Therefore, it is clearly by God’s Grace and not by human power that salvation is made available to it. One could make the argument that an adult, by making a confession of faith before Baptism, has in some way “earned” his salvation. While this is not correct, it is the Grace of God that initially stirred the adult to faith, but it is most clear that an infant has no capacity to “earn” salvation.

Acts 16:14

One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying.

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Living the faith is so important because if we do not live the faith, no one will pay any attention to the words we are speaking. Whereas, if we live the faith in our everyday lives, we may influence more people than we will ever know to come to the faith. I was initially drawn to the Catholic faith by a Boy Scout who faithfully went to Mass every Sunday even when we were out on camping trips.

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Although St. Paul may not have felt the discomfort of circumcision as an adult, but I suspect, St. Timothy did. However, the point St. Paul is illustrating is that although circumcision is not required among the Gentiles, he did not want to offend the Jews in the area who may become believers. It is better to have an unnecessary circumcision than to cause a single Jew who would otherwise believe to turn away from the faith and lose his salvation. Circumcision is a temporal and physical matter. Faith if Our Lord Jesus has eternal consequences.