

Text: Rom. 6:1-13

Title: "Baptism"

Time: 10/1/2023 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I remember the day I was baptized as a day of great spiritual encouragement. I grew up in a church called Bible Community Church, but when it came to the ordinance of baptism, we may very well have been called a Baptist church. Our pastor had grown up a Presbyterian, but when it came to baptism, he pastored like a Baptist.

I was saved as a boy after an evangelistic service, and it took me a few years before I was willing to be baptized as a high school student. A great battle for my life, between God and self, ensued throughout my early teen years, and the Lord finally brought me to a place of surrender to His will for me. My decision to be baptized came from my desire to no longer serve sin as Romans 6 mentions – to walk in newness of life, to reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God, and to yield my members as weapons of righteousness to God.

We have rejoiced in baptisms as a church over the years. Baptize is one of the things the Lord has called us to do. The Great Commission He gave us told us to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them the commands of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). Perhaps you remember the baptism of Tammy Williams, the last time we were able to rejoice together in this ordinance. Do you remember that she was baptized in 2020?

So as the Fall of 2023 closes in on us as a local church, I have been burdened that this may be our third year in a row without the baptism of a new disciple of Christ. It is that burden that prompted the focus of my message this morning. I am concerned that we have revived in our hearts an understanding of both the meaning and the importance of baptism. I will mention three things from our passage about this.

I. Baptism is a wet physical experience that pictures a life-altering spiritual experience (Rom. 6:3-4).

Application: The word *baptism* has both a literal-physical meaning and a figurative-spiritual meaning in the Bible. When it is used literally, it means *to dip* or *immerse* in physical water. When *baptism* is used figuratively, it means to be immersed in something non-physical in a non-physical way.

We get our English word *baptize* from a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. *To transliterate* means to transfer a word from Greek to English by simply changing the Greek letters to English ones. When we do that with *baptize*, β becomes b; α becomes a; π becomes p; τ becomes t; ι becomes i; and ζ becomes z. Had our translators translated *baptizo* rather than transliterating it, we would read the English word *dip* or *immerse* in our Bibles where we have the word *baptize* (vv. 3-4).

The meaning of this Greek word is illustrated by the baptism practice of the Greeks of the Greek Orthodox Church. They do not pour or sprinkle when they baptize. They take a baby and plunge that baby into a big bowl of water. This is because the literal meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* is to dip into liquid like water, and Greek people know this. So we do not sprinkle water or pour water when we baptize because God chose the word *baptize* to describe what must be done, and that word means *to dip* or *to immerse*.

The word's meaning is very important to the truth symbolized by the ordinance. Baptism symbolizes the experience that begins every believer's new life in Christ. It is called *regeneration* or *the new birth*, and the power of the regeneration/new birth experience is Paul's answer to the question raised in v. 1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" The answer is emphatically *no*, and this is because when grace abounds, regeneration or the new birth happens, and a new eternal spiritual life has begun.

Before I say more about this figurative meaning, let me mention another we find elsewhere in Scripture. Figuratively, the Bible uses the word *baptize* to describe what happened to the 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost, who were immersed in new revelation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the prophecies of Joel 2 (see Matt. 3:11 w/ Acts 1:5). This gift of special revelation from the Holy Spirit is called a *baptism*, because God's people were immersed in New Testament revelation, which would divide the wheat from the chaff – gathering believers into the Christ's church and reserving unbelievers for unquenchable fire.

But here in our passage, the figurative use of the word *baptize* refers to something that happened to a sinner when he is regenerated or born again. When someone is given new eternal life, he not only lives a new life, he also dies to an old life. This is what Paul refers to when he says that believers have been baptized into Jesus's death (vv. 3-4).

Our old self, the slave of sin, died the day we were saved. A brand new person, who is now free from sin, was resurrected at that very same time, and that is called being baptized into Christ's resurrection, after which we walk in newness of eternal life (vv. 4, 5, 8).

This is the truth that is symbolized in the physical water ordinance of baptism. We dip into the water symbolizing the death and burial of our old self through Christ's death and burial, and we come back up out of the water symbolizing the resurrection of our new birth to walk in new life through the power of Christ's resurrection (vv. 4-5). Baptism is a wet physical experience that pictures a life-altering spiritual experience – salvation by faith in Christ. Have you had this spiritual experience? Are you a born-again believer? (see 5:1).

II. Only born-again believers should be baptized (v. 3).

Application: It is pretty clear that to be baptized into the death of Christ is figurative. That is not something that happens physically. It is something that happens spiritually when we are born again.

What is less clear is what Paul means by *as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus*. Is that something physical or not? I believe it is. I believe that the phrase *baptize into Christ Jesus* is Pauline shorthand here for the physical water ordinance. It is a shortened form of the formula "baptize in the name of Christ Jesus," or "baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Here is how I would have us interpret v. 3, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized literally in water in the name of Christ Jesus were first baptized figuratively into his death when we were born again." Understood this way, Paul is saying that everyone he knew who had experienced water baptism had first also experienced the spiritual baptism of the new birth. When he says "us" in verse 3, he is referring to those who did what he did in Acts 9:18. Only born-again believers can be baptized scripturally and legitimately.

This is why we practice credo-baptism as Baptists. We do not baptized individuals who have not yet been born again by faith, and that includes not baptizing babies. Baptizing and teaching go hand in hand with making disciples as part of the Great Commission. Only believers who are old enough to be taught the commands of Christ are ready to be baptized.

And since we have to be born again first in order to be baptized, being baptized is not how someone becomes born again. The literal ordinance of baptism in water does not save a sinner. It is a symbol telling others what has already happened.

Two passages seem on the surface to teach that baptism is necessary to salvation. The first is Acts 2:38, and the second is

John 3:5. Without going into a full blown Greek lesson, let me share how I would translate Acts 2:38 so that you can see that it does not teach that we must be baptized to have forgiveness for our sins: “You (all) repent (second person imperative), and let those of you who do be baptized (third person imperative) in response to (see Matt. 12:41 for a similar usage of the word translated here *for*, there translated *at*) the forgiveness of sins.” Peter says that those who have had their sins forgiven by repenting of unbelief should then volunteer to be baptized.

Those who see baptismal regeneration in John 3:5 fail to see the connection between Jesus’s teaching there and Ezek. 36:25-27, as did Nicodemus, who should have known better (v. 10). Ezekiel explains that the new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit, and he mentions two figurative tools the Holy Spirit uses to change a man’s life – water that cleanses and a heart that beats anew. Ezekiel is not speaking of a literal-physical heart, nor of literal-physical water. Neither is Jesus, and it is why He distinguishes between flesh and Spirit in v. 6.

The Apostle Paul clarifies this further when he told the Corinthian church that God did not send him to them to baptized them, but rather to preach the gospel to them that they might be saved (1 Cor. 1:17). The gospel is that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Baptism is a necessary way to declare the gospel, but it is not the gospel. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for our sins saves us, not getting dipped in a baptismal.

III. No born-again believer should be ashamed of baptism (Acts 2:41-47; none are ashamed to be baptized in Acts 2).

Illustration: I wear a wedding ring, which is a symbol of my love for my wife. You might think that there were something wrong with me as a husband if I only wore that wedding ring while at home with my wife and kids refusing to be seen in

public with it on. It would be worse if I refused to wear one at all. The ring does not make me married, but I wear it willingly to tell others that I am.

Application: I believe that Scripture indicates that we should be concerned in the same way when a professing believer is ashamed to be publicly baptized, or when we are ashamed to encourage others to be baptized as faithful disciple-makers. Notice two things about the public boldness of baptism:

(1) Baptism is part of the joy of healthy local-church reproduction. Baptism is one of the blessings that comes to the saved child of God on his way to becoming a local church member. In this Acts context (2:41-47), sinners repented of unbelief having gladly received the gospel, were baptized, and then were added to the church.

Although there are NT examples of exceptional circumstances, in which baptism was done apart from a local church (Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch), avoidance of the church is never compatible with true baptism, and it is reflective of an attitude about the local church that Paul warns against when he discusses the ordinances of the church in 1 Corinthians 11.

Note that Paul speaks of Israel's baptism and their food and drink in 10:1-2. He begins to speak of the Lord's Table in 10:16, and then he refers to the ordinances in the plural in 11:2. Clearly, when Paul writes *ordinances* in the plural, he has baptism and The Lord's Table, those he has just mentioned, in mind in this context.

As we have reviewed together on many first Lord's Days of the month, Paul then discusses the ordinance of the Lord's Table in some detail, and one of the things Paul warns against when it comes to the correct practice of ordinances is the danger of despising the church of God (11:22). As believers, we should never want to avoid our local church for any reason,

and certainly not when it comes to our need to be baptized and to practice the Lord's Table.

(2) Baptism is done in the name of Jesus Christ to glorify His name (6:4). There is a Christ-given authorization that bears His name in Christian baptism. The ceremony is all about glorifying that name and its power to save needy sinners.

Regenerate people should not be ashamed of baptism because they should not be ashamed of the name of Christ. The purpose of the ceremony is to make the name of Christ known, to testify and proclaim our allegiance to Him.

Perhaps there is no encouragement in all the Christian experience quite like the encouragement that the Lord ministers to our hearts when we have the privilege of seeing a brother or sister in Christ declare their faith and let their light shine through the public confession of baptism before men as the Lord is adding them to His church.

The Lord Jesus expects nothing less from true believers: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

I had breakfast with a fellow pastor who told me about a recent baptism of a young lady at their church. He said fifteen family members came to the service to see the ordinance practiced. He rejoiced in the gospel opportunity of that day. Believer's baptism is a God-designed gospel opportunity. Let's not be ashamed of Jesus's name.

Conclusion: Baptism is a wet physical experience that symbolizes a life-altering spiritual experience, regeneration, the new birth, the start of the new eternal life of the believer. *Baptize* means *to dip*, and it symbolizes the way the old self of every

true believer has died and has been buried through Christ's death and burial, and how that believer has resurrected to walk in newness of life, with the power that comes from Jesus's resurrection victory over the tomb. Only born-again believers should be baptized, and no born-again believer should be ashamed to be baptized.

If you are a baptized member of our local church, do you feel our need to make disciples this way? Do you desire to experience this joy together once again? Surely, the Lord will not bless us with a blessing we have little desire for.

And a last question to us all this morning. When Paul says, "As many of us as were baptized in Christ Jesus," is he talking about you? Have you been baptized since coming to faith in Christ? If not, I would love to talk to you today about becoming a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ so you can be added to His church to the glory of His name.

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*