

Sunday, May 22, 2022 | Church Words

Romans 6:1-14 | "Baptism"

A couple weeks ago, we started a new series called "Church Words." Oftentimes, people who have been in church awhile use language that is unfamiliar to new believers and unbelievers (i.e., "gospel," "justification," "propitiation," etc.). And sometimes, even the Christians who use those words don't fully comprehend their significance. In this series, we will use the book of Romans to help us better understand some commonly used "church words" and their application to believers.

And the first church word we defined was "gospel." The Gospel is not only good news that can **save** you; it is also good news that will **keep** you. It is good news to the sinner because it tells them that they can be saved despite their actions. But it is also good news to the saint because it tells them that they are still saved regardless of what's occurring around them.

We unpacked two church words two weeks ago: "justification" and "propitiation." We were in Romans 3:21-26, which is the very heart of the book of Romans. In this passage, Paul does not simply tell you the point of the Gospel; he explains the very mechanism (i.e., how it works) of the Gospel. And the question he sought to answer there was not, "How could God punish humanity?" Instead, the real question he sought to answer for his audience was, "How could God save humanity?" And the answer to that question is all too surprising because Paul showed that **the unjust are made just by God's proclamation and because Christ paid for our sins on the cross.** What a remarkable thing for God to pay the price of his own character and freely offer such a gift as that to us.

Last week, Pastor Bob explained the concept of reconciliation. Though we were God's enemies, we became reconciled to God, becoming the children of God through Jesus Christ. As such, we've also been given the ministry of reconciliation, whereby we try to tell others about the atoning work of the Lord.

Today, we'll be looking at "baptism." After fleshing out the concept of reconciliation in Romans 5, Paul moves to dispel a few common misconceptions that might've arisen from his teaching. Like all good teachers, the apostle has explained what he means; he now has to explain what he **doesn't** mean. Thus, over the following 2 chapters, he will qualify what he means by using four rhetorical questions, which he immediately answers (cf. 6:1,15; 7:7,13). And the first of those questions was, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul says, "Absolutely not!" Why? In a word, baptism.

READ: Romans 6:1-14 (ESV)

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

I want you to understand that baptism is an outward show of an inward change, and this symbol demonstrates **three** things:

i. Baptism teaches that we have died with Christ.

Paul posed the rhetorical question, “are we to continue in sin that grace may abound,” because of what he said in Romans 5:18-21.

READ: Romans 5:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To hear that “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” a person might be tempted to think, “Well, if grace is magnified/expanded/broadened when it forgives sin, then we should sin some pretty big sins so that grace is magnified even more!” In theological spheres, this is a heresy known as antinomianism (an-ti-'know-mē-ən-ism; comes from two Greek words, *anti*,

“against,” and *nomos*, “law”). Proponents of this view twist the gospel message into saying that, rather than resist the urge to sin, we ought to embrace our sinful natures so that God’s grace would be multiplied in relation to whatever sins we commit (i.e., getting a credit card and maxing it out believing that your parents will just pay it). This would’ve been a common argument lobbed against Paul’s message from his fellow Jews. They would argue that what incentive would a person have to obey the works of law if righteousness was freely given by faith through Jesus Christ? Jewish critics would frame the Gospel into something like “easy-believism,” where lawlessness would reign, and everyone would be free to do whatever they wanted without fear of reprisals from God.

Paul responds by saying, “[How can we who died to sin still live in it?](#)” The dominion and reign of sin over our lives have been nullified by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This does not mean sin has absolutely no pull over our lives. Sin is still very much alive in the world of unbelievers and in the flesh of our fallen natures. (We’ll talk more about this next week.) But, at the moment of salvation, we were given a new nature, one that was as different from our old natures as the living is from the dead.

To illustrate his point, Paul uses the metaphor of baptism. Now, baptism for us evokes images of ceremony, of church on a Sunday morning, and of celebration. And, to be sure, it should be all of those things. However, “baptism” in the first century was a term of *violence*. To “baptize” was an expression more often used “of people being drowned and ships being sunk”¹ than of conversions. In fact, as far as we know, only the Christians were known to use the term in this antithetical way (We seem to have a habit of taking well-known phrases and turning them on their head: “take up your cross and follow me,” “whoever leads must serve,” “to die to self is to live,” “when I am weak then I am strong,” etc.). Thus, baptism was a term more often associated with death than life (cf. Mk. 10:28; Lu. 12:50). Ironical, isn’t it? A word coined to explain physical demise is now used to describe spiritual rejuvenation.

What’s more, while Paul no doubt has the image of physical baptism in his mind when he writes these words, he is thinking more on the spiritual level. Paul is not saying that, through the mode of baptism, the believer is given the benefits of salvation. No. Salvation is through faith alone and not through any work of the believer, not even baptism. When he uses the term “baptism,” Paul uses it metaphorically to explain what occurs at the moment of salvation. When you are saved, you are “baptized” into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And while your physical baptism comes later (and should come later; cf. Mat. 28:18-20), you

¹ Morris, Leon, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Leicester, England; Apollos Publishing, 1988), p. 246.

have already been baptized in God's eyes at salvation. And since you have been baptized—i.e., washed from the rule of sin—you no longer have to listen to the prompting of sin. After all, no matter how long and how loud you scream at something dead, it will not heed your call.

But, wait a minute, you might be thinking, "Does this mean that the Christian never sins?" No. This does not mean the Christian does not fail from time to time. Getting saved does not amend all of a person's actions instantly. That takes time, and it is a process called "sanctification," something we will dive into next week.

But not only are we buried in death with Christ through baptism, but we have also risen with Christ.

ii. Baptism teaches that we have risen with Christ.

READ: Romans 6:8-11 (ESV)

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Whatever Christ experienced during his death, burial and resurrection, we share, spiritually, in salvation. Thus, just as we've talked about our sin natures dying with Christ on the cross, so, too, are we risen with Christ in his resurrection. As Jesus explained in John 3:3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When we are saved, we are given a new nature as if we had been "born again;" that is to say, born a second time. But rather than be given a nature like the one we were first born with first—a nature characterized by death—through faith, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are given his nature—a nature characterized by one thing: life. And just as Christ rose from the grave never to die again, so, too, will we, someday, rise from the grave never to die again.

But is this the life that Jesus offers us? One that is only for the afterlife? One that we can only experience after we die? No. This life we have in Jesus Christ is also for today. And, yes, we will all die physically. But while we are yet in these mortal bodies, we can experience eternal life in the "here and now." This is why Paul admonishes us in verse 11 that we "must consider [ourselves to be] dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." This is the first exhortation in the entire book of Romans, and it is an important one.² We will not only live in a new reality

² Morris (1988), p. 256.

someday when we get to heaven; the Christian is living that new reality right now. In essence, Paul is encouraging us to own our new natures; he is telling us to be who we will become in eternity today (i.e., "As a pastor, if you don't think you're the leader, no one else will.") Too many Christians are living like their still dead

iii. **Baptism teaches that we are no longer under the rule of law but under the rule of grace.**

When Paul says in verse 14, "sin will have no dominion over [us], since [we] are not under law but under grace," he's setting up what he'll be covering in Romans 7. One would think that the law would work in our favor to cultivate righteousness. This is what the Jews believed. But Paul will show that the law actually worked against us. This does not make the law a bad thing, far from it. Through the law, we learn right from wrong. However, the law set a standard that we were **compelled** to break because of our sinful natures. How many of us have heard the phrase, "rules were made to be broken"? If you set a restriction on something, our sinful natures will want to break that restriction. And because, before Christ, humanity was under the rule of law and thus unable to obey the requirements of the law because of our fallen state, the law condemned us. This is why Paul said in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

However, this is why the Gospel is good news. Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the law on our behalf. And so, anyone who puts their faith in Jesus is justified by the propitiation of his blood and is reconciled to God. This free gift of salvation apart from the law is offered to us not on our merits but through God's grace. **The Lord saves us not because we are lovely but because He is loving.** And since all the O.T requirements were satisfied on Calvary, anyone who puts their faith in Jesus is no longer under the dominion of law which leads to death, but under the dominion of grace which leads to life. For the first time in our lives, we can obey as God intended us to obey because Jesus enables us to live the life God had always intended for us to live.

So, what's the takeaway?

Those who've been baptized into **Christ** have been given the ability to **resist** sin.

READ: Romans 6:12-14 (ESV)

¹² **Let not sin therefore reign** in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ **Do not present** your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but **present yourselves** to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and **your**

members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul explains that the Christian, more than anyone else, not only has every reason to resist sin (think of who had to die for our sin), but they are also the only people on the planet who can do so. Using the mode of Baptism, Paul shows that, spiritually speaking, we are no longer slaves to sin in the same way that a person who's been resurrected from the dead is no longer bound to the grave. In Jesus, we've been liberated and set free from the bondage of sin and death. Before believing in Jesus, we sinned because we had no choice. We were sinners. We did that which was according to our fallen natures. But after believing in Christ, we were given a new nature that had a choice whether or not to sin. For a Christian to willingly chose to continue in sin would mean that they would be giving themselves over to the power of whatever sin they wanted to do. Using the powerful metaphor of enslavement, Paul shows that such a person would, quite literally, be putting on the shackles of slavery once again to serve sin.

So, what's the takeaway?

Those who've been baptized into Christ have been given the ability to resist sin.

Video Description

Church Words | Week 4 | “Baptism”

TEXT: Romans 6:1-14

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: