

The Newness of Life

Romans 6:1-4

When I was a young kid, I was intrigued with church life. I would make pretend microphones out of tinker toys and vacuum cleaner handles. I would line my stuffed animals up on the couch and preach to them and lead them in songs. The only part about taking a bath that I liked was baptizing my GI Joe action figures. I knew you couldn't baptize your stuffed animals, because you get in trouble for doing things like that. But there was something about taking what I saw in church and translating it into everyday life. Those GI Joe guys got baptized again and again - not because they needed it. I just liked it! It was innocent and it was cute, but I know now, the Lord was laying a foundation in my life of the importance of baptism.

I also know now that baptism is confusing. I sometimes call it "the water that divides" because it means so many different things and is done in so many different ways. Some faith traditions teach that without baptism there is no salvation - it is the means by which sin is washed away. Some faith traditions routinely baptize babies. The Bible only mentions water baptism as an after-salvation step of faith. Other faith traditions baptize by sprinkling water, or pouring water. Some immerse once. Some immerse 3x. Some do it forwards; some do it backwards. Some faith traditions insist on a person being baptized wearing white robes symbolizing their purity in the Lord. And everyone thinks they're right and that the other methods are wrong! Can you see why I call it the water that divides? God's intention with baptism is to depict how the old self is dead and buried and that we have been raised to the Newness of Life.

Read Romans 6:1-4

I. Baptism Means Immersion

It's what the term actually means: to dip, to submerge, to immerse. I wish that all Bible translations would have used the term, "immerse" instead of "baptize" when they came to the Greek word, "baptize," while translating. I wish that baptism only meant dip or immerse in our culture and that any pouring or sprinkling would not be called baptism at all because it just confuses things all the more. Just as immersing and sprinkling are not synonyms, neither should baptism and sprinkling be synonyms.

It cannot be whatever we want it to be. We need to allow God's word to define what baptism is and not put so much stock into traditions of man and religion.

Read Romans 6:3-4a

Paul is reminding believers that physical immersion is a depicted illustration of their salvation.

- Every time we see someone baptized, it shows that person has been immersed in a spiritual way -- already immersed and buried in Christ's death, and made alive through His Resurrection.

This new life is a result of God's grace, and grace brings freedom!

- Every time we see someone baptized, it is a personal reminder of when we too were personally and individually saved and baptized.
- And every time we see someone baptized, there are others who are inspired by that act of obedience that they too need to take this step.

II. Baptism Means Complete Identity With Christ

We were buried with Him... This is in the passive voice. That means it is something done TO YOU. This is speaking of what the Holy Spirit did to you SPIRITUALLY at the moment you were saved by faith. The pastor immersing you cannot bury you with Christ. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

Much like communion is a physical reminder of what Christ has done for us spiritually, baptism is a physical demonstration of what Christ has done for us spiritually. It is an outward step of obedience to demonstrate complete identity with Christ!

- You identify with His death, burial and resurrection.
- He is your Savior
- Your old self - your sin nature - was buried with Him and you were raised to new life in the likeness of His resurrection.
- This happened by grace through faith!
- Water baptism literally depicts Christ's death, burial and resurrection. This depiction is not there when sprinkling or pouring is the method of choice.

When you are baptized in water, it is a way of publicly demonstrating outward identity with Christ. It is your way of saying, "He saved me and I'm ready to live for Him!" We celebrate anyone who is ready to do that!

This is the reason why we don't baptize infants. That's baptizing someone against their will. Baptism is a decision a person makes to say, "I am saved, I'm proud of it, and I have every intention of living for God - no matter what." That new identity with Christ is something that we celebrate. It's a result of God's grace - and it brings freedom to a new life with Him.

I never want to baptize a person who is not yet saved. It doesn't mean anything. But we sometimes see occasions when a person who has been baptized previously - later gets saved for real! That person should be baptized as a believer and we would celebrate it!

IV. Christ Launches the Newness of Life

Many Christians talk a lot about getting saved so you can go to heaven. While this is true, that is not something I emphasize in my preaching. The Bible talks about Heaven, but it speaks more about living a new life for Christ now. And if there is ever a time where God wants believers to courageously live out their faith, it is now. Newness of life. Freedom.

Read 6:4. Read 6:1-2

God saves us from sin - yes. But He does not MAKE you and me stop sinning. He does not remove our free will. But it is a natural desire for a believer to stop sinning because our old self (sin nature) was buried with Him. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. We have a new nature in Christ - one that yearns for righteousness.

Sadly, when it comes to sin, too many people have this mindset: "God will forgive me anyway."

We saw a few weeks ago how where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. Praise God for that! But don't go sinning on purpose as a believer because grace will abound anyway. That's making a mockery of God's grace! Grace sets you free - not free to sin - but free from sin!

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It is unnatural for a believer to keep going back to their old way of life before Christ. It goes against the nature of a believer to live in the sin that we've been delivered from. It's like saying, I enjoy the prison cell so much - even though it has been unlocked and I've been set free, I just keep going back there. NO WAY!

If you would like to talk to Pastor John about baptism, please call the First Baptist Church office at 330-725-5853 or email john.mccaw@firstmedina.org.