

WATER WE TALKING ABOUT

Romans 6:3-5

(Read Romans 6:3-5)

INTRO: I may be wrong, but 60 to 80 years ago there would almost certainly not have been an inside baptismal pool in a Brethren in Christ Church building. You see, we had only recently progressed from meeting in homes and barns to having meeting houses. So in those days baptisms would have taken place in a farm pond or a nearby river or creek. When my dad was baptized as a boy, he was immersed in the freezing Perkiomen Creek which was less than a quarter mile from Gratersford BIC which later became Perkiomen Valley BIC and my home church. They had to break the ice to have the baptism.

The first baptisms in the BIC denomination were in about 1778 and were in the Conoy Creek in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania near or even where it emptied into the mile-wide Susquehanna River. That's why for at least a hundred years after that we were known as the River Brethren. Our very inception began with baptism. We are also known as Anabaptists which, by definition, means re-baptizers – showing that we practice believer's baptism. This means that if a person had been baptized as an infant by a Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, or Reformed group – or any group that practices infant baptism, we would require that person to be re-baptized when they acknowledged Jesus Christ as their savior.

In other words, BAPTISM IS A VERY BIG DEAL for BIC's. What I'm trying to say is that it is good on this day when we have the joy and privilege of baptizing Nate Seidner and Scotty Malatok that we be reminded just what baptism is.

Baptism is referred to quite a number of times in the New Testament. John the Baptist was Jesus's cousin and appropriately named. He preached a powerful message of repentance and then baptized people who accepted that message. So what is repentance? Repentance is a realization that what God wants from you and what you want from God are not going to be achieved by doing the same old things, and thinking the same old thoughts. Repentance then, as it is now, is to make a change, but the big difference from the repentance John the Baptizer preached and what repentance is now, is that it is now a decision to follow Jesus Christ rather than one's own effort to change.

John was also the man who baptized Jesus (Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3) and when John balked at the idea, saying that the role should be reversed, *Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."* Matthew 3:15. So if there is no other reason we too should be baptized, we should at least follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are some other reasons that are important to know as we celebrate baptism today. . .

We are baptized into Christ

- Our text makes this clear, *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* Romans 6:3. Paul often used this terminology.
 - In 1 Corinthians Paul makes reference to the Children of Israel's rescue from the Egyptians we heard about earlier with *They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.* 1 Corinthians 10:2
 - In the midst of his discussion of the many gifts needed in the Body of Christ, he says *For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.* 1 Corinthians 12:13 (NIV) but in the English Standard Version it is rendered *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.* 1 Corinthians 12:13a (ESV).
 - In his discussion of his frustration with the Galatians for their abandonment of faith in the resurrection Paul reminds them with, . . . *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* Galatians 3:27 (NIV)
- In explain this, Matt Slick says, *"To be baptized "into Christ," "into His death," "into Moses," and "into one body" is to be publicly identified with the thing you are being baptized into. The focus is not the baptism itself but on the thing the baptism represents."* In the case of our text, Romans 6:3-5, being baptized into Christ is a public identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection which described as . . . *the gospel that saved us.* 1 Corinthians 15:2. All this indicates that baptism is a public statement proclaiming that the person being baptized is telling the world that he or she is trusting in the sacrifice of Christ.

- What you can see by this is . . .

Baptism is a perfect symbol for what Christ did on Good Friday and Easter Sunday and the perfect way a Christ Follower can identify with it.

- One commentator wrote “*Actually Christian baptism is Immersion in water and Emersion from water. Just immersion is to drown—you need to come back out.*” The point being is this: you need to come back out of the water to live. You might be buried, but resurrection means you don’t stay buried. Baptism signifies burial and then raising. Death and then life.
- A few verses after our text, and also in Colossians, by the way (Colossians 3:3), Paul tells us, *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* Romans 6:11. As Christ died and was raised to a new life, so too the Christ Follower has died and has a new life. This new life of regeneration is by faith which is an internal work.

Baptism is the external work of identification with Christ in his burial and resurrection

- This is why references to baptism in the Bible often deal more with our union and identification with Christ than to our believer’s baptism. In the way baptism is compared to Jesus' death and resurrection in our text, Slick points out the different ways this is revealed in the Bible.
 - In Matthew 28:18-19 baptism is being identified as a disciple. In his Great Commission Jesus tells this followers to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - In John 3:5 Jesus is discussing being born again with Nicodemous and he shows that baptism can be compared to new birth, and coming forth into life.
 - In 1 Corinthians 10:2, Paul even compares baptism is compared to Israel's Exodus from Egypt and their passing through the Red Sea which was the account Todd read about earlier.
 - Peter compared baptism to Noah's escaping the flood waters by entering the ark (1 Peter 3:21).
- In each of the references I just covered, baptism is an identification with something. In each case it signifies a change in the believer as a result of God’s work in their life. And notice, it was not the water that saves, but faith in Christ and His work. The water is only a symbol of what God has already done in our lives through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- Finally . . .

Baptism is integrally connected with a believer’s confession of faith.

- That’s why we call it **BELIEVER’S baptism**. That’s why we do not baptize infants or even a child who is not able to cognitantly make a decision to repent and live for Christ. William Barclay, who, as a Presbyterian, believed in infant baptism, and also held some non-orthodox beliefs, rightly points out, that in the early church “*A man was baptized when he entered the Church; and he was entering the Church direct from paganism. In baptism a man came to a decision which cut his life in two, a decision which often meant that he had to tear himself up by the roots, a decision which was so definite that it often meant nothing less than beginning life all over again.*”
- That is the very meaning of repentance by the way! And what a perfect picture of what it means to become a new believer! When we confess Jesus as Lord and relinquish the driver’s seat of our life to him, we are in effect tearing ourselves out by the roots and transplanting ourselves into new and eternal life in Jesus Christ. So, in addition to the burial and resurrection picture in baptism we also can see a picture of being wrenched out of the dirt of our old life and being planted into the sweet soil of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Water we talking about? It’s this, today Scotty and Nate are symbolically dying and rising again. They are telling the world that they have died to one kind of life and are rising into another. They have died to the old life of sin and rising to the new life of grace. That is what we are celebrating today. That is what we celebrated when we, ourselves, were baptized. That’s what we’re talking about. Amen.