

What Is the Meaning of Baptism?

Romans 6:1-7

December 8th, 2019

Big idea: Believers should not continue sinning because their baptism pictures the reality of their death to sin and life in Christ.

Intro

Today we get to celebrate. 4 people at UBC are going to be baptized. Because we are between sermon series, it seems appropriate to seize this moment and consider the meaning of baptism.

Martin Luther said, "There is on earth no greater comfort than baptism." He would fight against sin and Satan by reminding himself, preaching to himself, "I am baptized! I am baptized!"

David Mathis comments, Luther was not claiming to be saved simply because he was baptized. Rather, he rightly perceived the wonder and glory of baptism. He saw the visible, external act of baptism as an objective pointer to the invisible, internal reality of new birth and the faith through which we are saved on the basis of Christ alone. Luther was, after all, the great champion of justification by faith — as well as one captivated by the power and grace of baptism.

Does your baptism hold the same significance for you?

There are three types of people I have in mind as I teach today.

First, those who have been baptized however long ago in their past. I hope you are encouraged as they reconsider what that event communicated.

Second, those who are Christians but have not yet been baptized. Perhaps you trusted Christ many years ago but have never really seen the point of baptism. Or perhaps you were nervous about how your family would respond. Or perhaps you were just nervous about such a public event. I hope you see the meaning of baptism today and decide to take that step in the near future.

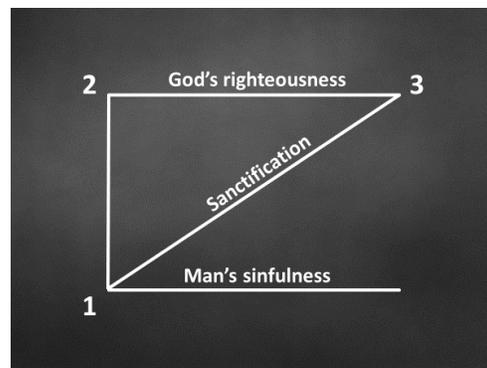
Third, those who are not Christians and have wondered about the meaning of baptism for Christians. It may seem to you like a strange ritual and you wonder what it is all about. I hope today will clarify the meaning of baptism and provide a space for you to consider the message communicated by the act of baptism.

We'll look at several passages in the Bible, but we will camp out in Romans 6. The will be our base camp from which we will make some shorter excursions.

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)
 - a. The argument in Romans leads up to this question:
 - i. Gospel is the power of God for salvation
 1. **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
 - ii. All are guilty – that's why we need "salvation" - revelation in creation and conscience that we violate, Jews had the law and couldn't keep it
 1. **Romans 3:19-20** Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.
 - iii. But God made a way

1. **Romans 3:21-23** But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
 - iv. Like Abraham, we are to believe in God's promise and our faith is credited as righteousness
 1. **Romans 4:3** For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."
 - v. By grace we are forgiven and have peace with God
 1. **Romans 5:1-2** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.
 2. **Romans 5:20** The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,
 - vi. Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace?
2. The answer: **No** way! (6:2a)
 - a. μή γένοιτο
 - i. NASB – may it never be!
 - ii. CSB – Absolutely not!
 - iii. ESV – By no means!
 - iv. KJV – God forbid.
 - v. NKJ – Certainly not!
 - b. but why?
 - i. The answer unfolds over the whole of chapter 6, but it starts in a surprising place.
 - ii. He doesn't start with the harm that it will do to the gospel as those who aren't Christians are distracted by your behavior.
 - iii. He doesn't start with the practical benefits of living in obedience to God. (that's more what the book of Proverbs does)
 - iv. He starts with baptism.
3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)
 - a. Baptism symbolizes our **identification** with Jesus.
 - i. We were baptized into His death.
 1. He was our substitute and our representative.
 2. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.
 3. Baptism can be used of being identified with someone
 - a. **1 Corinthians 10:1-2** For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

- b. They became united to him, recognizing his leadership and their dependence on him.
 - c. Union with Christ means union with him in his death
 - 4. When he died, we died. But I still feel very much alive. How did I “die?”
 - a. We died “to sin” because we are united to Jesus who died “for sin.”
 - b. Our baptism pictures this reality. When it says we were “baptized into Christ Jesus” it refers to our literal baptism that portrays a figurative truth.
- ii. Baptism is a symbol more than merely a sign.
 - 1. A symbol is a graphic picture of the truth it conveys. A sign doesn’t have an inherent connection to the truth it communicates.
 - a. Traffic light (why does green mean go?) vs. the sign at a railroad crossing.
 - 2. Baptism is a symbol, not a mere sign, for it actually pictures the believer’s death and resurrection with Christ. (Erickson)
 - 3. Wiersbe - Paul is not saying that their immersion in water put them “into Jesus Christ” for that was accomplished by the Spirit when they believed. Their immersion was a picture of what the Spirit did: the HS identified them with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.
 - 4. Piper - In Romans, faith is the means by which we are united to Christ and justified. But we show this faith — we *say* this faith and *signify* this faith and *symbolize* this faith — with the act of baptism. Faith unites to Christ; baptism symbolizes the union.
 - a. An analogy would be saying, “With this ring I thee wed.” When we say that, we don’t mean that the ring or the putting of the ring on the finger is what makes us married. No, it shows the covenant and symbolizes the covenant, but the covenant-making vows make the marriage. So it is with faith and baptism.
 - b. And just like a husband might look down at his ring and remember his covenant, so we look back at our baptism and remember the truth it communicates — that’s why Martin Luther found such comfort in it.
- iii. Line graph on justification, sanctification, God’s righteousness, man’s sinfulness from EBC pg 66



- 1.
- 2. Baptism symbols our justification, that we have been lifted from line 1 to line 2 in our standing because we are identified with Jesus.
- 3. Paul’s point is that this change in position should motivate our change in practice represented by the line from pt 1 to pt 3.

- iv. Not only were we buried with Him, we were raised so we can walk in newness of life. (v. 4-5)
 - 1. Not speaking of future resurrection after death, but the present reality of new life
 - 2. **Ephesians 2:4-6** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,
 - 3. **Colossians 3:1** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
 - 4. This conclusion gets back to the initial question – should we keep on sinning as a pattern in our lives? No, you died to that life style. Even more, you’ve been given new life in Jesus, why would you keep living as if you’re a slave?
- b. Baptism symbolizes our ***cleansing*** from sin. (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
 - i. **Acts 22:16** 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'
 - ii. **1 Peter 3:21** Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
 - iii. Does the act of baptism save a person? Some have taken it that way in church history. The mere act, regardless of the faith of the person being baptized or the faith of the one doing the baptizing, can save the one who is baptized. It sounds like it at first but the whole verse shows that it teaches the opposite.
 - 1. It’s not the removal of dirt – as in, the act of being immersed in baptism – but what it represents – an appeal to God for a good conscience.
- c. Baptism symbolizes our ***initiation*** into the body of Christ, the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13)
 - i. **1 Corinthians 12:13** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
 - ii. You can say that baptism is the initiatory ritual of the church and communion is the ongoing ritual of the church.
 - iii. The NT assumes that every Christian is baptized.
 - 1. Paul’s argument in Romans 6 depends on that assumption.
 - 2. Jesus commanded it as part of discipleship.
 - a. Matthew 28:19-20a "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
 - b. The imperative is “make disciples” – going, baptizing, and teaching are how we make disciples of Jesus.
 - 3. The pattern in Acts is that people believe and are baptized.
 - a. They received the Word at Pentecost and were baptized (2:41).
 - b. They believed Phillip’s preaching and were baptized (8:12).
 - c. The Philippian jailor and his household believed and were baptized (16:31-34).

d. Many Jewish leaders believed and were baptized (18:8).

4. Common questions about baptism

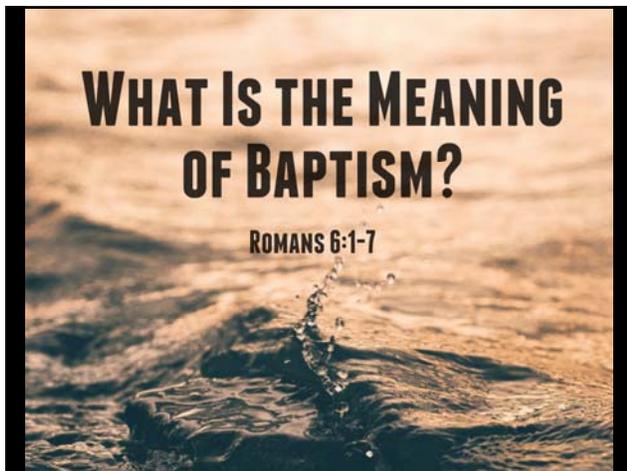
a. Who should be baptized?

- i. Two main teachings – infants in believing families (paedobaptists) or those who have believing in Christ (credobaptists).
- ii. Those who advocate for baptizing infants typically do so because they see it as the NT parallel to circumcision.
 1. Just like circumcision was administered to all male infants as a way of identifying them with the covenant community, so baptism should be administered to children of believing families to identify them with the new covenant community, the church, in anticipation of their future faith.
- iii. Both the command and example of scripture dictate that baptism should be of believers who make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 1. This is where I would disagree with Martin Luther.
- iv. Matt. 28:19, Jesus commands them to make disciples and baptize disciples.
- v. Peter passes this command on by commanding those who want to be saved to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38).
- vi. The pattern in Acts is also informative.
 1. They received the Word at Pentecost and were baptized (2:41).
 2. They believed Phillip’s preaching and were baptized (8:12).
 3. The Philippian jailor and his household believed and were baptized (16:31-34).
 4. Many Jewish leaders believed and were baptized (18:8).

b. Can I be saved if I’m not baptized?

- i. We need to say a clear “yes” – and the classic example is the thief on the cross.
- ii. But we need to clarify that clear “yes” –
- iii. Ask it a different way, are we justified before, in, or after baptism? Are we united to Christ and all His righteousness given to us and all our sin put on Him before, in, or after baptism?
 1. **Romans 3:28** For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
 2. **Romans 5:1** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
 3. **Romans 4:5** But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,
 4. **Acts 13:38-39** "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.
- iv. We are clearly saved (justified) by faith – that’s the sole instrument of union with Christ.

1. Baptism is the way given by Christ to declare that faith, for all the reasons we've already given today.
 - v. It's a bit like the guy who tells a girl that he's living with, "I love you and I'm committed to you but I don't want to marry you." She may have good reasons to wonder about his commitment.
 - vi. Just like marriage is the universally recognized, public declaration of commitment, so baptism is the public declaration of commitment given to us by Jesus Himself.
 - vii. If someone understands that God commands baptism and then refuses to do it, you have reason to wonder whether they are saved.
- c. Should a person ever be re-baptized?
- i. Infant baptism? Baptized as a teenager, walked away, came back to faith in Christ? Sprinkled instead of immersed?
 - ii. Less concerned about the mode (immersion vs sprinkling), although I think immersion is the clear practice in the NT and most clearly pictures the meaning of baptism, I'm more concerned about whether it was an expression of their personal faith.
 - iii. Take them to Romans 6, discuss the significance and purpose of baptism, but leave the decision to them. Did you believe when you were baptized? Was it a profession of faith?
- d. Conclusion
- i. Baptism . . .
 1. Adoption ceremony: "You're my son."
 2. Funeral: "You died with Christ."
 3. Wedding: "You're united to the groom." HT: Mark Jones
 - ii. "Baptism is the team jersey of Christianity. It's where faith goes public." Bobby Jamieson
- e. Another baptism date tentatively scheduled for January.



1

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

2

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

3

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)

Romans 3:21-23 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

4

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)

Romans 4:3 For what does the Scripture say? "**ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"

5

1. The question: Should we continue sinning since we are saved by grace? (6:1)

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

6

2. The answer: No way! (6:2a)

NASB – May it never be!

CSB – Absolutely not!

ESV – By no means!

KJV – God forbid.

NKJ – Certainly not!

7

3. The reason: Your baptism symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

a. Baptism symbolizes our identification with Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

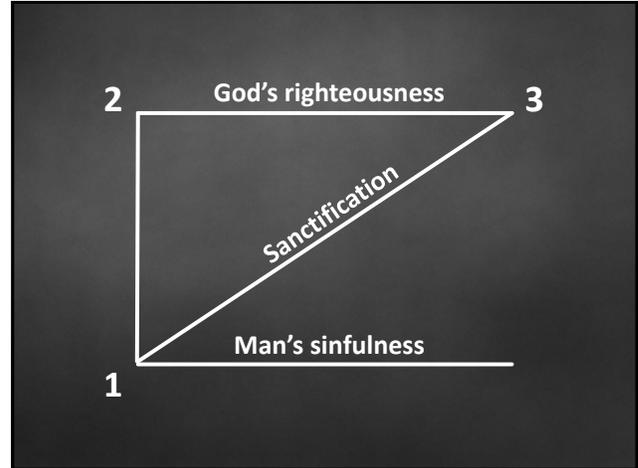
8

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

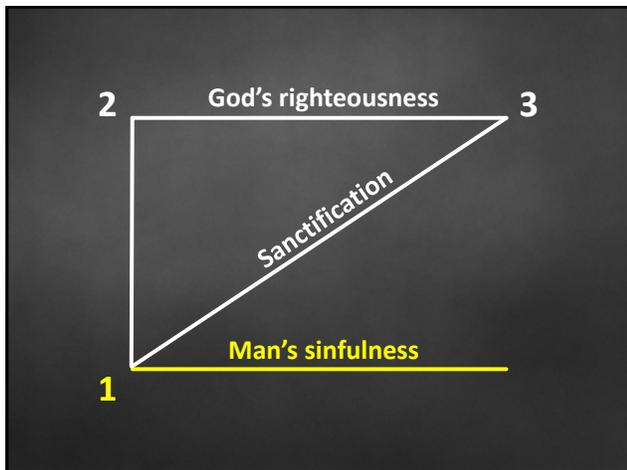
a. Baptism symbolizes our **identification** with Jesus.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

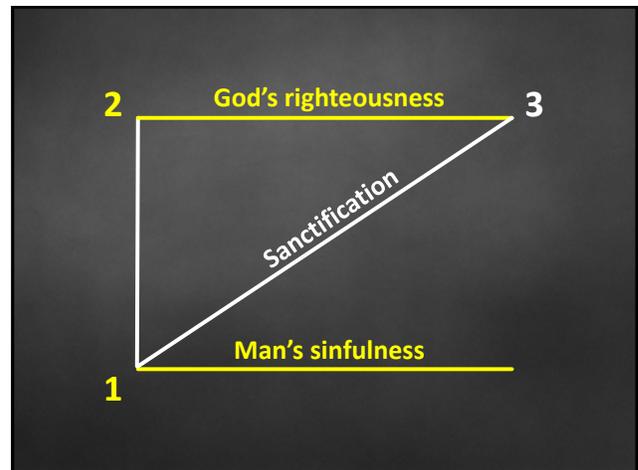
9



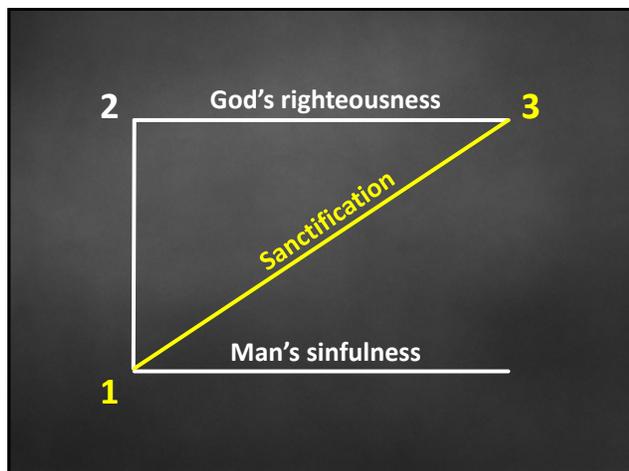
10



11



12



13

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

a. Baptism symbolizes our **identification** with Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-6 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

14

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

a. Baptism symbolizes our **identification** with Jesus.

Colossians 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

15

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

b. Baptism symbolizes our **cleansing** from sin. (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)

Acts 22:16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

16

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

b. Baptism symbolizes our **cleansing** from sin. (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)

1 Peter 3:21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

17

3. The reason: Your **baptism** symbolized the reality of your death to sin and new life in Christ. (6:2b-7)

c. Baptism symbolizes our **initiation** into the body of Christ, the church. (1 Corinthians 12:13)

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

18

4. Common questions about baptism

a. Who should be baptized?

19

4. Common questions about baptism

b. Can I be saved if I'm not baptized?

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified **by faith** apart from works of the Law.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified **by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

20

4. Common questions about baptism

b. Can I be saved if I'm not baptized?

Romans 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, **his faith** is credited as righteousness,

21

4. Common questions about baptism

b. Can I be saved if I'm not baptized?

Acts 13:38-39 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him **everyone who believes** is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

22

4. Common questions about baptism

c. Should a person ever be re-baptized?

23