

Reboot

4. Reborn

June 27, 2021

Welcome to Baptism weekend and the final message in our Reboot series. As our country reopens after Covid, God is pushing the "Reboot" button on his people. Responding to Him will prepare us to be part of what the Spirit is doing in this next season. If we ask, the Lord will reboot:

- the way we handle differences so we preserve unity in Christ
- our priorities so that we pursue the presence of Jesus above all
- how we are led by the Holy Spirit instead of ourselves

Today on this Baptismal Sunday we're talking with the greatest "reboot" of them all: receiving new life through faith in Jesus. If you have a Bible, please turn with me to Colossians 2.

If you've seen the movie *Black Hawk Down*, you've seen the Combat Search and Rescue team in action. That's the division that goes into combat zones to rescue wounded or captured soldiers. Every time they rescue someone, they call it a "save." Over the years this unit has made thousands of saves. Because their missions are so dangerous, they know that at any moment they could lose their lives as they seek to save someone else's. The motto of this division is, "These things we do, that others may live." When asked why they risk their lives for fallen soldiers, one former CSAR Lieutenant said, "They're our brothers and sisters in arms we are going to do everything feasible to bring that person back alive." But he also added, "You can't rescue somebody (who) doesn't want to be rescued."

We celebrate baptism today because at the cross God launched the ultimate search and rescue mission for us. Jesus moved into the war zone of sin and evil, risked and lost his life so that we might live. We celebrate baptism because Jesus rescued us.

Colossians 2:13 tells us why God needed to rescue us: **Colossians 2:13** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh* Wait, we were dead? Isn't that an overstatement for dramatic effect? We can't be dead --- we're walking around, right? Are we some sort of zombie? To be "dead in our sins" means that our spirits are dead. The spirit is the part of us that connects with God. Being dead in our sins means:

- when God speaks to us, our spiritual ears are deadened and we can't hear him.
- we don't notice God's presence because our spiritual senses are deadened.
- when God offers to guide us we ignore him to go our own way.
- And when our bodies die, we spend eternity apart from God- otherwise known as hell.

That's bad news --- but here is the good news: **Colossians 2:13-14; *God made you alive with Christ.*** Jesus didn't come to make bad people good, he came to make dead people live! God's goal is not to make you behave; he is seeking to rescue you from eternal death. Speaking to believers, Paul says, "God made you alive with Christ."

Here's how he made us alive: **Colossians 2:13-14 *He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.***

Forgiveness of our sins is like canceling a debt -- the "charge of legal indebtedness" against us. We all understand debt; it's way too easy to fall into. A credit card allows us to buy something immediately, whether we have the money to pay for it or not. We see a shirt we like online we can just charge it. We want a getaway and with a credit card we can charge a flight without saving for it. Or maybe the car goes down and the mechanic says it needs a new transmission; here's the credit card. It's easy to get what we want or need with a credit card until the bill comes due. We are legally obligated to pay for it. Yikes!

Whether or not you have credit card debt, each of us accumulates a *moral* indebtedness. That's because each of us has sinned. Every time we sin, we add to our moral debt with God. When we speak what isn't true, or take what isn't ours, or wound someone, or end up in the wrong bed... in big or little ways, we all sin. And that is a major problem because we have no way of wiping our sin off the books. We can never repay our moral debt. That's because the price of our sin is spiritual death. Verse 14 refers to ***our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us.*** "Condemned us" -- that means that if we are apart from Christ, we live with a death sentence. And that can suck the joy out of life, for sure.

Randy Frazee illustrates it like this. Imagine yourself in a courtroom on trial for a capital crime. The jury looks at the evidence and declares you guilty. The judge hammers the gavel and says, "You are sentenced to death." The guards take you back to your cell to await your execution date. The judge sets the date for a year later. You could say, "I have a year. I'm really going to enjoy life." I think it would be really hard to enjoy life on death row. You could try to forget what's coming, but in the back of your mind it's always there. You could deny you were guilty and tell everyone you are innocent, but that won't change the verdict or the sentence.

The same is true for us. Verse 14 says "our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us." Because of our sin, we're on death row. Some of us here today have a year left. Some of us have twenty years left. Some of us have fifty years left. But regardless of the amount of time you have left, the reality is that apart from Christ you are on death row.

We might wonder, "Why does death have to be the price for sin -- why can't God just say to us -- 'You sinned, but I'll let you off -- just don't do that anymore.'" Look at it

this way: let's suppose you own a family business, and someone hacks into your bank accounts and drains all your assets. You have to close the business and all your employees lose their jobs. Then the FBI catch the cyber-criminals and brings them to trial. What would you think if a judge said to the criminals, "Well, nobody is perfect, so you are free to go. Enjoy your day." Would you think, "What a great judge!" I doubt it. You might think he should lose his job as a judge. You'd feel the need for justice. God is perfectly just. He can't just wave our sin away and say, "We'll just pretend this didn't happen." No, justice must be done. The debt must be paid.

But Colossians 2 gives us the really good news that we don't have to be the one to pay for our moral debt! God knew we were in trouble and did something about it. He sent his own Son Jesus to earth to rescue us. He took care of our debt! **v. 14** *having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.* Imagine getting an email that says "Your credit card bill is \$20,000, but a third party has paid it in full. Your new balance is \$0." How amazing would that be? Colossians 2 tells us that you had a bill that would cost you your life but Jesus canceled it by dying for you on the cross. The list of your sins has been stamped "Paid in Full. You will never have to pay for them --- Jesus already did! You are released from death row! Jesus died so you won't have to! Amazing!

One pastor told about a 3rd grader who heard the message of Jesus and wanted to be baptized. His parents asked him some questions to see what he understood about the gospel. He said, "Like we all have a ticket on a train to hell. Jesus has a ticket on a train for heaven, and he gave it to us for free." That nails it! And that's what we celebrate in baptism. **Colossians 2:11-12** *Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.* This verse says baptism is part of our participation in the Gospel. Verse 12 says, *having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God.*

Baptism is a faith response to what God does. After the Spirit descended on the believers at Pentecost, Peter preached about Jesus to the assembled crowd. He said, "God made Jesus Lord and Messiah... and by the way, you killed him." **Acts 2:37** *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* Some were "cut to the heart" – Peter's message really sank in! They knew that if what Peter was saying was true then they had to respond. So they asked Peter, "What shall we do?" Notice Peter doesn't ask them to pray a prayer; he calls them to take two specific actions.

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.* Peter calls those who believed what he said to take two immediate steps:

- 1) Repent – that is, change your direction; let go of sin and let God lead your life.
- 2) Be baptized.

After the good news of Jesus first sank in for me, I didn't know I was supposed to be baptized. I came to Christ at a friend's house as a junior in high school in Brussels, Belgium. I started to grow spiritually, but no one ever told me about being baptized. I went to college and got involved in a great Christian fellowship there. I met Linda, who is now my wife. At one point the topic of baptism came up and I said I'd never been baptized. She was surprised and told me I should get baptized. I asked why I should be baptized. Since I was saved by grace through faith, I didn't see any need for a ritual. She told me, "Because it says so in the Bible." I checked it out, and she was right so I decided to obey the Lord. I was baptized as a college freshman in the college chapel. I remember standing in the middle of that huge sanctuary and submitting to baptism – with Linda standing nearby as my sponsor. I didn't hear angels sing, but it was a defining moment for me. I knew I was marked as a follower of Jesus at a deeper level than ever. It was just a couple months later that I first heard the call to be a pastor. If I hadn't said "yes" to baptism I wonder if I would have heard that call.

And there may be moments after we have been baptized that the Spirit cuts us to the heart in a significantly new way – you can tell God is calling you to a new place in your faith - and we are prompted to reaffirm our baptism. As a rule, I try to avoid making Linda cry. But there was a moment a few years ago I was glad I did. We were leading a number of Crossroaders on a trip to Israel and we visited the Jordan River. We offered the opportunity for people to renew their baptismal vows in the river, and most did, including Linda. When Linda stepped up, I spoke the reaffirmation words and poured the water from the Jordan on her head. She was so moved that she started cry. It was a holy moment as she was once again in touch with what God had done.

The Apostle Peter told the crowd if they repent and were baptized there's a promise: **Acts 38-39** *And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.* When we repent and are baptized, it opens the way for the Holy Spirit in our lives. We experience God's work in a fuller way.

Baptism shows we can't save ourselves

Baptism is a response to what God has already done: **v. 12** *having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God*

Baptism is something done to us, not by us:

- "having been buried..."
- "you were raised..."
- "faith in the working of God" – not our own working

Receiving baptism requires humility. It's an unusual process, isn't it? Someone stands or sits in water while someone else lowers them under and back up again – leaving them dripping wet and. Not very dignified, is it? It's not supposed to be. It takes humility to be baptized, because it takes humility to admit we have sinned and can't save ourselves. When babies are baptized it is clear they don't have the ability to save themselves. We can't save ourselves; it is God's grace at work.

Baptism shows we are included into the family of God

Colossians 2:11 says ...you were circumcised by Christ

When a Jewish baby boy was 8 days old he was brought to the temple for the ritual of circumcision which marked him as part of the nation of Israel – the chosen people of God. Through baptism we are marked as part of the people of God – which is the Church. That is why in some cultures, being baptized leads to persecution. The non-Christian society won't object much about what a Christian believes about Jesus. But when believers are baptized that means they are now part of the family of God and will obey Jesus above anyone else. And that can lead to persecution.

In the Middle East people who start to follow Jesus understand the risks. They truly start to follow saying, "If I live I live, If I die I die." One church was training Middle Eastern leaders to baptize others. They asked baptism candidates 2 questions:

1. Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?
2. Do you want to love and follow him all the days of your life?

Then the believers in that nation requested permission to add a third question.

3. Are you willing to follow him through persecution and death if it comes your way?

That is the risk of being part of God's family there.

Baptism demonstrates that we are completely forgiven

v. 13 He forgave us all our sins,

When we go under the water, we come up, but our past sins stay under. It reminds us that our sins are truly gone; God will never bring them up again! That's amazing! We're going to celebrate baptism now. It is a joyful time! If you are ready to be baptized or reaffirm your baptism, come on forward.

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