

# REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM

ROMANS 6:1-11

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Good morning.

Today, we get the privilege of celebrating baptism together, and so, we are taking a one-week break from our sermon series in the Psalms to hear from the Word of God about Baptism.

And the reason we are doing this is because while baptism may seem like basically an individual action, baptism is a sacrament that is a profoundly corporate sacrament. It has meaning and value that goes beyond what is happening in an individual that is being baptized and extends to the Church that participates by witnessing and affirming the baptism.

So today, as we witness several baptisms, I would like to prime the rest of us to actively participate in this sacrament by remembering your baptism.

Now, I'm not talking about remembering the day of your baptism. Some of you maybe can remember the day you were baptized really well: You can remember the minister who baptized you, the temperature of the water, the place you were at. Some of you maybe can't. Maybe it was 40 years ago, maybe you were a child, maybe the details are just really fuzzy. But regardless of the circumstances around your baptism, the Christian charge to remember your baptism is something all of us can do.

And maybe the easiest way to illustrate is to think about baptism like a wedding ring.

You see, the Church has, for centuries now, thought about the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper—as signs and seals of the promises of God toward his people. They are tangible practices we regularly participate in that point to something, just like a sign does, and they seal something—like a royal seal on an ancient document would have verified its reality and authority—so the sacraments point us to something, and they verify the authenticity of the promises of God.

So, think about a wedding ring:

In a marriage ceremony, traditionally, after the bride and groom have said their vows, the minister will ask something like: “What symbol do you give as a pledge that you will faithfully perform these vows,” and the bride will give the ring to her husband and say something like: “I give you this ring, as a sign of my love. As I place it on your finger, I commit my heart and soul to you.”

Now, the ring itself is just a sign. It’s a symbol. On its own, it’s a trinket. It has minimal value on its own.

But the ring signifies something beyond itself that is infinitely valuable—the love and commitment of your spouse. It points to something beyond itself, and it is a sign of its authenticity. And just as I, as a married man, am meant to look at this ring and remember something beyond the ring itself, we as Christians, are called to see baptism and look beyond it. We’re meant to look to the promises of God.

So, today, I charge you to *remember your baptism*.

Remember what Christ has done for you in the past.

Just as a wedding ring is not a sign of your commitment to your spouse, but your spouse’s commitment to you, your baptism is primarily not a sign of your commitment to Jesus, but Jesus’s promises to you!

Baptism’s primary function as a sign and seal is a visible representation of the cleansing power of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. This is why Jesus came to earth, to save sinners by living a perfect life they could not live, dying the death that they deserved, and being risen to new life to prove that his sacrifice was effective.

Your sins have been forgiven, you have been justified in the courtroom of God, because the blood of Jesus Christ has washed you completely clean from your sins. And the fact that you have been baptized—or are going to be today—is a physical, tangible representation and reminder of the promise of God to wash you completely clean from your sin.

No matter how stained you feel, if you trust in the promises of Christ, you can confidently say, like Paul did: “I have been washed, I’ve been sanctified, I have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 6:11)

No matter how unworthy you feel before God, you can approach his throne with the author of Hebrews, who looks to Jesus’s priestly function, offering a perfect atoning

sacrifice before God and says: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

Not because you are faithful, but because he is faithful! Not because you are holding tight to Jesus, but because he is holding tight to you. That is what baptism is first and foremost reminding us of: Not that we have made a commitment to Jesus, but that he has made an unfulfilling promise to us.

So, brothers and sisters, when you are drowning in guilt, tempted to despair, tempted to doubt whether God could ever save somebody like you, remember your baptism. Remember what Christ has already done for you in the past.

Remember what Christ is doing in you in the present.

You see, what we don't want to do is to slip into what Paul calls “presuming” upon the kindness and patience of God (Rom. 2:4). We can so focus on the forgiveness of Christ that we stop viewing our current actions as having any weight to them. Why dwell on it, if I can be forgiven?

The problem is that this renders baptism as a one-time event in the past that gives us salvation in the future but has absolutely no bearing on the present.

But what Paul makes abundantly clear here in Romans 6 is that one of the primary functions of baptism is to do something in us right now, no matter how long ago the date of our baptism was.

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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...<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.

What has happened to us in Christ has profound present effects. Our chains to sin—to addiction, to selfishness, to deceit, to lust, to pride—have been cut, if you have faith in the promises of Jesus! You have been crucified with him so that you would no longer be enslaved to sin! You have been set free from sin, in order that you might walk in newness of life, just as Jesus did.

Because Christ died for you, because he rose from the grave, because you have been united to him by faith, you really can live like Jesus! You can! You aren't a slave to your desires, you aren't a slave to your worst impulses, you aren't destined to be deceived by the world, by Satan, or by the lies you tell yourself. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

The call to remember your baptism is not: Remember how you made a commitment to Jesus at camp 20 years ago. It's not, remember that you grew up in the church and how you need to make them proud. Those things don't have the power to kill sin. The call to remember your baptism is to remember that Jesus did something for you, to you—he took your old, sinful nature and nailed it to the cross. He took it with him to the grave, and when he rose from the dead, he left it there. Your old, sinful, imprisoned self is dead!

Your job now is to take that objective reality, to remember it, and to live as if it's really true: "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ" (v. 11). Paul is saying: This is the reality, now you need to see yourselves in that light! Work out your own salvation, Paul says in Philippians 2. It's happened in you, Jesus paid for it, now, live like it.

Remember your baptism, because it's by remembering, that Jesus will sanctify you.

Remember how your baptism promises what Christ is preparing for you in the future.

Even as Paul encourages Christians to live out their baptism in real life here and now, he sneaks in these promises of eternal life in the future:

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.

As you see baptisms today, remember that just as surely as these people rise up out of the water, just as real and life-giving that the gulps of air they suck down are, so real is Jesus Christ reigning—ALIVE—right now. He rose from the grave, and will never die again. Death no longer has any dominion over him! The grave could not hold him, for he had a universe to rule over.

As R.C. Sproul once said, "No matter if things get worse, Jesus Christ is still King."

And because he rose from the dead, because he will never be defeated by any enemy ever again, we can trust that he *will* deliver his people to eternal life—life in a

kingdom where the stench of death never lingers, where the bonds of sin are forever cut, where perfect, unadulterated love and joy overflow forever.

If we have died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him.

Remember your baptism, the glorious hope of what Christ is preparing for you in the future, and forever.

As you watch these baptisms today, friends, remember your baptism. Remember the promises of God that have already been fulfilled at the cross, are working themselves out in you right now, and are preparing a future for you forever.