

## ***Baptism Basics***

Romans 6:1-6

August 11, 2024

The young son of a Brethren pastor watched with great interest as his dad baptized new believers dunking them three times. When he got home, he decided to baptize his evil cats in the bathtub. The kitten took it very well as did the younger cat, but the old tom cat rebelled. He clawed and hissed, and carried on before finally getting away with a just a splash of water. In disgust, the young boy yelled after him, "Fine, be a Lutheran if you want to!" There are different methods of baptism and we'll be talking about our method today, God willing. Please open your Bibles today to Romans 6.

Today is one of the best days in the life of Antioch Church! We get to celebrate the birth of 9 new brothers and sisters! We get to officially welcome them into our family and cases witness their baptisms. This is no small event but I fear we take such things for granted. We must not. This is huge. It's enormous. It's special. It's miraculous. It is eternal. It is a big deal. Since we are celebrating several baptisms today, let's remember a bit this morning what baptism means. If you are able, please stand as we read from Rom 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Our theme this year is the great what? Matt 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." So we've been talking a lot this year about going and making disciples and even about teaching them to obey everything Jesus commands. Today we want to talk about the baptizing part. Say baptism. What is it? Why do we do it? What does it mean? Why do we do it the way we do it? All good questions we hope to answer before we're done. Let's begin with the baptismal vows.

The first baptismal vow asked if you believe Jesus is God's Son and do you receive and trust Him as your Savior. It not only states that we believe Jesus is different than everyone else who ever lived being fully human and fully God, but it also admits we need a Savior. That we have sinned and disobeyed God and that we can't do anything to save ourselves. We're depending totally, entirely, and supremely on Jesus' sacrifice for us. Not on our good works, not on our good looks, not on our tithes or offerings. Only

on Jesus. This is one reason we don't baptize infants. No one else can make this decision for you. Not your parents, not your spouse, nobody. Only you can choose to follow Jesus. Parents should help and encourage their children, but that decision is ultimately theirs.

This is a good time to mention that baptism doesn't automatically save anyone. It is not an automatic ticket to heaven. There will be plenty of people in hell, I fear, who had been baptized on earth thinking they had their ticket punched. Baptism is an important step of obedience that every believer should take if he or she is physically able. But, if it is not accompanied by turning from sin and calling on God to save them through Jesus' blood shed on that cross, it is simply a beautiful ceremony where the person gets all wet. You might as well take a shower, go to the swimming pool or stand out in a hurricane.

And a decision to follow Jesus should result in changed behavior afterward which is where the second vow comes in. Will you turn from all sin and will you try with God's help to live according to the example and teachings of Jesus? Will you turn from sin? Say Repent. It means to stop doing wrong! On the day of Pentecost, Peter told those gathered to, [Acts 2:38] "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." And I say the same to every one of you today! Without repenting and turning from sin and trusting in Jesus, we cannot be saved! If you have no intention of turning from sin, don't lie to God. That doesn't turn out well as Ananias and Sapphira found out. None of us will live perfect lives after baptism but that should be the goal of every Christian. Be perfect or mature, God says, even as I am.

Thankfully, when we get saved, we get a helper! Say helper. The baptismal vow says with God's help. God's Holy Spirit comes into us when we get saved! He begins to live in us and shapes our thinking and our doing. Our minds and our actions. We have to allow Him to do so, but He can help us say no to temptation and say yes to Jesus and obey Him in every way possible.

Which is the second part of the second vow. To follow the example and teachings of Jesus. He is not only our Savior, He's also our pattern. Our model. Our example. And His teachings should shape our thoughts and actions every single moment of every day. We should begin to live obediently in every way we know how. In the way we interact with God, but also with our spouse, our children, our parents, our coworkers. In the way we spend our time and our money. If you don't intend to live an obedient Christian life, please don't get baptized. If you don't intend to be an active member in Jesus' church, please don't get baptized till you do. We're not fooling anyone. Don't make promises you don't **intend** to keep. We will all fail to keep them perfectly. But we shouldn't go into it determined to do the minimum or just to get

by. We need to be all in for Jesus! He was all in for us! Jesus Himself was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, to set an example for all of us and if we are going to follow His example, our first steps of obedience will be into His baptismal pool.

The third vow is one of belief. Say belief. Do you affirm and support the CBC Statement of Faith. It covers a lot of ground and we don't have time to rehash it all today. I taught a class on it just a few months ago and it is still on our Youtube channel and preached on the Apostles Creed awhile back. The Statement of Faith includes basic beliefs about God, Jesus, Salvation, the Bible and Christian living. There are one page copies on the welcome center near the church office. If you have questions, let me know.

The fourth vow is one of relationship with other people, with God's people. With His Church. Will you be faithful or loyal to the church upholding her with your prayers and your presence, your substance and your service? And this is the hurdle that trips up many would-be followers of Jesus. "I don't have any problem with Jesus, but I can't stand His people." Welcome to the family. The church is not an organization, it is an organism. The living, breathing bride of Christ. And individual believers that aren't plugged into a church will soon die on the vine. At the very least, it's disobedient and we cannot obey the many, many commands of Scripture that tell us to love one another, serve one another, bear with one another, and so many more that requires us to be with one another. Yes, it's harder that way. Yes, it gets messy. Yes, we get hurt. Which is where we learn to forgive, mature, grow, show grace and receive it. Pull a leaf off a tree and see how much fruit it produces on its own. Pull a coal out of the woodstove and see how long it stays hot. Cut a foot off your leg and see how much walking it does on its own. Separate a Christian from other believers and see how long he or she remains on fire for Jesus, how much fruit he or she produces, and how much walking in Jesus' footsteps he or she does. Christ died for the Church, that's how much He loves her!

Faithful with our prayers for the church-praying for and with one another and praying for the church itself to grow, be healthy, be faithful, be filled, be prosperous in the kingdom of God. Faithful in our presence by being present whenever we're physically able. Someone once said every time we don't attend worship when we are able is a vote to close the church. Voting with our feet. Yes, praise God for Youtube, but it's no substitute for being physically present as we promise in our vows.

Faithful in our substance. That normally happens through our tithes and offerings but can be through food, decorations, teaching materials, or a thousand other things needed to carry out the ministry here.

And faithful in our service by using whatever spiritual gift or gifts God has given you to serve Him and other believers in carrying out the work of Jesus. Praise God for the many faithful servants at Antioch! So many in so many ways! Week in and week out in nursery, Sunday School, music, safety team, BLAST, etc. Those who are faithful in visiting and maintaining the building, counting money, and using gifts of wisdom and knowledge, faith and healing.

And so when the new members took their vows a few moments ago, this is what they professed and agreed to. And when you renewed your vows, this is what you professed and re-agreed to. The book of James warns us against making false oaths. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. If you say something, be sure to do it. So these are no light and momentary promises. They are promises for a lifetime of Christian living.

Let's also remember some of the symbolism involved in baptism. Part of that is the actual washing with water. Say wash. The Jews had something similar to bathtubs that they would walk down into to ritually clean themselves to keep the law. But this baptism was something different and new. It was done by another person and you were dunked beneath the water, head and all. The Greek word for baptism literally means to dip or to plunge. The idea of taking a spiritual bath to cleanse us from all sin should come to mind but so too the realization that no amount of water can ever remove sin. Only Jesus' blood can do that. Rev 7:14 talks about those who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Which goes back to the first vow, accepting Jesus as Savior.

Our passage this morning reminds us that when we come to Jesus, we died to sin and that we were buried with Christ through baptism. If we have truly been saved, then the old man, the old woman, are dead. The life we lived according to the flesh, the life of sin is over. Put a tombstone up for we have been born again. And baptism is a symbol of that burial. Being lowered below the surface of the water reminding us of our spiritual death that we might not go on sinning as Paul writes. We Brethren also baptize forward rather than backward because John 19:30 says Jesus bowed His head and gave us His spirit. If we die with Him, we also bow our heads going forward.

But Paul also writes that we are raised with Christ through the glory of the Father. We don't hold people below the water forever. When we bring them up, it symbolizes resurrection! Say resurrection. New birth! New life as he says in verse 4 of today's text! Which is why some baptize backward. To symbolize when Jesus rose from the dead. Even though they're doing it wrong, it illustrates an important point 😊. Don't send hate mail. I'm joking.

Vs 5 says, "If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection." Just as the Tabernacle and Temple

and sacrifices and feasts were shadows of things to come, types and examples of what Jesus would be and do, so too, baptism is a shadow and a type of the bodily resurrection that will yet come while still being the concrete action demonstrating spiritual resurrection that occurs when we get saved. Like Holy Communion, there is something spiritual, powerful, mystical, and real that takes place beyond the physical that only eyes of faith can see. Baptism is so rich in so many ways and even holds meanings I'm convinced we don't understand fully, but as Jesus said about footwashing, if you know these things, you will be blessed or happy if you do them. Even if we don't understand everything about baptism, even if we can't explain it all, even if your pastor falls woefully short in laying it all out, God is able to bless us in spite of that, amen? If we obey. Baptism is obedience to Matthew 28 and it is a symbol, a sign, but there is also real power in it for it is obedience to Jesus and to His Word.

Which is why we try to be as true to Scripture as possible. We're not saying others are wrong or that other forms of baptism are ineffective, but we should know why we do what we do. As mentioned earlier, we don't baptize infants and only those old enough to make their own decision for Jesus. We immerse them, dunk them under the water because the Greek word means to dip or to plunge and not to sprinkle or pour like the tomcat. We do it three times in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost because Jesus told us to baptize that way. It could be done once in all three names, some do, but if I told you to write your name in the book of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, how many times would you have to write your name? The Greek word also implies a repeated action, not just once.

We also baptize publicly. Say public. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision. No one can see what goes on inside our hearts and minds, but when we act publicly on those inward thoughts, our inward decisions, thoughts, and intentions becomes public. When someone is baptized, it is a press conference, an announcement to the whole world that they have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. Our early Brethren ancestors did their baptisms in the Eder River in Germany early one August morning in 1708, perhaps the 11<sup>th</sup>, knowing that this public action would not only let others know of their decisions to obediently follow Jesus but also that they could be arrested and persecuted for doing so. And they were. A decision to follow Jesus is not something to hide or to be ashamed of. Baptism is a common door through which all believers enter the church if they are physically able. Since we become members of the family of God, this is a public family event. The adoption or new birth ceremony through which new siblings are born into the family. And so we do it WITH the family and through the family. Praise God for our new brothers and sisters today!

We also baptize publicly in worship because it is an act of worship. Say worship. We are giving ourselves totally to God through Jesus. This is one of the highest forms of worship. Committing ourselves to Him.

So we've pretty much covered all the baptism bases today. Why we do it and why we Brethren do it the way we do it. And we will actually baptize 9 individuals in obedience to the Great Commission today, praise God! And if there are others whom God is speaking to, let me close with the words of Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on [Jesus] name.' Do that as we pray.