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Baptism: A Three Point Gospel Sermon; 1 Corinthians 15:1-6

GPBC

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Introduction – We have witnessed Christian baptism today. It's always good to step back and be reminded of what we have witnessed. What is Christian baptism? Why did we do this today? As with the Lord's Supper that we studied a few weeks ago, as Christians we practice these things, but we must be careful to not practice them separate from their meaning. It's the responsibility of the church to ensure that the two ordinances of the local church are not mere ritual, that we aren't just going through the motions because it's something we do. If baptism and the Lord's Supper become just ceremony, they lose their efficacy. These practices concern our faith. They are rooted in the beliefs that we hold dear and cherish. The ceremony becomes meaningless if it's void of the meaning behind it for there is where our faith lies.

Baptism, then, is a kind of presentation. It visualizes for us the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, the gospel is proclaimed by action rather than by words. We see rather than hear the good news when we view baptism.

Paul says in v3 that this gospel is of first importance. It is the very heart of our faith, chief among the truths revealed in Scripture, second to none in terms of how vital and essential it is to man. The first two verses tell us why it is the most important truth ever to be told. Read.

1. The gospel is a message that must be shared – I preached to you
2. When the gospel is truly received, we are saved by it – being saved means that true gospel salvation not only brings about a new heart, but also a new life. The new birth is only the beginning of a lifetime of becoming more like Christ.
3. Received then refers to the new birth and being saved refers to the new life.
4. When the gospel is truly received and is saving us, it is evidenced by the fact that the gospel becomes our foundation for life – in which you stand. It's not just something we believe; it's something we live and live by.

5. We prove ourselves to be true recipients of the gospel if we hold fast to it for the rest of our lives. So I understand Paul's words "unless you believed in vain" to mean "unless you didn't truly believe."

The point is this: if we truly believe the gospel and embrace Christ as Savior and Lord, we will be saved. That is, we will be forgiven of our sin, reconciled to God, and destined for eternal joy in the presence of our Savior. That's why the gospel is of first importance. It is the only message that can save.

So what is the gospel? What is this message, this good news, that is the only message that saves? That is what Paul outlines in three simple points.

- I. Christ Died for Our Sins
 - a. Note first this gospel is in accordance with the Scriptures. In other words, God has revealed the gospel to us in the pages of holy Scripture. When we seek the answer to the most important question in life, the truth of first importance, we find it in the revealed word of God.
 - i. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Tim 3:15 – the sacred writings are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
 - ii. Salvation can only be found through faith in Christ, and that truth can only be found in Scripture.
 - b. The first point of the gospel though is that Christ died for our sins.
 - c. Christ died is merely and simply an historical fact. The man called Christ died. If that is only a point of history, there's no gospel in that. All men die. Which means the next three words make all the difference in the world. If the death of Christ holds a meaning that no other death holds, then there is a message there, a message of first importance.
 - d. He died for our sins – so the historical fact of his death is full of theological truth and significance and meaning. You see, you can learn of his death in the history books, but you learn of its meaning in the Bible. He died for our sins.
 - e. That statement of saving truth is what the Lord's Supper visualizes. The Lord's Supper unfolds for us how His death is for our sins. By His death, He becomes our substitutionary sacrifice as payment for our sins. His death is more than an example; it is an atonement. By His

death He removes the one thing that keeps us from God and condemns us to eternal judgment – our sins that we have committed against God. Christ died – for our sins.

- f. When the baptismal candidate is lowered into the water, he/she visualizes the death of Christ.

II. Christ was Buried

- a. We usually don't mention His burial in our gospel presentations. We speak of His life, death, and resurrection. Paul says the second point of the most important message is that Christ was buried. I believe he does so for two reasons.
- b. First, if He was buried, He did actually die. You bury dead men. Christ really gave up His life on the cross.
- c. That explains why the disciples were so distraught and frightened and went and hid. Jesus was actually dead. The Savior's body was lifeless. This can't be – but it is.
- d. That explains why the Pharisees convinced Pilate to put a guard on the tomb. They had heard His claim to rise on the third day and they said the disciples will come and steal the body and claim He has risen and that will cause more trouble than His teachings!
- e. Even His burial was in accordance with Scripture. Isaiah 53:9 prophesied He would be killed as if He were a wicked man but His grace would be as a rich man. And in Matthew 27 that's exactly what happened.
- f. Christ was buried. He really died. Now if the fact of His death is indeed a fact, He was buried, then the meaning of the death of Christ is just as true – Christ – not just any man, but Christ – died for our sins. He really paid for them. He died in my place. He died my death. He paid the price for my sin.
- g. When the baptismal candidate is completely submerged in the water, he/she portrays that Christ was buried.
- h. Second, if He was buried, meaning He actually died. Then if you see Him again that means He actually rose from the dead.

III. Christ was Raised on the Third Day

- a. The third and final point is that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. The resurrection of Christ proves

that He was who He said He was – the Christ. It proves that what He says is true – He did rise on the third day. And it proves that His death really meant what the Bible says it means – for our sins. God the Father accepted the perfect sacrifice of the Son.

- b. The resurrection of Christ is just as historically true as the death of Christ. That's what Paul argues in the remainder of ch15. The resurrection actually happened. V17, v19. But He did rise? How do know Paul? V6. Dead men don't appear to 500 hundred men at one time!
- c. Oh those Pharisees did all they could to hold Jesus in that tomb. They set a guard. They rolled a great stone over the entrance. They put a Roman seal on it daring anyone to touch it. But He wasn't taken from without – He rose from within that tomb! If death couldn't keep Him and the grace couldn't hold Him, there's no way man could stop Him!
- d. He rose! And that means life everlasting, life beyond death, is truly found in Him.
- e. When the baptismal candidate is brought forth out of the water, he/she portrays the resurrection of Christ.

Conclusion – Baptism – a three point sermon. The one who is being baptized is announcing to every witness, I place my trust, my life, my hope, my sins in the One who died, who was buried, and who rose again. Jesus is my Savior and Lord.

How about you today? You've seen the gospel portrayed. And you've heard the gospel proclaimed. Jesus is the only way and your only hope of salvation. Trust Him today. Give your life to Him today – and be saved!

And then for those who have made a profession of faith in Christ – are you holding fast to Him or did you believe in vain?