

Romans 6:1-4

A Disciple is Biblically Baptized

This is the third sermon in a mini-series on discipleship

- What it means to be a follower of Christ

I think we would all agree that it would be Biblically impossible to say, “I follow Christ” while never making that known

- Right?

For example, what would I be saying if I never told anyone about my wife?

- Never mentioned our anniversary
- Never mentioned our plans

As we look at the New Testament, the normal way of identifying with Jesus Christ was through water baptism

- It seems like a rather strange way of marking our association, doesn't it?

After all, what does being dunked in water have to do with the Gospel?

- A lot, as a matter of fact

This is what I want to talk about this morning

- The subject of water baptism
- Specifically, the importance of water baptism

In the Great Commission, Jesus said these words, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**” (Mt 28:18-20)

- Right there, we have the clear affirmation that Jesus wants His disciples (followers, learners, believers) to be baptized

As we read the book of Acts, what do we find believers doing soon after they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

- They are baptized

There are two baptisms spoken of in the NT

- Water baptism
- Spirit baptism

Spirit baptism has nothing to do with speaking in tongues, seeing visions, or anything like that

- Spirit baptism is a one-time act wherein God places a believer into the body of Christ
- It is a one-time spiritual transfer from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light

This morning, we are not talking about Spirit baptism

- We are talking about water baptism

Like Spirit baptism, however, water baptism is a one-time act

- Not of placing us into the body of Christ (that happens immediately at conversion)
- But of openly identifying and associating ourselves with the risen Lord

In no way does water baptism save anyone

- It never has
- It never will

Baptism is always after a person professes Christ

- That is why we call it “believer’s baptism”

We reject the practice of infant baptism

- Infants can’t believe
- Therefore, they shouldn’t be baptized

We reject baptismal regeneration

- The belief that baptism has some part in the salvation of a believer

So why do we stress water baptism?

- Because believers are commanded to obey the call to be baptized (identification, association)
- Because Jesus Himself was baptized (to follow His example)

If you are here as a believer and you have not yet been baptized, then you are walking in disobedience

- Your first step of obedience is to identify with Christ through water baptism

I don’t know of a better text that deals with the importance of water baptism than Romans 6

- Please turn there

We must keep the theme of this epistle in the forefront of our thinking

- It is found in Romans 1:16-17, “**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. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith’**”

After giving the theme of the epistle, the apostle immediately transitions to the first major division of Romans – **condemnation** (1:18-3:20)

- We learn very quickly that our sin has separated us from holy God

Romans 3:21-5:21 has discussed the realities and ramifications of **justification**

- Sinners have been declared righteous
- Not made righteous (that is in heaven)

Beginning in Romans 6, Paul then addresses the topic of **sanctification**

- The ongoing process whereby we become more like Christ
- The continual process whereby we are changed to be more righteous in our conduct

Right at the outset of this major section, the apostle deals with the importance of identifying with the Lord Jesus Christ

Let’s read Romans 6:1-4

This text highlights two statements about the importance of

- An absurd proposition (6:1-2)
- An amazing parallel (6:3-4)

I. An amazing proposition (6:1-2)

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

The very first part of this section on sanctification begins with an objection

- Paul is careful to head off any potential misunderstandings of the relationship between justification and sanctification

One very real misunderstanding was discussed at the end of Romans 5

- Romans 5:20 contains these wonderful reassuring words, “**And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more**”

Justified believers can be assured that God’s grace abounds even more over sin

- We never need to fear that a certain sin will “trump” God’s grace

But the dangerous line of thinking goes something like this, “If God’s grace is manifested in my sin, then I need to sin as much as possible!”

- The extreme view of this thinking would actually say that it is imperative that believers pursue a lifestyle of sin
- That way, we are assured that God’s grace – and His glory – would be manifested more in our lives

Is that right thinking?

- Will God be more glorified when we sin more?
- Or will God be more glorified when we sin less?

We may scoff at this line of reasoning

- But it is a very real temptation for those who misunderstand the nature of grace

In the book of Jude, the author tells us, “**For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ**” (Jude 4, emphasis mine)

- Instead of licentiousness, other versions have immorality, lewdness, or sensuality
- Clearly, these individuals were not pursuing holiness

One person who clearly misunderstood the nature of sovereign grace was Rasputin, a Russian monk

- He taught that those who sin the most need the most forgiveness
- A sinner who continues to sin with intensity and repents enjoys more of God’s grace than an “ordinary” sinner¹

Clearly, there is something wrong with a sinner who wants and enjoys sinning so much

- Our hearts should be broken over sin
- We should not long to delve deeper and deeper into sin

Paul will discuss the answer to this question in the first fourteen (14) verses of the chapter

- He doesn’t give just a petty answer
- He takes the time to deal with the realities involved

¹ Alan J. Johnson, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Romans*, 110.

Justified believers cannot “**continue in sin**”

- The thought is of remaining or abiding
- It was used of a person abiding in someone’s home as a guest

Paul categorically denies that a believer can merely “live in sin” as if tolerating a guest in one’s home

The apostle avoids two extreme views of sanctification

- On the one side is antinomianism – the absence of rules or law; live however you want
- On the other side is legalism – the complete dependence on rules or law

In Romans 6:1, Paul addresses the first extreme

- Believers cannot sin with reckless abandon

In other Scripture texts, Paul addresses the second extreme

- There are those who think that being godly is maintained by a set of rules, guidelines, and lists

Paul has a wonderful alternative to antinomianism or legalism²

- It is referred to as the Spirit-filled life
- The apostle will highlight this in chapters 6-8

He wanted Christians to become dependent upon the Spirit of God

- Not himself
- Not the Law
- Not some outside list of rules

2 May it never be!

How does Paul respond to the opening objection that someone could remain in sin so that grace might increase?

- The New American Standard Version records the answer, “**May it never be!**”

Some of the other English versions capture the thought differently, but with the same intent

- “**By no means!**” (ESV, NIV)
- “**God forbid**” (KJV)
- “**Certainly not!**” (NKJV)

Paul is absolutely, categorically against any such thinking

- Paul’s response here in verse 2 is the strongest way to say, “No!” in the Greek language

It would be similar to some popular English idioms

- No way, Jose!
- Absolutely not!

The very thought that a believer would “live it up” so that God’s grace would be manifested was absurd to Paul

- That is the wrong mindset for a believer to have

² F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Romans*, 128.

How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul asks a simple, but direct, question to counter this false thinking, “**How shall we who died to sin still live in it?**”

- Although it is a question, this sentence is loaded with theological truth
- This question is really the answer to the confounded teaching of antinomianism addressed in verse 1

The obvious contrast is between those who have “**died to sin**” and those who “**still live in it**”

- Two polar opposites

Believers are said to have “**died to sin**”

- Sin no longer has dominion over them
- Christians are no longer under the power and sway of sin

The Text does not say that sin has died to the believer

- The Text says that the believer has died to sin³

Sin is very much alive and well, even to the believer

- The difference is that the believer does not have to obey the impulses of the sin nature

Before Christ, we were dead in sin (Eph 2:1)

- Now, we are dead to sin⁴

Physical death is separation between a person’s body and spirit

- Our loved ones who have physically died are separated from us

Unbelievers, however, “**still live in (sin)**”

- Sin is in dominion over them
- The unconverted are under the power and sway of sin
- They are slaves to sin

The language of living in sin is very similar to continuing in sin of verse 1

- Both indicate the idea of remaining in a close association with sin

The apostle reasons that it is impossible for a born-again, justified believer to “**continue in sin**”

- The word “**continue**” has the connotation of perseverance or persistence

The Bible is clear that believers will sin

- Salvation doesn’t cause you to stop sinning

But the Bible is equally clear that a born-again believer cannot remain in a pattern or habit of sin

- That is what verse 1 insinuates
- To remain in a pattern of sin to cause God’s grace to be manifested

The apostle John writes these words in his first epistle, “**No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God**” (1 John 3:9)

- You have to understand that John is using present tense verbs
- Otherwise, you have the Bible teaching that believers never sin

³ Mounce, 149.

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 245.

But the apostle John is very clear in what he writes⁵

- No believer is able to “live in sin” as a habit of life
- It will be the exception, not the rule

So right here, out of the gate, the apostle Paul is beginning to unmask certain misunderstandings about sanctification

- A believer cannot remain in a state of constant sinfulness
- A believer should not sin more so as to manifest God’s grace

We have to realize that sanctification frees us from sin

- It doesn’t oblige us to sin

Said another way, sanctification should cause us to sin less

- Not sin more

Paul has given one of the two introductory components to this big topic of sanctification

- An absurd proposition (6:1-2)

Verses 3-4 contain the second component...

II. An amazing parallel (6:3-4)

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

The opening words of verse 3 are a bit of a rebuke, “**Or do you not know...**”

- The verb that Paul uses could be literally translated as, “**Are you ignorant...**”

Paul is not saying that the Roman believers lack knowledge

- He is not being derogatory by calling them, “**ignorant**”
- The apostle is simply appealing to common knowledge that should be self-explanatory

Paul did not found the Roman church

- Neither were they taught by the apostle
- As a matter of fact, he had never been there before

So how could he appeal to common knowledge with these believers?

- In some way, he knew that that they knew the basics of which he spoke

In other words, what Paul is about to explain is not earth-shattering or new to these believers

- It was something that they had been taught before

It concerns me greatly when I hear someone say, “I don’t think anyone has ever thought of this before.”

- **In other words, 2000+ years of Christianity has not unveiled a particular interpretation**

There may be a bit of Divine illumination when the Word is taught

- In that case, you may have never thought of something in that light

⁵ John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 1-8*, 317.

But that is far different than the speaker trying to find something “new” or “deeper” that has never been discovered before

- That is not my goal as a teacher
- Neither was it Paul’s

The apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:13, “**And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder**”

- The apostle Peter realized that “**reminder**” was a very effective manner of teaching

Paul didn’t try to “wow” the Roman Christians with information they had never heard before

- Rather, he reminds them of information that they already had in their possession

All of us are guilty of knowing certain information, yet failing to act upon that knowledge

- James tells us to be doers of the Word, not just hearers

The common knowledge that Paul expected his hearers to know was, “**all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death**”

I think one of the first questions that you are asking is, “Of what baptism is Paul speaking?”

- Water baptism?
- Spirit baptism?

The apostle Paul does speak of another baptism in 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; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea**”

- The Israelites were not literally baptized into Moses
- So what did Paul have in mind?

The Israelites were identified with Moses⁶

- He was their spokesman and leader
- They were under his authority

It could be that Paul has this in mind in Romans 6

- Christians are no longer identified with sin, but Christ
- Believers no longer submit to sin, but to Christ

It is easy to see that whatever view of baptism Paul has in mind, it must contain three elements

- Christ’s death (6:3b)
- Christ’s burial (6:4a)
- Christ’s resurrection (6:4b)

This, my friend, is the Gospel!

- The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

The apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15, “**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures**” (15:3-4)

⁶ MacArthur, 320.

Those who have been “baptized into Christ Jesus” have also been “baptized into His death”

- Same Greek word for “baptized”
- Same Greek preposition for “into”

Spirit baptism is the one-time act whereby, at the moment of saving faith, the believer is placed into the Body of Christ

- But this event does not fully portray the essence of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ

Water baptism, however, does portray the three elements described here

- Water baptism is a wonderful picture or snapshot of the Gospel

I am not saying that water baptism saves

- Baptismal regeneration is a heresy that is based on human works instead of Divine grace

But water baptism does illustrate the basic elements of the Gospel

- Christ’s death – we go down into the water, symbolizing our death to the old way of living
- Christ’s burial – we go into the water by immersion, symbolizing our burial with Christ
- Christ’s resurrection – we arise out from the water, symbolizing the new sphere of life as a believer

Please here me out

- Being baptized does not justify you

If you are an unbeliever and you are baptized, all it does it make you a wet sinner

- It accomplishes nothing from a justification standpoint

Water baptism is actually the first act of obedience for a believer

- It should be a natural step of trusting Christ to enter into the baptismal waters soon after conversion

The apostle Paul seems to reference the water baptism of these Roman believers

- This is the common knowledge of which he spoke
- He wants them to remember this event in their minds

Paul is saying, in essence, “Have you forgotten what your water baptism symbolized? Do you not realize the important picture that is gives of the Gospel?”

- Obviously, some believers had forgotten this significance

But in pointing these Roman believers back to their baptism, what else would Paul be highlighting?

- Their conversion!
- The time when they expressed faith in the Christ for forgiveness of sins

Water baptism is the outward expression of an inward change

- It points to a greater reality outside of itself

Here in America, water baptism is not viewed as being that significant

- We emphasize that it cannot save you
- Therefore, it tends to be minimized

But the early Christians – and even some Christians today in other countries – treated baptism very highly⁷

- They understood that being baptized was an outward call of allegiance

⁷ William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse-by-Verse*, 204.

Sometimes, it marked them as candidates for persecution

- They were daring to follow Christ and turn away from the world and their old ways

There is such a strong relationship between Christ and His followers that Paul can say that they “**have been baptized into His death**”

- When Christ died on the cross, so did they
- Their old sin nature was put to death on the cross

The reason that any of us is a Christian is due entirely to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died

- Apart from His death, we would not have life

This is why Paul can affirm the truth of Galatians 2:20, “**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.**”

- “**I have been crucified with Christ**” – even though Paul’s conversion was many years after Christ’s death
- “**it is no longer I who live**” – Paul’s old sin nature was put to death; the power of sin broken
- “**the life which I now live**” – obviously a reference to Paul’s newfound new in Christ

This truth is affirmed also by Colossians 3:1-3, “**If then 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. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**”

- What a phrase, “**your life is hidden with Christ**”!

Not only are believers identified with the death of Christ

- Look at verse 4

4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death.

We have discussed the death of Christ and our subsequent death to sin

- Next up for discussion is Jesus’ burial
- We find that in verse 4

Paul writes, “**Therefore we have been buried with Him**”

- Once again, notice the strong union and relationship that exists between Christ and His followers
- When Christ was buried, so were we

Why does Paul focus on our burial with Christ?

- What is the significance?

Burial is the realization that someone has indeed died

- It is the proof and confirmation of death

How do we know that Christ died physically?

- He was buried!

How do we know that we died to our old sin nature?

- We were buried with Christ

Once again, water baptism illustrates this truth

- It points to the Gospel
- It reminds us of our conversion!

in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father,

The death and burial of Jesus Christ have been discussed

- But there remains the final element, which is one of victory and rejoicing!

Christ didn't remain dead in the grave

- On the third day, just as He promised, He arose from the dead!
- He proved Himself victorious over death, hell, and the grave

Paul tells us that “**Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father**”

- The Text does not say, “through the *power* of the Father”
- But “**through the *glory* of the Father**” (italics mine)

God's glory was manifested supremely in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

- Ephesians 1-2 tells us that that same power is operative in the lives of every born-again believer
- It took the very power of God to raise us from spiritual death

so we too might walk in newness of life.

Christ's death and burial have effects in the lives of believers

- And so it is with His resurrection

Bill Gaither may have penned the words to the song, “Because He Lives”

- But friend, that truth has been proclaimed for centuries!

Jesus' resurrection has a very real effect in the lives of His followers

- The last phrase of verse 4 says, “**so we too might walk in newness of life**”

Think about this, dear friend

- We have resurrection power available to us!

We are not the same people we were before conversion

- We may look the same from an external perspective
- But inside, we have been transformed!

Throughout Scripture, the verb “**walk**” signifies a way of life

- It is used to describe the pattern or habit of one's life

What word did Paul use to describe the new lifestyle of the believer?

- He uses the word “**newness**”

Even in the English language, we can see that the Christian life is not just a modification of the old life

- The “**new**” life is contrasted with the old, sinful lifestyle

But the specific Greek word that Paul uses helps us even more

- The word denotes that which is a new quality of living
- Obviously, it is life as a believer, with the Holy Spirit indwelling every Christian

Before Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1)

- Now, we are described as being “**in Christ**”

The resurrection of Christ was not merely resuscitation

- It was a new form of life⁸

Likewise, the believer has not just modified externals or behavior

- He has had his very nature changed at the deepest level

The caterpillar has become a butterfly!

- Transformation has taken place!

The theologian Charles Hodge has written these powerful words,

- “There can be no participation in Christ’s life without a participation in his death,
- and we cannot enjoy the benefits of his death unless we are partakers of the power of his life.
- We must be reconciled to God in order to be holy, and we cannot be reconciled without thereby becoming holy”⁹

You can’t claim to have “**newness of life**” unless you have first “**died with Christ**”

- You can’t live for Him until you have died with Him

This morning, every one of us could be classified as being in two groups

- Those who are alive in sin and dead to Christ
- Those who are dead to sin and alive to Christ

Which group are you in?

The only way for you to be spiritually alive is by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ

- His death, burial, and resurrection is the essence of the Gospel, the good news of salvation

For those of us who have embraced Christ, have you identified with Him in believer’s baptism?

- If not, why not?

What does baptism do for the believer?¹⁰

- It openly identifies you as a follower of Christ
- It openly obeys the command of Christ
- It expresses many truths about the faith
 - o God is Triune
 - o My sins have been washed away
 - o I have been united with Christ in His death and resurrection
 - o Through Christ, God has given me a new life

⁸ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, . *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (2:462).

⁹ MacArthur, 322.

¹⁰ 32-39.

What are some reasons people give for not being baptized?

- Fear
 - o Fear of water
 - o Fear of being ostracized by family and friends
- Embarrassment
 - o “What will people think when they see that I have waited so long?”
 - o The problem is that you are only waiting longer if you postpone this act of obedience!
- Lack of understanding
 - o Some people go to the extreme of saying, “Baptism doesn’t save you,” that they forget that it is still a command to be baptized

When I married Sarah 13 years ago, I not only gave my vow

- I was given a physical token of remembrance of that day
- My wedding ring

When I look down at my ring, what does it remind me of?

- The day that I said, “I do.”

Does putting on a wedding ring make me married?

- No

But for those of us who are married, the ring is a reminder

- It is a symbol of our love

Baptism achieves that very purpose

- It is a symbol, pointing to a greater reality

Baptism reminds us of the Gospel

- The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Why would you not want to identify with Him?

- Why would you not want to identify with the Gospel?