

Remember Your Baptism!

Romans 6:1-4

© 2017 Daniel R. Hyde

ALLELUIA! Christ is *still* risen! Amen? What a beautiful opportunity to continue thinking of Jesus' resurrection with the baptism of little Calvin? Baptism always brings us back to the gospel or good news of God himself that he saves sinners like us through Jesus Christ. And so baptism is the promise of God's word in a visible form, as St. Augustine said.

Look at how Paul says that. Right before this text Paul speaks of God giving "the law to ancient Israel "to increase the trespass," that is, not only to expose their sins but to exasperate their sins. But then he says, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20). In the context Paul is saying that the great news of our being justified or declared righteous and acceptable to God because of Jesus Christ is that you cannot out sin grace. Children, sometimes when your brother or sister says something, you repeat them. They say something again, and then you repeat them again. This goes on and on until they finally give up because you've out-repeated them! But you cannot out sin God so that he gives up and you win!

And our sin nature tries to take advantage of us. We *think* the more we sin, the more grace we'll receive: **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** (v. 1) These are the same types of people Jude described as “pervert[ing] the grace of our God into sensuality and deny[ing] our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4). Peter described them as us: “live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Peter 1:16).

Like Peter, Paul is here challenging us as believers on to live new lives of godliness because God has severed our relationship with sin and given us a new relationship with him: **How can we who died to sin still live in it?** (v. 2) To illustrate this, Paul points us to our baptism. This morning I want you to *remember your baptism*.

Remember Daily the Sign of Baptism

God says to you and me today, *remember daily the sign of baptism*. Isn't it interesting here that when Paul wanted to refute this false teaching we here or temptation we feel that **we should continue in sin that grace may abound** (v. 1), he points us to our baptism? In fact, this pervades the New Testament. John came baptizing people in preparation for the Lord's coming. When the Lord arrived, even he underwent baptism to identify with sinners.

Before he returned to glory he commanded his disciples to go into the world baptizing and teaching. All throughout Acts we read of conversions and baptisms—the three thousand on Pentecost and Cornelius, for example.

Let demonstrate this to you like this. I'll give you a scenario and you tell me how the New Testament answers. Two members of our congregation have a legal dispute with another and they come to you for advice or else it's going to court. What do you say? Would you tell them that their going before unbelievers who cannot inherit God's kingdom but that "such were some of you. But you were washed?" That's what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6. We're all tempted with idolatry, especially serving ourselves; we're all tempted by sexual immorality; we're all tempted to grumble against one another but especially to the Lord. What advice would you give me as your pastor on how to counsel people in these situations? Would you point me to 1 Corinthians 10 where Paul says "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, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from that spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ?" In our congregation we have people with white skin representing all kinds of European heritages; we have people with black

skin, brown skin, yellow skin, and everything in between, representing many ethnicities and cultures. We are bound to have friction and tension; we are bound to offend each other. What can we do? “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized in Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). *Remember daily the sign of baptism* in all these practical scenarios.

Martin Luther wrote of our entire Christian life as “nothing else than an ongoing daily Baptism, once begun and always continuing.” Baptism is the outward beginning of our life in fellowship with Christ and his church and it is also the continuing metaphor of our lives. He also described baptism as the greatest jewel with which to adorn our bodies and souls, as well as our daily garment to be worn (*Large Catechism*). Remember the jewel you wear! Remember the spiritual clothes you wear!

This is also important for our assurance of salvation. A while back I read a local Christian college professor’s answer to the following question: “How can I know I’m a Christian if I can’t remember when I first responded to the gospel?” The professor distinguished the Revivalist answer that emphasizes the need for personal appropriation of the gospel by faith from the Reformed answer that focuses on churchly reception by baptism and

confirmation. Here was his answer:

For those who question their salvation, the best evidence is not the memory of having raised a hand or prayed a prayer. Nor is it having been baptized or christened. The true test of the authentic work of God in one's life is growth in Christ-like character, increased love for God and other people, and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–25; James 2:18).¹

In seeming to lead his reader between subjectivism and objectivism, the professor ended up giving a subjective, introspective answer: look to your fruits! Of course our fruits testify of God's grace in our lives; but that is precisely the problem for so many of us who struggle with assurance.

Remember daily the sign of baptism is not ritualistic religion without the necessity of being born again and appropriating Christ for ourselves; *it is my personal embrace that I have been born again: "Do you openly accept God's covenant promise, which has been signified and sealed unto you in your baptism"?* And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

Remember the Deep Significance of Baptism

God is also saying to you and me today, *remember the deep significance of baptism*. It's not the water, which is the sign, but the promise of God, which is the thing signified that is the precious jewel around our necks.

Luther said again, "Clearly the water does not [forgive], but the Word of

¹ Cited at http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/december/29_56.html (Accessed December 26, 2007).

God...for without the Word of God the water is plain water and not a baptism, but with the Word of God it is a baptism” (*Small Catechism*).

And in our text Paul responds to the question, **are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** (v. 1) His answer was absolute: **by no means!** (v. 2) Not in a thousand years! Remember, he’s showing us through the window of our baptism that there is an intimate connection between our being justified apart from the law and our living in service to God. That inter-connectedness is like a hand made quilt. You can see that there are two different colors of yarn in it. But they’re so closely connected that it’s a seamless tapestry. Our salvation in Christ is one; if we have him, we have everything. Yet we distinguish aspects of his work such as justification and sanctification.

Why **are we not to continue in sin that grace may abound?** (v. 1) Because the first deep significance of our baptism is that *we died to sin*: **How can we who died to sin still live in it?** (v. 2) Sin is personified as a slave-owning taskmaster; we are its slaves. But we died to that owner. Isn’t it interesting that he doesn’t say it died, but **we...died**? This means we are no longer under personified sin’s authority. Practically, when you’re tempted to sin you have to say to yourself, “I died; you’re dead to me sin!”

Then he says in more detail: **Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death** (vv. 3-4a). You were not baptized into sin, but into Christ. This is a way of saying you are now under his authority, not your own, not your sin's, and certainly not the devil's. With body and soul, in life and in death, you belong to Jesus Christ! Let me illustrate. All of us natural born American citizens have never had to affirm the oath of naturalization, but when someone comes here and desires citizenship, here is what they have to declare (in part):

...I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law...so help me God.

Why are we *not* to continue in sin that grace may abound? (v. 1)

Because the second deep significance of our baptism is that *we rose to life*.

Notice the ironic play on words: **How can we who died...live?** (v. 2) We died, yet we live! We died to sin's slavery; we live to Christ's Lordship! Paul continues: **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** (v. 4b). Think

of Jesus' friend Lazarus. He was truly dead. His body lay bound in up burial cloths. But then all of a sudden his body resurrected and he came out of the tomb to see his friend Jesus once again! That's us when we died to sin and rose with Christ!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth and followed Thee. ("And Can It Be")

Remember daily the sign of baptism and remember the deep significance of baptism that you died and rose to new life. And lest we're tempted to think, "I was baptized way back when, I'm good to go spiritually," the very act of remembering is believing. Paul is using baptism as the tangible illustration here of our dying and rising in Christ. He's not negating all that he's said in the previous three chapters about God declaring us righteous by faith apart from works. Baptism is the outward means God uses to portray what it looks like to be saved by faith. So as I said, baptism always brings us back to the good news that God saves sinners like us through Jesus Christ.

What great news! What a great God! Let's remember! Let us go out and live! Amen.