

“Treating Baptism With Holy Reverence”

Romans 6:3-5

(Preached at Trinity, July 23, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Charles Spurgeon was the greatest preacher of the 19th Century. Even today, he is referred to as the Prince of Preachers and his influence is still felt. A major controversy developed in the 1880's that became known as the Downgrade Controversy. Spurgeon used the term “downgrade” to describe how many in his day had “downgraded” the Bible and the principle of sola scriptura.
2. Christians must always be on the alert against downgrade—downgrade in the authority of Scripture, downgrade in God's demand for holiness, downgrade in sound doctrine, downgrade in the centrality of Christ.
3. We've witnessed over the last half-century a downgrade in many aspects of Christianity. One of the terrible and fearful downgrades of present day Christianity is the downgrade of reverence towards God. Few have any concept of God's holiness. It is reflected in every area of life. Sadly, it is also affected in how we approach Him in worship.
4. Worship services in many circles are more about man than God. We want the music WE like, the preaching WE like. When people enter into the sanctuary there is little sense that we have entered into the realm of the holy.
5. This is one reason the Puritans held so tenaciously to the doctrine of the Regulative Principal of Worship—that God determines the manner in which He will be worshipped and the essential elements of worship.
6. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two of the elements of worship. Our Confession (LBC 28:1) states: “Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only Lawgiver, to be continued in His church to the end of the world.”
7. This morning we will be observing the sacrament of Baptism. It is a solemn occasion, an act of worship that we must treat with holy reverence. God considers our two ordinances as having great importance. In the early church some had lost reverence for the Lord's Supper. They were beginning to treat it as a common observance. Paul gives solemn warning:
1 Corinthians 11:22 NAU - "What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."
1 Corinthians 11:27-30 NAU - "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep."

8. For this reason, our church takes the ordinance of the Lord's Supper very seriously, even at risk of occasionally offending people in our observance.
9. We also take baptism very seriously because God takes it very seriously. He will be the focus and He alone will receive all the glory. Baptism is a display of what He has done. We have visitors among us this morning who have come to celebrate the ordinance of Baptism with us. But please be mindful. What we will witness this morning is not about Dillon. There must be a single focus this morning. If Christ does not overshadow the observance we can be guilty of losing the sense of reverence that the sacrament demands.
10. This morning I'd like to spend a few minutes describing the meaning of Baptism. May God bless us as we prepare our hearts to share in this act of worship.

I. Baptism is an ordinance of the local church

A. An ordinance is an order, a decree or command

1. Jesus Christ instituted the ordinance after the resurrection—He charged His disciples to baptize those who were made disciples.
Matthew 28:19-20 NAU - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
2. The Great Commission displays the order of discipleship
We preach the Gospel to the nations and disciples are made. They are then baptized through the ministry of the local church and then disciplined, or taught the doctrines of Christ.
3. The New Testament church is made up of baptized believers who give evidence of regeneration by their faith and repentance.

B. New believers are baptized by the command of Christ

1. It is an act of obedience both by the local church and the individual baptized
2. It is the first public display of obedience for the new disciple
3. The local church is also under Divine mandate.

II. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ

A. This union is an essential element of God's eternal plan of redemption for His elect

1. The Father sent forth His Son that we might be reconciled to Him. This is only possible through our union with Christ in His work of redemption.
2. John Murray – "The fountain of salvation itself in the eternal election of the Father is 'in Christ.'" The Father elected from all eternity, but He elected in Christ. We are not able to understand all that is involved, but the fact is plain enough that there was no election of the Father in eternity apart from Christ. And that means that those who will be saved were not even contemplated by the Father in the ultimate counsel of His predestinating love apart from union with Christ—they were *chosen* in Christ. As far back as we can go in tracing salvation to its fountain we find 'union with Christ'; it is not something tacked on; it is there from the onset."¹

¹ Murray, John, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955)

3. Salvation brings us into a position, a union, a relationship with Christ. Union with Christ is the wellspring from which flows every Christian blessing.

B. Baptism is a visual display of our union with Christ

Romans 6:4-5 NAU - "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,"

Colossians 2:12 NAU - "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

1. Our Confession (LBC 29:7) – “Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with Him, in His death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into Him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.”
2. When Jesus died we died with Him. We participated in His death. His death has become our death. In other words, our sin has brought us under God’s condemnation—under the charge of death. At the cross, Jesus suffered in our stead. His substitutionary sacrifice has atoned for our sin.

Romans 6:4 NAU - "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death

 - a. *Going under the waters of baptism symbolize this death*
"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death"
 - b. In Christ we have died to sin and self. Sin no longer reigns over us.
3. When Jesus was raised from the dead we were raised with Him; His resurrection is the surety of our resurrection. His life is our life, in which we have been raised unto holiness.

Coming up from our immersion under the waters we symbolize our union with Christ in His life.

Romans 6:4-5 NAU - "so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:8-11 NAU - "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

4. The fruit of this union is victory over sin. Sin will not reign over us. We are united to Christ in His holiness. Baptism is the outward symbol of the inward washing of the Holy Spirit
Titus 3:4-6 NAU - "But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,"
Romans 6:12-14 NAU - "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

III. Baptism displays our union with one another

- A. Baptism is a corporate ordinance – always done in the presence of the body.
1. Baptism is a part of Christian worship. Although a single individual is being baptized we are all sharing in the event
 2. We are observing and remembering our own union with Christ. This is why we must guard our heart against focusing on the individual. It is all about Christ and His saving grace.
- B. Baptism displays the unity of the body of Christ
Ephesians 4:1-6 NAU - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*"
1. **Charles Hodge** writes: "Under the *New Covenant* the baptized are men bound together in covenant with Christ and with each other. There is but one baptism. All the baptized make the same profession, accept the same covenant, and are consecrated to the same Lord and Redeemer. They are therefore one body."
 2. Baptism testifies to the unity of those joined to Christ. This one baptism must be for believers alone – those who are a part of the New Covenant.
 - a. Baptism is the outward testimony of our faith, the same faith shared by all who are share in the union of Christ.
 - b. It is the outward expression of the inward work of the Holy Spirit. It is an experience shared by all who profess Christ
1 Corinthians 12:13 NAU - "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

3. There is a unity in the church ordinances. We share together at the Lord's Table. We also share together in baptism. As each new convert is baptized we all participate in their baptism.

IV. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of grace

- A. What is meant by the expression, "Means of Grace"
 1. On the surface it may seem like a contradiction
Grace cannot come by action or merit
 2. The very definition of grace is God giving His blessings to sinners completely apart from any personal virtue or action on the part of the sinner.
 3. To discuss a means of grace seems contrary to this definition
- B. There is no contradiction if you understand the nature of second causes. Although God is sovereign over all of His creation, working all things according to His good pleasure He often works through the use of means or second causes.
 1. God is also sovereign over the second causes
 2. For example, God ordained that Christ would die on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners. He also ordained the actions of Judas Iscariot in betraying Christ. He also ordained the actions of Caiaphas and the Council as well as the actions of Pontius Pilate. All of these were the means God used in carrying out His purpose
 3. When we refer to "means of grace" we are speaking specifically of those institutions God has ordained as ordinary channels of grace—especially the means used for the salvation of the elect.
For example the Word of God is a means of grace. It isn't the Word that saves but it is used as the indispensable means of God's saving grace.
1 Corinthians 1:21 NAU - "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."
Romans 10:17 NAU - "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."
- C. God uses Baptism as a means of strengthening the faith of both the individual believer being baptized as well as the congregation observing
 1. God applies the grace of Baptism as the believer prepares for his baptism, and as he receives his baptism
God also applies the grace of Baptism to the congregation as we look back and remember our baptism
 2. It is not easy to understand or explain fully the grace of God in baptism but a careful study of the Scriptures cannot deny it
G. R. Beasley-Murray— *Baptism in the New Testament* – "We can no more give a complete account of our participation in the resurrection of Christ through baptism than we can give a complete account of our anticipated participation in the resurrection of Christ in the last day."
 3. Baptism is the culmination of the conversion experience. Among other things, it seals and confirms that the individual is now united with Christ. But its effect does not end.

4. Baptism serves as a lifelong reminder of our death in Christ. Sin no longer has dominion over us
 - a. When we by faith follow the Lord in baptism we are saying that we do believe in Christ's atoning death and in His bodily resurrection. We are also saying that having believed the gospel, we have died to our old manner of life. No longer do we serve sin, self, and the world, but we are now alive to Christ. The old self is "buried."
 - b. There is therein an expression of hope and a commitment to the new life in Christ. There is substantial victory over sin now, and full victory when we see Him at His return
5. Every time we witness a baptism we share in this grace. We are reminded of what Christ has done for us. We are united together in this shared experience.

Conclusion:

1. If you are a believer, may this observance of Baptism remind you of your own commitment to Christ. Look back to your baptism. Remember God's grace in joining you to Christ. Remember how you have participated in His death and resurrection. Remember how you have forsaken your sins.
2. If you are an unbeliever this morning, pay close attention to the baptism. Turn your eyes to Christ. Salvation is a forsaking and dying to self. It is being raised with Christ. It is to be cleansed from all sin. Watch this wonderful picture of God's grace. Turn to Christ. You too can be united to Him in all of the benefits of His redeeming grace of salvation if you turn away from your sin and trust Him with all your heart.