

WATER BAPTISM
July 17, 2016 morning service
Romans 6:1-11

Take your Bible this morning and go with me to the book of Romans. We're in chapter 6 and for the next several weeks we're going to be marching through a portion of Romans but we begin today in Romans 6 and begin reading in verse number 1 in just a moment. We're talking about baptism. Next Sunday I'm going to preach from the baptistery. We're going to begin the service with baptism. I'm going to baptize. We're going to be preaching and we're going to invite others to come and be baptized. It's what we're calling Baptism Sunday. We baptize almost every service around here as we did in this service. We're excited about that with that ordinance as God ordained it and gave us that picture and it's that picture we're going to talk about this morning. You see, baptism is not my idea. Baptism was not the church's idea. Baptism was God's idea. Nobody baptized until John baptized Jesus. You don't find it anywhere in the Old Testament. You don't find it administered by another. The only time you find it somewhere else people tried to baptize themselves and we'll speak to that in this message this morning.

Baptism was God's idea. He invented it and He called us to it. Jesus was the first. He was immersed as He walked down in the water with John and John said, "Oh no, I need you to baptize me." Jesus said, "No, I come in submission," and John baptized Jesus. It's one of the first times we find the trinity in the New Testament when the Son was in submission and the Holy Spirit was in descent and the Father was in commendation, "This is My beloved Son." Baptism. Jesus started it and then Jesus commanded it. The Great Commission. We're to go into all the world and make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus did it and then He commanded it. I share with you from time to time. People ask me about burial. They ask me about cremation. They say, "Pastor, can I be cremated?" I say, "Well that's a question you can have. Don't cremate me." I don't want to be cremated. I want to be buried like Jesus and I want to be baptized like Jesus. I think they go together.

There's a picture in those two things and it's that symbol that we're looking at today. Romans 6 speaks of two kinds of baptism. The Spirit baptism and water baptism. We'll talk briefly of the Spirit baptism but today our emphasis is the symbolic act of water baptism. Repent and be baptized. The Bible tells us again and again. Baptism is an act of the church and an act of the believer.

Did you get a worship guide this morning? Look right there on the front of it. I gave you a definition I found this week. I think it's great. It's the first paragraph of that little word that I wrote. Let me encourage you, when you come in on Sunday, read what

I write. I don't write the same thing every week. That's just a little epistle from the pastor to the church. I'm promoting things, speaking things and this morning I start with a portion of this sermon. Look at it. Baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water. That's the church's act and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and His people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking him or her from the world. The church says you're a believer. John asked that young lady. Are you a believer? Yes. So we affirm that this is a believer. Then the person being baptized is affirming that I am marking myself off from the world and I am coming publicly to put on the jersey, the team shirt of the Lord Jesus and His family. Baptism. Romans 6:1.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 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. 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, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.¹

He says in verse 4 that we have been baptized into His death. When you get saved, you are by the Spirit baptized into the body of Christ. It is a spiritual birth. You've been born by the flesh. Then you are born of the Spirit and you are baptized into Christ. He then begins to move into that symbolism telling us that when we are baptized, that we are baptized into His likeness. There is that internal baptism by the Spirit. Then there is the external symbol that we see all through scripture. Just as Jesus was baptized so should we be.

Three things I want you to see about this baptism. Three truths about baptism this morning. Then I'm going to invite you and I'm going to invite and you and you, I'm going to invite you to come believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and I'm going to invite you to come and set a date with me next Sunday morning in this service at 9:30 or 11:00 to join me right there in the baptistery and I will baptize you as you mark yourself off and say, "I'm coming to follow Christ," and the church is affirming that you have said yes unto the Lord Jesus. So in just a few minutes I'm going to ask you to have a seat, walk

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right here to the front, take me by the hand, and say, "Pastor, I'm coming to profess faith in Christ. I'm coming to join this church. I'm coming to be baptized." I'm going to set the date with you next Sunday. Some of you, "Pastor, you know, next week I'm going to be on vacation." That'd be fine. We can do it the following week but next Sunday is an emphasis.

Some of you have been waiting on that and it's now time. It is high time that you walked into the water and made your public profession that you've trusted Christ and Christ alone for your salvation. Let's look at these three truths. First of all is what I call the proclamation of baptism. What is it that baptism preaches? What is it that it proclaims? I believe that it shares with us the three greatest doctrines in scripture. Number one. Baptism symbolizes what I am calling a past redemption, a past redemption. It's what Jesus has done for us in redemption. I Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 and 4 says: *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

You see that He died for us. He was given over for us. He was raised for us. When you turn back one page or two in your Bible to Romans 4 and verse number 25 you find the Bible telling us: *He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.* Hear me. This is the gospel. Jesus dying and rising. That's the gospel and when you are baptized, you are symbolically saying, when I place you under the water, Jesus died. It's as if He's put you in the ground, in the grave, and that you are raised. Jesus was. He died and He was raised. That is the gospel and when you walk into that water, you are looking back at a past redemption. Nothing else can save you save Christ alone. Being baptized is not what saves you. Jesus is who saves you and then as you are put under the water, Jesus died for me. Coming out the water, Jesus rose for me.

I had a young girl in our first little church at New Lebanon Baptist Church, a little country church out north of Birmingham where we were baptizing. In the spring we would baptize in Sportsman's Lake and then in the winter we'd go down the road and we'd borrow the baptistery at Macedonia Baptist Church Number Two. Not number one. That had a fight and split and it was number two. I didn't know anything about that. I just knew Macedonia Number Two was friendly to us and let us use their baptistery. Before I walked in there with that little girl she had a question. "Pastor, how long are you going to hold me under there?" I said, "Well, I don't know. How big a sinner are you?" You're placed under the water for just a moment. Jesus died. If we did it a literal, a literal symbol we'd leave you under there for three days and three nights but it's a symbol. So you're placed under the water and then out of the water.

What does that say? It says I'm looking back at a past redemption when Jesus died and when He rose. Not only do we see the symbolic act of a past redemption, we

see baptism symbolizing a present regeneration. Not only does it look back to what Jesus did, then there is this present regeneration. Look in your text in verse number 4. *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.* Look at verse 6. *Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with.* Look at verse 11. *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

What I'm telling you is when you are baptized you are symbolically saying that, "I have died to my sinful ways and I'm raised to walk in a new way. I've made a change. Jesus has changed me and I am on the line. My name is written down and I've said, 'My life is no longer mine. I have died to myself. I've been saved because of a past redemption. I have moved into a present regeneration where Jesus has saved me.'" I'm telling you, friend, when you get saved, you are different. He changes you from death to life, to a newness of life. No longer slaves to sin but raised to walk in newness, newness, newness of life.

This morning as most every Sunday, three of our deacons come and pray over me. They laid hands on me this morning and one of those deacons said to me, "You know, pastor, I know you're preaching on baptism. I'll never forget the Sunday we came in over in old Passmore Hall and God saved me, saved my wife, saved my daughter all the same Sunday. The following Sunday night we were all three baptized." He said these words, he said, "Pastor, I've never been the same since. Jesus radically changed my life when I came to faith in Christ."

That's what present regeneration is about. It's a past redemption. Jesus died for us. He was raised for us. It's what saves us. That's the gospel but there is a present regeneration and then thirdly there is a third symbol in this proclamation. It proclaims past redemption. It proclaims present regeneration and it symbolizes a future resurrection. Romans 6:5. *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.* When you are placed under the water it says that you one day are going to die and be buried. Everybody in here, if you live long enough, you're going to die. You may get run over by a truck in Istanbul but you're going to die. You may get shot in Baton Rouge, but you're going to die. You may live to be 110 in Pensacola but you're going to die. We're all going to die. Baptism says I'm temporal. Death. But baptism also says there is a future resurrection. I'm going to get up. Up.

Now just let that sink in for a minute. I'm telling you, we talk about this a lot but hear me. There's a day coming when the dead are going to get up. When Jesus arose the Bible says in Matthew 27 that the graves opened and people walked through Jerusalem. Son, I'd like to have been in church the next Sunday. Can you imagine? The preacher got up and all these – "Did ya'll see that? Uncle Joseph came to the

house for dinner.” “What?” “We buried him three years ago and he came walking down Main Street.” That’s just a template of what’s going to happen. It is the gospel.

I’ve got three or four atheists that are now following me on Facebook and Twitter and they send little barbs and little aggravations. I got one yesterday. It was so good. He told me, he said, “I see you say Doctor on the sign.” He said, “You’re not a doctor. Doctors heal people.” I said, “Well you’re right. My daughter said I was the kind of doctor that don’t do nobody no good.” That’s what she told me when she was growing up. He sent me a word yesterday. He won’t sign his name. I always sign mine. He said, “I’m sitting out here.” He said, “You guys have the ugliest building.” He said, “I’m from Europe and they have beautiful cathedrals.” Have you ever noticed all these cathedrals are empty over there? He said, “You must have had the worst architect.” I replied to him and I said, “Well before I was a doctor I was an architect so you can blame it on me. I did it.” I did draw a lot of this building here. I’m not an architect by degree but I drew out some things.

Now if he’s right then it really doesn’t matter. We’ll just all die and go to dirt but if I’m right he’s in trouble, deep trouble. Worse than six feet. He is in abyss trouble and my job is not to make fun of. My job is not to argue. My job is to proclaim a Savior to him or her. That’s my job. I’m here to tell you, I’m going to die but then I’m going to get up. When Nolan baptized me when I was ten years old I wasn’t thinking about dying but I’m telling you, that symbol, one day I was going to die and then one day I’m going to get up. That’s what baptism speaks about, a past redemption, a present regeneration, and a future, bless God, resurrection. When you’re baptized, you’re the preacher. You’re proclaiming – and some of you need to get up right now in a few minutes. Just walk right down here and take me by the hand and say, “Pastor, I’m in. Next Sunday, that’s my day.”

Secondly though, there’s a second truth I want you to see. Not only the proclamation of it but the pattern. The pattern of baptism. Now I’m fixin’ to make some people mad in this room but I didn’t come here to win a popularity contest. You called me to be the pastor and the prophet so let me speak to you. There is a pattern for baptism. Just like God gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle God gave John the Baptist a pattern for baptism. That pattern is three-fold. Number one, it is a pattern of immersion. The only biblical way to be baptized is to be placed under water. Sprinkling doesn’t do it. Pouring doesn’t do it. Touching your forehead does not do it. Immersion, the very word baptism is *baptizo* which means to plunge under. It means to dip. A lot of people in this place have told me, they said, “That’s when they dunked me.” Well that can happen.

Now being baptized will not save you but when you have become a believer, you should be immersed and take your stand and death and resurrection – it is the pattern. The only pattern in the word of God is total immersion. There is no other way to be

baptized in the Bible but by immersion. You ought to be baptized a biblical way. Secondly in the pattern is that you are baptized by another. This is very important. We take this for granted. Not the last time but the time before last that I was in Israel there is a place in the Jordan River where we baptize people. We take people with us and they're baptized. It's the coldest water you'll ever be baptized in. I remember we were getting ready and I saw a group of guys, they were in dark brown or kind of – it wasn't dark, dark brown but just brown robes and I asked. They were a group of monks from somewhere in Russia. They were orthodox. They were out there and they would hold themselves and then they would throw themselves in the water and baptize themselves. I said, "What are they doing?" They guy said, "Well they believe that you baptize yourself." I said, "Well I've never seen it that way before."

In scripture the pattern is that another baptizes you. Now get this. The reason that you are baptized here and you remember it's an act of the church as well as an act of the believer. The baptism is an ordinance not of you, it's an ordinance of the church. Therefore you come to the church. Now it doesn't mean the pastor has to baptize. I don't do all the baptizing. It doesn't even mean a staff member has to do it. We have lay people here from time to time. As a matter of fact, it is of my heart and soul that anybody you lead to faith in Christ, if they want you to baptize them I'm thrilled about that. We're all priests standing before the Lord. It would be fine with me. Many times we've had lay people that would baptize other folks here but you are baptized by another.

I had someone I dealt with in this town one time that said, "Pastor, I want to join your church." I said, "Good. Have you been saved?" They told me yes. I said "Have you been baptized?" They said, "Yeah, I baptized myself in my bathtub." That was their word. They were being serious. They said, "I didn't have a church and so I baptized myself." I said, "Well you've not been baptized." Baptism is not a secret affair. Baptism is a public identification with Christ. It's for any and all to see.

Next year in May, Dr. Tommy Green has asked Florida Baptists – I think it's a genius idea – on a certain Sunday in May he's asked every church in Florida to go to the beaches of Florida and baptize outside and Baptists all the way around the beaches of Florida. He said, "I've been praying that we baptize 3,000 that day, up here in the panhandle and all the way down to Miami and over on the eastern seaboard, that people would go and baptize." You say, "Well it will probably rain." Let me tell you, one of the hardest days I ever baptized was in the Indian Ocean, the south sea off of Australia. I preached there. We had six people to be baptized. One of them was a deacon. He was a deacon in the church but you didn't even have to be baptized to be a deacon in their church. I preached on baptism and he came forward and said, "I want to be baptized." They walked me out into that sea and the swells were over my head. This was as rough a sea as I'd ever seen. Easiest baptism you've ever seen. They had a guy on each side of me to hold me so I didn't get swept out. We walked out there with

a candidate and I just watched. I put my hand up. They held my arm. I'd watch behind them and when the wave got just right – here it would come – and I'd say, "In the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit..." The easiest baptism I've ever seen.

You see, you're baptized by another because the other is the one who comes representing the church and you come representing your change and together it's an ordinance of the church. The pattern is by immersion. The pattern is that it is done by another. The pattern – now don't miss this – the pattern is that it is always post-conversion. You don't get saved when you're baptized. You get baptized after you're saved.

Some of you are sitting in this room today and you were baptized years ago and then after that you marked your salvation and you've never been baptized. You were dunked. You got wet but you don't know what you did. You don't even remember hardly except somebody tells you. You see, after you've been saved, you should be baptized. It's the first way of going public with your conversion. You say, "Pastor, that'll be embarrassing." No, no, no. This church will rejoice with you when you walk in obedience.

Now I argued with myself about this when I was 17. I got saved when I was 10 years old. I remember it. Seventh row back at Vacation Bible School on a Thursday some 51 years ago and I got saved. Then Nolan Ford baptized me at Pisgah Baptist Church the following Sunday night. I remember that. I struggled in discipleship a little bit but every ten-year-old does.

I tell you from time to time as an eight, ten, twelve-year old you're going to have to have an adult reconfirmation to make an adult decision. I'm not telling you that you didn't get saved. You can get saved when you're ten. I did. But when God called me to preach at 17 I struggled. I said, "Well am I really not a Christian?" So is this God just calling me to get saved or is he calling me to preach? I tried to lead myself to the Lord. I got the Bible out and went through the plan of salvation. I asked the question. "Have you done it?" I said, "Yes, sir. I've already done that." I was arguing with myself. I said, "Yeah, I've already done that. I've trusted Him." The Spirit of God said, "I've not called you to get saved. I've called you to proclaim salvation." That was the call of God in my life but some of you have struggled with that and you know that you've never been immersed after you were saved. You've got your baptism out of order and the pattern is salvation, then baptism.

The pattern, by immersion. The pattern, by another. That pattern is after salvation. There's a third truth I want you to see with me today. Not only the proclamation of baptism and the pattern of baptism but then the person. The person of baptism. The question begged is this. Who should be baptized? Hear me and I want you to say these two words with me. Who should be baptized? Every Christian. Let's

say it together. Every Christian should be baptized. No exceptions, no special cases, no if, ands, or buts. Every believer should be baptized.

Why should you be baptized? Well number one it's obedience. Jesus said we should. Number two. It'll strengthen your faith. When you take steps of obedience, you always get stronger and you should step forward and be baptized. Thirdly, you ought to get baptized. Now listen to me. You ought to get baptized because baptism is a ready-made opportunity for evangelism when you invite your lost momma and daddy, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters to come see you baptized and hear the gospel. That's why you don't do it private. You do it in public because it's a ready-made evangelistic opportunity.

There's a lot of people, they say, "Preacher, you know I would but it's just been so long since I got saved. Really what difference will it make?" Well it'll make an obedience difference. It may make a difference in somebody in your family. Some of you men, your son may never be the same after they see their father or grandfather baptized. They'll say, "Buddy, if it's important to those guys that I idolize, it must be the real deal." Amen. Others make an excuse and say, "You know, pastor, I was baptized as an infant." Well this is a protestant church, this is not a popeish church. It's not a Catholic church. You go back and read, and I have this week, you read what the priest says when he baptizes an infant. In that saying of that priest, he confers redemption on that child in that Catholic church. Let me tell you, friend, baptism won't save you. I know there is in the reformed mindset a covenant but what baptism is, is your response, not your parent's response. It is a public declaration that you make. So if you were baptized as an infant, throwing no stones at you but I am throwing a lifeline to say, "You ought to make your public declaration for yourself and go public to say, 'Jesus died for me. I am standing for Him.'"

"It's been so long." "I was baptized as an infant." Some people tell me, "I'd be baptized but I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm just absolutely fearful." We had a lady, oh I don't know, she was well into her 70's that we baptized here. I baptized her. Her two sons brought her. No, I did not baptize her. I was not baptizing that day. She came fearful of water. You cannot believe how fearful of water. She was as scared of water as my mother. She said, "Pastor, I'm just scared." I said, "Let me tell you two things. Number one. Humorously, I have looked it up in the Guinness Book of World Records and no one has ever died being immersed in water, not in a Baptist Church." Now there were people during the Protestant Reformation who were killed that way. They were dunked and held under for persecution and they died. But we're not persecuting you here. We're proclaiming here with you. I said, "Number two, I want you to know we'll help you." We baptized that lady. One of our staffers baptized her and her sons stood behind her. I said, "Will you trust your boys?" She said, "Most days." I said, "They'll take care of you." Big tears in those boys and they helped just lower momma into the water.

The Bible says, "Fear not." As a matter of fact, baptism may help you get over some other fears if you'll trust God and trust the administrator and trust the church. Fear not. It's the greatest story of baptism in all of scripture outside of Jesus. It's the eighth chapter of Acts. Philip is preaching and as soon as he finishes he is sent down to Gaza. There in Gaza there is an Ethiopian man and he's in a chariot. He's the secretary of the treasurer for the queen, Candace, of Ethiopia and he's been up to Jerusalem. He has received a copy of the Old Testament because we know that he's reading from Isaiah 53. The Bible says the Spirit of God told Philip, "Go attach yourself to the chariot." Philip did and he asked, "What are you reading?" He began to read the scriptures and from that text the Bible says in Acts 8 that Philip preached Jesus unto Him.

He took Isaiah 53, that suffering servant passage, speaking of Jesus and the prophecy that He was going to come and He was going to be beaten and scourged and die. Philip said, "That's the Christ. He lived and He died and He rose for you if you'd believe on the name of the Lord Jesus that you'd be saved." This is a black man, a white man preaching to him. That old Ethiopian got saved. They went on down in the chariot riding a little farther and you come to verse 36. The Bible says they went along on the road and they came to some water. The Eunuch said, "Look, water. What prevents me from being baptized?" Philip told him, "If you believe, you can." They didn't stop at a Day's Inn and get a cup. They stopped at a pool. He said, "Look, here's water." The King James Version says, "What doth hinder me?" What hinders me from being baptized? Philip says, "Nothing. If you believe it's time, you can, you should."

The Bible says they got out of the chariot – I'm sorry, it says they got out of the pew. No, no. It says they got out of the chariot. That's right. I was right the first time. They walked down in the water and Philip baptized the Ethiopian and immediately Philip was translated. Now that doesn't happen every time but if you want to get rid of your preacher, you ought to come get baptized and pray God would be biblical. Amen. It's a miracle of God what happened in Acts 8. The Spirit of God fell.

I believe that old Ethiopian went back and became one of the first missionaries that continent had ever seen when he got back in his chariot and headed back to his country saying, "I've got a Bible in my hand, I've believed in my heart, and I've been baptized in water. This is the gospel." Amen.

Some of you, some of you, today's the day. You make your appointment for next Sunday. Some of you say, "Preacher, I can't make it next Sunday." Good, come tonight. We'll do it tonight. We'll do it the following Sunday but you need to come today and draw a line and step across it. Now hear me. You've got to trust Christ before you're baptized. You've got to give your life to Christ. This is not some religious act you do. You give your heart and life to Christ. He raises you spiritually from the dead and

you're saved and then you step into that water, sit down on that little seat that I've designed. They ought to sell it at Lifeway. And then lower you into the water and raise you up.

You say, "Preacher, why do you sit them down?" Because I'm a little bitty man, that's why. Some of ya'll are great big sinners, physically. I've had people in that shallow water. Now if we baptize in a pond, that's easy. You just move out a little deeper but here we try to make that – we want baptism to be – it's a solemn occasion, it's a happy occasion, but it's a special occasion and we're gentle with baptism. When you bury your momma, you don't just throw her in the ground. Amen. You lower a body in the ground.

I used to watch old Dr. Criswell over at Dallas. I'd go hear him preach. They'd baptize. He could baptize people and never rip the water. I told Liz, "I'm fixin' to go let him baptize me and just see" – I didn't do it but I said, "I just want to see how he does that." I see all that thrashing around and waves in the pool. Sometimes that happens. We baptized an old boy – I did – over in Passmore Hall one night. We tell everybody to go barefooted. He put on red socks and both those feet came out of the water. He was 6'8". That's why I've got that stool up there. I baptized that boy and here came those two red socks up. The place broke up. Wild things happen at baptism but it's a joyous occasion. Amen?

You remember when you were baptized? That was a good day, wasn't it? Were you nervous? Sure you were. Excited? Yes. Following Christ. Knew everything you were doing? No. That's just the beginning but it's the first step and some of you need to get out of your seat and walk right down here and take me by the hand and say, "This morning, pastor, I'm coming." Some of you say, "Preacher, I've already been saved and I've already been baptized and I just want to join the church." Good. Good. You come and link your life right here with us. Others are here and you've never said yes to Jesus. We're going to talk to you this morning and let you know how to believe on the name of the Lord Christ. Then we're going to be ready next Sunday. I'll walk right out there after the first music and we'll be ready to baptize, we'll preach the gospel, give the invitation for others to come and be baptized that morning. We're going to baptize twice in each service. Those planned and then those coming spontaneously in that service next Sunday. Some of you need to get ready today. Now is the accepted time and today is the day of salvation, of baptism, of commitment.