

SPIRIT BAPTISM AND WATER BAPTISM

Romans 6:1-14

Before He ascended back into heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ instituted **two ordinances** for the Church. One is **communion** (the Lord's supper), which we celebrate around here about once a month, and every time we celebrate it, we reflect on His sacrifice for our sins. We remember that it was completely sufficient to pay for our sins and we need that consistent reminder that the cross is enough, lest we forget and go back under some sort of works-based system. The other ordinance, which we are going to celebrate today, is **water baptism**. But this ordinance is not something we do over and over as individuals like communion. It's a one-time observance for each believer who has placed their faith in Christ. It serves as more of a permanent, milestone reminder to look back on for the rest of our lives as believers. In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said, "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 of the Son and of 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." But why baptism? What's the point of it? Do we do it just to do it? Is it a required work? What does it symbolize? Our text, Romans 6:1-14 will be our central guide to understanding water baptism today. But Paul's not really teaching on water baptism, but Spirit baptism. However you can't really grasp water baptism unless you grasp Spirit baptism so let's read and see what he had to say about Spirit baptism.

Now the first thing we need to remember when it comes to this passage is that Paul is talking about Spirit baptism and not water baptism. It is a dry portion of Scripture, as one man said. **But water baptism is something that can only be understood and made sense of through the teaching on Spirit baptism.** If we don't understand the spiritual baptism, water baptism will just become some sort of religious work. If you believe you can work your way to heaven through religion, then baptism becomes just another one of those necessary works for salvation and we start baptizing babies and everyone else with that mindset thinking that by baptism will get people one step closer to heaven. But Paul has just made it clear in the preceding chapters of Romans that there's not a couple steps or three steps or a bunch of steps. It's just **one step: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.** The righteousness that God requires for someone to get to heaven is **perfect righteousness.** I think that's what's missing from most gospel presentations. It's not that you can just turn from your sin and be a better person and go to heaven. It's the opposite. It's saying you cannot be good enough and you need to repent of trusting in yourself or your religion, changing your mind and simply trusting Christ. We need perfect righteousness to get in. And we can never be perfect or work our way to perfection but that's why Christ came and died on the cross for us: He was the perfect sacrifice, no sin in Him. And when we humble ourselves and trust in His gracious and merciful cross, we are given His perfect righteousness. Romans 4:5 says, "But to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." Righteousness comes through faith, not works. The only thing man can "do" is to put his faith in Christ's work on the cross (Rom. 1:16-17). Jesus said the "work" of God is that you simply believe in Him whom He has sent (Jn. 6:29). Only Christ's work on the cross is satisfactory to pay for man's sin.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." Whosoever. That's an invite to anyone. If you haven't placed your trust in Christ, do that right now. Change your mind about what you're trusting in and instead only trust Christ and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, being baptized by Him. And that's something Paul

wants us to know. **The key word in this passage is the word “know”**. It is used several times. Paul wants us to know a basic Christian doctrine that’s going to help us live as Christ-followers. Learning is for living, doctrine for duty. We have to think right in order to have our practice right. And the first thing we need to **know** about water baptism is that we are reflecting on what has happened already happened to us on the inside. So what has happened?

I. WHAT HAS HAPPENED: SALVATION APPLIED THROUGH SPIRIT BAPTISM (VV. 1-10)

Again the context is progressive sanctification, not salvation, but we’re learning how we can experience some serious victory over the sin nature by understanding the spiritual realities of what happened at our salvation, the moment we were saved. We were baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word *bapto* means “to immerse” – like a sinking ship is immersed in the ocean; or “To dip” like dipping a cloth in dye. Like when you take a white t-shirt and dip it in dye, it takes on the color of the dye, it “identifies” with that dye. We have been immersed or dipped into Christ by the Spirit and taken on a new color and we identify with Him. It carries the idea of “enveloping” something. We have been enveloped by the Spirit like putting on a robe or when you place your mail in an envelope. Through the Spirit we are born again; regenerated; made alive in Christ and made members of the body of Christ; a new creation with a new nature. Whereas before you were dead spiritually and slaves to the sinful nature, now you’re alive. All of this is a past tense spiritual reality for the believer. Look at the past-tense words. “Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized** into Christ 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 the 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.” Baptized, buried, raised, united, freed. These are only things that are said of a believer.

A. Water baptism is only for those who have already been saved. (vv. 1-7)

They’ve already been granted eternal life through faith in Christ and have been connected to Christ. That word “united” in verse 5 is a neat word too. It can be a botanical word, a plant word (*sympatoi*). It means to be “grow together”. Have you ever planted something like carrots too close together and they grow together and become like one carrot with two roots? Well we’re that close that we’ve been planted into Christ. The KJV translates it, “...we have been planted together with Him.” Grafted into Christ and His work. = When He died, you died – When He was raised, you were raised – you have new life in Christ. Water baptism won’t bring you the new, transformed life. It’s only for those who have the life already and want to identify with Him publicly.

- For instance, with the case of the Gentile converts at Cornelius’ house in Acts 10:44-48, the Gentiles believe the Gospel message *while Peter is speaking*. Peter says, “Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins,” and boom, the Holy Spirit baptizes all who believe that gospel promise. They’re baptized by the Holy Spirit as he preaches. Immediately following this, Peter says, “‘Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have **received** the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?’ And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”
- In Philippi on the 2nd missionary journey, it says the Lord opened Lydia’s hearts to respond to Paul’s gospel message and **after** she believed, she was baptized (Acts 16:14).
- In the same city and same journey, Paul and Silas witnessed to the Philippian jailer. He asked them very specifically, “‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, “Believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” He and all his household believed the good news and were baptized **immediately following** their belief.

It’s something that happens only to those who believe. If you don’t believe the good news that Jesus Christ is your Savior, why would you want to be baptized? To get baptized is to say I want to identify with Christ and His message. I want to express my faith in Christ publicly. Charles Ryrie said, “Baptism may be defined as an act of association or identification with someone, some group, some message, or some event.”¹ And in water baptism, we’re identifying with Christ, the Church, the Gospel and the Cross. So unless you associate with those already, there would be no use in getting baptized. It should only happen after someone hears and believes the Gospel and is baptized by the Holy Spirit because it is symbolic of all of that.

We practice **immersion or submersion** as well, actually going under the water and coming back up.

B. Immersion portrays the spiritual death, burial and resurrection life. (vv. 1-7)

Going under the water is like being buried in the grave and then coming back up is like being raised to resurrection life. **That is the most gospel-centered method of baptism** and also gives us **the clearest portrayal of what has happened spiritually**. It is also the method clearly used by the Early Church. The **meaning however, is always more important than the mode**. Not all people are even physically capable of being submerged under water and so some have been sprinkled or have had water poured on them, but immersion is the clearest portrayal and is important and should be exercised whenever possible.

- Mt. 3:16 – “After being baptized, Jesus came **up immediately from the water**...”^C
- Acts 8:36-38 – after Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch it says, “they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ [And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went **down into the water**, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went away rejoicing.”

And I hope this doesn’t make things more confusing but there’s a couple other ways Spirit baptism has been likened to:

❖ **The circumcision made without hands. (Colossians 2:9-14)**

In Colossians, Paul likens baptism with a spiritual circumcision, a circumcision made without hands. “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” Through our Spirit baptism and salvation experience this passage reveals incredible truths: It says we have been made complete, freed from the grip of the sin nature, been buried, raised up, made alive, forgiven, and the Law against us has been nailed to the cross. Isn’t that something? It says that by that one baptism you receive by the Spirit when you believe, you are made complete. There’s no mention of a second

Spirit baptism or something like that. It says you receive everything you need to live the Christian life because you have Christ, who is the fullness of God.

Circumcision, which we're pretty familiar with as we've been going through Galatians, but it was an Old Testament rite performed by the Jews to identify them as God's people. It was symbolic of belonging to God and having purity in life. However, many of the Jews did what many do with baptism today. A lot of Jews thought, "Well I'm a descendant of Abraham and I've been circumcised so I'm in." It was a work that they thought would save them. But a lot of people today think, "Well I was raised in church in a Christian family and I've been baptized so I'm in." There's a ton of people out there who have been baptized, who do not have the Spirit of God and are not saved because they're trusting in their background or church membership or baptism. At the same time there are a lot of people out there who have the Spirit of God and are saved, and yet have not been baptized. And that's a shame on both sides because this is such a special thing that is abused or not taken seriously. It is important.

What's not important is who baptizes you or where or what water is used – Being baptized by a priest or by Billy Graham in the Jordan River water won't be any holier or make you more spiritual than being baptized by a local cowboy in the local White River or Niobrara River. **The righteousness of God and the born again life isn't in the water, but in believing the gospel.**

The baptismal work of the Spirit has also been described as...

❖ **The bath that makes completely clean: John 13:1-11**

In John 13, Jesus washing the disciples' feet to be an example of how they should humbly serve others and Peter is upset about this and says, "Never shall You wash my feet!" So Jesus responds to Peter by turning it into a spiritual lesson on Spirit baptism and walking by the Spirit. He responds, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." In other words, to be a part of Him, we must be washed by the Holy Spirit. There has to be a spiritual cleansing by the Spirit of God. And this goes back to the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from your idols... [How?] I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you" (Ezek. 36:25-26). So the work of the Spirit and receiving the Spirit is often described as being washed with water. It's a water-like cleansing comes by the Spirit. And so with Scripture being the best interpreter of Scripture, it makes sense then when Jesus tells Nicodemus, the spiritual leader in Israel, you have to be born of water and of the Spirit. It's Ezekiel's water-talk for saying you have to be born again by a regenerative washing of the Spirit. Ezekiel 36 should be a familiar passage to him. It's a metaphor for cleansing by the Spirit. Water and washing is often used to describe the Spirit's work and that confuses some folks. Jesus said demons seek waterless places (Mt. 12:43). What did He mean by that? Well, Waterless as in Spirit-less, people who don't have the Spirit because believers cannot be indwelt by demons. Demons can't indwell people who have the Spirit. The Spirit is stronger (1 John 4:4). Titus 3:5 says, "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, whom **He poured out upon us** richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made

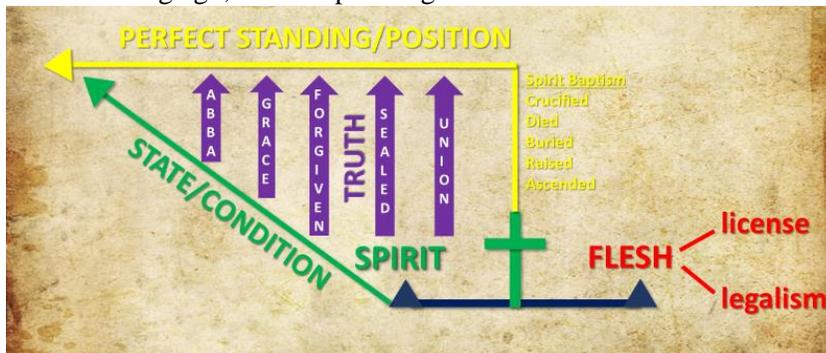
heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” So regeneration is a washing and renewing done by the Holy Spirit. It’s referring to a spiritual cleansing. It’s water-talk.

So back to Peter when Jesus says if I do not wash you, you have no part with me, Peter says, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” Jesus says, “He who has bathed (louo) needs only to wash (nipto) his feet, but is completely clean.” What a great way to think of the spiritual life! The moment you put your faith in Christ, you have a complete spiritual bath, a complete cleansing, a complete spiritual washing by the Spirit of God. But there are going to be times when we stumble into a mud puddle of sin. You’re going to get your feet dirty and well, that doesn’t mean we lose our salvation and need to take another bath. We simply need to wash our feet, by confessing the sin and getting back to walking with Him, in fellowship with Him.

And this idea of washing our feet is such a great place to lead into the next point. I love the next major point because when we get water-baptized, we are also saying that we want to commit to this sanctification process. We don’t want to walk around in the muck of sin all the time. We want clean feet. We want to follow Christ. We want to be disciples of Christ. When someone gets saved and is like that that Ethiopian, saying, “Can be I be baptized?” That’s just refreshing. They’re saying I love Jesus and I’m so thankful for what He’s done for me, I want to follow Him and do what He says. I want to identify with Him and let my life be surrendered to Him and used for His glory. And that decision to surrender is the beginning of the sanctification process, growing spiritually, that which *is happening* in your life. You’re saying God’s at work in my life. I’m a new person who wants to live differently.

II. WHAT IS HAPPENING: PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION (VV. 8-14)

Lets read again in Romans 6:8, “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 [#1] be dead to sin , but [#2] alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 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. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.” **So after the knowing, after we know what has happened to us, that knowing becomes the basis for yielding. There must be a reckoning and yielding that takes place, a giving of yourself to God.** If I could put water baptism on the chart that we looked at not too long ago, I would put it right at the base of the incline.



We are looking back to what has happened at the moment we believed, but then are also looking forward to following Him and growing in that grace. [GALATIANS CHART]

❖ We are making the decision to live for God. (v. 11)

To grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through studying His Word and applying it. We're not just letting sin reign in our life. We're living out our faith. We're saying I'm not just going to live for me anymore, but **I want to live for Him who died for me, starting with the command to be baptized.** I think a lot of people get hung up in their walk because they won't apply what they already know: like being baptized. Don't wait. Get it done. Identify with Him and His message. Be bold. Sometimes I'm afraid we take baptism too lightly here in the States. In persecuted countries, sometimes it's fine to call yourself a Christian, but if you get baptized, then all hell breaks loose on you – you're ostracized from your family and the community, persecuted, maybe killed. It's a big decision in persecuted areas and only those who are serious and bold for Christ will do it. You can't be a coward to be baptized in a persecuted country. But if you've tasted His salvation, present yourself to God as a surrendered child of God, as one who is alive from the dead and live as an instrument of righteousness. Take on the attitude of Paul, who said, "It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20). Take on the attitude that your life is not your own.

Baptism is a holy and monumental reminder to us for the rest of our life that we have made the decision to trust Christ and to live for Him. Just like a wedding ring is between spouses, a reminder of their covenant together, so the day of our **baptism is a momentous occasion** to remember. So, you who are being baptized today, you're coming with a heart that trusts Christ alone and has been baptized with the Spirit but also saying, "Yes, I want to follow Christ!" For those of you here today who have been baptized, let it be a reminder of God's grace to you as well. Look back to where you were when you first got baptized. Let your soul praise the Lord as you reflect on your own baptism and how far the Lord has brought you in your walk since that day. And if you've gotten a little off track since then, let it bring you back to full surrender and a walk with Him. Some of us need to come back to our first love I'm sure and love the Lord and desire to follow Him just as much today as we did back then. Be bold again. Follow through on your commitment to live for Him. Get back to being authentic like you were when you were first baptized and praise God how He has remained faithful to you all these years.

I love baptism days. It's such a beautiful ordinance we've been given! And with such deep truth in it! I'm excited to celebrate it today with the those being baptized. We are privileged to be a part of it. I know you have been wanting to do this for a long time and so we're excited.

¹ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*.