

ROMANS

Part 12: “Remember Your Baptism”

Romans 6:1–11

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Sunday, April 17, 2022 (Easter Sunday)

Scripture Reading

Our Scripture reading for this Easter Sunday comes from Romans 6. We'll begin in verse 1 and read through verse 11.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 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, 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. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:1–11).

This is God's word. *Thanks be to God.*

Let's pray: *Our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, thank you that you have spoken to us through your word. Thank you for the good news it proclaims. Thank you that Jesus Christ, your Son, defeated the power of death and welcomed us into his new life. May we be immersed into that glorious truth this Easter Sunday. In Jesus's name, we pray, AMEN!*

Introduction

There is a lot of bad news in the world today, and if you spend a lot of time scrolling through social media or watching cable news, it is easy to feel a sense of heaviness, anxiety, and even anger at the many of the stories that tend to dominate headlines. But

every now and then, a story of hope—a story of good news—shines like a ray of light into the midst of darkness.

A few years ago, I stumbled onto the story of a man named Ken Parker. And his story is one of those stories that shines hope into a world of so much sorrow.

But like many stories of hope, Ken's story does not begin in a good place. Ken was once a man who based his entire life and identity on hatred [show [1Ken Parker](#)]. He was once a self-proclaimed white supremacist. Not only was he a member of the infamous Klu Klux Klan, but he also rose to the rank of Grand Dragon in that organization [show [2Ken Parker](#)]. He attended and participated in the 2017 riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, and even desired to ignite a race war in the United States.

But since that time, Mr. Parker's life has undergone a transformation. He met a black man named William McKinnon at a poolside cookout in his apartment complex. And as soon as he met him, he knew that something was different about him. Soon Mr. Parker found out that William was a pastor of a church. Pastor William invited Ken Parker to attend his church. And, to his own astonishment, he accepted William's invitation to visit his primarily black church.

At that church, he encountered the word of God proclaimed from the pulpit. He encountered the love of God embodied by the people. And, as a result, over time, he found himself being irresistibly drawn to Jesus.

Then, one day—on an Easter Sunday, no less—Ken Parker he traded his Klan robe for a baptismal robe [show [3Ken Parker](#)]. And this baptism was more than a religious ceremony. It was a public declaration that he had renounced his former identity—his former life—and had become a Christian.

What strikes me about this story is how much it is an unignorable sign of hope, not just to Christians but even non-Christians. Every day, we are inundated with stories of division, hatred, warring ideologies, and shouting matches. But here we have a story of redemption and renewal.

It naturally provokes the question: *what can account for a transformation like this? Is there really a truth that is so beautiful and a love that is so real, that if encountered and believed, it could change someone at the very core of their identity? If so, what is this truth that transforms life so much?*

My friends, the only truth that can create such a profound, identity-changing transformation is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Review of Romans

In his letter to the church of Rome, which we have been studying this year a Redeemer, Paul has been unfolding the power and the glory of the gospel.

He has shown us that the message of the gospel isn't just *about* the power of God—it is the life-transforming, history-altering, creation-reclaiming power of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Paul has shown us that the gospel is an announcement of revelation—in a technical sense it is a “*apocalypse*” (ἀποκαλύπτω)—meaning it is a truth that *unveils* us. The gospel reveals our deep, cosmic need. It confronts us with the unsettling truth of the weight of our sin. It exposes the dead-end road of human righteousness; the fool's errand of trying to earn our salvation through our own good works and willpower.

And, yet, over against our radical inability to save ourselves, the gospel is a proclamation that where the righteousness of man has failed, the righteousness of God has prevailed!

When we could not come to God, God came to us. Jesus Christ—God in human flesh—has entered human history. He came into a world that was fractured by our sin, and he lived a perfectly righteous life on our behalf, he took upon himself the penalty of death for our sin, and he rose again.

And now, for all who believe and trust in Jesus, we can be counted as righteous before God. The righteousness of God cannot be inherited by ancestry, acquired by intelligence, or merited by good behavior. It is a gift—a gift of grace—that can only be received with the empty hands of faith!

Thus, though our sin is great, the grace of God is greater!

This is history-changing truth! However, it is a truth that almost immediately provokes a set of questions.

If we are really saved by grace, *how then should we live?* Does the grace of God mean we can live however we want? Does it mean that our sinning doesn't matter as long as we believe in Jesus? Or, as the Apostle Paul himself asks: “*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*” (Rom 6:1).

Paul immediately answers his own question: “*By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*” (Rom 6:2).

Paul is showing that the grace of God is not an excuse to remain in sin. Rather the grace of God is the means by which we are emancipated from the power of sin!

When we trust in Jesus, we are not just saved *from* something—we are saved *to* something. We are saved unto a new life, a new identity, a new experience of liberty that is possible only because of the resurrection of Jesus!

But how do we practically avoid falling back into our old ways of life, our old identities, and our old bondages when we feel gravitationally pulled back into those things by temptation? How do you live in a way that is ever mindful of the power of resurrection and righteousness?

Paul's answer in Romans 6 is that you **"Remember Your Baptism."**

A Word on Baptism

When Jesus Christ rose from the grave, he famously commissioned his disciples with the words of Matthew 28: **"...All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"** (Matt 28:18b–19).

For this reason, as long as there have been Christians, Christians have participated in baptism.

For Christians, baptism is not just a religious ritual. Baptism is a visible, tangible means by which we witness and experience the grace of Christ. Baptism is a gift through which the Holy Spirit ministers to us and publicly declares our participation in Christ through faith. Baptism is a sacrament that tells and retells the story of the gospel.

But if baptism tells and retells the story of the gospel, what story is it telling? Another way to ask the same question, *what exactly are we remembering, when we remember our baptism?*

Our Scripture reading today answers that question. When we remember our baptism, we remember that **1.) Jesus has defeated death, 2.) We have been united with Jesus through faith, and 3.) Sin no longer has dominion over us.**

Exposition

1. Jesus has defeated death.

Paul writes, **"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, 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"** (Rom 6:3–4).

The reason we celebrate this day is that 2000 years ago, something happened that inaugurated a new era of history. Jesus Christ of Nazareth died, he was buried, yet three days later, he rose from the dead. And today, there is a tomb in the city of Jerusalem that is still empty!

The supernatural, miraculous, bodily resurrection of Jesus is the lynchpin of the Christian faith.

If all Jesus accomplished was his death, he may have been an inspiration and an example, but he would not be our Savior. After all, everyone dies.

Since Adam, the power of death has been the normative reality within this sin-fractured world. But through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Divine Creator has intervened into history and reclaimed his good creation from the powers of Sin and Death.

If this cosmos is nothing more than matter in motion, if there is no God, then there is no real purpose, no truth, and no hope in life. In the end, death prevails, and all we possess is the opportunity to seek empty pleasure, while we endure the meaningless nothing of nihilism.

But the historical reality of Jesus's resurrection shows us that this cosmos is more than matter in motion. It shows us a God who "*...so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*" (John 3:16).

Because of Christ's entry into history and triumph over death, we know that which is good and true and beautiful are more than figments of our evolved imaginations—they are echoes of a Divine Voice and signposts that point toward eternity! Because of Christ's resurrection, we can know that history has a purpose. Life has a meaning, and death is not defeat!

Without the resurrection, the cross would have meant nothing. But because of the resurrection, the cross now means everything!

Baptism is a visible public confession that we believe this gospel to be true, and we seek for all of our lives to be immersed into the full reality of all that Christ has accomplished on our behalf.

Baptism is a symbol of this story. As Jesus was plunged into death, we are also plunged beneath the waters. And as Jesus rose from the grave in victory, we rise from the water to walk in newness of life! And that leads us to the second point.

2. We have been united with Jesus through faith.

The Apostle goes on to say, "*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his*" (Rom 6:5).

When you believe in Christ, you are brought into more than just a relationship with Christ—you are brought into union with Christ. You have been united with Christ in his death, and you will be united with him in his resurrection.

All of your sin, all of your shame, all of your failure was crucified to the very cross of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus died, your sin shame died with him!

So too, for all who trust in what Jesus has done, we have been brought into union with Christ. And the power of that union is so powerful that nothing can make it uncertain.

Our union with Christ is deeper than our complicity with sin. It is more enduring than our shame. More true than our most profound brokenness. If you have placed your faith in Christ, God's love for you is as perfect and complete as his love is for his very Son!

What would it look like for you to believe this? How would you pray, I wonder, if you were utterly convinced of your union with Christ and the love that God the Father has for you in Christ?

Baptism testifies to our hearts that our union with Christ is true and that we belong to the kingdom of God! And that brings us to our final point.

3. Sin no longer has dominion over us.

Let's read the last few verses of our passage today in full.

"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:6–11).

It's important to remember that all of the Apostles and most early Christians were Jewish. Even Christians who came from gentile (or non-Jewish) ethnic backgrounds were deeply immersed in the language and stories of the Old Testament.

And in this context, when Paul mentions words like "enslaved," "free," and "dominion," these words come with a charged history that would have evoked a specific cultural memory—the memory of the *Exodus*.

The Exodus was seen as the definitive redemptive moment of the Old Testament. It was the moment that God freed the people of Israel from enslavement to the Egyptian Pharaoh. This act of divine deliverance was central to the identity of the people of God.

They were no longer slaves. They were free people. They were God's people.

And now, Paul is presenting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the true and greater Exodus. As the Passover Lamb was slain and the power of Pharaoh was broken, so too, Christ has died for our sin and the power of death is vanquished.

And as the people of God walked through the parted waters of the Red Sea never to go back to Egypt again, so too, the people of God today pass through the waters—the waters of *baptism*—never to go back to the slavery of sin again.

Baptism, then, is a declaration of freedom that we are no longer under the dominion of sin! In baptism, we renounce the powers of death and darkness, and we pledge our allegiance to live for the kingdom of Christ!

But even after being liberated and witnessing miracles, the ancient Israelites struggled to actually believe that they were free. They were tempted to go back to Egypt. They were tempted to live within the mindset of slavery.

This is God gave his people the rhythms of the Sabbath, the sacrifices, and the feasts. The people of God were to gather for worship to tell and retell the testimony of God's faithfulness. They were to recount all that he had done for them.

So too, we are called as the people of God to gather together and tell and retell the truth of the gospel. We are to remember the sacrifice of Christ's death and the triumph of his resurrection as we sing together, read the word of God together, share communion together, and witness baptism together.

When we receive these means of grace, we are not just going through empty ritualistic motions of dead religion. We are inscribing onto our hearts the very truth that we have been set free from sin! Together we are to remind one another that we are dead to sin and alive to Christ!

Conclusion

For these reasons, baptism is to be not only cherished, valued, and observed—it should be *remembered*, moment after moment and day after day. In fact, Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, even taught his parishioners to make the sign of the cross as they awoke in the morning and remember they awakened to a new day as those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The world offers us many names, many roles, and many identities to adopt and assume. But for Christians, our deepest identity is that which we have in Christ. And when we remember our baptism, we clothe ourselves with that identity day after day.

So today, on this Easter Sunday, if you have already been baptized. Remember your baptism. Remember all that it means. Remember its power!

And today, if you have not been baptized, I invite you to receive this gift today. You don't have to be a member of this church to be baptized. All you need is to *believe* that Jesus Christ has died and risen for you!

You don't need to worry about your Easter outfit. We have shirts, shorts, towels, and places to change in the back. There is nothing holding you back. And there could not be a better day to be baptized.

So, if you believe and you have yet to be baptized, come forward in a few moments, when we begin to sing again, and we will baptize you today!

Redeemer Christian Church, Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! May we respond to this truth! May we rejoice in this truth! And may we remember the power of the resurrection, as we remember our baptism!

AMEN.

Discussion Starters for Gospel Communities

1. *Read Romans 6:1–11.*
2. *What is baptism, and what can we learn about baptism from this passage?*
3. *What does it mean to be united with Christ, and what is this concept so important for Christians to understand?*
4. *How can the truths of our baptism and union with Christ empower us to live in freedom from the power of sin?*