

## Water Baptism Sunday – No More Identity Crisis

1/27/19 – Pastor Randy

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Romans 6:1-11

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when **we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?** For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

**Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was.** We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. **For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.** And **since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.** We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. **So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:26,27

**For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** And **all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ,** like putting on new clothes.

Acts 2:38

Peter replied, **“Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.** Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Water Baptism is one of two “ordinances” Christ gave to his church. An ordinance of Christ is “an authoritative order or mandate given to us by Jesus”. Many Christians don’t have a really clear understanding of why we practice baptism.

Baptism serves as a symbol representing two realities that have taken place in the life of the new Christian and which now form our new identity as children of God.

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1. Our sins have been forgiven. They no longer separate us from God. We are members of His family and our past has no bearing on our adoption.

[Acts 2:38 has created a bit of confusion among Christians because it seems to indicate that baptism, along with faith and repentance, is the basis for being forgiven. If so, it appears to contradict the clear teaching of the NT that faith, and faith alone, is the only condition for salvation from sin. Peter was not communicating that baptism is the means of salvation. The reason for his wording is because baptism was understood to be Jesus' ordained means by which people would express their faith in Christ. Baptism was so closely associated with faith that the only reason someone wouldn't be baptized would be because they were rejecting the gospel. (See Acts 10:44-48 for an example of baptism being practiced after the Spirit was received)]

2. We are united with Christ. That means that his victory over sin and death belongs to us. We now consider ourselves - identify ourselves – as people who are dead to sin and alive to God. To identify with Christ consists of more than slapping a Christian bumper sticker on your car, wearing a Christian t-shirt, becoming a member of a church, and doing church stuff. To identify with Christ is to be united with Him in His mission, in agreement with His words and teaching. Our body, mind, and heart are “clothed with Christ.”

A proper sense of our identity as children of God who are forgiven and united with Christ by the Spirit is essential to living as God intends for us to live.

Moses encounter w/ God through the burning bush in Exodus 3 reveals two misperceptions that resulted from Moses identity crisis. The first was related to his perception of himself and the second was related to his perception of his “purpose” or “calling”.

Moses identity crisis was revealed in two phrases. The first was a statement he made about himself and the second was a question he asked about himself. He said, “Here am I” but he then asked “who am I?” Moses knew where he was but he didn't know who he was. There are a lot of people like Moses; they know where they are but not who they are. In this passage we discover that Moses identity crisis resulted from defining himself in terms of

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his gifts and position, or more accurately, in terms of his perceived lack of giftedness and lack of position. His response to God's call was, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?"; the obvious underlying thought being, "I have no title, power, or authority. I am just a shepherd in Midian. This response is not surprising since pharaoh was most powerful man in Egypt and Israelites had been enslaved for 400 yrs to them. Later his argument was, "I can't go. I'm not a gifted speaker".

But it's not like God didn't know about Moses lack of position and his speech impediment. We don't find God responding, "You know, Moses, you've got me thinking. I completely overlooked the fact that you aren't the leader of a great nation with a powerful military force. I also forgot about your speech impediment. I don't know what I was thinking." You see, Moses lack of position & giftedness wasn't an issue to God. I'll get to why in a moment. What lies at the heart of Moses identity crisis is his failure to define himself primarily, and ultimately, in terms of whose He was. He was asking the question, "Who am I?" when the real issue was not who he was, but whose he was. When God began to speak to Moses he revealed Himself in terms of His relationship to Moses. He said, "I am the God of your father..." which meant I am YOUR God. You belong to me. Our sense of security, significance, and self-worth - our identity - needs to be wrapped up in our relationship to God as his child. Not a matter of who I am, but whose I am. People for his own possession, bought with a price, belong to him.

Moses went wrong by defining himself in terms of his function, personality & position instead of his relationship to God. The same error is committed by a multitude of Christians. When we are faced with the question, "Who are you?" we often think of the answer only in terms of social standing or vocation. Engaged in identity construction. trying to be somebody, but the Christian's identity is firmly established - a child of God. All attempts to establish our self-worth by relational, social, educational, or vocational pursuits are misguided and futile because all of those things can be stripped away from us. I am an ordained minister of 25+ years, Lead Pastor of Calvary Church, husband to Christine, and father of two boys. None of those facts define me! Every one of those present realities can change tomorrow. Many

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people experience an identity crisis, the loss of their sense of “who they are” when they lose their job, their spouse, or face the empty nest experience. For some it is not the loss of their job per se, but of their ability, skill or talent.

Author Lin Schreiber: *“On the way home, I remember smugly commenting how sad it was that so many people would be lost without the identity provided by what they did for a living. So imagine how stunned I was, those few years later, to find myself completely and totally lost when I left my career as TV and special events producer.”*

There will always be reasons to be insecure if we define ourselves in terms of vocation, personality, position, family heritage, talents, or intelligence, but never any reason when defined in terms of our relationship to God as his children. Our sense of identity, of **who we are**, has to be firmly grounded in **whose we are**. This is so important because as long as you base your identity on your relationship to God as his child through Jesus cross you will be free from the pride or insecurity that comes from basing it on human standards. If my identity is first and foremost as an adopted son of God both pride and low self-esteem have no place to thrive.

The gospel of grace is the only antidote to the twin spiritual diseases that afflict fallen mankind; debilitating low self-esteem and destructive pride.

The sickness of self-righteous arrogance results from believing the lie that says, “I am SO good, I don’t need saving.”

The sickness of self-loathing and self-condemnation results from the lie that says, “I am SO bad I am not worth saving.”

The gospel of grace says, your exalted position as a child of God is not something you deserve! You didn’t earn it! You have no reason to boast.

The gospel of grace also says “But God...loved us so much!”

Moses second problem was his perception of his “calling” or “ministry” as something God was telling him to “go and do”, rather than understanding “ministry” as obedience to God through which God performs His work. Moses reply, “Who am I to go and deliver the Israelites?” would never have been asked if he listened carefully. It was based on the faulty assumption that he

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was the deliverer. God said, "I have come down to rescue them..." If Moses was the deliverer, then certainly position & natural ability would have been critical. Remember what I said earlier. God didn't make a mistake by calling Moses. It wasn't like he forgot to read Moses' resume carefully. God was going to rescue them, and he chose Moses to be his instrument. Moses reluctance to obey was due to the fact that he was more concerned with who he was -or wasn't - rather than who God was! Moses focus was on himself, not God! There is a world of difference between viewing ministry as something we are doing for God as opposed to something God is doing through us! Moses wasn't called "to go for God" but "with God". in vs. 10 God said, "come now" and when Moses protested God said, "I will be with you". God sends us out - to go where He is going!! In the former case the effectiveness or success relies upon us and in the latter it relies upon God. I, personally, am much more comfortable with it relying upon God. All ministry should be about who God is rather than who we are!

**When we think that our job is to go deliver people we leave ourselves vulnerable to either pride or insecurity. If the responsibility for setting people free lies primarily with us, then why shouldn't we get the credit when they are set free. By the same token, when they are not set free – at least not in the timing that we think they should – it is perfectly logical to think we have failed. Initially things got worse. The People said, "Moses, get out of here!"**

In Moses response to God we discover two misperceptions: a misperception of himself and of Christian service. These misperceptions reveal two reasons why the ministry of the H.S. is so important and stressed so much by Paul: The Holy Spirit is the one who corrects these misperceptions.

1. The first thing the HS does in the life of the new Christian is to ground our identity in the reality of our adoption as God's children. In Gal. 4 and Rom. 8 Paul tells us that it is the Spirit that confirms in our hearts that we are God's children and enables us to cry, "Daddy". He settles the question of "who I am" by revealing the significance of "whose I am". Then we are free to be more concerned & consumed with knowing 'who He is' than worrying about "who I am". A God-consciousness replaces our self-consciousness. Too many

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people are worried about “discovering themselves” and too few with “discovering God”.

2. The Holy Spirit empowers us to serve. Understanding that I am not called to “go and do a work FOR God” but rather to go and do a work WITH God. Our new identity as people who are dead to sin and alive to God is made possible by the Holy Spirit’s presence in us. This is why it is so important that we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The wording is significant. We aren’t called to go and save people. We are called to walk in the Spirit so that the Spirit will work in and through us to save spiritually lost people. There is no rescue that takes place by human agency, BUT GOD’S PLAN IS TO RESCUE THROUGH HIS RESCUED ONES. MOSES HAD A JOB TO DO – HIS JOB WAS TO OBEY AND WATCH GOD RESCUE!

In closing I want to bring together two common NT metaphors for salvation: Adoption and redemption. Adoption signifies that there was a time when we were not God’s children, but that God has now set his affection on us and chose us to become His children. Redemption signifies that a price was paid for this adoption to take place. There are several places in the NT where we are told that God has purchased us so that we might belong to him. That the price of this purchase was the blood of Christ and that the Holy Spirit has now been given to us creating a seal, or stamp, on our lives which is proof positive that we belong to Him. His Spirit has inscribed his initials on our lives. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:19). I know you are excited, but please understand that the fact that we belong to Him, not only means we don’t belong to the Devil, it also means we don’t belong to ourselves. Our new identity is people who have been crucified with Christ; meaning that although we live, the “I life” doesn’t rule us any longer but Christ who is in us, the one who loved us and gave himself for us!

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