

Romans 6: Mechanics of Baptism

03-05-17 PM

As we survey the book of Romans, we find that Paul has until chapter 6 been building the case that the Law of Moses (and law in general) does not save, but instead reveals sin. Sin causes us to be cut off from God, unable to be justified (stand blameless) before Him. This puts man in a condition of war with God, a war we will not win. God's wrath was satisfied by the death of Christ, which is called a propitiation. In Romans 5:1 Paul says we have been justified by faith in Christ, and therefore have peace with God. But he does not explain what that means, faith. In a sense, he is working backwards, trying to establish for us that we (the saved, Christians) were in a position where we could not save ourselves, and then suggests that we were saved when faith was established. Romans 6 makes it clear that this connection between us and the death of Christ occurs at baptism. Romans 6:1-11 is a description of the mechanics of baptism. Justification occurs at baptism.

First, we might precede this idea by seeing some of the simple statements about baptism. Romans 6 is not a passage that makes the case to the sinner why they need to be baptized (although it could, if they already understood the ideas around why Jesus died and what law accomplishes). Instead, we turn to other places typically to make this point. For example, we see the commandment of Jesus through the Apostles in Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38; very simply put, Jesus commands baptism for the lost. We know that the apostolic writers pointed out that baptism and its work was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in the flood (1 Peter 3:20-21) and the Israelites passage through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-3). The New Birth (being born again) is accomplished by water (John 3:5, Titus 3:5). While many may teach that the baptism of importance is something else (as in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, promised only to the apostles (Acts 1:8), or the baptism of John, only for Israel (Isaiah 40:1-3)), these New Testament writers make clear that there is only ONE baptism for men today (Ephesians 4:5, 1 John 5:8).

Romans 6 speaks more to those who have been baptized, and what they should understand their baptism accomplished. Fundamentally, baptism is the application of the cross. It is the means of sanctification and justification per 1 Corinthians 6:11. Jesus died, and in baptism we make that death our death. What emerges is one who is sanctified and justified before God.

Understanding this idea leads us to some important deductions.

1. Baptism before Christ's death was not this baptism. In Acts 19:2-5 Paul meets disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus. They have only been baptized into John's baptism. Since John baptized before Jesus' death and resurrection, they do not have the ONE baptism. Thus they are baptized into Christ. ANYONE (including the Apostles themselves) baptized before Jesus resurrection (or more practically, the Day of Pentecost) needed (needs) to be baptized into Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

2. Baptism without repentance is unsuccessful. We are told here that our repentance is our death to sin. There are two deaths in this point; our dead selves in sin, and our desire to die to sin to live in Christ. When we bury someone, are they dead or alive? This simple point means that baptism is ONLY for dead sinners (1 Corinthians 15:29). When people teach of a baptism for a

believer, this is not accurate and could result in an ineffective baptism. Believers are not baptized, sinners are baptized. Baptism is only for one who is dead in their sins, just as burial is only for one dead in the flesh.

3. Baptism is the transition point of:

Changing from lost to saved – 1 Peter 3:21

Changing from sinner to saint – 1 Cor. 6:11

Leaving the kingdom of darkness for light – Col. 1:13

Becoming a Christian – Matt. 28:19 w/ Acts 11:26

Being added to the church – Acts 2:38-47

Ultimately, understanding the mechanics of baptism explain why it is that we are saved not by our works, but by the work of God. Baptism's effect is by faith alone. Hearing is OUR work (Mark 4:9); belief is OUR work (John 6:29); confession is OUR work (Romans 10:9); repentance is OUR work (Acts 26:20). But baptism is God's work; we even express it as such, by saying that WE believe, WE repent, WE confess, but WE *ARE* baptized. God does the work in baptism.

Titus 3:5: 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