

Baptism
Part 1
Dying with Christ
Romans 6:1-7
Pastor Charles Price

If you have a Bible with you I am going to read to you from the book of Romans and Chapter 6. Romans Chapter 6, and I am going to read the first eight verses.

Romans is the sixth book of the New Testament and one of the most important, not that we can put one book as more important than another in Scripture. It is all given to us by God. It is all true; it is all trustworthy. But this book is the most systematic explanation of the Gospel, what it means for a person to be reconciled to God and to be in union with Christ.

And I am going to read just one small section from this - Romans 6:1 – and following Paul talking about the fact that the grace of God is totally sufficient for us. He then says,

“What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

“By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

“If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”

I am going to stop there, although that is only part of what Paul is saying about a very, very important aspect here.

There are two ordinances that were given to the New Testament church. An ordinance, by definition, is an outward physical act that portrays an inward spiritual experience.

And the two ordinances given to us in the New Testament are: Number 1, baptism and Number 2, the Lord's Supper, which we popularly know as communion.

And what these two events share in common is that they focus on the cross of Jesus Christ. They focus on His death and on His resurrection.

The act of baptism, whereby somebody goes down into the water, is a picture of them dying with Christ, being buried with Him, and then being raised again to walk in newness of life.

The communion service involves taking bread and wine. The bread, said Jesus when He instituted this, "is My body which is given for you. The wine is My blood, which is shed for you."

And both of these events go back to focus on what lies at the very heart of the Christian gospel, which is that something happened on the cross of Jesus Christ that is absolutely vital and central to the Christian gospel and the Christian message.

If we don't understand the cross of Jesus Christ we will not enter in to enjoy all that is to be ours in the Christian life.

Baptism takes place once because it is demonstrating a once for all event in the life of a Christian, when they have become united to Christ and in so doing, united in His death, burial and resurrection.

The Lord's Supper is repeated frequently because it reminds us of our need for ongoing cleansing and ongoing renewal of our communion with God.

And that's where those two differ to some extent. But they both focus on the fact that the Gospel is primarily about reconciliation with God.

There are many subsidiary benefits to the Gospel, but it is essentially about human beings who are in a state of separation from God, being reconciled to God and restored to a relationship of intimacy where He, by His Holy Spirit, lives within us to reproduce in us something of the character and holiness of God.

What I want to do for three Sunday mornings is look with you into these verses in Romans Chapter 6 to see what Paul teaches here about baptism.

We baptize people in this church fairly regularly. We do it on Sunday evenings, which means a lot of you who don't come on Sunday evenings have possibly never witnessed a baptism here.

It may be some of you have never been baptized, though you are Christian. And it may be some of you have never witnessed a baptism at all. But we cannot read the New Testament without understanding that is an important ingredient in Christian experience.

Eleven of the New Testament books talk about baptism in some way or other. And in the book of Acts there are nine separate instances of people being baptized.

The book of Acts records the first years of the early church and it is very interesting to look at those nine instances, as I have done, and to realize that every single one of them took place immediately that the person baptized had become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and had become forgiven and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

There is not one instance in the New Testament of somebody becoming a Christian one day and days later or weeks later or months later, or worse, may I say, years later, being baptized. There is no instance of that in the New Testament.

Now generally, of course, we would encourage a period of time between conversion and baptism for a number of reasons. For the individual themselves it is important that they are sure of what has taken place, that they really have come into a living relationship with Christ.

For churches it is important that we are sure the people really are born again in the Spirit.

I remember once being in a baptism in a river in England. And it was a summer's evening and a number of young people were baptized. And the person who was speaking preached a very powerful message. And actually it took place in a river just below a bridge. And there were some folks the other side of the bridge and people walking by; it was quite a popular area, say, "Hey, come down and see what's going on."

"What's going on?"

"We're having a baptism."

"Oh, that should be interesting." So they came down. So lots of non-Christians were there.

And the speaker at the end said, "If you are not yet a Christian, I invite you to become a Christian today, and not only that, but to come down here and I will baptize you right now in the river."

And it was a very dynamic occasion. And one teenage girl did come forward – nothing to change into – just got baptized in all her summer clothes and out soaking wet, went home.

The only thing is we never saw that girl again. So, you know, there are reasons why we say, "Well, let's have a little time lapse here to make sure people really understand what discipleship is, what it means to be a Christian."

But actually the reason why some people are saved and then they are not baptized is simply because they neglect to do so. Maybe they don't understand something of its importance.

You know I am always a little bit surprised when I go to a baptism and somebody says, "Well, I was saved 15 years ago and now I am being baptized, or five years ago or even two years ago."

And actually to not be baptized is to be disobedient. The Great Commission that Jesus gave in different forms several times to His disciples includes baptizing.

In Matthew 28:19 He said,

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey..."

In Mark 16:15 He said,

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

And therefore to not baptize is negligence on the part of a church that doesn't take it seriously and it is disobedience on the part of a Christian who doesn't take this seriously.

I have been serving in this church for eight years now- it was eight years ago this weekend that Hilary and I came, we began ministry here.

And I have never talked about baptism on Sunday mornings in any meaningful way. On Sunday evenings when we have a baptism service I normally give a short ten – fifteen-minute maybe explanation. But that doesn't give time to go into the real significance of this.

And so I felt in my heart that over these next three weeks I want to explain baptism. And the reason why I want to explain it over three weeks is because there are three movements in baptism.

There is dying with Christ – that is, going down into the water. We have died with Christ.

We have been buried with Him, symbolized by being under the water.

We have risen with Christ, symbolized by coming out of the water.

And I want to talk about dying with Christ this morning, about being buried with Christ next week. And I am looking forward to next week because I have never heard a sermon on being buried with Christ, so I am looking forward to hearing what I have to say. I

have started thinking about it, but I am discovering that it is repeated a number of times – buried with Him, buried with Him, buried with Him – and why it is important to know that you are buried as well as that you have died with Christ. And then of course, risen to walk in newness of life.

But in explaining this, I am not just talking about baptism; I am actually explaining the Gospel, because baptism is an outward physical expression of an inward spiritual experience. And it is the inward spiritual experience, the inward spiritual truth I want you to get hold of.

And there are going to be some of you here this morning, some of you watching on television and you are not yet a Christian. I want you to listen to this because what I am going to explain explains what it means to be a Christian and what it means to die with Christ, what the cross of Jesus Christ is about, what it means to be buried with Him and risen. And baptism is just a symbol, just the outward symbol, but it is the symbol of something that is crucial if we are going to know and enjoy the Christian life.

Now a baptism of course doesn't have to take place in a church. Normally that's what we do. I am standing right now on a platform that I am glad is a strong one, underneath which is an empty baptistery so I don't want to go through.

But you know they didn't baptize in the church in the early church for the simple reason they didn't have any church buildings. They didn't have church buildings for about 300 years.

So Jesus was baptized in a river, for instance. The Ethiopian eunuch, if you remember that story, travelling through the desert, and Philip who came and pointed him to Christ and he said, "Here is water. What stops me being baptized?" And they must have come across some kind of pool or pond and he was baptized in the pond.

The Philippian jailer in the New Testament, who Paul led to Christ in a jail, baptized him there and then. There must have been a tank or something in the jail.

It doesn't matter where it is you have been baptized. The first baptism I ever conducted was very informal. It was in a cattle-drinking tank on a farm. In fact we have a picture of it right here.

I was about 20 years of age and we were running a youth group on a Friday night and we were having a Bible Study on a Wednesday night. And this young man whose name was Tony – I had the joy of leading him to Christ and he said to me, "Will you baptize me?"

"Well, where are we going to baptize you?"

"Well, let's find somewhere." So we found this dirty old tank. I had to stand on the outside, so I thought I was going to stay dry. But he half emptied the tank when he went down, so I got soaked. But you can't see in the picture, but there were dozens of young

people. I said, “Bring your friends. Invite everybody to come.” There were folks who came to the youth club and some of them just came around. We explained what was happening. And I baptized him in the dirtiest cattle-drinking tank you could imagine.

It doesn't matter where you are baptized because it is simply the outward act that demonstrates an inward spiritual experience and it's that I want to talk about this morning and then we will come back to baptism as the expression of that.

In Ephesians Chapter 4 Paul says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. But when you read the New Testament you realize there are actually two baptisms. It talks about baptism with the Spirit, or by the Spirit, and it talks about baptism in water.

But if there is only one baptism, then clearly baptism in water is a picture of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Now that phrase baptism with or by the Spirit occurs only seven times in the New Testament. Five of those times are referring to the Day of Pentecost (you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit) and that was of course the great inauguration of this new church era when the Spirit of God came to live within people.

Then there is one reference to a man called Cornelius who was a Gentile convert and it is spoken of there as him being baptized with the Holy Spirit.

But none of them explain what that means. But the seventh reference is in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 when Paul explains it. And he says,

“We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

And the one body into which we were baptized by the Spirit – you will read from its context – is Christ Himself. You are baptized into Christ.

What that means is that you are united to Christ, says Paul, in such a way that your union with Christ means that what is true of Christ becomes true of you. You are baptized into His history. That is, that when you are united to Christ, what was true of Christ becomes true of you.

Let me explain what this means. I just read to you from Romans Chapter 6. And of course Romans Chapter 6 follows Romans Chapter 5. If you read Romans Chapter 5 it talks there about Christ died for me. Romans Chapter 6 talks about,

“ I died with Christ.”

Now we have to understand Chapter 5 if we are to understand Chapter 6. What does it mean Christ died for me?

Romans 5:6:

“When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”

Romans 5:8:

“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

What does it mean that Christ died for me? Why did Christ die for me?

Well there are two things in the character of God that make the cross of Jesus Christ necessary. And these two things are these: Number 1, God is just. Number 2, God is merciful.

Now we will all be in full agreement about that. God is a just God. God is a merciful God. But when you stop to think about that, those two things are actually incompatible with one another, because to be just means you give people what they deserve – that’s what being just is. Just means tit for tat. Mercy means that you don’t give people what they deserve.

Now if justice is giving what people deserve and mercy is not giving what people deserve, how do you give what people deserve and not give what people deserve at the same time? These are incompatible qualities.

Well there is only one way. I am going to give you a very inadequate simple illustration, which explains this aspect of it.

If I was driving my car along Sheppard Avenue outside this church here in Toronto at 100 km an hour because it is at night and there is not much about, I might notice in my rear mirror after a while another car with a flashing light travelling at 110 km an hour, and it pulls me over. A big guy gets out, comes up and says, “What was your speed?”

And I say, “Ah, about 100.”

“What’s the limit on this road?”

“50.” (What is the limit on this road – what is it – 50? I don’t need to know because I go below it anyway.)

He’d say, “Do you realize you are breaking the law?”

“Yeah, I guess so.”

And so imagine that he summons me to appear in court. (I don’t think it works that way; I think what happens is they fine you on the spot. Gerry, is that what happens? I mean you will know all about that.)

But for the sake of my illustration, I go to the court and the magistrate says to me, “Were you driving your car at 100 km an hour down Sheppard Avenue at 12:35 a.m. on such and such a date?”

And I say, “Yes.”

“Do you know that is breaking the law?”

“Yeah, I realize.”

“I am going to fine you” (what’s the going rate? Gerry? What do you mean you don’t know? Depends on what? How much above the limit, huh? Well what’s the last fine you paid? \$250? Okay, \$250).

Okay, so he says, “I am going to fine you \$250” and I say, “Oh, \$250, man, what am I going to do?”

The magistrate has to act justly – that is his business. But if he is going to act justly, he cannot act mercifully, which is his prerogative if there are mitigating circumstances, etc. etc. He has got one or the other choice, and he chooses to act justly, fine me \$250 and I sit there saying, “Oh boy, \$250” and a friend of mine (I don’t have friends like this, but pretend I did), comes to me and says, “How much was that fine?”

“\$250.”

“You know, I have my chequebook with me. I am going to give you \$250.” And he writes in the name of the court \$250, hands it over and the records of that court say this: “Charles Price. Crime: Speeding on Sheppard Avenue. Guilty. Punishment: Fine of \$250. Paid.”

When I walk out of that court, I am the recipient of mercy. I haven’t paid a penny. As far as the court is concerned, justice has been done because a third party has stepped into the situation, has addressed and satisfied the justice of the court. And in so doing, has mediated to me mercy.

Now that is inadequate in a lot of ways to illustrate the cross, but it illustrates this one point that the soul that sins shall die. And under the justice of God, nobody in this room this morning has any hope at all because we are sinners.

But Jesus Christ, who, sinless Himself, therefore as a man, has no sin that needs to be atoned for, stood in our place, addressed the just wrath of God and satisfied the just wrath of God. That as a result of that, you and I may be the recipients of mercy and we may be forgiven.

But it is not because God says, “Okay I will let you go free just because I am being kind to you.” We wouldn’t need the cross if God exercised that prerogative. But He is a just God; justice had to be met.

And therefore we have to understand Jesus Christ was our substitute offering Himself in place of me before a just God and satisfying His justice so you and I might be forgiven.

Having said that, let me ask you a question. And I am going to ask you in a moment to respond to this question.

When you come and confess your sin to God and you are seeking His forgiveness, do you appeal to His justice or do you appeal to His mercy?

Now if you appeal to His justice – I am going to ask you just to raise your hand – we’ll take a poll on this. If you appeal to the justice of God, would you raise your hand? And there are two or three hands – not many – that are raised.

If you appeal to His mercy, would you raise your hands? Okay, thank you – that’s most of you. I asked you to do that, because I thought you might get it wrong and you did. And it is very important we understand this.

Do you know the verse in 1 John 1:9? It says,

“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

It is on the basis of justice that God forgives you, not on the basis of mercy. Now God is merciful. His mercy was demonstrated in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus, to act as our substitute.

But because Jesus Christ has satisfied the justice of God, the fantastic consequence of that is that we are forgiven on the basis of His justice. In other words, if I may put it in these terms, God is legally and morally obligated to forgive because Christ has satisfied the just requirements of our sin.

Now why is this important? Because if you appeal to the mercy of God as the grounds of your forgiveness, you are very likely to get tempted after a while, “Maybe I have sinned too many times. This is the fiftieth time I have confessed this sin, or the 500th time or the 5000th time. You know, this is one too many times. God surely isn’t going to forgive me yet again.”

If you appeal to His mercy you appeal to God’s whim, if I may put it that way. And you may have doubts.

But if you appeal to His justice, you may be certain of your forgiveness.

Let me illustrate this.

Supposing going home from here one Sunday morning, you pull into a coffee shop because you are desperate for a cup of coffee. And you go up to the desk and you say, “I would like a large coffee please.”

And when the guy produces it, you say, “You know, you’ll never guess what happened but I forgot to bring any money with me today. I am sorry I don’t have any money. Could you just give me the coffee?”

And he says, “I can’t just give you the coffee. This is a business we are running here. You know, this is \$1.50.”

“Yeah, but I don’t have any money. Just give me the coffee. I mean, how often do you throw out coffee every day? Don’t you make new coffee every twenty minutes and throw out half the pot if it’s still running, huh? I mean you are not going to go bankrupt by giving me a cup of coffee. Just give me a cup of coffee.”

“I can’t just give you a cup of coffee.”

“Yes you can.”

“Oh, alright here you are. Here’s the cup of coffee. Don’t tell anybody.”

Next week you are on your way home and you stop for a cup of coffee again and you go up and say, “Hi, I would like a cup of coffee please.” And they produce it and you say, “You’ll never guess what. You know, I didn’t bring any money last week. I didn’t bring any money this week either. Could you just give me...?”

“I can’t just give you the cup of coffee.”

“Yes you can. You didn’t go bankrupt last week. Come on, you didn’t get into trouble last week. Just give me the cup of coffee.”

“I can’t just give you a cup of coffee. You know this is a business. Go on.”

“You won’t miss it. What’s your problem?”

And because there is a line of people behind you, “Alright, here’s your coffee.”

Next week you are on your way home and you need a cup of coffee and you pull in and you go up to the counter and the guy says, “Hey, listen man, get out of here. I don’t want to see you in this place.”

Why? You are appealing to his kindness, to his mercy.

But just supposing I know you and I go to the coffee shop a little in advance and say, “Hey, I have got a friend of mine – every Sunday morning, you know, about 1:00 he will be on his way home. He will want to drop in for a cup of coffee. Here’s 50 bucks – just make sure he has his coffee.”

And you pull in and you go up and you say, “I’d like a cup of coffee please.”

“What’s your name? Oh, no problem.”

“I forgot to bring any money.”

“No problem at all. Here you are. Here’s your cup of coffee.”

You go back the second week and you walk in and you say, “Hi, could I have a cup of coffee please?”

“Oh, sure, do you want a large one? Here is it.”

You go back the third week and they say, “Hey, we’ve been waiting for you. Come on. Get your coffee. Do you want a donut to go with it?”

What’s the difference? You are appealing to justice. There is money in the till.

Listen, I don’t want to in any way, in any way at all, cheapen what it means to be forgiven, but God forgives you, not because He is kind, though He is, not because He is merciful, though He is; He forgives you because He is just. He forgives you because there is money in the till – the precious blood of Christ.

We are redeemed, says Peter, not by the blood of bulls and goats but the precious blood of Christ. That is the currency on which we are forgiven.

Now you are going to say, “Wow, that sounds like I can just sin and just come back and be forgiven.” Do you know, if you are thinking that this morning, you have understood the gospel because that is exactly what Paul says in Romans 6:1, in the light of the fact Christ died for me, he says,

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning?”

Wow, is this permission to go on sinning then that grace may abound because God continually gives me what I don’t deserve but which has justly been obtained through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he answers the question:

“By no means!”

And this is why:

“We died to sin.”

Not only did Christ die for me, but I died in Christ. What in the world does that mean? Romans 6 is full of that. Verse 2:

“We died to sin.”

Verse 3:

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

Verse 4:

“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.”

Verse 5:

“If we have been united with him like this in his death...”

Verse 6:

“We know that our old self was crucified with him...”

Verse 8:

“Now if we died with Christ...”

Verse 11:

“Count yourselves dead to sin...”

When the question arises does this mean then we can go on sinning because grace is available, forgiveness is available, you have appealed to the justice of God?

No, he says, because it isn’t just that Christ died for you; you died in Christ, and in so doing, you died to sin.

You see what that means is this: that what happened to Christ on the cross is deemed to have happened to us.

“Don’t you know,” says Verse 3, “that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

That is, that you are united with Christ in His death. It's as though you died. It's as though you paid the price, but in the person of a substitute.

You see, go back to the law court illustration being fined \$250. If I go back and I say, "You know, I feel my conscience is a bit disturbed about this because I didn't pay anything. I want to give a \$20 donation." And I go to the clerk and go, "Can I just give \$20 towards this?"

And he'd say, "No, no, no. It says, 'Fine: \$250. Paid: \$250.' You have paid."

"Well I didn't pay that."

"I don't care who paid it. As far as the court is concerned, you have paid it. If you add \$20 you are going to unbalance the books."

That's why, by the way, there is no such thing as penance. You don't have to run around the block twenty times to amend your sins. You can't add to it. But the record says, "Charles Price. Crime: speeding. Guilty. Fined \$250. Paid."

If I go back to the clerk and say, "Have I paid?"

"Yes, you have paid."

It's in the person of a substitute who gave the money on my behalf. But I have paid. I am free.

You have been crucified with Christ. And it's interesting that in Romans 6 – I won't stress this now – but he says of these issues, "Don't you know? Don't you know? Don't you know?"

In other words, have you not grasped this? Is this why your Christian life is fumbling along at the bottom all the time because you haven't understood this that in the reckoning of God you have been united with Christ? When Christ died Charles Price was crucified with Christ on the cross.

When you know that you start to spell the Christian life differently. There are two ways to spell the Christian life. One way to spell it is D-O – do, do, do. What do I have to do? I am asked that all the time. "What do I have to do?"

The way to spell the Christian life is D-O-N-E – done. It's not what we do; it's what Christ has done. And I have become united with Him and therefore it has all been done.

Let me read carefully Verse 9:

"We know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again" (and neither can you); "death no longer has mastery over him" (nor over you is the

implication.). “The death he died, he died to sin once for all” (so did you); “but the life he lives, he lives to God” (and so must you.)

“In the same way, count yourselves dead...”

Same way as what? Same way as Christ died.

“...Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

I read about a church where a young lady became a Christian – I don’t know if she was young actually; I think she was middle-aged. And she had a history that was well known. It was a history of sin – I don’t know the details of that. But she came to know Christ, became very enthusiastic about her relationship with Christ and got involved in some of the work in the church.

And they had a church meeting on one occasion and somebody raised the question of the fact that this woman was involved in some Christian ministry. And he said, “This woman has a reputation that is known in this community. I am not sure it is good that she is in a position like this.”

Somebody else came up with, “Yeah, yeah, I have been concerned about that myself.”

And so quite a lively discussion began to take place about this woman.

And somebody wisely got up at one point and said, “What is on trial here in this discussion is not this woman and her past. But what is on trial here is the blood of Jesus Christ. Is it sufficient to cleanse her?”

And when you and I are in a sense of feeling of condemnation, sometimes of self-accusation, sometimes a feeling of dirt and sometimes loathsome about ourselves, as so many are; what is on trial in your mind is not you; it’s the blood of Jesus because it is sufficient.

It is because He didn’t just die for me. I died in Him and the consequence is that I am a word that comes up often in Romans – I am justified. That’s a very important word. Not mercified, as though this is to do with mercy. Justified – that is to do with justice.

Now what does the word justified mean? When I was in Sunday school we were taught a little play on words. It said justified means it’s just as if I’d never sinned. And that was very helpful as a child.

That really isn’t what it means. The effect may be it’s just as if I had never sinned but the word justified is a legal term.

When capital punishment was still in force in Britain, Scottish law is different to English law and when somebody was hanged in Scotland, they would announce it by pinning a

notice outside the prison. It was a tradition; it was done every time somebody was hanged. And the wording was the same and it would say this – it might say:

“On such and such a date at Barlinnie Prison, Glasgow, so and so (naming the criminal) was justified at 9 a.m.”

What do they mean? He was justified at 9 a.m. – that’s the moment he was hanged. Did it mean it was as though he hadn’t done it? No, of course he had done it. But it meant the case closed at 9 a.m. this morning.

The judge took off his wig and went home. The lawyers assigned to his case had to find a new job, a new case. It’s over. There is no ground in which this incident for which this man has been hanged can ever reappear in a court of law. He has been justified. He has paid the price and satisfied the law.

What does it mean for you and me to be justified? It means the case is over. You weren’t hanged; you were crucified. And that’s why the devil has no grounds for his favourite ministry, which is of being the accuser of the brethren. It’s one of the ministries he is described as having, if ministry is the right word for it - he accuses people.

And that’s why next week we are going to talk about the fact why not only are we crucified with Christ but we are buried with Him.

And we need to understand that everything that warranted death; all my sin has not only been crucified but it has been taken and it is buried. And if you don’t bury your sin that has been cleansed and forgiven, it will continue to haunt you.

And we’ll look at the burial because the burial of Jesus should never have taken place. He should have been thrown into the valley where all crucified men were thrown, called the Valley of Gehenna.

But according to prophecy, He had to be buried and He was, and we’ll explain next week why He was buried. But why the significance of knowing what it is – “Don’t you know you are not only crucified with Him but buried with him and then risen, not to the old life bounced back, but to a new life imparted to Him and imparted now to us.”

Baptism is only the picture of this. But this is the spiritual experience, the spiritual reality of which baptism is a very important picture.

I went to a wedding yesterday and as part of the wedding, they exchanged rings. My ring was given me by my wife 29 years ago last month – 29 years last month. And when she gave it to me the wording that she used (because we were told what to say) was, “With this ring, I thee wed.” And she slid it on my finger and I said, “With this ring, I thee wed” and slid it on her finger.

Now you might think, “Oh, with this ring you wed me? Is that all you marry me with?”

No, this is not what makes me married. This is the symbol of my marriage. It is an endless circle (is that the idea of it? I don't know). Anyway, it just means if anybody is nosey, they can look and see and I am glad my wife has one so people don't think, "Uh – hmm." But this doesn't make you married.

Baptism does not unite you with Christ; it is the symbol of your being united with Christ. You see, you can go to a jeweller and you can buy a wedding ring, stick it on your finger and walk down the road hoping to give the impression you are married and it's a total fraud. It's just a piece of jewellery.

You can be baptized and it's just a piece of spiritual jewellery. It doesn't mean anything. There's not legal standing at all.

But if you have been brought into that relationship with Jesus Christ, I think – and we'll say more about this in the next couple of weeks – Scripture seems to make it very important that this is not just between you and God; it's between you and God, it's between you and your family, between you and your friends.

And as I will point out to you also, that it is between you and the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms, because he tells in Ephesians Chapter 3 that through the church (what does that mean, what does that involve?) His manifold wisdom is demonstrated to principalities and powers in the heavenly realms.

In other words (and those are evil powers by the way), those evil powers are watching. And we demonstrate to them, "Hey, Charles Price, wicked - sinful, corrupt - has stood before a holy God and satisfied His justice because he has been crucified with Christ.

And baptism is demonstrated to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms, "You have lost me. I am buried, I am dead; I am buried. And the life I now live is a new life. It's the life of Jesus Christ in me."

My primary concern this morning is not whether you are baptized. My primary concern this morning is whether you are forgiven, which is the way into the Christian life.

There's a lot more once you get in there. But the way in is to come to the cross and know that you have been forgiven and cleansed because Christ died for you and you have been united with Him, so you died in Him. In the legal council of God, I was crucified with Him, buried with Him, risen now to walk in newness of life.

And what that means is that you have become a New Testament Christian. That's what being a Christian is. It's not being part of a religious club; it's being in relationship with God, reconciled to God through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I am going to lead you in prayer as we close and I want you to listen to all three weeks about baptism before we talk about, "Okay, do I need to be baptized and what is this

going to involve?" I want you to make sure this morning that you are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus.

You may be a young person here, you may be an older person, you may have been around for years, but did you know that the justice of God was satisfied in the cross of Christ, and you, on the basis of that justice, can be cleansed and forgiven and reconciled?

I am going to lead you in a prayer, which I invite you to pray with me if you have never come to know Christ in this way for yourself. Let's pray together.