

INTRODUCTION:

If you were here this morning, you know that we studied a passage from **Colossians 2** concerning the practice of baptism.

- We learned that baptism is one of the most twisted subjects in the religious world right now, but we also learned that it is one of the most important subjects that we could study.
- We reminded ourselves that baptism is very closely connected to our faith in God's work.
- In other words, as we faithfully obey the Lord by being immersed in water, our sins are forgiven as they are covered by the blood of Christ.

This evening, I'd like for us to conclude with what we might describe as "**Baptism—Part 2,**" as we move ahead one chapter and look at the first half of **Colossians 3**.

- As I studied for this morning's lesson, I was aware that most of us have already been baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, and that our primary struggle is probably that of being forgetful.
- A number of years ago, researchers at the Mayo Clinic did a study where they found that many people today suffer from what they described as "**information overload.**"
- We are bombarded with so much information, that we are literally forced to forget things.
- Most of us are so busy that we struggle with our memory.

I recently read a story about a politician who was out trying to drum up votes, and so he went to spend some time at a retirement home.

- As he walked around introducing himself to the residents of the home trying to get their support, he approached an elderly woman in the craft room.
- He walked up to her and said, "**Ma'am, do you know who I am?**"
- The woman did not even look up from her project, and she said, "**No sir, but if you walk down the hallway, there is a nurse who can help you out.**"
- I guess she assumed that he was another resident who had simply forgotten who he was!

But all of us struggle with being forgetful.

- And so, as I studied about baptism, I suddenly realized that a vast majority of the passages concerning baptism are written to Christians.
- Most of the time, we will use the passages in **Romans, Galatians, Colossians,** and **1 Peter** to prove that people need to be baptized (and certainly that is a valid use of those scriptures).
- But most of the New Testament passages on baptism were written to those who were already saved as a reminder of their new birth—as a reminder of what they had done.
- In **Romans 6**, for example, Paul says, "**Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism....**"
- In **Galatians 3**, Paul said, "**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**"
- And in **Colossians 2**, as we studied this morning, Paul was also speaking of something that had happened in their past, when he referred to, "**...having been buried with Him in baptism....**"
- In other words, much of what we read about baptism in the New Testament has been written by way of reminder.
- And so this evening, I would like for those of us who are Christians to remember how our lives changed on the day of our baptism.
- On this first Sunday of 2010, I would like for those of us who are Christians to remember that day that we received newness of life.

To the Apostle Paul, his baptism was a reference point—a mile-marker in his life.

- We can say the same thing, and that reference point serves as a very important reminder.
- I know that in my own life, I was baptized in February of 1982, when I was almost 12 years old—that would be just about 28 years ago.
- I remember very clearly being on vacation at the time and letting my dad know that I was ready.
- I remember us using the pool at the resort that were at in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.
- I remember my brothers and mom standing by the side of the pool as I made the Good Confession and expressed that I wanted my sins to be washed away.
- I remember standing next to my Dad in the water and I remember him letting me down into the water.
- But more than anything, I remember that my faith was in the power of God who raised His own Son, from the dead.
- That simple act has now become the backdrop for my entire life.

And so this evening, as all of us think about the time when we were baptized, I would like for us to look together at the first **15 verses** of **Colossians 3**.

- 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*
- 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.*
- 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*
- 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.*
- 6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,*
- 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.*
- 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.*
- 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,*
- 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—*
- 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.*
- 12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*
- 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*
- 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*
- 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

As we look back over this section of Scripture, I'd like for us to notice at least three changes that took place at the time we were baptized.

- These are three things that happened in my own life, but I think that all of us can apply these changes in our own lives as well.

I. First of all, when I obeyed the gospel, **I BEGAN TO SEE LIFE FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE**.

Let's look back at the first four verses, because in those first four verses, we see that we have been ***“raised up with Christ,”*** and that ***“our old life is hidden with Christ in God.”***

- I guess at just a few months before my 12th birthday, there was a whole lot I did not know about sin.
- And yet even at that age, I knew that baptism was the point where my life would change forever.
- At that point, I knew that my priorities had changed, because from that point on, I was to *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”*
- From that point on, I knew that I would need to do everything in my power to honor the Lord and to live according to the sacrifice that was made on my behalf.

In **verse 3**, Paul very specifically says that we *“...have died and [our] life is hidden with Christ in God.”*

- At the moment of our baptism, our worldly mind died.
- We set aside the life of sin, just like the soul leaves the physical body at the time of death.
- I don’t know if you have seen some of the pictures of the baptisms that have taken place among our troops in Iraq.
- But in some of the pictures, it looks like the soldiers literally dug a hole in the ground, surrounded the hole with sandbags, and lined the hole with plastic before filling the hole with water.
- They were literally *“buried”* in baptism—just as people are also buried in the water here at this building.
- But when we are buried, we do not stay buried!
- We are raised up out of the water, and we look at life from a new perspective.

In **verse 4**, Paul refers to the Lord with some of the most beautiful words in the entire Bible, as he refers to *“Christ, who is our life.”*

- This is certainly a thought that was very dear to the Apostle Paul.
- Paul understood that once we have been raised up with Christ in baptism, that the Lord has become *“our life.”*
- Our priorities have changed, and everything else in life is seen from that perspective.
- You might remember what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi in **Philippians 1:21**.
- Paul said, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*
- When he became a Christian, Paul was able to look at his own life from a different point of view.
- Even earlier, in **Galatians 2:20**, Paul said, *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”*
- Paul could write those words, because when he became a Christian, he understood that living for Jesus is the most important priority we could ever have.
- So first of all, then, as I look back on my own baptism, I know that at that point I began to look at life from a completely different perspective.
- At that point, I truly began *“seeking the things above.”*

II. There is a second change that took place in my life when I was baptized—I see it reflected in **verses 5-11**—but when I became a Christian, **I BEGAN TO LIVE BY A NEW STANDARD. I STARTED LIVING WITH A NEW MORALITY.**

And again, at only 11 years old, there was a whole lot that I did not understand about sin...but I understood that sin was offensive to God.

- In fact, I can remember for several months before my baptism crying myself to sleep—worried about my salvation because of the things that I had done.
- But when I become a Christian, I started living with a new intensity to always do the right thing.
- I remember going back to school and thinking, **“I can do this!”**

Several years ago, someone wrote in to Dear Abby and said, **“Dear Abby, I am having an affair on my wife with two different women and I don’t know what to do. Please give me some advice but don’t give me any of that morality stuff.”**

- On this particular question, Abby had a wonderful answer.
- She said, **“Dear sir, the only thing that makes us different from the animals is morality. Maybe you should write a veterinarian.”**
- More people today need to hear that answer!
- Most of us can think of people who probably also need to be seeing a veterinarian!

Paul lists a number of sins that sound like they were taken from stories in this morning’s newspaper.

- In **verse 5**, he refers to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which amounts to the worship of idols).
- In **verses 8-9**, he refers to anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, and lying.
- Many of these issues are things that you and me, to a degree, deal with on a day to day basis.
- All of us will struggle from time to time with anger, and lying, and abusive speech.
- Paul doesn’t say that there will never be a struggle, but he says that when we became Christians, we put those things aside.
- When we put on Christ in baptism, we started by taking off our old life of sin and death.
- We threw those old clothes away.
- And so Paul is saying that our standard has changed—we no longer live to please the flesh, but we live to please God.

Have we had a problem with sexual immorality in the past?

- Once we have been raised up with Christ, we need to be different.

Have we had a problem with anger in the past?

- Once we have been raised up with Christ, we need to be different.

Have we had a problem with abusive speech in the past?

- Once we have been raised up with Christ, we need to be different.

When a parent tells their son to go put on a clean shirt, it is understood that he will start by taking off the old one!

- We do not put on clean clothes on top of those that are dirty.
- And in a similar way, Paul would remind us that when we became Christians, we stopped living in sin, and we started living for God.

First of all, then, when I was baptized, I began to see life from a new perspective.

- But secondly, though, I also began to live with a new enthusiasm to do the right thing.
- I began living with a new morality—knowing that my past sins had been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and knowing that I could do better in the future.

III. There is a third change that took place in my life when I was baptized, and that is, I BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE LIFE IN A NEW FAMILY.

Did you notice what Paul told us to do? In **verses 12-15**, Paul said...

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Did you notice what all of these things have in common?

- As far as I can tell, either all or almost all of these things can only be done with one another.
- How can I be compassionate...without another person?
- How can I be kind...apart from someone else?
- How can I demonstrate humility, or gentleness, or patience...without another person?
- All of these qualities are things that we must demonstrate in the family of God!
- And so Paul is saying that when we become Christians, we become a part of a spiritual family.
- When I became a Christian, I gained mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and as I became older and started teaching and baptizing people on my own, I gained children in the Lord.
- I gained family in far-off places where I had never been.
- When I went away to college, I discovered new family along the way as I stopped to worship.
- As I drove my old Datsun 210, I had the opportunity to call various churches along the way and ask for advice on car repairs.

Some people may picture the church as an institution, or perhaps even as a building, or maybe as an organization, but one of the most exciting is the picture of the church as a family.

- And so, at the time of our baptism, we were born into the Family of God.
- And when Paul tells us to put on a heart of compassion, and so on, he is telling us to do some things that can only be done through relationships with other people.
- If I come to worship and only see the back of someone's head for an hour every week or if I only talk to someone for a few minutes after class, chances are I will never need to forgive that person.
- Chances are I will never have an opportunity to show compassion on that person.
- Chances are I will never be able to show gentleness or patience to that person.
- And so Paul is telling us that we are part of a family, and that we should treat people in that way.

This means that we need to get to know one another.

- We have a number of activities coming up over the next few months here at this congregation—things that should help us get closer together as a family.
- The ladies Bible study is held on Tuesdays once a month.
- We have snac-night fellowships on the 3rd Sunday of every month.
- We had an area-wide singing in Centralia this afternoon.
- We have holiday parties and Thursday Discussions...
- I mention all of this, simply to say that families love one another, and it is difficult to love as we should if we only see each other for an hour every week.

SUMMARY:

This morning, we have reminded ourselves that when we stepped out of the waters of baptism, the Christian life was just beginning.

- We began to see life from a new perspective.
- We began to live with a new determination to do the right thing.
- We began to experience life in a new family.

Instead of forgetting who we are or what we have done, this morning I'd like for us to remember.

- We need to remember the enthusiasm we had at first and then live with that enthusiasm during the coming week.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION:

There may be someone here this morning who has never been buried with Christ in baptism.

- If that is the case, then you have never known the excitement that we have been studying this evening.
- If you are ready, though, to obey the good news, we would love to see that.
- We would love to see you confess the name of Jesus and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins.
- If you have any questions, we would love to study with you.
- But if you are ready to do it now, you can let us know as we sing the next song.
- Let's stand and sing...