

Adam Sandiford

The sermon this week is titled The Gospel, Righteousness and Baptism. The scripture readings are Romans 1:16-17 and First Corinthians 15:1-4. I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew then to the Gentile. For in the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. A righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith. Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you which you received and on which you've taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise you believed in vain. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

Don Smith

So today we're going to be talking about the seriousness and the solemnness of baptism. There you go. But I do want to talk a little bit about baptism today and then mainly in the churches of Christ. Baptism is just part of our heritage. And I just want to spend some time talking about this. We're in the book of Romans, and we're talking about righteousness. And we're also talking about the gospel, and how baptism flows into all of this. Paul says in Romans one, as we read this morning, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation for all who believe first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God is being revealed: a righteousness that is by faith, from first to last, just as it's written, the righteous will live by faith.

Righteousness is not a word we use very often in our society. If I were to ask you when was the last time outside of a church setting, that you use the word righteousness in a normal conversation. I'd be surprised if anybody said I use it all the time. It's just not a word we use. But righteousness really means just being right with God. God's wanting us to be right with Him, and being right with God. And also connected to that is the gospel. Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Paul will also explain what the gospel is reminding us of. Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel, the gospel that you have believed that I preached to and on which you've taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved if you hold firmly to these things I preached to you, otherwise you believed in vain. For what I received from the Lord, I passed on to us first importance that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures that he was buried that he rose again on the third day, appearing to many according to the Scriptures, so when Paul talks about the gospel, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and righteousness being made right with God, baptism flows – no pun intended – baptism flows in and out of this. And I just want to spend some time talking about this.

Now, a couple of questions to begin with, how many of you (raise your hands) how many of you have been baptized? Okay. Now here might be a very strange question. How many of you remember your baptism? I'd be surprised if you didn't. How many of you do not remember your baptism? And sometimes, that is the case. Sometimes, when, especially children, young children are baptized their memory, they don't, they just don't remember. So it's often called a christening. And I just want to spend some time talking about baptism and the significance of the gospel and righteousness, and maybe just some quirky things that we don't really think of very often. Matthew writes a gospel you know, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew records Jesus as he's about to ready to leave the earth. And Jesus says, these very familiar words: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me, Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and

the Holy Spirit, and I will be with you always, even until the end of the age. Now, it's interesting that Matthew records that significant event Paul picks up on this theme throughout his gospels, not so much the baptism part, which is Paul talks about baptism often, but all authority, in heaven and on earth. That's a theme that Paul will run with all the way through his letters. It's also what John picks up in Revelation, the new heaven and the new earth. 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 the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So Matthew records, Jesus saying all this, but we have no record of Matthew being baptized.

Matthew records it, Matthew writes it. So we're going to assume that Matthew himself would have been baptized. It's interesting, however, that we don't always have the specifics of who was baptized when where they were baptized. And what—what's it like? Mark, which was in chronological the first gospel that was written records Jesus talking about baptism, when he says to His disciples, 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. What's interesting in Mark chapter 16, is Jesus is commissioning his disciples to go into the world. But when you read Matthew chapter, Mark, chapter 16, there is this lack of belief. And so Jesus is saying to His disciples do not go out into the world, preaching the gospel, and baptizing people. If you don't believe it. You need to believe this. You need to be baptized. You need to go into the world and share this gospel, preach it and be baptized. But what's so fascinating to me is that the 12 disciples that spent so much time with Jesus, we really have no record of their baptisms. I'm not suggesting for a moment that they weren't baptized. But it's interesting to me the events in Scripture, who was baptized and the interest around it all, Luke, out of Matthew, Mark, Luke, Luke writes most extensively about baptism, but not in the book of Luke. Luke writes the book of somebody helped me – Acts – we have some 11 separate stories of people being baptized, and they're wonderful stories. But let's sort of go back at the beginning of Acts, Luke records all of this. Jesus has already ascended into heaven. And the gift of the Holy Spirit is being poured out on the disciples, and they're preaching the gospel. And it's an amazing event. It's just a remarkable story. And if you forgotten about it, you may want to reread it and Acts chapter two. It's a remarkable story. And so people are all gathering around at Pentecost, this festival, and Peter stands up and says, men of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man of credited to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which he did among you as you yourselves. No, he was handed over to you by God set purpose and for knowledge, and you with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, for it was impossible for death to keep its grasp on him. And then he says, therefore go into all the world and preach the gospel. And it's, it's a beautiful story of sharing this. And when the people heard this that thought they were cut to their heart.

Now, I'm not sure everybody's stories the same. But how many of you before you were baptized, wrestled with being baptized? How many of you tried to make that decision and found it an easy thing to do? How many of us were nervous? How many of us, I really want to do this, but I'm not sure I really am ready to do this. But I want to be ready for this. And then there was always at least for me, a little bit of a guilt because I heard these stories these, these scary stories. But, but what if Jesus comes back? And you still hadn't decided to be baptized? And that's scared the daylights out of me. And so I'm not saying that I was baptized because of fear. But I'm also not saying that fear wasn't involved. I really felt like this was something I had better do. Because what if Jesus comes back and he's gonna say, "Why didn't you do that?" Then you have enough courage, don't you believe in me, and I had all these things wrestling in

my mind, and I didn't want it. I wanted to just have joy, and have this piece. And I'm not sure what everybody's story is like. And I don't think that anyone's baptism is exactly like any other person's baptism. Does that make sense? You may have even been baptized with someone else maybe in the same baptistery or in a lake and yet, there's something may be going on different in your heart and in your soul. I know a great deal of thanksgiving is there, that all Israel be assured of this, Peter said that this same Jesus, whom you crucified is both Lord and Christ. And when they heard that they were cut to the heart and said, "What should we do?" And Peter says, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins. We have no record of Peter being baptized. We have no record of Peter being baptized. And yet Peter writes about baptism. Later on in his book, he talks about baptism.

So, what I'm suggesting is, please don't misunderstand me that just because we don't have an example of it in Scripture, doesn't mean it didn't take place. I'm just saying it's so interesting to me how baptism is presented. It's an invitation to come to Christ in some of the people who write in detail about baptism, we just don't have their story. We know that we're pretty sure they would, why would they ask someone to be baptized if they themselves are not being baptized, but it's a remarkable event. So here's where I really would like us to go. And maybe you've done this already in your imagination. So after Peter preached at Pentecost, some people believed anybody remember how many people believed? Somebody give me a number? 3000 people. Okay. Now, here's where we go with our imagination. Can you picture that? And where were they baptized? Was it Jordan? Was it Galilee? Was it? I guess it doesn't matter. But how do you baptize 3000 people? I'm not sure. Maybe I'm not sure. Maybe there were 3000 people and somebody said, there're not enough of us to help somebody go under the water. So on the count of three, everybody go down. I don't know. I don't know what that's like. But there there's something that's significant. That's there. 3000 people, if it was done one at a time, how many hours would it take? I just, I'm just trying today to just kind of grasp this understanding of the significance of what Paul is saying, to a church at Rome. I am not ashamed of it. Ashamed of what? I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation. For all who believe first for the Jew, then for the Gentile, for in the Gospel, I righteousness from God has revealed the gospel, the death, the burial, the resurrection, righteousness is being made right with God. Part of that is in our communion. Part of that is in our battle. Baptism. It's an event that's profound and wonderful. And if you've been baptized many, many, many years ago, you may have forgotten a lot of things over the years. But I would doubt it, that you forgot your baptism. There's something unique. There's something significant. It's God, I know, you were there. I want to do this. I want to do this. But what's the result of our baptism as far as how you felt after your baptism? And I don't mean immediately. I meant later on that day, or later on the next week. Was it a joy that was continued in your life? Was there frustration with it? Was there confusion about it, that I really do this for right? But this righteousness of God is you are loved.

I loved you from the moment you were born, I knew you before you were born, you've always been mine, and you're baptized into Jesus Christ. Isn't that wonderful? You may have some thoughts in your mind. Jesus doesn't. He loves you. He's given himself for you. You're baptized into him. And just to show you how crazy we can get sometimes with understanding Baptism of not, not really being grace, but being of a command for quite a few years. I was a teacher slash evening preacher at Strawberry Point camp for I don't know how many years a long, long time and a lot of teens were baptized at Strawberry Point camp, but just to show you how things can get skewed sometimes, there are three four people who were baptized, now happen to have the privilege of baptizing these teens. And as the last one came

to shore, and as I was walking to the shore, I was nudged by another person and said, I think you better do that baptism again. And I said, Why? I think you need to do it again. I said, Well, well, why? Well, that last person that you baptized when he went under, I saw some hair still sticking up above the water. And I laughed, like you did? He said, No, No, I'm serious. It has to be a complete immersion. And I said, You mean those three or four hairs aren't saved? Is that is that exactly what we're meaning? Still, sometimes we can just sort of get a little bit strange with the understanding of our baptism. I read the stories of baptism, and it's wonderful and it's beautiful. And I think one of the tragic things can that can happen is after this wonderful event, somebody saying negative things towards you or somebody saying, Are you really sure and on and on and on. It's, it's difficult enough to make that decision that we need Christians to put their arms around others and say, Praise the Lord. This is wonderful righteousness has come to your house today. You have demonstrated the gospel. We love you, God loves you, you're part of his family. Amen. And keep, keep the confusion and in the sometimes the throwing of stones away that because Christ has invited us in, think of those 3000 people who were baptized, and the question would always for me be who baptized them? Not that it matters. And what was said, was anything said, you know, if you have 3000 people in this great big lake so count of three, be baptized, who knows was the idea of people coming to know Jesus Christ. And so scripture gives us pictures that we have to use our imagination. In Romans chapter six, Paul says, don't you know that as many of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death, we were buried with Him in baptism into death, in that just as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father, we too should be raised in newness of life. It's this wonderful event, his death, the gospel, death, burial, resurrection, baptism, death, burial, and resurrection.

I remember not too many years ago, I think about it was more than a few years ago. We were in Sundridge. And there were a number of people in our church who wanted to be baptized. And if you've been in Sundridge and Lake Bernard, it's shallow for a long way depending on where you are in the lake. It's shallow for a long, long way. And so a number of us went out into the lake to be baptized. I think it was probably five or six people. And the people on shore were kind of squinting. So we just said, Come on, come on. And so we all went out into the lake. And we all kind of went in a circle as people were baptized. And as they come up out of the water, not only are they feeling this wonderful, wonderful feeling of being one with the Lord, but here, all these brothers and sisters surrounding them, loving them, putting their arms around them, saying, maybe not with these words, but with the understanding. I know, this was not an easy decision. I know you were nervous, but we love you and we're proud of you. And we're so grateful that you made this decision. Because 3000 people were baptized on Pentecost, you're part of that. And because Jesus said, to go into all the world and preach the gospel, then baptize, you are part of that and all throughout the scriptures. People think, talking about baptism, you are now part of that. And even though it may have happened hundreds of years ago, thousands of years ago, you are part of it. And if God lingers, hundreds of years from now, other people being baptized, but you're part of them. Past baptism, present baptism, future baptism, it's this coming together as one.

This is the gospel, the death, the burial, the resurrection, the life of Christ, living inside of us. And so Paul uses these, these wonderful words to sort of picture in our minds. First Corinthians 12, we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body. Or when Paul writes to the church of Colossi in baptism, you've been buried with him, and raised with him by the power of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, or Ephesians chapter four. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to, when you were

called one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is above all, through all, and you know, or in Galatians chapter three, for you're all sons of God through your faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ had been closed with Christ. There's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. We are all one in Christ Jesus. But I have to say, and everyone's choice is different. I have to say, I love what Titus says, or as Paul records it. But when the kindness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ appeared, he saved us, not by righteous things we had done, but by His mercy. He saved us by the washing, of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, who he puts out on us generously through Christ. So do you remember in Scripture when Jesus was baptized? John the Baptist didn't want to baptize him. Who am I? He said to baptize you. He said, Now this is right. And Jesus was baptized. And God said, This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased. And then your baptism. I think we could hear God say to us, if we listen, this is my daughter, whom I love. This is my son, whom I love. There's this connection. Not just with our own baptism, not just with the celebration, not just in this righteousness with God, not in just demonstrating the gospel, but there's this connection with all those from the past, present and future belonging to this wonderful family of God, this kindness, this love, this joy.

And when Peter was talking about it, it's, it's this this idea of going back to the flood, remember that story, Noah and the ark in those days that were so evil, but in Noah's time God saved Noah, through the water, and this water, Peter says, symbolizes baptism, which now also saves you. And then of course, the person who talks about baptism more than any other person in the Bible is Paul, some different— nine different occasions. And there are different times for Paul's baptism was mentioned. But you know, it's interesting to me. Not that it matters too much. We do not have a step by step, understanding of all these baptisms that we've talked about, we don't have a step by step understanding of, they went to the water, for example, there was Cornelius, who was baptized. There was the jailer that was baptized and in the middle of the night. We are told they're baptized. But maybe it's just my curiosity. I want to know more. Okay, so it was midnight. Then where did you go? Well, they were are baptized. Yeah, I know. But how did you get there? Where did you walk to? Where were you baptized? What church building is open in the middle of the night? Well, there were no church buildings at that time. I want to know more and more and more. You can almost hear God saying, when you get here, I'll tell you. When you get when you get to heaven, I'll tell you. We don't have the step by step understanding of it all and baptisms, in so many ways do it. It's typical that we bury someone this way and that way.

I've had some fun events in the baptistry. I've had no one swim through the baptistry, as I saw not once before, but it's this wonderful celebration of: look what's happened. And I say all this to say, Romans is not an easy book to read. But it's a wonderful book by saying right from the beginning, Paul is making a clear, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation for our first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. For in the Gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed our righteousness, that is by faith, from first to last, just as is written, the righteous will live by faith, righteousness, gospel, living our life worthy of God, part of all of this being baptized and yet we do not after all these events, we do not have the exact understanding. It's not written out in Scripture, Have you walk to the baptistry or you walk out into the lake or you walk out to the river? Here's what you say, this is what happens. No, no, it's this. It's this coming together in the celebration of Christ being baptized, where there's someone goes down under the water like this, someone like this or back, we can sometimes make something gospel, no pun intended, which is not gospel. What's the important part is the baptism is the understanding. And it's interesting to me that we don't spend much time with this.

I'll conclude with this today. I thought about this all week long of entire households, being baptized, entire families, being baptized. I don't know, is anybody here? Anybody here ever experienced that your whole family was baptized at the same time Fantastic, fantastic. Fantastic. Was anybody else baptized with someone else at the same time? The water? Okay. 3000 No, no, okay. Not at all. No, of course not. But it is interesting. I just want to share these with you as I conclude entire households being baptized and this is where my imagination goes. And I hope it goes in a wonderful way. But Acts chapter 10 first Gentile this promise is for you, and all the others the Gentiles who would come, Cornelius Acts chapter 10. And his family. We don't know their ages, but his entire family were baptized. Acts chapter 16, Lydia, and all her household were baptized, the entire group. Acts chapter 18 Crispus the synagogue leader and all his Household were baptized. First Corinthians 1:16 Stephanus and all his family were baptized, and then Acts chapter 16, the Philippian jailer, and all his family were baptized because of the gospel, the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus, we receive the righteousness being made right with God.

And our baptism demonstrates this death, burial and this resurrection, that we're right with God. And so we come together as Christians on Sunday celebrating who we are in Christ. Thank you, Jesus. We come together on Sundays, celebrating communion, the bread, the wine, the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus, his body, his blood, and we come together with Christians. People who have celebrated being baptized into Christ. And for anyone who is here today, and you've been thinking about baptism, we're here to help you, never to judge, never to be critical, only to be helpful. And, in wanting you encouraging you to be baptized, it will be if it hasn't been already, one of the great joys of your life, that Jesus was baptized, and that when we're baptized, we are baptized into him. And you belong to a family of God, that is thousands and thousands and thousands of years old. But you're part of an eternal family. So if you're thinking about, you can speak to our elders, speak to myself, speak to others and we will help you through this with joy. With love, let's pray.

Father God, as we come to you today, many of us remembering our own baptism. And we think of the Scriptures where we don't really know what words were spoken, when people were baptized, but that they were, and that we're part of them and that they're part of us. And we pray for those who are thinking about making that step to be baptized, that they will, through your love and through your spirit. Say, Yes, I will, and be part of this family. And we're so grateful that you give us this privilege that we can come together on a weekly basis, to celebrate our baptism to celebrate our love, our joy, our faith, to celebrate communion, and to continually be reminded that we are part of a family that is everlasting. All because of Jesus and His name we say amen.

Adam Sandiford

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