

Romans 6:3-4

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[0:00] Please join me in your copy of God's Word in Romans chapter 6. As previously mentioned, we're going to talk about the ordinance of baptism this morning.

! This is good if you are unfamiliar with the doctrine, and it's good if you're familiar with the doctrine. It's important that we remind ourselves of why it is that we do baptism the way that we do baptism. This is a thing about our fellowship that distinguishes us from other fellowships.

This is a thing that distinguishes our denomination from other denominations, that we are credo-baptists. We believe in baptism of believers and only believers. Now, many, and for good reason, grieve the formation of denominations. It seems like such a fracturing thing, and in a lot of cases it is. But on the positive, it also means that we have convictions and that we follow those convictions and that we desire to unite with those who also follow those convictions. So I think baptism is a particular one that both divides, but in many ways unites. We can gladly link arms with other fellowships that don't believe in believers' baptism on the gospel. But how it is that we carry that out as a church together may differ, and therefore it can be good and valuable that we gather as a church and believe the same thing about this doctrine.

Now, we are a confessional people, and that means that we gather together those things we believe to be true about the Bible and have been pinned throughout the ages in confessions.

[1:56] And we take those confessions up and we carefully examine them by the scriptures, and we place a confidence not above the scripture in them, but as a way to understand the scripture.

Our church has a statement of faith that upon becoming a member of our church, you agree that you'll hold these truths together.

And a statement of faith is a confession. Our statement of faith is based on the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. And you can see those points outlined in the packet that's out in the hallway. There are many good confessions of faith. This morning, as an outline for the sermon, I'm going to use the chapter on baptism from the 1689 London Baptist Confession, also known as the Second London Baptist Confession, or some people would just say the 1689 Confession.

The 1689 Confession, as it is a wonderful confession of the Baptist faith. The 1689 Confession is possibly the finest of all the Baptist confessions.

[3:10] It has been widely adhered to, in fact, all of the founders of the Southern Baptist Convention, which we are a part of, either personally expressed agreement with the 1689 Confession.

In their writing, we can look and search through the annals of history and find that they either personally agreed with the 1689 Confession, or that they pastored churches that did so.

So, there was an evidence again there that they were a pastor of a church that held the 1689 Confession. So, we want to be careful, as I've said, that we don't elevate confessions to a place that they don't belong.

But they do have a helpful place in the life of the church. There's an organization called Founder Ministries, and they have a publishing house, and they've recently put out a 1689 Confession in Modern Language.

In the introduction, they write this, A confession is a tried and true teaching tool. It lays out the faith in a clear, systematic way and shows the connections among doctrines.

[4:24] It also serves as a standard by which the teaching in the church can be measured. So, we've agreed together on the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. It gives us some standard for our thinking together.

An overseer must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and a deacon must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

Hearing an officer merely quote the Bible does not tell us whether or not he understands the overall teaching of Scripture on a subject.

A confession gives us a tool for evaluating his understanding and teaching in summary form. A confession is a restatement of the word for a particular purpose.

In this case, to summarize the overall teaching of that word on various topics. So, in our case, for this morning, baptism. To the degree that it expresses the doctrines of Scripture accurately, it is an expression of the word just as accurate preaching is said to be an expression of the word.

[5:36] So, confessions, right, help us collect the teaching of the Scripture together, and think rightly about what the Bible says on any given topic contained within said confession.

So, the 1689 confession has a wonderful chapter, chapter 29 on baptism. And it has four points to help us rightly understand baptism biblically.

And so, we're going to display those points up on the screen, I think, for you. Here we go. Just so you can see it, and I'll talk about it, and Susanna, I'll give you. And here we go to the second one, and you can change it at that point.

So, first, and I think most importantly, this phrase, and there's some Scripture proofing, and I'm going to read some of those Scripture proofs, which is what those large numbers are in the midst of the text.

So, the first one reads this way. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament ordained by Jesus Christ. To those baptized, it is a sign of their fellowship with Him in His death and resurrection, of their being grafted into Him of remission of sins, and of submitting themselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.

[6:51] So, the very first sentence, writers of this confession say baptism is an ordinance. It's a right given to the church to be administered.

And there are only two biblical ordinances, that of the Lord's Supper and baptism. Some teach that there are more, but we understand scripturally there are two.

And it's an ordinance given to the church. So, the church baptizes. The gathered people of God, under His authority, are the ones who administer baptism.

And it's an ordinance of the New Testament. We don't find baptism as an ordinance of God's people in the Old Testament. And in this way, there's much continuity between the Old and the New Testament.

This is one of those discontinuous parts. This is a new command given that those who place faith in Christ should be baptized. And, it's an ordinance that was ordained, given to us, by Jesus Christ Himself.

[7:59] In Mark chapter 1 and verse 9, we can read of Jesus going to John the Baptist and being baptized. Setting for us this great example. Fulfilling all righteousness in He Himself being baptized.

To those baptized, it is a sign. It's meant to picture something for us. Right? We get to preach and hear and sing and pray the gospel.

We also get to see it displayed for us in the ordinances. In the Lord's Supper and in baptism. It is a sign of a believer's fellowship with Christ in His death and in His resurrection.

Of their being grafted, or you could think, united with Him. So, look at our text in brief. And, we're going to bounce around to other texts. And, I would encourage you to turn to those places or write notes and look at them later.

Romans chapter 6 verses 3 through 5. Paul writes, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

[9:12] Paul here is speaking figuratively of our faith placed in Christ. We were buried, therefore, with Him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

By placing believing faith in Jesus Christ, those who were once dead in their trespasses and sin, had no spiritual life, and their eternal destination was death and destruction forever. By placing faith in Jesus, we are baptized into His death. This is what baptism pictures for us. And, we are given new life. This is the doctrine of regeneration. Dead people made alive once again. Old self passing away. New self now existing. Not differing in degree, but in kind. I was once apart from Christ. Now, I am in Christ.

[10:22] I am clothed in Him. We are united. There is a great solidarity between me and Jesus by faith in Christ.

And, baptism pictures this for us. It helps us to understand what has happened in the heart of a man or woman when they are baptized.

It shows forth something that has already taken place in them. So, it pictures this. It is a sign of us being grafted into or united with Christ.

It is also a sign of the remission of sins. Again, picturing a thing that has happened. Mark chapter 1 and verse 4.

John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John was already going about the work of baptizing before Jesus' ministry began.

[11:22] Right? And the preaching he was doing was to say, repent. Right? Turn from your sin and turn to God. People didn't know exactly in whom yet. We would find that it would be Christ.

But for a picture of your repentance. So, the baptism itself does not remove sin. But our faith that God would forgive sin removes sin.

And baptism represents that. Another place. Acts chapter 22 and verse 16. Paul is here speaking in Jerusalem.

And he says, And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins. Calling on his name. On the name of Christ.

So, it pictures this for us. It is a sign of this. Our unity in Christ. The forgiveness of our sins. And of us submitting ourselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.

[12:25] It is a declaration on the part of the person being baptized that I am a new creation. The person being baptized is saying, I have died to myself.

By faith in Christ, I am raised. I am a new person. And therefore, I want to walk and follow him. It is very important that we understand that baptism is an ordinance of the church.

And it is part of church membership. Because you are declaring to a group of God's people that this is true of you. And God's people are the ones that are baptizing you.

I think we baptize people. I have noted that in my baptisms, I have always said, I baptize you. And I think we should correct that. Now, I might do the dunking.

But it would be good for me to say, we baptize you. Because as a church, we are recognizing that you have made this profession of faith in Christ. And as a church, we are committing to help you walk in this newness of life.

[13:27] Now, for us, our membership processes can be a bit complex. Because in the place we live, if somebody says, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, I think it's right.

I think it's fair for us to say, what does that mean? What does that mean? It can mean a lot of things in the place in which we live. But there are contexts where I think it's much simpler.

If someone were to say to you, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, they could likely lose their family, their education, their job, their very life. But people don't just go around saying that kind of thing in places like Iran.

And so if I were a pastor of a church in Iran, I wouldn't live very long. But if somebody came and said, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, I would say, come, be baptized.

And guess what? You're a member of our fellowship, right? This is the sign of entry into this covenant community. These people saved by God. You're professing to follow Jesus when you're baptized.

[14:27] So this is a sign of all of these things. And it's a precious sign of that. Let me remind you again of Romans chapter 6 and verse 4.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that we too might walk in newness of life.

This is the ordinance of baptism and what it's meant to picture for the church, the way that the church is meant to see the gospel.

Secondly, those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

Now, I have already said some things about that. But specifically, what the writers of the 1689 confession are saying is that we ought not baptize infants.

[15:32] And we shouldn't baptize people who just say, I'd like to be baptized. They must profess faith in Christ, right? Baptism itself does not carry some special magical power over an individual's life.

But it's a picture of, it's a sign of something that has taken place. I said before, we are credo-baptists.

And that's from the Latin, I believe. So we are, I believe, Baptists. And this is to be juxtaposed against paedo-baptists, also derived from another language, in this case Greek, for child.

So, child baptizers and I believe baptizers is the distinction that's so commonly made.

Paedo-baptists include Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians.

And this is not intended to be a sermon against any particular denomination. But rather, in showing you why we are for credo-baptism, it's sometimes helpful to show you the counterpoint to why we believe what we believe.

[16:45] And so, I think, and in brief, I want you to understand that we are credo-baptists because it is so clearly taught in the Scripture.

In fact, no paedo-baptists disagree that someone who becomes a Christian and was not baptized as a child shouldn't, therefore, be baptized.

So, everyone agrees on believer's baptism, just that many want to also include the ordinance of child baptism or infant baptism.

So, we find that the teaching confuses the text, it confuses the nature of the church, and it confuses the very meaning of believer's baptism.

So, first, paedo-baptism confuses the sufficiency of Scripture. We believe that God's Word is sufficient for our rule and practice, right?

[17:46] It tells us everything that we need to know, and it tells it to us on the most important matters with a great deal of clarity. Right? The great cry of the Reformers was sola scriptura, the Bible alone.

They put in place in the forming of their churches, any of these brand new infant churches that were coming out of the Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation, something they called the regulative principle of worship.

And it was defined by John Calvin, a paedo-baptist, as follows. God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word.

Not expressly sanctioned. Now, to be honest with the text, we have to look at clear commands or examples given to us in the Scripture, and we have to deduce by good and necessary consequence through plain reason and logic what the Scripture teaches us about some matters.

But it is very difficult to find infant baptism in the text. In many ways, it's assumed rather than clearly taught.

[19:07] Now, I love particularly many of our Presbyterian brothers. I learn much from them. In our study of Hebrews right now, of the six commentaries I have, I think four of them are written by Presbyterians.

They are helpful to us. They are instructive to us. I wish we didn't have to go outside of our denomination for biblical brilliance. But we do, and we do very often have to do so.

I have read widely the paedo-baptist argument and have yet to be convinced with any plain reason or logic. I feel like I have to become a textual critic and earn three PhDs to even understand some of the arguments that are being made for it.

And so, I think the paedo-baptism confuses the sufficiency of Scripture. We have, and have had in our fellowship, many people who come from many different denominational backgrounds.

And this has been a big work of our church, right? Teaching people about credo-baptism and why. Why it's important. Why it matters. And I hope that you see it's not a primary doctrine, but it is at

least a secondary.

[20:23] We ought to understand it. We ought to agree upon it. We certainly ought to practice it. Because to not do so would confuse the sufficiency of Scripture.

Secondly, paedo-baptism confuses the nature of the church. We believe in a believer's church. Ephesians chapter 5, the last half of verse 25, Paul writes, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Those who are in Christ, who have expressed faith in him and obedience and following him, are the ones that are in the church. And therefore, baptized as a sign of being in the church.

Believer's baptism draws a very clear line. We're saying church and not church. We're trying to understand who is and who isn't a Christian. Who do we hold to Christian standards and who do we share the gospel with?

We want to be clear about what the church is. Who belongs to the church. And then welcome everyone who is not in the church.

[21:35] Every New Testament reference concerning the universal church or the local church is always speaking of those in the faith. Whether past, present, or future.

It's never unclear about that, the Bible. Who is church? Those assembled for the praise of Christ. It's those who have placed faith in Christ.

So it gets very confusing when we begin to speak about baptism as a sign for those who have yet to place faith in Jesus Christ.

This from the Westminster Confession. A wonderful confession in so many ways. In fact, the 1689 confession is largely based off of the Westminster Confession with some, I think, wonderful baptism changes to it.

So this is from the Westminster Confession. Baptism is a sacrament, or you could read ordinance there, of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace or his, in grafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and his giving up unto God through Jesus.

[22:53] Sounds familiar, doesn't it? There's a lot said in there that's very consistent to the 1689 confession, but here's the phrase I hope popped in your brain. They say, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church.

What are they saying? A person baptized is part of the church. That's clear. That's clear. And the further sections develop that idea a bit more.

Isn't that dangerous? To now think that an infant is a part of the church, having not yet professed faith in Jesus Christ?

It confuses the nature of the church. What is the church? And the scripture does not speak of the church in those terms ever.

Lastly, paedo-baptism confuses the meaning of believer's baptism. And again, all paedo-baptists agree that once you have placed faith in Christ, if you've never been baptized, that you should be baptized.

[23:58] But then why? What does it mean? Because they've confused it on the front end, they confuse it on the back end. It's a sign of something that has happened.

It's picturing for people what Christ has done on your behalf. I was dead. I was dead at the bottom of the sea, and he raised me up to newness of life.

And it is a beautiful expression of this. And we don't want it to be confusing. So this statement, right? Those who personally profess repentance towards God in faith, in an obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

Mark chapter 16 and verse 16. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. Who does the condemnation fall on?

Those who don't believe. But we see that those who believe are what? Baptized. Acts chapter 8, verse 36 and 37. This is Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch.

[25:06] Right? And Philip has just shared the gospel with this eunuch. And the eunuch says, now remember, as I said, this is an ordinance of the church. The eunuch is going back to Ethiopia as the sole Christian.

He's the only one, right? He's the missionary sent out. And so, in a sense, Philip and the eunuch are the church. Right? Philip is with him. He has shared the gospel with him.

He believes. And the eunuch says, see, here is water. What prevents me from being baptized? And he's baptized and sent back to Ethiopia. Acts chapter 2 and verse 41.

So those who received his word were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. Acts chapter 8 and verse 12. Again with Philip.

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized. Both men and women. And then Acts chapter 18 and verse 8.

[26:05] Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue that's done to the ministry of Paul, believed in the Lord together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

So, it's a sign for those who have professed faith in Christ. And if you're new to our fellowship, we love our children.

And we fervently preach the gospel to our children that they would believe and be baptized. So, please know. That's a great desire of our hearts.

Okay, third from the 1689 confession. It gets a little simpler towards the end. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water.

It's good that they're clear on that. In which the individual is to be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Now, when the scripture speaks of the name of, right?

[27:05] To pray in the name of Jesus. To baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They're not suggesting some magical incantation. Jesus doesn't say this in Matthew chapter 28 that we would speak some magic words over the baptism.

But what it's saying is, in consistency with the character of God. The triune God. We're meant to do it. Now, we do say that. That typically is the thing that we say when we're doing it.

Because we're recognizing this is what we're doing in baptism, right? We're uniting a person with us as he or she is united in Christ. So, Jesus says in Matthew chapter 28, verse 19 and 20.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I'm with you always to the end of the age.

Right? You're welcoming them into a discipleship relationship. Right? So, God intends as the good Father to lead us in the way of truth.

[28:11] We see the story again of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts chapter 8 and verse 38. And he, the eunuch, commanded the chariot to stop. And they, Philip and the eunuch, both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

So, this is the element used in the baptizing of believers. Fourth. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.

Immersion. Baptism by immersion. That means pushing someone underwater. The Greek word, very often in extra-biblical language, is used to mean dunk repeatedly.

Well, we don't dunk repeatedly. We only dunk once. But, this we believe is what the scripture examples for us. Now, to me this is a finer point of it all.

If we lived in a place where water was extremely scarce, I might be able to make a case for doing it differently. But we don't. We have abundant water. And you know what was going on in Jerusalem in those days, and still does?

[29:28] They're in the scarcity of water, and they seem to be going into water, and baptizing underwater people. And so, we think this is the right thing to do. It pictures most clearly what we're trying to picture.

Right? Someone was dead, and is raised to life. How do we most often deal with dead people?

They go underground. They're closed up.

They're put away. And for them to come to life, they'd have to come out of that. So, baptism by immersion pictures this most clearly. Matthew 3, verse 16.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water. So, here we see the water, and he's coming up. He went down in, and he then comes up out of the water.

And behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and coming to rest on him. It doesn't make sense that being baptized in the Jordan River, that he would have gone down to, stood ankle deep in, and been sprinkled.

[30:35] He went down into the water. He came up from the water, and was considered baptized and pleased the Father in so doing. In John chapter 3, in verse 23, we see this ministry of John the baptizer.

And he's baptizing at Anon near Salem because, why? Water was plentiful there. There was all kinds of water for us to immerse people in, rather than, he didn't walk around the desert carrying a pot of water.

He went to a place where there was lots of water so that people could be baptized. And people were coming and being baptized. So, this is why we are Credo Baptists, because we want to be abundantly clear about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That those of us who were once dead in our trespasses and sins, right, offending a most holy God, cut off from him, declaring ourselves enemies of his with all of our life, right, have been made new in Christ.

We were dead. He made us alive. He granted to us his righteousness. And now he's given us a spirit that we might walk in obedience toward him with the church.

[31:54] That's why this is so important that we get right. We gather together and we walk together in newness of life. So, we baptize by immersion because we want those within and those outside the church to see a clear picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We believe that the scripture teaches this and does so reasonably. I hope that you will join with us this morning in celebrating the ordinance of baptism as Chris Biggers will come in a few moments and is baptized by our church this morning.

But before we welcome him, let's spend a few moments together in prayer.