

Today we are beginning our sermon series on the book of Romans. The theme of this series is a Summer in Rome – the trip of a lifetime. I don't know about you, but I like to travel. Even though I'm slowly learning that with three young children traveling for relaxation is more of a dream than a reality, I still like to travel. I especially like to travel to foreign countries. There's something about going to places where everyone speaks a different language, has a different history, and shares a different culture. Someday I'd love to travel to Rome. I'd love to visit its ancient ruins, wander through its museums, and spend time in some of its plaza's. I'd love to tell you that I bought each of you a ticket and that we will be leaving immediately after Bible Class today. But unfortunately I didn't, so you'll just have to travel there in your mind with me. If we were to enter the Old City from the South you would see remnants of Rome's glory - the remains of impressive public buildings, aqueducts, baths, theatres, and fountains - all kinds of fountains – some are mythological heroes shooting water from their mouths, others have a cool geyser blasting up from the middle, while still others are a series of basins overflowing with water and being caught by the pool below.

This morning as you consider these fountains and their cool refreshing water, I would like to direct you to a different type of water, the waters of Baptism. In our text from Romans chapter 6 we will see how through Baptism **1. we have died to sin, 2. and been raised to live a new life with God.** Please listen once again to the words of our text...(Romans 6:1-11)

In the first five chapters of Romans Paul clearly presents God's plan of salvation. A passage from this section sums it up well: **"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** God in his undeserved love saved sinful human beings like you and me. Righteousness comes to us through faith alone in Jesus. It is God's gift to us, given purely because He loves us. God has done it all. In chapter 5 of Romans Paul explains that every time sin increased, every time God's law showed how terrible our rebellion was, God's grace increased even more. It's as if our disobedience continually created a larger and larger bowl, but each time God's love grew to fill that bowl and cause it to overflow.

You can almost hear the argument now, can't you? "Well, Paul I don't mean to be ridiculous, but if God's grace always increases to cover my sin, then why not go out and sin like crazy if God will forgive those sins anyway?" "Why not help God get his money's worth?" Paul puts a quick end to such thinking by saying – "Never!" "That is not who we are anymore." Verse 2 says, **"We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?"**

What does it mean that we died to sin? Paul answers this question with another question: **"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"** Baptism is not just a tradition that every good mom and dad does for their child. It's not just one of the rituals that every child must pass through. No, Paul tells us that Baptism does something. It changes things. Even though there were no lightning bolts from heaven, and the roof of the church didn't open up to reveal an angelic choir, something amazing took place this morning. God changed little Pierce. And when you were baptized God changed you. We are not the same people anymore, not since our baptism. The old self, the old me, the sinful person who came into this world died at our baptism. We usually think of baptism as a rebirth and a new life. But today God wants us to know that there is also a death in baptism. When you were baptized God took all the condemnation that we deserved and buried it. And he said to each one of us, "Jesus died for you, paid for your sins and all this guiltiness that you have in my sight is gone, wiped out, buried. And the power your old self has over you to lead you into sin all the time, to be a bad influence on you – I'm killing that and burying that too." Our old sinful life and our sinful self died. In fact Verse 6 says it was crucified, like the worst of criminals. So now we are no longer slaves to sin.

And this is why it is utterly contradictory to want to go on sinning. Let me give an illustration. If you died tonight, how many of you think that your boss would make you come into work tomorrow? (Glad to see that no one is nodding). Seriously, if you die, your obligations to your boss are over. The same is true with school – dying will get you out of going to school. Now I know that from time to time there are mix-ups where a dead person still gets a tax bill, or is sent a credit card, but in normal circumstances, death frees us from all of our earthly obligations.

God killed our sinful nature when he baptized us. We died to sin that day and have no obligations to it. It no longer has control over us. That doesn't mean that we still don't feel its pull. As long as we live here

on earth there will be a constant struggle. That old sinful self comes back time and time again like a zombie from “Night of the Living Dead.” What do we do then? We kill it! We put it to death all over again!

That’s why it’s so good for us to gather together and confess our sins. Because when we do we are acknowledging and exposing that old sinful self within us, so that God can cut it down. We bring that zombie out into the light so that God can hack him down and put him in the grave. How does he do that? By pointing us to Christ and assuring us that our sins are forgiven.

Through Baptism **we died to sin**, but we were also **raised to live a new life to God**.

Let me ask you a personal question. Do you always strive to live a new life to God? Do you always remember the death that has taken place, and God’s power that lies behind you? I know that I don’t. In fact sometimes it’s easy for Christians to fall into this defeatist type of mentality, isn’t it? I just can’t beat that sin. There’s nothing I can do. My father had a problem with his temper, and I have a problem with my temper. That’s just the way things are. Or, I know it’s not right to talk about other people and their problems, but when I get around certain people, I just can’t help it. Or, I know its wrong to overindulge on alcohol, but I have to have some way to relax, some fun in my life. Unfortunately, we have not always strived to live a new life to God. At times we have forgotten God’s promises to us in baptism – that we have been joined with Christ. We have failed to let his power drive our lives.

This is why time and time again we need to turn to Christ. Our failures to perfectly live the life that God wants us to remind us how difficult this is. God’s Word shows us time and time again how the one who was raised to life lived the new life perfectly. At his baptism, God thundered from heaven saying: “This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.” Towards the end of Jesus’ earthly life, God repeated these words. Christ lived the new life perfectly for us and then was crucified in our place. But do you remember what happened to Jesus? Death could not keep him down. God in his almighty power pumped new life into Him. Christ came back to life. He came out of his tomb and was transformed.

I don’t know a whole lot about medicine. But I do know that it takes quite a bit of power to bring a dead person back to life. In fact, since Christ, I don’t think that there is anyone who has been dead for three days and then came back to life. The neurons that had been inactive for days began to fire again. His lungs that had probably been the cause of his death, were cleared of blood and ready for air. The heart that hadn’t moved in over 36 hours, began to pump blood throughout his body again. Yet God in his almighty power caused all these things to happen.

Verse 4 says that **“just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”** Wow! The same power that God used to raise Jesus empowers us to live a new life. Just think about that. What temptation, what earthly lust, what weakness, could overcome God’s power working in us? In Christ we are given everything that we need to live a new life to God. We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?

It’s been recorded that when Martin Luther would feel troubled by his conscience or under attack by Satan he would often remember the fountain of baptism. He would say, “I am baptized!” “I am baptized.” Notice the tense here. He wouldn’t say, “I was baptized.” Notice he didn’t just say, “Yeah, a long time ago, before I can even remember, I got some water dumped on me, and some words said over me. A cute little ceremony, but pretty much worthless now!” No. Luther believed what God is telling us today. It is my prayer that Pierce Donnelly, along with each one of you, will remember your baptism. It is my prayer that you say, “I am baptized! I am a person whom God loves. I am a person for whom Jesus Christ, God in the flesh shed his blood. I am connected to him. I have died to sin, and am alive!” Amen