

Baptism

David C. Mills
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Romans Chapter 6

In the beginning of chapter 6 of Romans, it begins by asking a series of rhetorical questions to demonstrate a lack of understanding between law and grace. In verse 3 we see that a question of baptism is presented, which at first may only appear to be a reference to that baptism which is an outward demonstration of our inward faith. However, a closer look will help us to understand its meaning and placement in this passage of scripture.

I believe that there is a dual meaning in the use of baptism here. First we see that it refers, by the use of the word baptizo, to the ordinance of baptism. It illustrates our relationship with Christ as well as our position (v.5), representing that at the time of salvation we have died with Christ and are raised in newness of life. We also see the direct reference to the resurrection, as we are symbolically buried and risen. This is one of two ordinances observed by baptistic believers, the other being the observance of the Lord's Supper.

As we closely study this passage, we see that there is a reference to one "walking in newness of life" through this baptism. Having just spoken in previous chapters about God's righteousness being placed upon us, through no work of our own, we know that no act of water submersion would have the ability to work within us to make such radical changes (v.6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 18). We can however, see this as the work of the Holy Spirit, as promised (Mt. 3:11; Ac. 1:4-5).

If we were to look at this passage simply from the perspective of the ordinance, it would lead us to the conclusion that if a person never observed this commandment, they would not have received the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and thus not have been released the servitude of sin (Rom. 6:6). Thus, I believe that this passage also refers to the spiritual Baptist that every believer receives completely at the time of salvation, the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Baptism that crucifies the old man, frees us from serving sin, frees us from the dominion of death and the obedience of our lust, through God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Bibliography

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