

Never the Same
Romans 6:1-4
September 11, 2011

Lets begin the message this morning with this video that reminds us about September 11, 2001. (can be seen at youtube.com, "Where Were You when the world Stopped Turning," by Alan Jackson)

The song by Alan Jackson ask many questions.

- It ask questions like where were you when the news of the attacks broke?
- What was your initial response to that horrific event?
- The ultimate question is whether the events of September 11th made a difference in how our lives moved forward?
- Would you say that your life, the life of our country would never be the same after that event?

Someone would say absolutely, life is different. Others may say not so fast, especially from the perspective about our relationship to God. Worship attendance following 9/11 spiked upward for about two weeks and then declined within six months to where it was before September 11th. (sources George Barna, Pew Research)

I see a common theme between the ten year anniversary of 9/11 and celebrating the sacred act of baptism this morning. The common ground is for those of us who are Christians, who have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, is whether our baptism represents the difference God is making in our lives?

For those who have never made a decision to accept Christ into their lives, baptism should be something that that marks the beginning of your relationship with God because you should never be the same again. Please stand for the reading of scripture.

Romans 6:1-4

“Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?” v.1 -
Transformation is the expectation for a Christian; not the exception.

Paul said in verse 4 that our baptism was to mark the beginning of the newness of life in which we are to walk. **God’s transformation of our lives inside and out is the expectation for a Christian; not the exception.**

Based on the question Paul raised, there must have been some problems going on back in the day in Rome with the Christians to which Paul was writing. Paul asked a rhetorical question. It's the question where we ought to know the obvious right answer. It's a question like the one our parents asked, "If all of your friends were going to jump off a bridge would do it to?" You better answer no.

In verse 1, Paul asked the Christians, the church, should we continue in sin so more of God's grace can be given to us? No! Baptism marks the moment to say from this day on our lives will never be the same. The total change of who and what we are doesn't happen over night; but make no mistake about it, Paul has said the beginning of our journey as a Christian is marked by our baptism. It is a journey to move away from sin or that which rebels against God, and move more into living like Jesus Christ lived and taught us to live. **Baptism says God's grace has set us free from the penalty of sin; but not free to sin.** The problem can be that some will go by the name of Christian, but nothing is really different than the non Christian. Paul is calling our lifestyle into question if since the day we were baptized, or if baptized as an infant, since the day we confirmed our baptism as a young person or adult, if there is no growing in the ways of Jesus Christ.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death?” v.3 - We are to die spiritually to sin.

Paul said in verse 3 that those of us who have been baptized have been baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. Baptized into the death of Jesus means **we are to die spiritually to sin.** Isn't it ironic that Paul describes new life with Jesus Christ begins with spiritual death. New spiritual life starts with death. When death occurs what once was alive has no awareness. In death there is no sense of time. In death there is no reaction to pain or pleasure. In death there are no desires or needs. Death means we have ceased to be and the life we had is no longer active. It ends. Nothing.

Never the same for a Christian means we have died spiritually to the way we use to live. We use to excuse, over look, explain away our sins and even approve of them. Never the same means we die to sin.

- We cease to respond to that which displeases God.
- We look at that which displeases God with regret, even when we fall back into it. But never the same means there has to be a death before there can be newness of life.

Our souls do not need just a little cosmetic surgery, there has to be death first.

Paul said in verse 2, **“How can he who has died to sin go on living in it?”** Evidently Paul had some Christians who were very alive to sin. They were very alive to their lust and greed whether it was about power, or things, or sexual pleasures or acts of selfishness. Their baptism didn't define a change of course for their life direction.

Illustration: It would be like watching the for the first time events of 9/11 unfold and see the twin towers imploding, the Pentagon burning, and the crater left by plane that crashed in Pennsylvania field and then turning to someone and causally saying, “Where are we going for lunch this afternoon?” That would be crazy. It would show no impact had happen, no change inside of us that would indicate life will never be the same.

Paul said the spiritual death is necessary so that we can experience something new. A fair question to ask is, okay so how do we die spiritually so we can “walk in the newness of life.” Spiritual death is the surrendering of our lives to the leadership of Jesus Christ. Before there can be resurrection into heaven; our physical bodies have to die. Before we can have new spiritual life today our self-will has to die. Spiritual death occurs inside of us when we trust God's truth and will more than we depend on ourselves.

Before churches can be resurrected with new spiritual life there has to be death; death to worn out programs and ministries, death to traditions that no longer are relevantly communicating the good news of Jesus, death to the purpose of keeping an institution open. Jesus said go into the world and preach the gospel; not go and open institutions.

“Just as Christ was raised by the Father to new life, so we too might walk in newness of life.” v.4 - We are never going to be the same.

In verse 4, Paul said the death has to come so we can walk in newness of life. Does your life demonstrate that type of never the same quality? Since you have been committed to following Jesus since your baptism since you confirmed your infant baptism are you moving into newness of life that

looks more and more like Jesus, more and more like his teaching from scripture?

Don't confuse this with just what we say we believe but rather this is living what we say we believe.

Illustration: I read about a psychologist who described some of the beliefs of people he counsels. He said he has a client who believes he can fly without an airplane. He said he has a client who believes domestic violence is wrong, but the guy beats his wife. The psychologist doesn't really describe these people as having beliefs; he said they are delusional because their beliefs do not match reality in which they live. Their beliefs do not match what they actually practice in life.

Paul was telling the church don't be delusional. **Live as followers of Jesus not believers of Jesus.** If our lifestyle doesn't match what we claim we believe, then we are as delusional as the guy who says he can fly or the man who is against domestic violence, but beats his wife.

Congregations can live out delusions if we say we want to reach people for Christ, but we make no effort to tell someone what Christ has done for us, minister to them one on one, or invite people to worship or an event where they can be exposed to experiences of Jesus among us.

Pastor Kevin Harney writes about 3 simple questions for church outreach. He asks:

- **Does your church believe, honor and follow the teaching of the Bible?** Because the Bible has God's plan and if we aren't going to follow God's plan then were wasting our time.
- **Does your church love people and long for them to know Jesus?** Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus Christ and other believers. Our down fall is we have made Christianity about being a part of an institution, budgets and sometimes irrelevant rules and traditions.
- **Are the people in your church willing to sacrifice to the point that they will joyfully embrace change?** What changes would we embrace with joy so people experience God's living presence? (Kevin Harney, sermon central, 8/25/11)

These three questions show how strong of a desire we have to put to death our self will and please God.

Walking in newness of life means we are never the same as before we met Jesus Christ.

Never the same means we spiritually put to death our pride, our self will that has us seeking to defy God's will and word. Its being on watch for sin in our hearts as strong as they are on watch today for terrorist to strike again.

We live never, never the same because God is too awesome for us to remain the same.