

“Claimed for Good” – Pr Jim Sprengle – The Baptism of Our Lord

January 11, 2026

- I. **Romans 6:1-11**, previously read.
- II. **It's amazing when we consider the transformative power of God.**
 - a. Many of us have personal stories of transformation, or we may know someone who was miraculously changed by God's work.
 - b. I suppose these are called “faith stories” or “personal testimonies” in other Christian traditions, but the point is to give glory to God for His ability to set us free from a hopeless situation.
 - c. My experience comes out of recovery and addiction... and it's amazing how far down the scale some people go, and yet God is able to find them and bring them out of the pit.
 - i. It doesn't have to be drugs or alcohol, but some people live a life of crime and depravity... others deal with sexual sin... or any other sins that Paul calls the “former way of life,” and “the old self and its practices.” (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)
 - ii. There is a long list of people who were brought to faith and their lives transformed in amazing ways:
 - 1. C.S. Lewis was a militant atheist and Oxford professor... the last thing he wanted was to be converted, but God snuck up on him, and Lewis is “surprised by joy,” as he said, “I am dragged kicking and screaming – the most reluctant convert in all the world – into the Kingdom.”
 - 2. Alice Cooper was one of the first shock rockers from the 1970's, and he lived a life of utter depravity... but through the witness of believing friends, hearing and reading the Bible, and God's persistent work through the Church, he came to repentance and faith in Christ.
 - a. In interviews, he has said that alcoholism was a prison, and that God “took it away,” not through willpower but through surrender... and he openly talks about prayer, the Bible, and remembering his baptism as central to his sobriety and Christian life.
 - 3. Lee Strobel was an investigative journalist for the Chicago Tribune had no room for Christianity, and then his wife became one...
 - a. He went after God and the Bible as an investigative journalist to show her that it was all a fairytale, but instead... it changed his mind and he became a believer.
 - b. He was all about taking Christianity down, but the truth of grace, faith, and the death and resurrection of Jesus took him down instead.

4. And of course, we have the man who wrote our Romans passage today – St. Paul, or Saul of Tarsus.
 - a. Paul was a zealous Pharisee who was doing his best to crush Christianity from spreading – by persecuting, jailing, and even killing Christians.
 - b. Yet, Jesus blinded Paul with His presence, and after a few days Paul's sight was restored, and he was baptized.
- d. All these unlikely conversion stories were about the hardest of hearts, the prideful and intelligent, and the lowest on the scale – but God still reaches down and transforms them... claims them for His own.

III. **Romans 6 begins with living in God's grace.**

- a. Paul uses a literary device by asking a rhetorical question that should bring out not just a "no", but a "heck no! May it never be!"
- b. How can any of us who died to sin partake in that life again?
 - i. In verses 6-7 it says... "We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin"
- c. The point is that when we were baptized, the Old Adam of sin was drowned, and the New Adam arose – free to live for God.
- d. The trouble is that we find ourselves going back to the old life of sin, or at least we don't always let it go... Proverbs says, "As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his foolishness." (Proverbs 26:11, NLT)
 - i. In reality, sinning against God is being a fool, and we continue to go back to the things that kept us in bondage... like the Israelites who were freed from the bondage of slavery to the Egyptians, but wanted to return because at least they had a variety of food there.
- e. Yet, at any point in time, we might say the same words as Paul in the next chapter, Romans 7: "I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway." (Rom. 7:19, NLT)
 - i. Those who struggle with addiction understand going back to the very thing that destroyed their lives... and this destruction may come from drugs and alcohol... or any number of other things like gambling, pornography, and spending money.
 - ii. And sin doesn't have to be drastic or extreme... but it's still sin that causes harm... like gossiping and breaking down others in our lives... as we just cannot tame our tongues when the opportunity arises to harm someone's reputation or assume the worst in someone else.
 - iii. Still others of us are unwilling to let go of past hurts and perceived offenses... so we hold the other person accountable by the silent treatment or ignoring them... or maybe we lack a heart of forgiveness... in spite of the Lord's sacrifice for our own forgiveness.

- f. All of us can fall into old sinful patterns of behavior, but remember, the Old Adam is a terrible swimmer... and he is drowned daily in our baptisms.

IV. **God reminds us today and every day** – He has claimed us for good.

- a. The language used in Romans 6 is about eternal life and the resurrection.
 - i. You see, you will die twice as a Christian – once you were drowned in baptism, and you will die a bodily death when God takes you home, (as long as Jesus doesn't come first!)
 - ii. Our Old Adam was drowned, and the New Adam came forth.
 - iii. It may be hard to understand, but we were all spiritually dead to God before faith and baptism, so we came out of those waters as different people.
 - iv. Titus 3:5 says, “[God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5)
 - v. Not only are we transformed, but we are claimed in the power of God to live now... and as it says we are connected to Jesus in a resurrection like His, so we will live forever!
- b. In the past several weeks, I've been privileged to baptize a couple of new babies... and each time I make the sign of the cross on their forehead and on their heart, as a mark of God's claim upon them... and then as I look into their eyes and pour the water on them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit... I'm filled with awe and wonder.
 - i. Only God can redeem... Only God can bring life out of death... only God can give us eternal life in Christ.
 - ii. You see, all the benefits that Jesus won for us – from His birth to the baptism that started His ministry... to the crucifixion and death He went through... along with His resurrection from the dead – all of these benefits were given to us through our faith and baptisms.
 - iii. So again, when I perform a baptism or watch it happen anywhere, I know that God has claimed that person for good... forever.

V. **The best we can do is never enough**, but new life in baptism changes us.

- a. In our former sin and brokenness, many of us thought we could just be a better person for God and that would be enough... yet, God says it's not about our work, but about the work He's done through His Son.
- b. As we were given this new life, it was not only for good, as in forever, but also as in living for good in all things.
 - i. We once lived for bad... and now we live for good.
 - ii. It isn't that we gain anything by living for good, but the Bible tells us that we were given the gift of grace through faith, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10)
 - iii. We are “created in Christ Jesus for good...” just as we are claimed by God through baptism for good.

- c. So, when sin calls us back, God calls us somewhere else... back to the font, back to the cross, back to the promise that we have already died and already been raised with Christ.
- d. As those who died to sin, we are now claimed and kept by Him for good.