

Tender Mercy

(Colossians 2:9-15)

I. Introduction

- A. In *Tender Mercies*, Robert Duvall is Mac Sledge, country-singer-turned-alcoholic
1. He's now a handyman at hotel run by a widow, far from Nashville spotlight
 - a. Fan recognizes him on the street, *"Didn't you used to be Mac Sledge?"*
 - b. Mac eventually falls in love & marries the widow, Rosa Lee (*Tess Harper*)
 2. She's a Christian; her faith and her love drives Mac's transformation
 - a. Mac is baptized the same day as Sonny, Rosa Lee's pre-teen son
 - b. As they drive home from church, Sonny starts talking about baptism
Everyone said I'd feel like a whole different person. I guess maybe I do feel a little different, but not a whole lot different. Do you feel different?
 - 1) *"Not yet."* Sonny, *"You don't look different; do I look any different?"*
 - 2) Mac again says, *"Not yet."* (*Duvall won a Best Actor Oscar for all that*)
- B. In our last men's group, we talked about rebaptism. Why get rebaptized?
1. Most common reason people give, *"I didn't understand what I was doing"*
 - a. I think the biggest reason is that they don't see change in their life
 - 1) Maybe they fell away; maybe they think they need a fresh start
 - 2) Know they're supposed to be changed; they look and *"Not yet"*
 - b. They see rebaptism is a way to start over—maybe it will take this time
 - c. We often do need a fresh start; getting baptized again is not a way
 2. We want something to visibly happen at baptism, but it usually doesn't
 - a. I once heard a preacher talk about baptizing a young woman in a pool
 - 1) As he lowered into the water, her eyes few open and he felt a jolt
 - 2) Was it the Holy Spirit? No, he whacked her head on the steps!
 - b. We'd like for there to be a jolt and then we're totally transformed
 3. We're not saved because we change ourselves but by God's tender mercy
 - a. We talk of *"five steps of salvation."* There's one; Jesus took it at cross!
 - b. Change follows, but it's slow and gradual; that's why we call it *"growth"*
 - c. If you wonder if you do, learn, serve or grown enough? *"Not yet"*
 4. Paul discusses some of this in Colossians (**Reading: [Colossians 2:9-12](#)**)

II. God's Tender Mercy

- A. Paul starts with Christ, "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"
- Colossians were taught a heresy that was a cafeteria line of ideas
 - It was amalgam of Greek philosophy, Jewish tradition, mystery religion
 - You shake all that up and take it to church and call it "Christianity"
 - Paul reminds us that Christianity begins and ends with Jesus Himself
 - Paul says Jesus "he is the head over every power and authority" (2:10)
 - Baptism affirms, "Jesus is Lord." That means you don't need other stuff
 - He uses metaphor of circumcision—all of that stuff is cut out (2:11)
- B. We then get to that familiar baptism text, but they're all familiar (2:12)
- Are we really saved by the water? Are we changed by the water?
 - Where is the power—here it is our faith and it is God's power
 - The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise us
 - How do we know? Faith in God's work; not any faith in our own
 - A lot of people have some pretty strange ideas about baptism
 - Robert Peck has a character say this in novel *A Day No Pigs Would Die*
I'd heard about Baptists from Jacob Henry's mother. According to her, Baptists were a strange lot. They put you in water to see how holy you were. Then the dunked you under the water three times. If you didn't come up, you got dead and your mortal soul went to hell. But if you did come up, it was even worse. You had to be a Baptist!
 - Well, that's not right, but that no more off than some ideas we have
 - There are a lot of strange ideas one baptism—two different extremes
 - Extreme #1:** Baptism is what saves, and you got to get that right
 - Right reason, right way, right words... it's "obeying the gospel"
 - Discussion:** Man was attacked by croc while waiting to be baptized
 - One guy, "Was he pulled all the way under?" You got to get that right
 - Point:** Paul says baptism is not **our** work, but faith in **God's work**
 - Extreme 2#:** Baptism is a human work and is therefore unimportant
 - We're saved by grace, so requiring baptism is "works salvation"
 - Paul doesn't see baptism as a work but as faith in work of God
 - Baptism is where we participate and commit to the cross (Rom 6:3-4)

III. Conclusion

- A. Paul moves from baptism to the point of baptism—the cross (**Col 2:13-14**)
1. At the cross, God acted to cancel *“the charge of our legal indebtedness”*
 - a. The KJV wording caused many to misunderstand the metaphor here
 - 1) *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...”*
 - 2) So we had this view that Paul meant the OT was nailed to the cross
 - b. That’s not Paul’s point; what Jesus nailed to the cross was our sin
 - 1) Everyone of us had a *“record of debt that stood against us”* (ESV)
 - 2) But at the cross, God cancelled the charges too them all away
 - 3) Jesus took our *“certificate of indebtedness”* and nailed it to the cross
 - c. Can’t save ourselves in *“steps of salvation.”* Dead men don’t climb stairs
*God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ’s cross. (**Col. 2:13-14**, Message)*
 2. There’s more. At the cross, Jesus defeated the forces of Satan (**Col 2:15**)
 - a. What looked like ultimate defeat was Jesus ultimate victory over sin
 - 1) Jesus died stripped naked and powerless, rejected and ridiculed
 - 2) Here *“disarmed”* literally is stripped off. Look at *The Message again*
He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets.
 - b. Cross didn’t just cancel out bill; it keeps Satan from sending us another
 - c. Of course, in the Bible economy there is often an *“Already/Not Yet”*
 - 1) Satan has already been defeated and exposed for the tyrant He is
 - 2) There is coming a time when that defeat will be final (**Rom 16:20**)
- B. In this text, Paul ties our forgiveness and ultimate victory to the cross
1. The cross says we can’t save ourselves; we need God’s tender mercy
 - a. It was at the cross that Jesus cancelled the debt caused by our sin
 - b. It was at the cross that Jesus defeated the forces of darkness forever
 2. It is at the cross that Jesus calls us to be disciples, *“to take up our cross”*
 - a. The cross isn’t just an event we remember when we eat communion
 - b. The cross is something we live out as we follow Jesus every day
 3. If you haven’t met Jesus at the cross in baptism, that is our invitation.
-