

The Point Of No Return

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Raised on the southwest coast of Oregon, I had many opportunities to visit the beaches with family and friends. One day, as a teenager, I felt the foolish urge to climb an ocean front cliff near Bandon.

It looked challenging but not impossible. So up the sandstone wall I went. About halfway up I realized that I had taken on more than I had bargained for. Backing down was not an option. Suddenly I realized, *I was at the point of no return.*

Breathing an urgent prayer, I committed myself to go all the way, one step, one handhold, one foothold at a time. After a few tense moments I reached the top, relieved and triumphant.

Every believer in Christ has a "point of no return." It is called water baptism. Water baptism is not part of the saving act itself. The saving act itself is the act of God in justifying the believer by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Nevertheless, water baptism is part of the total salvation *experience*. Water baptism is intended to be the believer's first response to God's saving act. It is "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). "Answer" means "appeal, response, pledge." It is a vow to God. It is like saying "I do."

You were "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working [power] of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

In water baptism we identify ourselves with Christ in His death and resurrection. We bury the "old man," that is, the old person we used to be. We are now a new person. If and when the old temptations come, we can point to our water baptism and say, "the person who used to do those things is dead. I had a 'funeral' and buried him. I am not going to dig him up. I am past my 'point of no return.' I am committed to going all the way."

We are now alive in Christ. The risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, now lives in us. We live each moment in His resurrection life and power. It is more than trying to live *for* Jesus; it is Him living *in us* by faith. It is not merely *trying*; it is *trusting*. It is living in victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil through our "faith in the working [power] of God."

So then, by faith we "live" our water baptism day by day. We count ourselves "dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).