

### **Dead in the Water, New Life in Christ (Romans 6:3-4)**

Well this morning we have the special privilege of witnessing baptisms as a church, which we'll do at the end of the service today. For that I would ask you to turn to Romans 6, and I don't want to just tack on baptism at the end, I want to talk about the importance of baptism in Scripture and in our lives. Baptism doesn't make us Christians, it doesn't make us the bride of Christ. It's like the wedding ring the bride wears, an outward symbol of her status. Rom 6 is what baptism means spiritually, the reality the symbol represents: Rom 6:3 *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*<sup>4</sup> *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

In the Gulf War one 'army chaplain reported his amazement at the large number of Desert Storm soldiers who gave their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, then asked if they could be baptized. To accommodate their requests, a wise pastor used the only "baptismal" available in the middle of the Saudi Arabian desert: a coffin—a potent and perfect symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of which baptism is a picture.'<sup>1</sup>

Our baptistery is also like a large coffin. The cross on the front symbolizes death, and those who enter it to be baptized are making a public statement of death to the old sinful life, it's buried at the foot of the cross, covered by Christ, washed, cleansed. They're declaring new life in Jesus. In the gospels a 12-year-old girl is resurrected as Jesus took her by the hand. Another time a funeral was underway for a young man, a crowd watched as Jesus '*came and touched the open coffin, and...He said, **Young man, I say to you, arise.** So he who was dead sat up...and they glorified God, saying, "...God has visited His people"* (Lk 7:14-16 NKJV). The young man climbed out of his coffin, and today a young man and young woman who believe the Lord has touched and visited them will be lain in a coffin-like baptistery before this crowd, they'll sit up, rise, and climb out to walk a new life glorifying God.

My goal today with the help of the Spirit is that we would walk out of here knowing in a greater way what this new life is that we're called to walk in. Do you know this, v. 3 asks? Do you know like v. 3 says, what it means to be baptized into Christ Jesus and specifically into His death and to be buried as v. 4 says with Christ into death? Just as Christ was risen from the dead so are we in Christ, and we're to walk in a new life because we have new life. I don't know if we know this, or if we do, if we think about it in our daily life

For those being baptized today, these are truths to know, think about, and live from this day forward. If you haven't been baptized yet, if considering it, these are truths you need to know as realities in your life. If you've been baptized as a believer, these are realities to remember of your old life of sin.

**1<sup>st</sup> reality: Baptism pictures death to the old person (v. 3)**

In the context Paul has just finished 5 chapters of presenting the gospel, the good news for the totally depraved and enslaved in sin who can be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Christianity isn't about what we do to be made right with God, it's about what God has done for us in the person and work of Christ, our sin being paid for by Christ on the cross and Christ's righteousness being given to us as a gift. It's not of our works, it's His work for us applied to us by faith, it's all of grace for all of our sin. If you've never trusted in Christ alone for salvation, if you're trusting in being a good person, you're not saved. You need to turn from your sin (Rom 1-3) and trust Jesus alone to be saved (Rom 4-5). That's the gospel, not baptism. Now in chapter 6, v. 1 Paul anticipates an objection or excuse some might raise: if that's true, should we continue living in sin so grace abounds more?

<sup>2</sup> *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* That's the lead in to his point in v. 3 as Paul reminds Christians they've been baptized into the death of Christ. v. 2 connects that with dying to sin, so we're not to live in it anymore, as our lifestyle, what we live in, for. It's not saying water baptism literally removes sin, he's been saying for chapters we're saved from sin by grace through faith, but now he presents it from another angle: being saved=we died to sin. Death=separation, end of old status, here our old sinful life.

[I'm not to live in sin like I did before Christ, that's my former life]

The NT word baptism means immersion and it had to do with identification. My study Bible says: 'All Christians have, by placing saving faith in Him, been spiritually immersed into the person [of] Christ, that is, united and identified with Him ... Certainly water baptism pictures this reality, which is the purpose—to show the transformation of the justified. **into His death...** means that immersion or identification is specifically with Christ's death'<sup>2</sup>

There's 2 ordinances Jesus gave to the church and both of them are pictures of spiritual realities. The communion cup pictures Christ's blood, His death, and the bread pictures the life of Christ for us. Baptism also pictures the life and death of Christ for us and how we're united to it by faith. Having visual aids helps us remember the life and death of Christ and our union with Him. v. 3 says all who have been baptized into Christ are baptized into His death.

Both ordinances, communion and baptism, are rooted in Jewish practices. In order to convert, be a member of a synagogue body, participate in Passover and Israel's worship, God's Law called Gentiles to be circumcised first as a physical act for their inward faith. The Jews also used the word *baptizo* for the immersion in water of any converting to Judaism, then they could come to the memorial ordinances. Christ commanded His followers a similar way: make converts/disciples and baptize them (them=disciples), then teach them to observe all I commanded (which would include observing communion). Acts 2:38-42 follows that pattern: repent – baptized – added to the number of the church, to teaching, fellowship as a church family and communion.

Christian baptism for believers is also a physical act for inward faith. It's the first step of obedience in my conviction before being a member, being a full part of our communion and fellowship. Maybe you were baptized as an infant, but if you're an adult or young adult who has put your faith in Christ and you haven't been baptized as a believer, since you repented, I urge you to obey the command of God's Word: repent and be baptized. You can obey that before next communion, and put that first step first, in its biblical order.

Rom 6:3-4 describes baptism for those whose old life to sin is dead, buried, and risen and that you must know this is what happened – that doesn't work for babies who don't know what's happening to them as water is sprinkled – but it does match the image of laying down a dead body, put in a coffin and buried, then a new life raised up to walk in newness, by one who knows that has happened spiritually in his or her life by Jesus dying, lying down, rising. Our baptistery is like a coffin, a visual aid for our death, burial, resurrection.

Last week's message I talked about the Passover background of communion that the NT transforms. It was the end of their old life in Egypt as slaves and the first Passover they ate with sandals on ready to walk in haste to the new life they were being redeemed to. To review our study last week in 1 Cor 5, Christ is our Passover, He's redeemed us from slavery to sin. We really *are* freed in Christ, so we should live like it, not like our old life as sin's slaves.

The message of the symbol is: leave the old behind. Don't let the past define you or drive your present, don't look back like grumbling Israelites did, look upward to Christ the Lamb of God who redeemed you from the past and is able to help you look past sin, to pass over what's covered by Christ's blood. Don't resent who or what God may be using to help you cleanse old evil out of your heart, submit to His cleansing agents, repent of evil to God, others.

Israel was freed of slavery and was to live like. But some of her forefathers did later want to go back to Egypt instead of their Promised Land. Paul's using that analogy to say don't look back to your old life of slavery and sin, you have a new identity in Christ, a new inheritance greater than Canaan. In the words of v. 1 here we're not to *continue in sin*. One scholar explains that word *continue* 'was sometimes used of a person's purposefully living in a certain place and of making it his permanent residence'<sup>3</sup> [that also fits end of v. 2 'live in sin']. We're not at home with sin anymore, we're sojourners.

That was some of the imagery behind Passover->Communion, interestingly some of that imagery was also applied to baptism in the early church. Pastor Cliff and I took a class this week with historian Michael Haykin at IBC and he shared how the early church sometimes after baptisms would give new converts milk and honey, the OT symbols of the Promised Land of Canaan. It's another way to picture salvation as a personal exodus from our old life and a newness of life to walk in, freed from our slavery to sin. 1 Cor 10 uses this same word baptism for being in Moses delivered through the red sea in the exodus, then Paul argues we're not to continue living in sinful old ways.

[in baptism think of the old self as 'dead in the water'; leave it there]

Here in v. 3 Paul uses the word baptism for being in Christ, for dying to sin.<sup>6</sup> *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.*<sup>7</sup> *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* So to die to sin is to be set free from sin, not free of sin's presence, but sin's penalty and power. The penalty of sin is death in v. 23, but in Christ's death we're free of death eternally in hell. In the end of v. 6 it also frees from sin's power to enslave.

What does v. 6 mean '*our old self was crucified with him*'? Jesus said in Mk 8:34 '*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross ... whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*' Followers of Christ deny self and die to self, losing their life to be saved for the sake of Christ and His gospel. Taking up a cross in NT times meant you die, just as Christ did the day He took up His cross. Paul says here '*our old self was crucified with him,*' that's what happened when we were saved, as we became a follower of Jesus, our old self was crucified just as Jesus was.

He explained in Galatians: '*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live* [i.e., not 'the old I/self']...*those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires...in the cross of our Lord... the world has been crucified to me and I to the world*' Gal 2:20, 5:24, 6:14.

My sin, O the bliss of this glorious thought,  
My sin not in part but the whole  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord (2x) O my soul!<sup>4</sup>

The cross doesn't just end sin's penalty for us, it deals a blow to sin's power  
His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me  
He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free<sup>5</sup>

Here v. 6 says our old person was crucified with Christ '*so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*' The old self/man, body of sin, and flesh in Paul's writing are all ways to describe our nature before salvation, and it's brought to nothing or '*done away with*' (NASB, footnote '*or made powerless*'). It's not the annihilation of sin, it's breaking the power of sin, so we're no longer slaves to sin. Sin is not our *master* anymore, v. 14 says, that's the verb form of *Lord*. Sin has no rightful *dominion* over us who are under grace, it does not own us in Christ.

You can still choose to obey someone who's not your master, who doesn't own you, and you still may follow what your old person did, but in Christ you *can now* resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Before, you couldn't do anything outside those realms, but those in Christ have been '*delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of* Christ (Col 1:13). Salvation isn't just a *transaction* that affects where we go after we die, it's a *transfer* from one domain to a new kingdom and rulership, it's also a *transformation* of nature, v. 17 says we now obey God *from the heart*

Picture a business dying out, they close up shop, the place is cleared out till one day driving by you see a new sign that says 'Under New Ownership.' If you were to go in the store, you would see things inside have been changed all around, but the outside sign didn't do that, it tells others what happened. Think of baptism as a sign that says to the world: 'Under New Ownership.' The sign doesn't make that happen, it's an outward sign of what's already happened legally, and it's already affected things inwardly, changing things. The former occupant is gone, and he may come back to visit but he doesn't own the place and doesn't have a right anymore, you can show him the door  
[when he comes knocking, don't let him in and let him make orders]

Baptism is a sign of what's already happened, it lets everyone know the old is gone, you have a new owner: Christ. An outward sign of inward change, or to use v. 4's imagery, it's like a sign at a graveside of who's buried there:  
<sup>4</sup> *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death ...* Baptism is the sign on the tombstone of our old self, he's dead, buried, so don't dig him up

In early church from 64-312 AD as you were baptized as a disciple of Jesus it could be a sign of death another way. Baptism meant you may literally die for your faith, and that public profession might seal your fate as a martyr or more commonly, still today in some cultures, baptism for Christ meant your family would see you as dead to them. In our old Bible study in SoCal, the wife was saved from a Buddhist family and her family essentially cut her off, her husband was the son of a Jewish rabbi. When he converted to Jesus, his old family saw him as dead to them. We're to love sinful family but old sinful flesh is to be dead to us, cut off. Baptism pictures death to an old life.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> point: Baptism Pictures our Risen New Life in Christ

v. 4b '*...in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*'

Our union with Christ is now raised to a new level, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God, we're to walk in His risen new life in us. For the glory of God, the purpose of baptism is that we would walk in a new kind of life, a new quality of abundant life. The picture of baptism shows an old person as "dead in the water." The former self is dead in the water to be left there, buried, and there's a new person made alive to new life in Christ.

Col 2:12 says you were '*buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead...God made alive together with him...[3:3] For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God...*'  
<sup>9</sup> *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices*<sup>10</sup> *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed ...*

A good biblical illustration would be Lazarus. He died, was buried and rose literally, but as he walked out, he still had layers of grave clothes to take off with remnants of old dead flesh still corrupting, clinging, reeking (in KJV 'stinketh'). We're a new person to walk in new, life shedding layers of sin. People ask 'does a Christian have 2 natures'? The NT teaches we get 1 new nature with remaining sin/flesh. Eph 2 says we '*were by nature children of wrath*' but in Christ we're '*one new man*' (v. 3, 15). The old sinful nature you *were* (past tense) but now you *are* new (present). God's Spirit promised in the new covenant '*I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them*' (Eze 11). So it's not that I have 2 hearts, 1 good heart and 1 bad

No, the old heart is taken out, and 1 new heart is put in its place and 1 new spirit. It's not a makeover on the outside, God makes all new on the inside. This isn't a remodel of our nature, this is a remaking of our nature in Christ. The new person now *'may walk'* in new life but won't always, while the old sinful nature could only walk in the course of this world, flesh and the devil. Those in Christ are still *in* the world, but not *of* the world anymore, we have the flesh to battle still (Romans 7-8), and we still resist the devil (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9). Salvation doesn't deliver us from the presence of those things, but it does deliver us from their power. Rom 6 doesn't say believers are not *capable* of sin, it says we're no longer *controlled* by sin or *compelled* by sin

2 Cor 5: *'the love of Christ controls [compels], because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died [context: all in Christ]; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.'*

Paul says we need to behold it, see this by faith: we don't get a new nature with the old, no, the old is passed away/died, new is come. It's not just that something new is created in you, in Christ you *are* a new creation. There's been more than a salvation transaction, it's been a spiritual heart transplant (heart is the inner person, spirit, nature). It's a transfer to new life in Christ.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives the illustration of 2 fields separated by a highway we can't cross. We all start in the field of slaves to sin but when Jesus saves us, He transfers us out of that domain to the fields of His kingdom. We now are on the other side in a new life but we can still hear our old slave-master over the fence, and he can distract us and draw our attention away from our new Lord and life and can urge us to sin like before. Laborers in the Lord's field are still led astray and sometimes obey influences from the other side but they don't have power to pull back over and Jesus offers power to resist.

Which takes us to **Point #3: Baptism Reminds Us to Walk in New Life**

v. 4 ends with this purpose statement *...we too might walk in newness of life*

We need to know this, v. 3 says. We need to remember this. Baptism helps remind us of this reality, v. 6 says know you're not slaves, v. 11 adds: *you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

NAB translation: "you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin"

ISV: “continually consider yourselves dead as far as sin is concerned”  
 Wuest’s Expanded Translation of Greek NT: “be constantly counting upon the fact...you are those who have been separated from the sinful nature”  
 One paraphrase says it like this: “look upon your old sinful nature as dead”  
 Another: “you should see yourselves as being dead to the power of sin”  
 Paul’s application in v. 12: *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.* Sin remains in Christians but must not reign.

Pastor Stuart Briscoe wrote: I was drafted into the Royal Marines during the Korean War, I came under the control of a particularly imposing regimental sergeant major, who strode around the barracks leaving a train of tough men quaking in their boots. I didn’t realize how dominant this man had become in my life until the day I was released from the Marines. Clutching my papers in one hand, I was luxuriating in my new-found freedom to the extent of putting the other hand in my pocket, slouching a little, and whistling—sins so heinous that if they had been observed by the R.S.M., they would have landed me in all kinds of trouble! Then I saw him striding toward me. On an impulse I sprang into the posture of a Marine until I realized that I had died to him—he and I no longer had a relationship. He was not dead, and neither was I, but as far as his domination of my life was concerned, it was all a matter of history. So I did some reckoning, decided not to yield to his tyranny, and demonstrated it by refusing to yield my arms to swinging high and my feet to marching as if on parade, and my back to ramrod stiffness. Instead I presented my feet, hands, back to my new-found freedom as a former Marine—and he couldn’t do a thing about it!<sup>6</sup>

Paul’s saying don’t listen to sin, don’t let it reign obeying it, don’t live in it. What do we do with this body of flesh we’re still in? Chapter 12 says ‘*offer your body as a living sacrifice...do not be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*’ (v. 1-2). Chapter 8 says ‘*by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body*’ (v. 13). Not a passive process, it’s an active putting to death, dying to our old self and desire daily and not conforming to this world but transforming by renewing our minds.

Col 3: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*<sup>2</sup> *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*<sup>3</sup> *For you have died ...*<sup>5</sup> *Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...<sup>10</sup> ... put on the new self, which is being renewed ...* Let’s remember these truths, let baptism remind us of death to sin, new life in Jesus, let’s walk out of here in newness of life



John Newton said: ‘I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was; a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge, “By the grace of God I am what I am.”’<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Courson, *Application Commentary* (Nelson, 2003), p. 920.

<sup>2</sup> *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nelson, 1997), p. 1702–1703.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> Horatio Spafford, “It Is Well.”

<sup>5</sup> Charles Wesley, “O For A Thousand Tongues.”

<sup>6</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, *Romans*, Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nelson, 1982), p. 134–135.

<sup>7</sup> <https://puritanquoter.wordpress.com/2010/11/16/i-am-not-what-i-ought-to-be/>