

DEAD AND BURIED BY BAPTISM

Romans 6:3-4a

*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.*

REVIEW

The question introduced in Romans 6 is: What kind of life should a Christian live? The answer, negatively, is: a life where the Christian stops sinning. (The answer stated positively is the topic for next week.) The argument is that a Christian is dead to sin. Our text today strengthens that argument by referencing the Christian's baptism.

I. What happens soulfully when a person is baptized into the body of Christ

The Holy Spirit of God – the same Holy Spirit who moved upon the face of the waters when the earth was without form and void, the same Holy Spirit who moved holy men of God to write the Scriptures, the same Holy Spirit declared co-equal in glory with the Father and Son – took *our* souls one-by-one at the time of profession of faith and delivered them from the power of darkness and translated them into the kingdom of God's dear Son. We try to understand the experience from a 3-dimensional perspective, imagining something like the snatching of a falling egg and transferring it to a safe bed of straw in the sunlight. We try to imagine what it means to be baptized *into* the body of Christ or to be *in* Christ and He *in* us. But we know there is something beyond normal material experience in those spiritual events.

In a similar vein we are not sure of the precise nature of Ezekiel's transport to the temple or Paul's tour of paradise or John's view into heaven.

Thus we are thankful when God uses what is familiar and comprehensible to communicate the mystical. So it was at Pentecost with the Disciples' baptism of the Holy Spirit. In confirming and clarifying that reality the Lord sent visible tongues of fire, audible sounds of rushing wind, and the observable phenomenon of speaking in other languages. And so likewise He has established the ordinance of baptism which helps communicate outwardly what has happened inwardly.

II. How the spiritual reality of Holy Spirit baptism is testified to comprehensibly.

- A. The parts – baptizer, baptizee, water, audience
- B. The process – act out death, burial, and resurrection to new life
- C. The purpose
 1. Public identification with the greatest act in human history
 - a. Public – Baptism is not intended to be a private experience. Almost everything of spiritual significance that happens to us after our salvation happens in connection with our spiritual family, the local church. In baptism a person says, "I am joining with the body of people here, looking forward to mutual encouragement to obedience, commitment, and love.
 - b. Identification – The person being baptized is declaring, "I understand what Christ has done for me; by faith I have appropriated it; it now defines my life."

2. What baptism communicates

- a. I have turned from the old life of sin to a new life in Jesus Christ.
- b. Sinking beneath the baptismal waters, I show that my past sins and corrupt affections have been buried. As I emerge, I show I have risen regenerate, cleansed, and quickened to new hopes and new life, consecrated to emulating, reflecting, indeed manifesting the life of Jesus Christ in my entire mind and body and yielding my past, present, future, reputation, vocation, motivation, location, health, length of life, and manner of death.
- c. Church: love, support, rebuke, edify me, as I commit to do for you; world: hate and reject me if you must.

III. Relevant themes in baptism to our topic of continuance in sin

A. Immediacy

1. When a body is dead, it is dead, and when it is dead, it is buried.
 - a. See Ananias, Sapphira, Lazarus, Jesus.
2. Historically to leave a body unburied has been seen as the greatest indignity.
 - a. See the shame heaped on the 2 prophets – Rev. 11:8-9.
 - b. So a believer. There's nothing so incongruous or undignified as a Christian zombie.
3. Hence the (sometimes misunderstood) message of a quick baptism.
 - a. Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, etc.

“To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ was to publicly declare one's allegiance to Christ and one's desire to follow Him as a disciple. When Peter exhorted the Jews to be baptized, he was commanding them to express their allegiance to Christ. An unwillingness to be baptized would have exposed an unwillingness to obey the gospel and become a disciple of Christ.” – Matt Waymeyer

“The early church could not conceive of a true Christian who was not willing to express commitment to our Lord [in baptism]. That was not one of the options given to the person being evangelized. He either trusted Christ and was baptized, knowing the implications in terms of commitment and lifestyle, or he rejected the truth.” – Richard Averbeck

“The idea of an unbaptized believer is completely foreign to the New Testament – it is not even entertained as a possibility. In the New Testament, a person was not baptized only if he did not want to become a Christian or he believed in Christ and yet was physically unable to be baptized.” – Waymeyer

4. No one thought, “Can I do the first but not the second?” Baptism followed faith as evidence that the first was genuine. Similar situation: Rom. 10:9 (confession following true belief).
5. So *immediately* things change upon death. Dead people don't continue in pre-dead ways. Old things have passed away. They are utterly and forever renounced and forgotten.
6. So the charges in Scriptures:
 - a. “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live *any longer* therein?” (Rom. 6:2)
 - b. The time past suffices – I Pet. 4:1-4. See also I Cor. 6:11, Luke 9:59-62.

B. Thoroughness

1. “Baptizo” means to immerse, plunge, dip. The logical use of the word here and the best picture of burial is, of course, full immersion in water.
2. What kind of ugly picture of burial would baptism be if scalp, hand, or face is left exposed?!!
3. Did Jesus partially die? Did He just swoon and then resuscitate?
4. Then should we misrepresent Him . . . some parts dead but other parts yet alive?
5. The issue is *thoroughness!* We know what that means. We *immerse* ourselves in a project, *plunge* into a work, *dive* in to an undertaking.
6. So, the idea is to do something *completely*. Full dedication in service to God! Consecration! Sealed unto all the benefits and obligations of Christian discipleship.
7. See what's coming up in Romans 12:1. Let's be specific:
 - a. Eyes – “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1)
 - b. Ears – “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” (Prov. 28:9)
 - c. Tongue – “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” (Prov. 18:21)
 - d. Mind – “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5)
 - e. Hands – “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Eph. 4:28)
 - f. Feet – “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” (Prov. 4:26)
8. Listen: if we have been baptized into Jesus' death, then we have gone through a *thorough* mortification of the old ways of sin!

C. Sobriety

1. We have been baptized into the DEATH of Jesus Christ.
 - a. When “planted together” with Christ, we aren't going tandem-parachuting or riding a bicycle built-for-two! A better picture: bound in a Roman form of punishment for murder.
 - b. To continue in sin following a profession of faith in Christ shows a schoolgirl flippancy to a very serious topic. We are baptized into the death of a man.
 - c. [Personal illustration of grief] – “Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful.” (Prov. 14:13)
 - d. Perhaps that's something of what the apostles experienced as they, in Paul's words, always bore about in their bodies the death of the Lord Jesus (II Cor. 4:10).

