

Roman 6:1-11  
Entering the Divine Life

Katie and I have been making preparations to head to the SBC this year. Preparations means taking the kids to one place and taking the dog to another place. As we were taking our kids to Katie's parents we were moving all tier stuff, changing over car seats and the thought occurred to me. When Katie and I were dating and talking about marriage I never had the foresight to imagine the mingling of our lives that children would bring. Marriage has truly brought our families together like nothing else in this world could.

Katie and I entered this relationship through marriage where we stood before each other and professed a love that already existed between us. We could only imagine how greater our love would be once we started having kids.

Marriage with kids is amazing but there is something greater, a relationship that will never fade away a relationship in eternity. How do we enter that life?

Baptism is our entrance into the divine life. I appreciate what Christopher Hall says about the every church: "The fathers believed that God delights to use tangible, concrete, earthly means - matter itself - to communicate his grace, redemption, and presence to us, elements as simple and specific as bread, wine, water, and oil." (*Worshipping With the Church Fathers*, 22)

To consider baptism today, let's turn to Romans 6.

#### READ TEXT

Two things this passage teaches us about our relationship to Christ

#### **1. In Christ We Have Been Buried in Death (1-4)**

To really appreciate the full force of Romans 6 we have to go back to Romans 5. In Romans 5, Paul is continuing the thought that he has been developing since he beginning, a thought that for our purposes comes to a high point in Romans 4 where he says that justification that is being made in a right standing before God comes by faith. Faith in what? Faith in the work that God has and is accomplishing. 4:3, *Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness*. Abraham believed in what God was going to do for him and it was God's actions that were to be his salvation.

We too must place faith in the work of God on our behalf, a work that Paul gets to at the end of 4 and into chapter 5. 4:25 says, [Jesus] *was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*. 5:1, *Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. 5:6-8, *For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die - but God shows his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*. 5:18-20, *Therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will*

*be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus our Lord.*

The point of the gospel is to direct you to Christ. For my life and your life to rest on his amazing grace, to rest on his unfailing love that was demonstrated towards us. However, this does not mean that we are absolved from our responsibility in this life. On the contrary, we are not absolved we are enfolded into this life so that we can say *it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

So what is our response to this grace? Do we sin so that grace may abound? Isn't that what Paul said in 5:20, *Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...?* Worshipers of the Lord Jesus, those of us who understand this gospel of grace realize that our lives that are now his are to be lived in response to his grace. Not that we live to earn our salvation, but the life that we now live is a life of responding to his amazing grace.

We love to sing "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." Very powerful imagery but don't lose the power of the image of blindness in a word of seeing. The Bible helps us with the image of blindness by bluntly saying, *...you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,...*(Ephesians 2:1-6)

Paul is saying in this passage how erroneous the question of continuation in sin is. Effectively he is saying 'you were choking on a hotdog and were not breathing, you had the Heimlich successfully completed so that your airway is clear and now you are asking me to put the hotdog back in your throat so that you can choke? You are saying that you enjoy choking rather than breathing? You would rather have death than life? Some people, you know them, I know them, the world is full of them, and they would rather enjoy death than life. Some people love the darkness. But not us. We run to identify with Christ through baptism.

John 3:19 says, *This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* But this is not our testimony. Our testimony is John 1:14, *The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* We have seen Jesus, as the one sent from the Father to accomplish salvation for us by death on the cross, a death that he died to give sin its own wages - the wages of sin is death - and by his dying for our sins not the sins of his own, he was able to execute the executioner and stand triumphantly from the wages of sin alive. We respond to his grace and the way that we respond is baptism.

The way to respond to the grace of God is baptism. I love that Paul, to remind and expound on this principle uses the vivid picture of baptism to show how we share in this life that Christ has secured for us. We should know this, after all we are Baptist. But, as the British Baptist Beasley

Murray, Stanley Fowler and others demonstrate, most Baptist have a very weak theology when it relates to baptism. This is not so for Paul, and surely not so for many in the early church. Paul uses baptism, a rite that he understood all Christians undergoing, to explain this new life that we have in Christ, a life that comes through death. Let's look at what he says:

First we need to note the tenses of the verbs. All are in the aorist tense which refers to an undefined action in the past. This can be seen in *have been baptized* and *were buried* etc... I believe there is a relation with Romans 6:3 to Galatians 3:27. Gal 3:27 says, *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. Baptism is the effect of putting on Christ. Once we are saved, baptism serves as our entry point, our initiatory point, into the divine life. There is an undeniable spiritual unity between Christ and the baptism.

We don't want to underemphasize baptism, we don't want to overemphasize it either, we want to see baptism as part of the whole Christian experience and not separate from it.

Notice as well that the baptism that we are baptized into is not *our* death but *his* death. By connecting our faith filled obedience to his acts on the Cross we learn just how such an event (then) saved us (now). We place faith now in what he did. What he did has implications for all eternity. He is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world and is able to save to the uttermost all who draw near to him.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*. When we enter the waters of baptism, we are participating in the death of Christ and so are marking a definitive break from our old ways in the same way that Christ died for sin. We, through participating in his death through entering the waters of baptism, die to the same power that caused his death - our sin. This is why we who have died to sin cannot live in it.

Death is only part of the story of the gospel. Death gave way to life. We who are plunged into the death of Jesus are also brought back up to enjoy the life of Jesus - he is alive! When we enter the waters of baptism we enter his death, a death that he died for us so that we who believe in him even though we die we shall live. Not only do we enter his death, we enter his life! Look at the end of verse 4ff.

## **2. In Christ We Have Been Raised To Walk In Newness of Life (5-11)**

This is the hope of the gospel, hope that we get to express now. And we express it now through baptism. When we come out of the waters of baptism we are expressing that just as Jesus went into the tomb and came from death alive so we who live in him will be made alive! Here is the beautiful part of the story - life begins now! By faith in the Son and in the power of the Spirit (Romans 8) we get to live. We don't get to live it to the fullest but we get to live with the hope of resurrection. Look at verse 7. Look at verse 12ff.

By saying this Paul wants us to know what Christ has done. He removes us from the curse of the first Adam. Look at 5:12 and 5:17. Paul says in another place, *The first Adam became a*

*living being; the last Adam became a life giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:45) We are a new creation in Christ, a new creation whose heart has been made alive and now beats to bring him praise.*

Daily we are being remade in the likeness of Christ our Savior. We are those who have been born again, born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)

We go into the waters of baptism so that we can live. After we come from the waters of baptism we have new life. We, through this act definitively both die and live as we are plunged into his grave and raised to walk in newness of a Spirit-filled life.

Is this how we view baptism? Baptism is more than an act of obedience; more than a symbol. Baptism is our entry point into a new life, a life that come by faith in the one who loved us and gave himself for us. We don't enter the waters of baptism again just like we who have died to sin don't live in it. The baptized believers live a life being made partakers of the divine nature. We enter the waters saying goodbye to our old ways and we rise in newness of life anticipating from that point forward until the day when our Lord calls our baptized bodies back from their grave to a resurrection of life.

When we come to die we who are baptized into Christ can say *[we] have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* (Colossians 3:3-4)

Let's pray.