

ROMANS 6:1-11

BAPTIZED INTO JESUS

Today is the day on which we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, and yet this selected text talks about our baptisms. It tells us that our baptisms join us to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Today isn't supposed to be about us, but this text appears to be all about us, and of course about Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. But what about His baptism, the thing that's supposed to be the subject of our celebration?

So, to preach on this text we need to step outside of the text and look at Jesus' baptism. In Jesus' baptism Jesus identifies with us sinners. He cares so much for us in our sinful broken lives as bruised reeds and smouldering wicks that He identifies with us and is baptized with us. He has no need to confess any sins. There's no need for Him to personally get into the water, but He does it for us, to save us from sin.

As our reading talks about our baptisms joining us to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection so that we may be made dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, in a similar way Jesus' baptism joins Him to us, to our sin. And so, as our reading says, when we're baptized, we die with Jesus, when we're baptized all of our sins go to Jesus and He dies with them. We die with Him in that crucifixion, but we're protected by His righteousness that comes to us in place of our sins.

It's a complicated, marvelous, beautiful thing that the Bible lays out for us. Jesus' baptism joins Him to us, and our baptisms join us to Him. All of our sins go to Jesus, and all of His righteousness comes to us. What God the Father said to Jesus His Son at His baptism He now says to us. 'You are My beloved son, with you I am well pleased. You are My beloved daughter, with you I am well pleased.'

So when our text talks mostly about us and our baptism on the day of the celebration of Jesus' baptism it is in fact talking about the baptism of Jesus – not the actual event of it, but the results of it. It talks about what Jesus' baptism means to you. Without Jesus' baptism Paul couldn't write that we have died to sin, or that we're alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So, as Paul looks past Jesus' baptism and through our baptism to our death, burial and resurrection with Jesus, let's also try to do the same.

In Baptism you died with Christ, really died with Him, and you were raised with Him to a new life. He rescued you from the road to hell and placed you on the path to heaven. All of your sin was washed away, washed onto Jesus. He got all of that. What you got was His righteousness and life. By the blood of His death, He completely cleansed you from all Sin.

It sounds nice for me to tell you this marvelous good news, but where do I get it from? Where does Paul get it from? Paul wrote to Timothy, “The saying is trustworthy, for: “If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11). This comes from one of the first Christian hymns. Paul quotes part of it in his letter to Timothy. This is part of the early Christian teaching, that through baptism we die with Jesus, and we live with Jesus.

We see it popping up in various things that Paul says such as, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life 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). Faith in Jesus is one of those gifts of Baptism. Paul also wrote, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Or more clearly put, Jesus died for all people and all people have died by being joined to Jesus’ death through their baptisms.

Our reading says 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” (v. 6). That old self is also referred to in the Bible as the Old Adam, which we drown daily by sorrow for our sins and repentance in faith. We do this because we “belong to Christ Jesus [and] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). And you know that you belong to Jesus because God put His name on you in your Baptism. “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Thus having died to sin, we’re no longer slaves to it. You don’t owe your old sinful flesh a thing. You don’t have to sin. To do battle with that sinful nature return to your baptism, which means thinking of yourself as Paul describes you: “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11).

Think of this. At Baptism Satan trembles and leaves his prey in the hands of Him who resurrects the dead. Thus just as when Jesus was baptized and left in the hands of His beloved Father, when we were baptized we were placed into the hands of our loving Father, by passing through Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.

Jesus died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:3), and Baptism joins us to that death for our sins. Also according to the Scriptures Christ “suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

Your baptism doesn’t just join you to the death of your sins, but it also joins you to a new life in Christ Jesus, to a new life before God your Father. In your spirit you are alive.

I understand that our text can be hard for many to grasp and that's why I've been circling around it. Another reason is that it's based on many things Paul and others have said before this. Without that foundation it doesn't make sense, or it's harder to believe. Our text begins by alluding to that by saying, "What shall we say then?" Basically, Paul tells us that what we hear today is based on what was said before, and thus it might be helpful for you to hear what was written right before our text.

Immediately before our text Paul wrote:

"But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

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 Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:15-21).

The original sin that Adam did led to your actual sins and condemnation. Jesus' Baptism, death, burial and resurrection leads to your forgiveness, righteousness and eternal life.

As Paul goes onto say, "If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11). And you know that the Holy Spirit dwells in you because you were given the gift of the Holy Spirit at your Baptism (Acts 2:38).

Through your union with Jesus through your Baptism you have been raised with Him and seated with God in heaven (Ephesians 2:6). Thus as "you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3). Amen.