

Baptized into Christ

Romans 6:1-11

Introduction

The story of Jesus' Baptism is an Epiphany story because He is manifest, or made known, to the world as the Son of God, as the Voice from heaven says, "*You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased*" (**Mark 1:11**). It's interesting that Jesus was baptized by John. Remember, John's Baptism was a *Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (**Mark 1:4**). Jesus was sinless. Of all the people gathered around, He was the only One not needing to be baptized. But by His being baptized, Jesus was identifying with fallen humanity in our sinfulness. This is important because of what His Baptism signifies for us. Because Jesus was baptized with fallen man, Paul says that we have been *baptized into Christ* (**Romans 6:3**). But what does it mean that we are **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**.

United with Him

This speaks to the question, "What happens at Baptism?" Many Christians believe that Baptism is nothing more than a symbol, that it is a visible confession of faith. That's not what Paul is saying here. He is saying that something happens at our Baptism. In **verses 3** and **4**, he says that those of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were *baptized into His death* and by that baptism, we were *buried with Him into death*. In short, we have been united with Him in death through Baptism. Baptism is something God is doing to us, not something we do for God. For it's God who unites us with Christ in Baptism. But what kind of death are we talking about?

Old and New

Paul says in **verse 6** that our *old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing*. But it's not just about death; it's about life, as well. In **verse 5**, Paul says that we will be *united with Him in a resurrection like His*. The best way to understand this is to look at the **Small Catechism** in the Article on Baptism. The question is: *What does such baptizing with water indicate?* The answer is: *It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever*. Baptism is all about a new identity.

Crucifying the Old Adam

Notice, the Old Adam, or sin nature doesn't go away. Even though we are buried with Christ, the sin nature is still in us, working with the world and the devil to try and pull us away from faith in Jesus. As the **Catechism** says, we are in a daily struggle with the Old Adam for control of our lives. That's why the Christian life is one of daily repentance and confession of sins, leading to forgiveness for Christ's sake because He paid the price.

A New Life

But it's not just about the death of the old. It's also about the resurrection of the new. We are no longer *enslaved to sin* (v. 6). We have been *set free from sin* (v. 7). Before Christ, there was no struggle with sin, because we had no choice. We were fully immersed in our sin nature, completely at odds with God and His plan for us. While the Old Adam is still there, tempting and pulling at us, we are

not under his control. We have the Holy Spirit at work in our lives through the Word and Sacrament. We are free from sin.

Free to Serve

That doesn't mean being free **to** sin. We are free **from** sin, so that we can be free to **serve**. To *walk in a newness of life*, as Paul says in **verse 4**, means to live in a way that fulfills the Law of Love, to love others as ourselves. We are living out our Baptism in Jesus Christ when we serve others and work for the best in their lives. We are free to serve, free to love.

Dead and Alive

It boils down to this: we are dead and alive. We are *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11)*. The death that Christ died to sin, *He died once for all (v. 10)*. This means that He doesn't need to die any more. The debt has been paid in full. While we must drown the Old Adam daily, Christ's death, the death that made satisfaction for our sins, is complete. His work is done. But the *life He lives He lives to God (v. 10)*. Jesus lives never to die again. He says the same of us in **John 11**. *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26)*.

Means of Grace

We have assurance of this in the means of grace, **WORD** and **SACRAMENT**. We see this and are reminded of it in God's holy **WORD**. When we eat His body and drink His blood, we proclaim His death until He comes. He forgives our sin and strengthens our faith so we can continue our Baptismal struggle with our fallen nature. This is what it means to be **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**.

*And the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
