

BAPTISM

Let us read Romans 6:1-11:

¹“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ²God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³**Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?** ⁴**Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.** ⁵For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷For he that is dead is freed from sin. ⁸Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: ⁹Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. ¹⁰For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. ¹¹Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (KJV Bible).

We want to emphasize two verses here: verses 3 and 4 from Philipps' translation:

“Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were, by that very action, sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead by that splendid revelation of the Father's power so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether.”

Here before us is the doctrine of our union with Christ! It is indeed one of the most glorious aspects of the Christian truth, one of the most profound, one of the most stimulating, and one of the most comforting.

There is nothing, perhaps, in the whole range and realm of doctrine, which, if properly grasped and understood, gives greater assurance, greater comfort, and greater hope than this doctrine of our union with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we shall see, if we are not clear about this doctrine, we are missing in a sense, one of the pivotal aspects of the whole doctrine of Salvation.

We must therefore pay careful attention to it, for it undoubtedly was in order that we might be clear about it that the Apostle elaborates it in this way.

Now the great problem with these verses is that too many have missed the doctrine of “union with Christ” at this point because they have been diverted from it by the form of expression, which Paul uses in presenting it.

I mean, that having seen the word baptized in these verses, they never see anything else, but regard these verses as having nothing to teach except a particular doctrine of baptism.

Let us take up some of the interpretations concerning these verses. First, there is the Sacramental, or Sacramentarian interpretation, which teaches quite openly and plainly that it is the act or rite or performance of baptism that incorporates us into Christ and joins us to Him.

That is the doctrine of baptismal with regeneration as it is taught by Catholics: Roman, Anglican, Scottish and many others. Whatever is the form of Catholicism that is their teaching! They claim that it is the act of baptizing that in and of itself, unites the person baptized with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The teaching of the New Testament is that the people who are to be baptized are those who have already given evidence that they are regenerate; only believers were baptized in the New Testament.

So it is not the act of baptism that makes them believers, it is because they WERE believers, or are presumed to be believers that enabled them to be baptized.

Consider for instance the Ethiopian eunuch; Philip baptized him because he believed. Take the case of Cornelius: "Can any man forbid water?" says Peter, "that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 10:44-48).

Peter baptized Cornelius and his household when he saw that the gift of the Spirit had been given to them as unto himself and others at the beginning. Observe the order. It was the same in the case of the Philippian jailor; it was when he had believed that he was baptized--he and his household. (Acts 16:30-33).

This is, of course, a tremendous argument; it is the Protestant's position against the whole Catholic doctrine, which teaches that grace is transmitted by and in the very elements. The Catholics believe that grace is transmitted in the water, as they believe that grace is transmitted by the wafer that is eaten at the Lord's Supper, that it conveys grace.

But the cases given in the New Testament itself clearly show that far from giving life and union, baptism is rather meant to be something that seals a preceding action, or is given as an attestation or a seal of an accomplished fact.

That is the order, not the other way round. The wrong teaching crept in partly as a misinterpretation of these verses; let us never forget that! The Sacramentarians always apply these verses in their doctrines of baptism and of Sacraments.

That led in turn to exaltation of the priesthood, and of the Church, and so the tyranny comes in which dominates the life of the individual Christian. Protestantism is a protest against all of that; it teaches the universal priesthood of all believers, and asserts particularly that no action on behalf of the Church or by "priests" can give life, or can produce this union.

Then there are others who reject Sacramentarianism, and they say that what is taught here is that the baptism referred to means our baptismal vows. It is not anything a priest or a minister does. Rather it is the occasion on which we take certain baptismal vows; we declare our faith, we repudiate the life of sin, and at the same time pledge ourselves to a new way of life.

This puts us into the realm and sphere of Christ. In a sense, by submitting to baptism one is making a statement, but that is not the principal method in baptism. In any case, it is not the point here in Romans 6:3,4.

What is emphasized here is not anything that I do as a believer, it is what HAS happened to me that integrates me into Christ and joins me to Christ. The vital principle here is the doctrine of my union with Christ, not something that I may or may not do.

But there is still another explanation, which says that what baptism means here is that it is a sign of our belief in the redeeming and saving effectiveness of the death of Christ as a propitiation for our sins.

I believe that water baptism does that; but it is clear that it does not stop at that. There is still

another explanation, which says that here in Romans 6, Paul is teaching that baptism is the symbolic representation, or the pictorial enactment of, a deeper spiritual reality; namely, our union with Christ; our union with Christ in His death and in His burial.

The Apostle Paul states that we go down under the water--a picture of burial--and then we come up again out of the water, which is a picture of resurrection. This is a symbol, a picture, a representation in a dramatic manner of what is happening to us spiritually.

Paul continues to emphasize that it is a very remarkable one and a very appropriate one. First, you are buried, and then you rise; your baptism is a pictorial representation of union with our Lord in His burial and in His resurrection.

Now let us examine this: The expression in verse 4, where we are told that we are "buried with Him by (or through) baptism," seems to oppose very strongly this interpretation. Paul does not say that it is a picture.

Paul says that it is accomplished by or through baptism. He does not say that this is a wonderful pictorial or symbolic representation of it. He says that by or through our baptism this happened to us.

Let us bear in mind that the doctrine of our union with Christ says that we are united with Him in all that happened to Him; and the first thing that happened to Him in this context was that He was crucified! Paul, introducing this same idea elsewhere, says, "I have been crucified with Christ" Galatians 2:20:

"I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Amplified Bible).

"I have been crucified with Christ." Where is that represented in this pictorial representation? How does water baptism represent crucifixion? It is simply not there. And yet it is a vital part, perhaps the most vital of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore there should be a doubt at once in our minds as to whether the Apostle uses baptism as a picture.

I would go further and suggest that to argue that the Apostle has water baptism in his mind in any shape or form here is to give a prominence to baptism that the Apostle Paul never gives to it.

Let us take for instance what he says in 1st Corinthians 1:13-17:

"¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

In this statement, the Apostle is not depreciating or belittling baptism, but he certainly does not give it the central position, which this explanation suggests.

Let us also read Ephesians 2:4-6.

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Paul teaches here that, having been quickened, we have arisen with Christ, and seated with Him in the Heavenly places.

But, Paul does not mention baptism at all at that point. One thing must be made very clear: these verses in Romans 6 bring out the important doctrine of our union with Christ. Romans 6:3,4 again: **“³Are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴We were buried therefore with Him by the baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious [power] of the Father, so we too might [habitually] live and behave in newness of life.”** (Amplified Bible).

What sort of baptism is this? What kind of baptism is taught in the New Testament, which definitely says that it is baptism that integrates us into Christ and joins us to Him? The answer is found surely in 1st Corinthians 12:13:

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (KJV Bible)

The theme of that great chapter is the Church as the Body of Christ.

Christ is the Head, we are the Body. We are all joined to Him, and we are all joined to one another. But how have we thus been joined? The answer is that the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the Body of Christ; it is a baptism by the Holy Spirit. I am not saying baptism WITH the Holy Spirit; I am saying a baptism BY the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who baptizes us into the Body that joins us to Christ; this is the wonderful, mystical action of the Spirit. This can be compared to the action of the Spirit in our regeneration: the Holy Spirit makes that possible; He gives us this principle of life.

And in exactly the same way, the Holy Spirit puts us into the Body of Christ; and the expression used is that He “baptizes” us into Christ, into the body of Christ. The conclusion therefore at which I arrive is that baptism by water is not in the mind of the Apostle at all in these two verses.

Instead, it is the baptism that is produced by the Holy Spirit. It is the plain, explicit teaching of 1st Corinthians 12:13 from Philipps’ translation, “For we were all baptized by the one Spirit into one body, whether we were Jews, Greeks, slaves or free men, and we have all had experience of the same Spirit.”

Notice in that 5th verse of Romans 6, the term “planted together” (King James Version) that this seems to support what we are saying. All are agreed that the idea of planting has nothing to do with baptism at all; it is rather the idea of grafting a shoot into a tree.

“Planted together” -- in unity or identification -- that is the meaning of the term. Paul is not using the figure of baptism in any shape or form there, but is still emphasizing this unity. That also is the work of the Spirit. Let us look again to what Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, which by the way, is often misquoted:

“I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave

Himself up for me.”

Now there we have the same identical doctrine, but baptism is not mentioned. That is because water baptism does not achieve union, it does not produce unity; indeed at that point it does not even represent it.

This is a baptism which is carried out by the Holy Spirit when He integrates us, plants us into, engrafts us into the Lord Jesus Christ. It is because we are united with Him that says our final salvation is guaranteed, for everything that happened to Him happens to us.

The same is held true when we were united to Adam. It was that one sin of Adam that brought all the evil consequences upon us. And it is the action of Christ that brings all blessings upon us. As we were united to Adam, so we are now united to Christ -- that is the doctrine.

And we must realize that it is the Holy Spirit who unites us to Christ. I believe that this is the baptism which Paul is speaking. The great thing in salvation is that we are not only justified, and not only forgiven (in a sense the most glorious aspect of salvation), but that we are “IN Christ”, and Christ is IN us -- this is a vital union! And we must never fail to realize this union.

As we read these verses at the beginning of Romans 6 what has been the principal impression on our minds? Has it always been our UNION with Christ, or has it been baptism? I believe it is nothing short of tragic if the absolute impression left upon our minds is water baptism in any form.

Baptism is important, baptism is a command, which must be carried out; but I do not think that this 6th chapter of Romans should emphasize water baptism and overshadow UNION with Christ. “By one Spirit (or, in one Spirit,) we have all been baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, bond or free; and we have all been made to drink of that one Spirit.”

This is comparable to baptism. It refers to this union and this integration. Romans 6:3 again, “Paul starts by saying, “Know ye not?” “Don’t you know?” asks the Apostle, “Haven’t you realized?” Haven’t you understood?”

What does that tell us? It tells us that the Apostle assumes that this is common knowledge among all Christians. He says in effect, “Need I tell you?” as if to say, I almost feel like apologizing for reminding you.

It is common knowledge -- this doctrine of our union with Christ, our oneness with Him. The Apostle had never been in Rome, as he reminds us in the introduction to the Epistle. He had not taught these people, and yet he says, “Of course you know this. Don’t you know? Don’t you realize? Don’t you remember?” He says this to people to whom he had never preached in person, but whose Christianity had come to them through some subsidiary, or some other teachers!

Yet Paul assumes that every Christian knows this. But does every Christian know it? How many Churches and preachers preach and teach this and accept the doctrine? Have we truly been thrilled by this wonderful doctrine of our union with Christ?

Look again at that verse in Galatians: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

This is a very significant verse. Everyone agrees that the Galatians were a very primitive sort of people, an unstable people. They lived a primitive kind of life, they were poor in intellect; but the

Apostle had preached to them, and it is quite clear from his Epistle to them that he had preached this doctrine of UNION with Christ, even to them.

I draw a very important deduction from this, namely, that this belongs to the most primitive kind of evangelism. The pity is that so often this doctrine has been regarded as only applicable to people who reach the higher heights of the Christian faith, that it is a doctrine for some special people only.

The idea often is that you only reach it in places where you are no longer evangelizing, but where you are engaged in deepening the spiritual life and going down into the depths; in other words, that it is for the spiritually mature, the advanced scholars and the mature saints.

But that is not Paul's teaching. "Don't you know?" he says to these Romans; and he had preached it to the Galatians, among whom he had not spent much time. The fact is, the great truth of the New Testament is that in salvation, we are not merely forgiven and not only justified; the doctrine of salvation includes the basic truth that we were in Adam, but we are now IN Christ and that we have been taken out of one position and put into another.

That is one of the basic elements in the presentation of the Gospel. Therefore, if we do not place proper emphasis on our union with Christ, we are not evangelizing truly. Evangelism is not simply saying, "Come to Christ; He will do this, that, and the other for you". No!

The glorious thing about salvation is that I have been taken out of Adam, and that I am not only finished with him (Adam), but that am now dead to sin. I am IN Christ, and all the blessings that come to me come because of my UNION with Christ -- what He enjoys in Heaven today, are my right to enjoy here and now: health and protection, peace in my surroundings, financial success, victory over Satan and all his works.

"Know ye not?" "Haven't you realized?" "Haven't you grasped?" "Haven't you understood this?" That is what the Apostle is saying at this point. Then take a second point. Take this phrase of his, "So many of us": "know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?"

What does "So many of us" mean? It means "ALL." It is just a way of saying "All of us who have been baptized into Christ." He does not say that some Christians have been baptized into Christ but others have not.

No, he says, ALL OF US, every individual Christian. Again we see the importance of this matter. Paul is not teaching something designed for or understood by the specially trained or those of great knowledge, not something that is restricted to a small group, a select group in the Christian life; he is saying that? This applies to every Christian.

In Romans 8:9, we read, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." It is the same thing. If we are not united to Christ we are not Christians!

You cannot be a Christian without being united to Christ. This truth applies to all Christians. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin; the Holy Spirit gives us the principle of a new life; He regenerates us; He is the same Spirit who joins us to Christ; and this is true of every Christian.

Paul is dealing with something that has happened to us, something that is true of us, something that results from the action of the Holy Spirit upon us. We may not be as well aware of it as we ought to be; the Apostle clearly suggests that there were certain Christians in Rome who were not

as clear about this as they should.

And there are people like that today. It does not mean that they are not Christians, thank God for that. If we were saved by our understanding and experience of truth, then, God help us!

Thank God, we are not saved by that; we are saved by this tremendous action of God through the Spirit, who takes us out of Adam, integrates us, implants us, and baptizes us into Christ. That is the thing that saves us; and it happens to all of us, says Paul. He is excited that we should realize it, and then draw our deductions from it.

Paul is not dealing with experience, but status; he is not dealing with condition but our position. There are only two positions; every one of us is either in Adam or in Christ. There is no middle position. You cannot be a saved person without being joined to Christ or without being IN Christ.

And as there is no middle position, so also there is no progress at that point. All of us, "many of us" have in this way been baptized into Christ. But let us not belittle water baptism, it is essential.

To refuse to be baptized is to reject God. In the New Testament, the word for baptism is used as a symbol of faith. Believers who accepted the Lord Jesus Christ in the Apostle Paul's day were those who by faith showed their acceptance in baptism. Water baptism that was not preceded by faith was not customary, and faith without water baptism was not permissible.

It is very obvious and a fact that thousands who have been baptized are unregenerate and not saved. Therefore, it cannot be that Paul intends to say: all who are baptized and saved are united to Christ. Baptism is the sign and seal of our new relationship or union with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our new birth; which of itself does not save.

We address a company of professing Christians as true Christians; we call them brethren in Christ; we speak of them as beloved of the Lord, partakers of the Heavenly calling, and heirs of Eternal Life.

Baptism was the recognized method of confessing faith in Christ, of giving our vow of allegiance to Christ as the Son of God, and we believe in, trust in, rely on and accept the Gospel of Christ, and surrender our life to Him. Consequently, those who were baptized, are assumed to believe what they affirmed, and to be what they declared themselves united to Christ.

Baptism into Christ is that of which water baptism is the emblem -- union to our Lord Jesus Christ, which is connected with the belief of the truth, which baptism emblematically represents, and of which, when submitted to by a person of mature age, is the solemn profession. Infant and children baptism are not practiced by the Church.

He who is baptized INTO the LORD Jesus Christ is he who is UNITED to Christ by faith. Amen.

We are always glad to give Scriptural advice and counsel to those who desire to write us about their problems, and to remember their requests for prayer in our services.

In addition, we publish sermons on other subjects, which take up in detail teaching on how to deal with God successfully and be delivered out of all our troubles. We will gladly send them to those who desire them for their own use or for others.

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