

“Baptized, Buried, and Born Anew”

Romans 6:1-4

January 26th, 2020

We come today to the 6th chapter of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Rome – we call it “Romans.” As we do so, we see a new emphasis in Paul’s teaching from what he has written in the last couple of chapters. From the final section of **Romans Chapter 3** through the end of chapter 5, Paul has addressed the sinner’s justification before God by faith. We are right with God when the atoning work of Jesus in His life, death, and resurrection are ours by faith. Justification is a declaration; an act of God’s free grace. In chapters 6 through 8, Paul addresses another \$10 word – “sanctification.”

Where justification is an act, sanctification is a process. Sanctification follows justification and is the outworking of the faith we profess in Jesus Christ. Justification and sanctification exist together; they are as inseparable as a head and a torso. You can’t have one without the other. As we’ll see in coming weeks, sanctification consists of those things we say and do as born again believers that prove our faith genuine.

Romans 6:1-4:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ²Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

I’ve outlined this text this way:

- MP1 – Baptized (into Christ);
- MP2 – Buried with Christ (into His Death);
- MP3 – Born Anew (because Jesus was raised from the dead).

Paul begins chapter 6 by addressing a critique his readers could pose about this grace abounding. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” One translation puts it this way, “Should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?”

The thinking goes like this – *if my sinning brings more grace from God, then what’s the point of striving to live a sinless life?* I can sin more and more in both number and depravity, and not have to worry about the consequences! I can’t out sin God’s ability to pour grace on me!

That’s what is known in theological circles as “antinomianism.” ‘Anti’ meaning ‘against.’ And ‘nomianism’ meaning ‘law.’ Against the law; against God’s law! Any thought, spoken word, or behavior against God’s Word is antinomian. *Do you see the problem?* If someone who professes to be a child of God – a Christian – and consistently lives in sin (has a pattern of unholy speech and conduct acting against the law) then that person has a serious identity issue.

You can't say you're a Christian and live a life that goes against what you say. Interpretation – you're not a Christian! One commentator writes, "A believer cannot...live in sin; if a man lives in sin he is not a believer." (Murray, 213) And if you were to die before you truly repent and live right, you will die in your sin.

Paul's answer to such thinking in verse 2 is forceful – "Certainly not!" I like the Phillips' translation here, "What a ghastly thought!" Paul continues in verse 2, "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" If we are in Christ, then we have died to sin. It no longer has the power over us whereby we can only do, think, and say wrongly – sinfully. True Christians take the Lord at His Word and seek to follow His law. They do not rest in their obedience to be right with God, for that would sever them from Christ (**Galatians 5:4**); instead, Christians serve the Lord in gratitude for the righteousness that is theirs in Jesus.

Justified (Christian) men and women strive not to sin because we have died to sin. So says verse 3, and our first **B – Baptized into Christ**. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" Paul is saying, through baptism, we have been buried with Christ and have died to our old way of life. Paul shows how a Christian has actually died to sin — that he is a sharer of that death to sin. This baptism has nothing to do with water, but is a spiritual baptism, an actual act that places a person into Christ. Water baptism is a physical act that cannot put a person into Christ. Baptism here refers to baptism by the Holy Spirit, while seeing water baptism as the outward sign of Spirit baptism.

Most commentators agree that the meaning of the word "baptize" frequently means 'dip.' While this may be a primary meaning of "baptize," the word has other meanings, one being 'identify.' There are many places in the New Testament where "baptize" cannot mean 'dip.'

- **Matthew 3:11** where John the Baptizer says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall *baptize* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."
- **1 Corinthians 10:2** - "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Here, the only people who were immersed in water were the Egyptian soldiers, and they were drowned in it! The Israelites didn't even get their feet wet! The meaning here is that the Israelites with Moses were identified with him; they were joined with Moses for the duration of their desert wandering.
- **Galatians 3:27** - "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." As believers in Jesus, we are united with Him. We've put on the clothing of Jesus' righteousness.

More could be said about **being united in spirit baptism with Jesus**, but moving on, we read that Paul writes in verses 3 and 4 that believers are identified (baptized) into Christ's death and our second **B– Buried with Jesus**.

Dying to sin doesn't mean sin is no longer within us, or that it has no more power and influence. It does. Rather, sin can no longer dictate to us. Though you may obey it and though (the Bible predicts) you will obey it, the fact remains that you no longer have to obey it. You have died to it; it can be dead to you.

Paul lived in light of the fact that he had died to sin in Christ – so must we. This is **Galatians 2:20** - "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives 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."

The power of our sin nature had been broken at the cross. While we will sin at times, if we are truly in Christ, we are no longer slaves to our sin nature. Sin remains in us, but it will never again reign over us! Paul knew he could begin to defeat sin progressively in his life because God had broken its power in him.

Many years ago a missionary who sailed from England for the African coast had to change at Lagos from his ship to a costal tub going to the fever-infested spot where he was to pour out his life for the Lord. A trader protested, "If you go to that place you will die!" The man of God replied, "I died before I left London."

Further, we are buried with Jesus in His death, as verse 4 says. *Buried? Wasn't Jesus' dead body laid in a tomb? In a cave, where he was not even put into the ground?* What a peculiar thing for Paul to emphasize.

It's not all that strange, though. I find Boice's comments helpful here, "The reason burial is an important step even beyond death is that burial puts the deceased person out of this world permanently. A corpse is dead to life. When it is buried, when it is placed in the ground and covered with earth, it is removed from the sphere of this life permanently. It is gone." (Boice, 662) Burial is the step after death. We have died to our sinful nature in Christ; we are also buried with Jesus in His death. To go back to sin once we have been joined to Christ is like digging up a dead body.

The rest of verse 4 of today's text is this, "...just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." This is the **third B, Born Anew**, which is inferred by the words, "walk in newness of life."

I think of the third chapter of John's gospel account when Nicodemus came to Jesus with questions about being born again. Jesus' familiar words *"unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God."* In order to walk in newness, we must first be born anew.

This is the practical outworking of today's text. *What does walking as one born anew look like?* I submit it is very much "other oriented." Before our conversion to Christ, we could only live for ourselves. But, when Jesus invades the life of one of God's elect, he or she is radically changed from a self-orientation, to one of loving, serving, forgiving, and comforting others.

As we work out our sanctification in doing for others, we realize that we are actually working this out to Jesus. Paul writes as much in **2 Corinthians 5:15**, “He died...that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”

When Texas pastor Jim Denison was in college, he served as a summer missionary in East Malaysia. While there he attended a small church. At one worship service, a teenage girl was baptized. During the service, Denison noticed some worn-out luggage leaning against the wall of the church building. He asked the pastor about it. The pastor pointed to the girl who had just received baptism and told Denison, ‘Her father said that if she was baptized as a Christian she could never go home again. So she brought her luggage.’ (Raymond McHenry, *Stories for the Soul*, 48)

We can easily drift through our walk with Jesus, not much is at stake. The idea of ‘packing bags’ makes me think about how much of myself I am investing in following Jesus. *Have you packed your bags? Is your whole heart and life invested in being a Jesus-follower?*

Thomas Chisholm was born the year after the American Civil War ended. He eventually was ordained a pastor, but he only served for one year. For most of his life, he worked as an insurance agent. He was born in humble means in Kentucky, struggled with health problems, and worked hard to make ends meet the rest of his life. He wrote, “My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness.”

You’ll know Thomas Chisholm from his best-known hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” His second most popular hymn is the one with which we close today’s service, and it serves as a consecration hymn to guide us to live out what we’ve learned from this passage today. “Living for Jesus”