

Peace from God the Father, and grace to you in the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:2,9,10) Amen.

Romans 6:1–11 (NKJV) — *1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore 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. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

This is the word of the Lord.

○ Lord, let me never forget Your precepts, for by them, You have given me life. I am Yours, save me; For I seek Your precepts. Amen. (Ps. 119:93,94)

Baptized into Death into Life

into the death of Christ
... a separation from sin

into the life of Christ
... a union to God

In Jesus name, who is, who was, and who is to come, our Savior in flesh and in glory, dear fellow sinners declared righteous in Him,

The book of Genesis records how God created man “in His own image and likeness.” That is to say, Adam and Eve were created in perfect union with God. The life they possessed was not to breath oxygen, but it was to breath God. They lived in spiritual union with the One who created them.

With the fall into sin, mankind suffered more than just the inevitable death of body, we received the death of our soul. Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 2 that we are all born “dead in trespasses and sins.” And so we find a basic definition of life and death. Death – a separation, Life – a union.

Death is an ugly thing. I mentioned last week how Richard Rice, whom I had been ministering to and leading in Bible Study since May, passed away recently. When I

attended His funeral on Monday, I could not help but notice the open casket. I could not avoid being struck with the visible presence of death. Yet I was also struck by how we try to make death look presentable. We spiff up the body, dress it in fine clothes, put on a suit and tie. But how unnatural it all is. A body, no matter how much makeup, remains without the soul, separated from life.

Sin is the root of all this ugliness. What I saw on the outside of Richard is what lies on the inside of every one of us by nature. Oh how we too try desperately to dress it up. Our sinful flesh tries to make sin look appealing. It leads us to think there is something to be gained in sinning. It desires a union with what results in death and hell. It leads us captive to anger, to a persistent stubbornness when we think we're right about something. It presents adultery or any other form of unfaithfulness as something that is good for you, that you need. It is ever busy making excuses for why such things are ok for you. We try to cover it up to make sin look decent, but when stripped bare, when seen for what really lies before us it is nothing more than spiritual death, the inevitable end of eternal separation from God in hell.

We grope for something to appease our conscience, for some good is left in us to restore what is wrong. And yet there remains nothing in a dead body that can reunite it with life. It must come from outside of itself.

The focus of our service today is the Baptism of Jesus. In Acts chapter 10, Peter calls this Baptism of Jesus as the "anointing of the Holy Spirit" in which He began His public office as the "Christ." He was anointed by the Father, the Beloved Son, chosen to be the Christ. He was chosen for death. Our Lord's baptism was ultimately the entrance of His path to the suffering and death of the cross for us.

Jesus entered into every ailment, every guilty sin we have committed; He was chosen by the Father to receive all the suffering of this fallen world has earned. On the cross, He entered into our death. His cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me," was a cry of separation. No longer did He call Him Father. No longer was He the beloved Son. He had taken on the ugliness of our death – our spiritual, physical, and eternal separation from God. He entered into hell itself.

And yet where our death results in an eternal separation from God, Jesus' death results in something different. Luther calls this "the death of death." When Jesus died, death itself died. It was the death of death, the eternal end of its existence. Jesus was The beloved Son of God offered the blood bought payment that would satisfied God's wrath against sin forever.

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

His death was entrance into life, a reunion with God. Jesus was anointed as the Christ not just to die, but to live. So He says, "*Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*" (Luke 24:26). "Once and for all..." The resurrection declared that sin and death will no longer be master over the risen Christ. Nor will it be master of you.

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Your baptism was an entrance into Jesus' baptism. By the washing of water and the word you entered into the anointed purpose of your Lord. One pastor told me to think of baptism as a time machine. Through it you enter into something timeless – a separation from sin and a union to God. You enter into Christ.

Your baptism was your entrance into His works of love and righteousness. You have received His crucifixion, His death and burial.

4 Therefore 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.

To be buried is to leave this world behind. When Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried, He was leaving this world behind. He would never suffer under the curse. Spiritually you too have entered into this timeless existence, buried into the death of Christ.

We have been studying Colossians 2 and 3 in Bible Study. This is a great parallel section for you to read and meditate on this week in your personal studies. We read there...

"[you were] buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ...

So many think of eternal life as starting when you physically die and your spirit leaves this earth. However, Jesus calls Baptism the entrance into the kingdom of God. The birth of faith is the birth of life. Even while still in these earthly bodies, we are raised from death to life. And yet this is also the moment where we really leave this earth. As Paul goes on in Colossians 3, "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*" (Colossians 3:1–3)

Your life is not eating and drinking, it is spiritual. You are no longer of the world or the things in the world. Your life is hidden in things above.

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

The temptation is very real for us to go on sinning, with the assumption that we will be forgiven. This is why Paul asks questions like: "Do you not know?" To persist in sin is to not to know what God has declared. To keep on sinning or approving of sin is not to trust that what God has given is really true. This is what led Adam and Eve into sin in the first place. They didn't trust God. They didn't believe that what He said to them and was giving to them was real and true. When we willingly go back to sin after having been forgiven, we are showing that we don't really believe that Christ has died and risen. If we did believe this, then we would believe that this was our death and we have been separated from sin.

But this is all the more reason to emphasize the declaratory nature of the gospel. Again, it does not rest in your believing it or living it. Your baptism is a time machine, where it takes you to the eternal saving presence of the baptized Christ. Just as with Jesus' baptism, so God has also called you His beloved son and sent His Holy Spirit to be upon you. As Paul says to Titus, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (Titus 3:5)* You are separated from sin and united to God not because of your works or righteousness, but because God has declared so in the Word. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

So "know it." From little on, it is so important that talk to our children about what their this baptism means. Knowing is believing. Faith needs to hear what God has promised in order to keep on believing. Again and again, hear and know that your old man has been crucified with Christ. If God says so, then it is so. Jesus was chosen to take your body of sins into the grave, never to be seen again.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which 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)

This is where we truly rise, in faith. To know that our old man is truly dead, that we are separated and free from sin, is to believe it. Trust that you are free from sin because God says so. If you believe what God has said, you will live what God has said. Faith cannot do otherwise. Faith receives Christ. *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)*

We are clothed with Christ so that what is hidden now becomes visible, what is inward becomes outward. *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... Do not lie to one*

another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, (Colossians 3:5–10)

All those sins which our flesh wants us to commit are dead and buried. We live in heaven even now. By trusting in the death and life of our Savior we have risen in the new man to be united to God, to receive His image once again.

Still our flesh clings to us, still we remain both old man and new man. This is why we set our minds on heavenly things, for that is where our life is, that is where our destiny lies.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

Soon enough we will rise to the full union of Christ. Both in body and soul, your final death will be your entrance into full life in heaven. That body that lies in the casket will then not merely be dressed up, but be “fully clothed” in heavenly garments, living eternally, never suffering or sinning. You will be fully united to God forever.

We have placed the baptismal font in the front here for good reason. We should not tuck this back in the corner as if once we baptize someone we don't need this until the next baptism, as if your baptism is behind you now. You should be reminded of your baptism every time you walk into church. For baptism is your passage from earth to heaven. It is your crucifixion, death, and resurrection into Christ. You should see here as we gather to receive the gifts of God's word, your baptismal fellowship: an eternal separation from sin and union with God forever. Believe it. Amen.