

## Buried with Christ through Baptism

**“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4**

This is a key Scripture that unlocks the mystery of the gospel. In this verse, the apostle Paul explains in simple terms the miracle of our new birth in Christ. In doing so, he also reveals the spiritual meaning of water baptism, which is the outward expression and confirmation of our salvation. This link between salvation and water baptism is declared by the apostle Peter: “Repent and be *baptized* every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).” This does not mean you need to be water baptized to be saved; it means that water baptism confirms your salvation (see also Mark 16:16).

The apostle Paul begins Romans 6:4 with “Therefore.” In other words, what Paul now states in this verse is the consequence of what he just said in the previous verse: “we have been *baptized* into Christ’s death.” The New Testament Greek word for baptize is *baptizo*, which means to immerse. In the previous verse (Romans 6:3), Paul taught that when you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you were spiritually *immersed* into Christ’s death. Now in this verse, Paul elaborates on the spiritual meaning and impact of this divine truth.

There are two parts to Romans 6:4. In the first part of this verse, Paul states that when we were born again, we were buried with Christ through spiritual immersion (*baptism*) into His death. The reason this is possible is because Christ’s redemption (*His death, burial and resurrection*) was an eternal event in the spiritual realm. Therefore, when we were saved, we were immersed into union with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17) and spiritually incorporated into every aspect of Christ’s redemption. Our union with Christ began at the cross when we were immersed into His death (Romans 6:3). In the second part of this verse, Paul states that just as God raised Christ from the dead, He has also included us in Christ’s resurrection life. Thus we might conclude that the miracle of our new birth involved two simultaneous, spiritual transactions. First, our old man of sin (*our sin nature*) was crucified and buried with Christ by our spiritual immersion into His death. Next, our new man was birthed and raised with Christ by our spiritual immersion into His resurrection life.

God ordained that all new believers be water baptized in order to continually demonstrate and remind the church of this great truth. This is why new disciples in the first century church were normally baptized the same day they were saved. Through water baptism, new believers declare their spiritual union with Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. Thus water baptism is the outward demonstration of the divine transformation which inwardly occurred in each believer when they were born again of the Spirit. In the act of water baptism, there are two stages that express this outcome of the gospel of Christ in someone who believes. First there is a burial and then there is a resurrection. This is what the truth in Romans 6:4 presents:

- Stage One: *“We have been buried with Him through baptism into death.”* In the first phase of water baptism, we are “buried in a watery grave.” Whenever anyone was baptized in the early church after they were saved, they were immersed under water, which represented the death and burial of their old man of sin (*sin nature*). Since only a dead man can be buried, this burial in water baptism confirmed that when we were born again, our old man of sin (*our sin nature*) died. Burial also signifies that God has removed our sinful nature from us since the dead are always removed from the house of the living. In other words, the immersion (*baptism*) of our old man of sin into Christ’s death resulted in its death and burial (*removal from us*). In this way, water baptism reveals the heart of the New Covenant. God knew we needed forgiveness for our sins; He also knew we needed deliverance from our sin nature. Otherwise, we would remain captives to sin. Therefore, when Jesus Christ died, He bore not only our sins on the cross; He also bore our sin nature on the cross. “God made Christ who had no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).” Since our bondage to sin came when we were born sinners; our deliverance from sin came when God included us in Christ’s death. “We are convinced that one died for all, therefore all died (2 Corinthians 5:14).”
- Stage Two: *“As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”* In the next phase of water baptism, we are raised in new resurrection life out of the watery grave. This demonstrates that Jesus Christ now lives in us and has become our new life (2 Corinthians 13:5; Colossians 1:27; 3:4). Everything we need for godliness has been deposited in us through Christ (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus Christ has become our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30). Thus water baptism outwardly demonstrates that God has included us in the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote, “Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12).”

To sum up, when we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God put to death our sinful Adam nature and removed it from us. At the same time, He replaced our sinful nature with Christ’s holy nature so that we might walk in the power of Christ’s resurrection life. This is the spiritual reality that Paul declares in Romans 6:4. This is the spiritual lesson that God wants the body of Christ to learn from water baptism. Water baptism is God’s way for new believers to be immediately instructed that their old sin-driven man has died and been buried and they are now a new Spirit-led person in Christ. This is also Paul’s personal testimony: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20).” As we continue our devotional studies, we will further explore this powerful and liberating truth.

Tomorrow: Romans 6:5

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