

Newness Of Life

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

“In baptism there is a burial, an immersion in water. No other act would so fitly represent the complete ending of a life of sin. If there was no other source of knowledge as to how baptism was performed, this text should settle the matter beyond doubt. There is no burial in sprinkling and pouring a little water on a person’s head, but there is burial in immersion in water” (Whiteside, p. 130). Notice several other points from the text:

- Jesus is with us in the act of baptism. We are united with Him in the burial. We are “alive together” with Him (Ephesians 2:5). Our spiritual death through baptism is a new birth! *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:5-7).*
- All people must pass through the watery grave if they wish to experience new life. You cannot escape the transition if your desire is salvation. No matter how much we may try to bypass it, dismiss it, or philosophize our way out of it, baptism is the only way a person can leave a life of sin totally behind and experience newness of life. Paul states with undeniable clarity, *“For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him” (2 Timothy 2:11).*
- Are we then saved by our works? It is strange how a jump is made by many professed Christians that if we assert the necessity of baptism, then it somehow nullifies the grace of God. We are not saved by our own works (Ephesians 2:9), but by grace. So is baptism a work we do, or a work God does to us? Notice the way Titus 3:3-5 places the emphasis on God as the one doing the washing! Furthermore, the very context of Ephesians 2 elaborates on the same point being made in Romans 6. *“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him...” (Ephesians 2:4-6).* The word itself might not appear in the text, but this is as much a passage about baptism as anything else in the New Testament! This is Romans 6 language!
- It is faith that leads us to the cross. When confronted with the Gospel, our faith drives us to act (Romans 4:18-22). *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).*

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin” (Romans 6:5-7).

Jesus was buried after his crucifixion, leaving behind a physical life for a short time. On the third day, the Savior arose from the grave in newness of life, to be saved from the grave and preserved for His ascension. We, too, share the death, burial, and resurrection through baptism. We are united with Christ in this act. No other action or attitude can replace this in the process of salvation.

But there is the undeniable expectation that our new life conform to the Christian model (His example, left to us through the scriptures, according to 1 Corinthians 11:1 and Ephesians 5:1). By continuing in sin after baptism, we effectively negate its purpose, which is to purify us and set us apart from the world. It is not enough for us to simply acknowledge that we are sinners, or that the old self (manner of life) was a mess. It is also not enough for us to admit that the old self still creeps back every now and then. We are told quite clearly in Galatians 5:24, *“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* If we think we are going to belong to our Lord, then we had better take that old man, crucify him with all of his passions and evil habits, and walk as far away from that life as we can! *“Since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the one who created him”* (Colossians 3:9-10).