



Lesson 10

Death... Then Life

Romans 6.1-14

*"Now if we have **died** with Christ, we believe that we shall also **live** with Him."*

Romans 6.8

What Happened When You Were Baptized?

Why were you baptized? Chances are passages such as Acts 2.38; 22.16 and Mark 16.16 will immediately spring to mind. You were baptized so that your sins would be forgiven, so that all the wrongs you once committed would no longer be held against you. While it is certainly true that baptism (having believed and repented) is God's means for forgiving our sins, there is some danger in equating baptism with forgiveness... if by forgiveness we only think of a point-in-time operation. In other words, if my baptism is simply the time my prior sins were forgiven, then what does it mean for my life now? What does it mean for my life going forward? It means a great deal, as Paul makes clear in this passage.

Of course, Paul didn't simply decide to begin discussing baptism. Rather, his words regarding its purpose flow from the argument in chapter 5. You will recall that in 5.12-21 we found two men and two epochs contrasted: 1) Adam and the epoch of sin and death, 2) Christ and the epoch of righteousness and life. Paul made it clear in 5.20-21 that the Law belonged to the epoch of sin and death, that under Christ it is grace that reigns. We understand from prior arguments that the new epoch is typified by faith in Christ, but is there a moment when one could say he transitions from the epoch of Adam to the epoch of Christ? Yes! This is where Paul's discussion of baptism comes in.

The Question: shall we continue in sin so that grace may increase? (vss. 1-2)

Romans 6:1-2 (NASB95)

1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

2May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

1. How could anyone ask such a question? While it is doubtful that any Christians in Rome were wilfully sinning with the notion that grace would cover all, there are a few reasons why Paul raises the issue here. First, it may have been the case that Paul's Jewish critics were charging him with a doctrine that made sin permissive. Recall again that Paul placed the Law on the side of sin (5.20-21) because the Law increased transgressions. But for the Jews the Law was viewed as a shield against sin, the assurance that they were God's people. Was Paul advocating lawlessness with his talk about justification by faith without the Law? Second, we know from Paul's Corinthian correspondence that the saints there were living as if their sins were covered by God's grace. Paul had just corrected those problems, and so makes it clear here that the gospel of justification by God's grace through faith leaves no

room for such behavior.

2. The answer to the question is itself another question: “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” This answer, which Paul will elaborate on in the following verses, is straightforward: a death has occurred! Sin was killing us. The only escape was to die to sin. And dying to sin results in life! Therefore, how could we go back into sin? Vss. 3-11 elaborate on this basic point, showing exactly when we died to sin and rose to life!

We died with Christ in baptism (vss. 3-7)

Romans 6:3–7 (NASB95)

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

4 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.

5 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,

6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

1. Jesus’ death and resurrection serve as the apex of history. In His death the salvation of all men was possible. The penalty for sin was paid, now forgiveness can be found. In His resurrection the life-giving power of God was fully manifest. Now, Jesus lives a life in the presence of God.
2. Within this passage Paul makes it clear that it is by baptism we are joined with Christ in His death and resurrection. While the point of this passage is not to give the mode of baptism (Paul’s readers knew already that “baptism” meant immersion), the image of burial and resurrection does coincide with the act of being immersed in water and rising again.
3. However, let us not forget Paul’s main point: Christians cannot continue in sin! No, not that they are unable to go back into sin (as Calvin would claim), but anyone who properly appreciates that in baptism he has died with Christ, died to his old self, died to the epoch of Adam, and was raised by God’s glorious power to a new life... how could such a person go back? How could you enslave yourself again? You can’t, you won’t! “for he who has died is freed from sin.”
4. Note: it is interesting that faith is not mentioned in this passage at all, even though we know from 3.28 and other passages that justification comes by faith. Why didn’t Paul insert faith into this passage? Because Paul never thought of baptism as being opposed to faith, a work by which salvation was earned. No, that thinking belongs to Luther, Calvin and a host of others since that time. Baptism isn’t opposed to faith, it’s an extension of faith as is any act of obedience (see 1.5).

We now live with Him (vss. 8-11)

Romans 6:8–11 (NASB95)

8Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
9knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.
10For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.
11Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1. This is the other side of the death/baptism analogy. A dead Messiah wasn't much hope, but He was raised by God's glorious might (Ephesians 1.19-20; Col. 2.12). Likewise, in baptism we have died to sin, but then we are raised. Raised to what? To life!
2. Returning to the comparison made in chapter 5, those who place their faith in Christ transition from the epoch of Adam and sin to the epoch of Christ and life. Baptism is when the transition takes place! Having died to sin (the epoch of Adam) we are raised to live (the epoch of Christ). Who could possibly say that baptism was optional for the believer, something you should do, but not essential?
3. Returning to Paul's main point, how could a Christian return to a life of sin? Did Christ rise to die again? Absolutely not! Neither did you! Christ's life is one by the power of God, in the presence of God, for God. Your life is to correspond with His! So, "consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

So, act as the living and not the dead! (vss. 12-14)

Romans 6:12–14 (NASB95)

12Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,
13and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
14For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

1. Paul's words in this passage clarify what he meant about Christian's having died to sin. He is not excluding the possibility (or probability) that Christians will sin again. He is excluding that one can be a Christian, yet under the reign of sin. The reign of sin belonged to the epoch of Adam, the epoch we died to in baptism with Christ.
2. You will note the presence of choice in this passage: it is up to us to present our bodies as either instruments of sin or instruments of righteousness.
3. However, this is possible because we are under grace, not under law. The Law shows what sin is, magnifies it. Grace in Christ not only forgives sin, but as our lives are molded to His life, we overcome sin (subject of chapter 8).
4. The point is clear: no, Christians cannot continue in sin so that grace can abound. We died to sin, we are raised to life. So act like it!