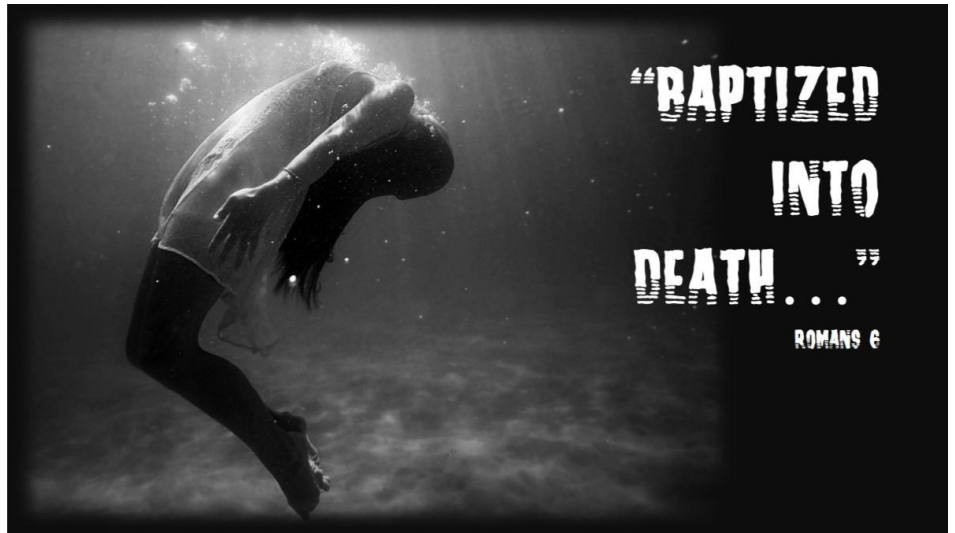


“Baptized into Death”

- Romans 6:1-7 -

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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Romans 6: *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.

Romans 6 represents the beginning of the third section of the book of Romans. The central premise of the first section (Romans 1:18-3:20) was on our *corporate damnation* under sin. That’s the current position of the entire human race! Paul wrote of the wrath of God that is expressed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Romans 1:18). In his presentation of the gospel, Paul laid out the facts that we have all sinned and all “fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). But what exactly does this ‘glory of God’ mean? What does that look like?

The phrase “fall short of God’s glory” carries a double meaning—people don’t properly glorify God and we also lack the glorified existence God intended. Humanity has long failed to give credit where credit was due when it came to God. As a consequence, humanity lost its own “divine glory,” that which was bestowed upon us by the Creation Artist. The cliff notes then is when we didn’t give greatness to the Creator, we lost the greatness of the creation...our very own splendor and nobility.

Then we moved on to the second section (Romans 3:21-5:21) which dealt with the concept of *justification* by faith alone. This is the divine act in which God declares the one who believes in Jesus Christ to be righteous. Such a standing before God has nothing to do with our practical life, but everything to do with what Jesus Christ has done on behalf of us guilty and lost. On the basis of the perfect, sinless life of Christ and His sacrificial death as our stand in, those who have surrendered to the life-control of Jesus Christ are given the perfect righteousness **He** achieved.

We now come to the third section of Romans...the section which deals with the issue of *sanctification* (Romans 6:1-8:39). These three chapters contain Paul’s greatest discourse on sanctification in all of his thirteen epistles. In fact, this is the main doctrinal section on sanctification in the whole Bible. In Romans 12-15, Paul will get into the practical application on living the Christian life, but Romans 6-8 is the theological infrastructure for the Christian life. It’s critical that we understand the doctrine of sanctification and its application for our lives.

The world after the ascension of Christ back to the Father was a “brave new world.” The world and all of its tenants were enslaved to sin, our flesh, and all of its consequences. But now the doors had been thrown open and everybody has been given the opportunity to walk away free. Oddly enough...a lot of folks stand in the door of freedom and fail to leave the bondage. When emancipation came in 1865 with passage of the 13th Amendment, many slaves would not and did not leave their plantations despite having the freedom to do so. There were several reasons for this. Fear of the unknown, a material dependence upon the owner, and an ironic but basic “comfort” in the world they knew over that which they did not. It was a clear case of “better the devil you know...” For many folks, the rule still

applies. They cannot grasp what life would be like if they walked out the door of the only world they have ever known and into the breach of uncertainty and ambiguity. It is a clear case of fear. They do not know the “love that cast’s out all fear.”

There is this disorder known as “Stockholm syndrome.” It’s where victims over time bond with their abuser over the abuse; they see the abuser as a fellow victim, and often actually defend the abuser and fight the redeemer. They don’t want to be ‘set free’, feeling a certain “safety” in their life state even if it is bondage and pain. And so they remain...a slave for sure, but secure in their familiarity. For many of us, we have been out for so long that we can no longer understand what is wrong with people...why won’t they dump that life and get out?

This is why it is so critical that we are living examples of God’s grace and redemptive life. We must do more than *tell* them what awaits them on this side, we must *show* them. And unless our lives are clearly different and visually centered around God, they do not see the example of salvation and freedom for which to aspire to! So many confessed Christians attempt to live out the faith in the form of a creed or a lifestyle based upon moral decisions. When the lost fail to see supernatural transformation and a revolution of a lifestyle guided by the Holy Spirit, our living can appear to be a façade...merely a “style of life manifest” rather than a radical renewal.

Paul begin chapter 6 with a question: If we are indeed born again and living in His grace, then can we continue living as we did before? Verse two says “certainly not!” The Old King James tells us “God forbid!” Reiterating the basics of change in salvation, Paul reminds us that once we have been born again, *if we have truly done more than make a mental decision to live differently*, then we have “died” to sin. Not “died to *sinning*”, (that would be nice!), but rather died to sin as a power over us. Died to its overt and primary control. Until true and radical rebirth, we were under the control and the bondage of *sin*. Sin held us in its power. We were slaves to Satan. He held sway in our life and we were compelled to do and be and live as he directed. Now that we are free, why would we not come out from that locked room and into the light of day and the freedom of living in Christ? The only explanation is perhaps we *haven’t* died to that life at all. We just wear a different uniform and go to church on Sundays.

In verse 3 Paul so succinctly clarifies the issue of baptism. Such is not in any way for *cleansing*, but rather a testimony of a death...*ours!* It is an outward sign of an inward act. We tend to grasp...*albeit often in a mere rudimentary form*, that baptism has in it a picture of the washing away of our sin. But seldom do we grasp the magnitude and depth of this act. For it is at its core an act of shared death and burial with Jesus Christ.

In that act...the *true* event of baptism, not the representative act of dunking a person in water, we are “resurrected” anew. We are “reborn.” Not repaired, not fixed up...not merely attempting to live a different lifestyle. We are resurrected as a different person with freedom in grace, in which we live with power over sin; and further, a very real and active *passion* for Christ, the furthering of His kingdom and the holiness of our daily living!

What Paul is saying in this section is that the reason for this “burial and resurrection” of the believer, is for more than just eternal life and righteous standing before the Father. God actually desires now that we *walk* in this “newness of life.” This word “walk” denotes “alive and moving”, motivated activity in this “newness of life” we have been gifted with. This obvious reality is so often and so overtly overlooked, and places in question the genuine nature of many perceived conversions! The fact is that many of us have been water baptized but have never been “death” baptized!

“*For if.*” Herein lies the big question: “*if we have been united together in the likeness of His death...*” If we have indeed, then *certainly* we will also share in the likeness of His resurrection! It is therefore safe to gather that if we have *not* therefore been united with Him, we can assume that there will be no shared likeness with Him either. And if we have no “shared death and no shared likeness” with Christ then it is safe to say we have not been yet “united with Him.” Such a standing is not for “sin-sniffing” ...to judge one against another, but rather as self-inspection of the *real*, or the *fictional* status of our salvation.

What is involved in being “baptized into His death?” Some see it as an issue of “Immunization”...that sin can't touch us anymore. But our experience refutes this. Some see the experience as an issue of justification only. But Paul contradicts this position, saying that such must be more experiential than that because we are, *through such an event*, been set free. Therefore it must be more than simply an emancipation event. John Owens used to say a pastor has only 2 problems: persuading unbelievers they are under the dominion of sin and persuading believers they are not under the dominion of sin. That is a stance I can relate to. Some reject the premise that they are powerless to walk away and live differently, and others fail to grasp that as a new creature they are no longer under that power and CAN walk away. That we are no longer slaves. That we are free.

Verse 6 says “*knowing this.*” This is the word “gnosko”; “knowledge by experience.” Meaning that as we walk the walk, we come to experientially “know” that our “old man is dead.” We gather that information as we “walk in (this newness of life.” Such is our “evidence” that we are indeed reborn... “no longer slaves to sin.” On our journey we “experientially” discover that the old man is dead, ...or that he in truth is *not*.

Is your “old man” dead? Have you indeed been “baptized into His death?” Are you new? Is all of who we were naturally now in the past? Our desires, lusts, ambitions, hopes, and judgments? Have you shared in the death with Christ? *Are you* walking in the “newness of life”? What does the evidence tell you?

Jesus’s death was painful and dramatic. How many of us are looking for easy and comfortable? Is it not that our culture has altered the very rebirth experience and therefore the subsequent life in Christ as some nice spiritual awakening rather than a vivid and powerful transformation of our very being? Our “gnosko” walk will tell us clearly if we are willing to bravely look at our living. Have we experienced the “baptism of death”? Death to our old life, our “old man” and all that he encompassed? Or are we, *like many of the American slaves of old*, afraid to walk away from our captor and into a radical and profoundly Christ-centered life that is wholly dependent upon Christ and His provision?

Is your life different? Is your life *different*? Are you now truly free from the bondage? Have you been baptized into his new life, but never shared in His death? Scripture and God Himself deals with us not for what we have *done*, but *what we are!* The question is, and always will be, *what are we?*

If we are born again, the old man is dead. We are not to attempt to crucify him ourselves. Such attempts are fruitless. Man has been attempting to do that for thousands of years through hundreds of false religions and have obviously failed. We are to be baptized into *his* death. Its **baptism**, gang! And all encompassing full body passing from one life to another in which there is no return and our old life is gone.

Paul was in prison when he wrote his letter to the church in Philippi. He wrote in chapter 1:19 *For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. (20) For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. (21) For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.*”

Verse 27 continues saying “*Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing side by side, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. (28) Don’t be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. (29) For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. (30) We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.*”

Paul said in verse 19, “*I know...*” He knew that his situation would not last. He knew he would be delivered from his situation one way or another...through his release from jail or through the release via death. However, getting out of the situation alive seemed to be less of a priority than finishing well and glorifying God no matter what. How can he think this way? Perhaps because he considered himself already ‘dead.’ Baptized into the death of Christ. He seemed to never have forgotten his salvation and what he was redeemed from. And that memory kept alive a love for Christ that far superseded anything else. When we fail to walk the same, it is because we have forgotten or perhaps never truly appreciated the magnitude of the cross and its effect upon us.

Paul just wanted to be bold in the faith. He was “all in.” Bringing glory to God was more important than anything else...more than any earthly plans, career, family, possessions, or status. He was able to look back and know that God had never failed him or abandoned him. God would be faithful! Not necessarily to handle the situation as he, Paul, would like it to be in the flesh, but Paul trusted God...more than he even trusted himself. Paul was ready for whatever God had planned for him.

Please note that Paul is not some super hero. He was just a man...and if history is correct, a slight one at that. He did not count himself as different than us or special in his strength manifest or faith expression. Paul...and Christ, actually expected us all to live with this same sold-out commitment!

The late Jim Elliott took upon himself a venture that many saw as a suicide mission, by going to Ecuador to take the gospel to an often violent tribe called the Waodanis. He lost his life in his attempt. Yet who can forget his famous quote “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*” Some will say he was crazy, yet today one of the men who killed Jim Elliot works to spread the gospel himself, and as a result of Jim’s death there was a massive response in funding and missionary operations around the world. How many are believers today because of Jim Elliot? How many because of Paul? Can there be anything more important?

For Paul, it was more than a case where his life began and ended with Christ. He was saying that *his life was Christ!* Everything was decided in the light of Christ and kingdom. Christ was the center of all directional pursuits, all decisions, all loves and all passions. Christ was not a *part* of His life, His life was *all* Jesus! He was *wrapped up* in Jesus. Is this not true Christianity?

We all can put on the Jesus mask and talk the talk. But does our *lives* say “Jesus is my everything?” For the “gospel of Jesus Christ” says that I have joined Christ in His death, as well as His resurrection, and I am truly a ‘new creature.’ So, does my *life* today say I am a new person? Or am I simply the same old vehicle with a new wax job? Because seldom will handing your neighbor a ‘4-spiritual laws’ track have a deep and lasting effect. 2 Corinthians 3:2 reminds us that “*You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men.*” The best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life!

Jim Elliot understood what Paul understood, and that is that all of our stuff is just future yard sale merchandise, and every relationship...every desire, interest, hobby, and pleasure will be left behind. For *everyone*. Why do most of us feel we are excused from this level of faith? Maybe because we erroneously believe that there *are* levels of faith? How would you finish that sentence: “*For me to live is....?*”

This is more than “I love Jesus in my heart.” This is “Jesus died for me.” This is *will I die for Him?*