

Union With Jesus Christ

Romans 6:1-5

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, (NKJV)

Of all the passages that we have covered so far this one is by far the most controversial. Of the dozen or so commentators that I look at this week, hardly more than two agreed with each other.

The interpretations are various and widely different. Some are quite fanciful, not trying to take the passage at face value.

The passage is not that hard to understand if we just take it a little at a time.

First let's put it in context. Paul has demonstrated that all are sinners and whether Jews or Gentiles we are all justly condemned. Next Paul has shown that our only hope of a favorable relationship with Jesus is by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. He has made it plain that salvation is only by grace and never dependent upon works. He has also declared that there is no sin that grace cannot overcome. That leads to the question, "If God is glorified by His grace in forgiving our sins, then why not sin more and more so that God's super abounding grace might be praised even more.

In our first two verses Paul has stated that we definitely do not do that. The very basic reason is that we are dead to sin, and can never again have sin's life force in control of us. So let us look at the passage.

- I. The baptism that Paul is here referring to is only water baptism.
 - A. It is not Spirit baptism.
 - B. Neither can we take the word baptism here and give it a new meaning to justify our theology.
 - C. But this is water baptism (immersion)
 1. All the commandments and teachings concerning baptism in the New Testament are concerning water baptism.
 2. Jesus Himself gave instructions to the early church to baptize those who they made into disciples.
- II. Baptism does not save us, but what baptism pictures does save us.
 - A. Baptists understand this very clearly.

1. If salvation is by grace without works, then baptism is excluded as a means of salvation or even a so called means of grace.
 - a. Some denominations teach that salvation is by grace and that it is by being baptized that you get grace.
 - b. That is like me saying I will give you \$20 for no reason just as soon as you shovel my driveway.
 - c. Either we are justified freely (without a cause Romans 3:24) or we are justified by works which would include baptism. We cannot have it both ways.

- B. 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
 1. the true meaning of the phrase "baptized into Christ," I take to be, is to be baptized purely for the sake of Christ, in imitation of him, who has set us an example, and because baptism is an ordinance of his; Gill
 2. "Into" eis a primary preposition; AV-into 573, to 281, unto 207, for 140, in 138, on 58, toward 29, against 26, misc 322; being found 1774 times in the New Testament.

- III. Our baptism is a declaration of a spiritual experience.
 - A. That is what Paul is pointing out.
 1. If they declared their union with Christ in their baptism, how could they want to sin more and more since it was their sin that put their Savior on the cross.
 2. In their baptism they declared that they died with Christ.
 3. That baptism was their declaration that they died to the old life, the old man, to their previous life of sin.
 4. Baptism never leads to new life in Jesus but it is their declaration that that transaction has already taken place.

- IV. How can we be true to our Lord and live contrary to our profession of Him?
 - A. This is the focus of this passage.
 1. That if we are what we say we are, then our life will demonstrate it.
 - B. Our heavenly Father loves us and only wants the best for us.
 1. He knows that it is when we walk contrary to His will for us that we will be the most miserable.

2. He knows that if we will walk in the way He has spelled out for us in His word that then we can have a fulfilling life.
3. If we live as rebellious children we can only expect that God will not allow us to be happy in that life.
4. Trials will come upon us as a natural consequence of our decisions.
5. But also God will take the joy and peace from us that we seek until we have turned back to Him.

C. But we often do not act on our profession.

1. Every believer knows that we should be in God's house on Sunday morning but we allow such little things to sidetrack us while other believers in the world risk arrest for worshipping together.
 - a. Do you realize that believers in countries where they are oppressed worship for hours not minutes each and every Sunday?
 - b. At Moody's Founders Week this year a pastor Woo who had escaped from China said in his opinion that the church in America will never grow until they get away from the confines of the hour only worship that has become so much a part of our tradition.
2. Every believer knows that we should spend time in reading God's word and in prayer each day but we allow the blessings that God has given us to take that time away from us while Christians in other places spend hours in prayer and often pay up to a months wages for a copy of the New Testament.
 - a. We are so spoiled.
 - b. We are like rich kids that have thousands of dollars worth of toys and never realize the value of any of them.
 - c. We are so blessed that everyone has a number of Bibles that often only gather dust and look like new.
 - d. We are so blessed that we have any number of Christian radio stations that we could tune into to nourish our souls but we continue to listen to the sewage that the world calls entertainment.
3. Every believer knows that our language should match our profession as is seen by how it changes when the preacher shows up.
4. Every believer knows that we are to have love for others but we harbor hate and resentment in our hearts over past wrongs that we refuse to let go.
5. Every believer knows that we are to forgive as God has forgiven us as we

pray Sunday after Sunday but we allow bitterness and resentment to continue in us and we try to cover it up instead of asking God to take it away from us.

6. Every believer knows that we have been blessed materially by God and that we should generously give back to His work, but we allow greed and lust for more things to fill us and give us our sense of worth.
 7. Yes it is true, as Mark Twain once said, “It is not the things in the Bible that I don’t understand that bother me, but the things that I do understand.”
- D. In our baptism we made a profession, a declaration, a vow if you will, to God and the congregation of God.
1. We declared that we had surrendered our old life with its lusts.
 2. We said that we were now dead to sin, the world and all that was contrary to God.
 3. We vowed that by God’s help we would live a resurrected life in full surrender to His will.
 4. That there was a radical difference between what we once were and what we now are.
 5. If we have identified ourselves with His death, how could we then live in sin any longer?
 6. If we profess that when Christ died, we died how could we but live unto God?

Jesus once spoke to the most religious people of His day. He accused them of being hypocrites. But you see that back in that day, that word was not an unfavorable word. For the hypocrite of Jesus day was the stage actor, the one who entertained others by paying the part in a play. Putting on a mask and pretending to be what they are not.

And that is what we are if we do not live up to the profession we made in baptism. But even worse, Paul seems to indicate that it could be that our profession is false. People get baptized for all different sorts of reasons. Some because mom or dad wants them to. Others because their friends are baptized and so they want to be baptized. Some people the preacher bugs them until they finally give in. But it is only those who have surrendered their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ that can live up to what they have professed in that great declaration.

3. Know ye not (are ye ignorant would be more literal), that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ? This is a very literal translation of the apostle's words, and yet it seems to suggest something which those words do not—namely, that only a part of those addressed "were baptized into Jesus Christ." To avoid this misunderstanding, the words might be translated—not less faithfully, if somewhat less literally—all we who were baptized into Jesus Christ. [" By baptism into Christ we are initiated into a participation of Christ." (Calvin.) See similar examples in 1 Cor. 1 : 13; 10: 2. "Baptism contains an avowal of our belonging to him [Christ] as our Master, of our union with him as our Head." (Ripley.) "It is of course obvious that the idea of the baptism of children was wholly foreign to this view of the Apostle." (Meyer.) "If St. Paul's language seems exaggerated, it is because we who were baptized as unconscious infants can hardly realize what baptism was to the adult believer in the apostolic age." ("Speaker's Commentary.")] We were baptized into union, participation, conformity with Christ, and that in respect to his death. "The rite of immersion in the baptismal water, and egress from it, was used as a symbol of breaking off all connection with the previous vicious life and giving ourselves to a new and purer one." (Bloomfield.)

4. Therefore. [Because we are dead, have been put to death through the body of Christ. (7: 4.) Our burial by baptism has reference to a death already experienced. Baptism, as Godet remarks, is thus not a figure of dying, but a consequence, an external proof of death.] The word 'therefore' assumes that the question of the preceding verse admits of but one answer: "Yes, we know this;" or, rather, to suit the more exact form of the original question, as above suggested, " No, we are not ignorant of this" : you admit, then, that we are buried with him by baptism into death. The verb, as in the previous verse, is in the past tense, and ought to be translated —we were buried with him: this makes the reference to the act and the time of baptism more prominent, than the present, 'are buried' : besides, the present is hardly appropriate to describe a transient act, like baptism. 'By baptism into death' : by means of our baptism into his death. Compare Col. 2 : 12. [Meyer says : "In reality this burial with Christ is not a moral fact distinct from the having died with him . . . but it sets forth the fullness and completeness of the relation, of which the recipient, in accordance with the form of baptism, so far as the latter takes place through sinking down and rising up (katadusij and anadusij), becomes conscious successively. The recipient—thus Paul figuratively represented the process—is conscious, (a) in the baptism generally : now am I entering into fellowship with the Christ; (b) in the immersion in particular: now am I becoming buried with Christ; (c) and then in the emergence : now I rise to the new life with Christ. Compare on Col. 2 : 12."

Lange speaks of being " buried in death," but the phrase in ver. 3, "baptized into death," shows that into death must here be connected with baptism. The absence of the article after baptism gives more unity to the conception, making the baptism into death as a single idea. " Buried into death," says De Wette, "if not nonsense is a pleonasm." We are not buried in order to die, we are buried with Christ by or in baptism because we are dead, and baptism (immersion) represents not only our death but burial. The death unto which we are baptized is left indefinite in this verse (the article also being probably generic), so that it " might be applied at once to his (Christ's) death and ours included in his." (Godet.) Meyer also says : "It is not specially the death of Christ which is again meant, as if 'his' were again annexed, but the description is generalized in a way that could

not be misunderstood. Whosoever, namely, has been baptized unto the death of Christ, has in fact thereby received baptism unto death; that is, such a baptism that, taken away by it from his previous vital activity, he has become one belonging to death, one who has fallen under its sway."] That like as Christ was raised up from the dead—in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead. By the glory of the Father —glory and power (compare 1 Cor. 6: 14) are cognate ideas, as referred to God ; see Col. 1:11, "according to his glorious power." Even so we also should walk in newness of life. [On the use of the subjunctive (literally: in order that we may walk—that is, continuously) after a verb in the past tense (were buried), see note to 5: 7. The word 'walk,' as used of moral conduct, occurs some thirty-three times in Paul's epistles.] 'Should walk in newness of life' : that is, in a new state, of which the characteristic is life. ["Not the life that is lived day by day (bioj), but the life which liveth in us (ewh)." (" Bible Commentary.") See Col. 3: 3, 4. "Ye died and your life . . . Christ our life." Had the apostle said "in a new life," the idea of newness would have been less prominent. Compare 2 Cor. 5: 17. De Wette says, "The truth of the figure rests upon the fact that the resurrection of Jesus, as every resurrection, is not simply something physical, but also moral." " When you hear mention made of a new life," says Chrysostom, "be sure that implies a great change and diversity. For myself, I forthwith burst into tears and groans when I reflect what strictness Paul demands of us, and to what indolence we have given ourselves up, relapsing after baptism into our previous old age, returning to Egypt and hankering after the garlic, though we have tasted the manna."] There are two Greek adjectives which are alike translated new in our English Testament, but there is a very plain distinction between them. The most convenient passage to illustrate that distinction is the one in which our Lord speaks of the new wine, and the new bottles and the old. (Matt. 9: 17; Mark 2: 22; Luke 5: 37, 38, 39.) The adjective new (neoj) applied to the wine means 'recently made, new as to age.' The adjective new (kainoj) applied to the bottles means 'new as to quality, unused, unworn.' No matter how long ago the bottles were made, if they have not been used, if they have not lost their elasticity by having wine fermented in them, they are still " new bottles." Now the word 'newness' in the passage before us is derived from the latter of these two adjectives; so that the term 'newness of life,' does not refer to the recent beginning of the life (however truly it might be called new on that account), but to the changed quality or character of the life : it is a new kind of life that they are to walk in who have been 'baptized into Jesus Christ.' [This walking 'in newness of life' is used here as the antithesis of were buried and the correlative of was raised. The idea of a rising or being raised in baptism which is implied very plainly here and in the next verse, is, in Col. 2: 12, explicitly stated: we were buried with Christ in the (our) baptism and we were raised with Christ in the baptism. The Greek for baptism (baptisma) does not, in itself; any more than immersion, denote or absolutely require an emergence, yet both allow of it (in the same manner as burial allows of a resurrection), and the baptismal or immersion ordinance requires it, as otherwise we could not thereafter be taught to observe all the Saviour's commands, nor could we hence-forth in this world " walk in newness of life."]

Note the teaching of this passage as to the meaning as well as the act of baptism. It implies in all cases a saving union with Christ [representing and] obliging to a new and holy life. [It is maintained by some that as no mention is made of the element water in these verses, therefore the baptism into Christ and the burial with Christ is wholly internal and spiritual and has no reference to the out-ward act. But granting the first part of this inference to be true, the second does not

follow, for the spiritual may derive its imagery from the outward and literal. We maintain, however, the literalness of the baptism and the burial (by immersion), not of course excluding from them a spiritual import. In the first place, the phrases into repentance, into name, into Christ, into his death, do not represent proper baptismal elements. To sprinkle or to immerse a person or a people into a person or into a name is an incongruous figure, an impossible transaction. To be baptized unto a person or unto his name denotes an intimate appertaining to, a belonging to, that person as his disciples or followers. The wide distinction which some make between baptizing into a person and into his name is not warranted in the Scriptures. They both denote substantially the same thing—as, "baptized unto Moses," "baptized in (into) the name of Paul" (thereby becoming followers of Moses or followers of Paul), and as Christian writers generally regard this latter baptism (into a name) as external, so they may and should regard the former as external. Moreover, as John's baptism "unto repentance" was compatible with an outward ordinance, an immersion in water, so a baptism into Christ and into his death need not preclude such an ordinance. When we read in our religious journals that such and such persons were baptized into such a church or into its fellowship, does any one suppose the "church" or the "fellowship" to be a proper baptismal element or that it precludes a baptism into water? But if baptism into the name of Christ and into Christ is external, then the burial effected by that baptism is likewise external. Confirmatory of this view is the remarkable fact that the Scriptures never speak of a burial with Christ save in connection with baptism. When the apostle addressed all who in Rome had given themselves up to Christ by and in baptism, the Christians there could not have naturally thought of anything else save their outward baptism in water into or unto the name of the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, to suppose that their baptism here referred to was wholly internal and spiritual is to suppose that all the baptized believers in Rome were spiritually conformed to Christ and wholly dead to sin, a circumstance which probably was not true, and which, if true, neither Paul nor any being on earth could "know." By their baptism they became professedly and engagedly dead to sin, and hence Paul subsequently counsels them not to "obey the lusts" of their mortal bodies, but to "reckon themselves dead indeed to sin," and to "yield themselves to God as if alive from the dead." In like manner he writes to the Colossians who had been buried with Christ in the baptism (Col. 2 :12, Revised Version) : "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above." If their baptism was inward and spiritual, how is it that they were not "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world" but were still "subject to [carnal] ordinances?" Had "all" the Corinthian Christians been spiritually and really baptized "into one body," their carnal "strifes" and "divisions" would not have been so flagrant and abundant. And had the Galatian Christians been spiritually baptized "into Christ," they would "all" indeed have been "one" in Christ Jesus, and we never should have heard of their removal to "another gospel." Yet all these baptisms have been claimed as internal and spiritual. Of course, no outward rite could prove absolute deadness to sin, nor was such a proof necessary for the apostle's argument. It was enough for him to assure his Roman brethren that the initial, solemn baptismal rite, to which they had publicly submitted, imported deadness to sin, and that hence they could not consistently "continue in sin." Nor is burial in baptism proved to be spiritual from the assertion in Col. 2:12, "ye were raised through the faith," since if the literal rising were to "newness of life," it may well be said to be effected through faith in the power of God. The objection that the pagan Romans did not then bury but burnt their dead (how was it with the people of Colossae?) does not deserve a moment's

consideration. Christ our blessed Lord "was buried" (so Paul affirms in 1 Cor. 15:4, though some writers, who hold this baptism to be a spiritual sprinkling, deny his literal burial), and he was also raised, and we, by our baptismal or immersion rite, are conjoined with him both in an outward and in a spiritual manner in the likeness of his death and in the likeness of his resurrection.' This immersion-burial theory is no modern (Baptist) fancy, but was held by the whole Christian Church in early times, and since then by Luther, Zwingle, Beza, Bullinger, Tyndale, Cranmer, the authors of the "Assembly's Notations" (most of whom were members of the Westminster Assembly), by Adam Clarke and MacKnight, and even by Baxter, and Wesley, and Doddridge. For further views on this subject, see Dr. Arnold's remarks in Appendix C, also the writer's "Studies on Baptism."]

APPENDIX C, TO ROMANS 6: 1-14, PAGE 155.

The reference which the apostle makes to baptism in the first few verses of this chapter is in some parts rendered obscure by his brief and elliptical manner of expression. But the general object and the emphatic points of the comparison are sufficiently plain.

The things to be observed here, as the hinges of the apostle's argument, and the key to the explanations of the particular expressions are the following:

1. A death and a new life, in a spiritual sense—a dying to sin, and a living anew to God; compared to
2. A death and a new life in a literal sense—the death of Christ, and his post-resurrection life; and illustrated by
3. A death and a new life in a symbolical sense—the submersion and emersion of the Christian in baptism.

Or, to express the same thing in a slightly altered form :

1. The dying to sin, and the rising to a new and holy life, which is realized in the Christian's spiritual experience, is compared to
2. The literal dying and rising again of Christ, and represented by
3. The symbolical burial and resurrection of baptism.

Christ died and lived again ; he was buried and he arose from the tomb. He died to sin, inasmuch as his death terminated that connection with sin which he had voluntarily assumed, and which caused all the sufferings of his earthly life, and finally his death on the cross. He lives unto God, inasmuch as he has returned to dwell in the bosom of the Father, in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

Believers are conformed to and conjoined with (*sumfutoi*;) Christ in his death to sin and new life to God, inasmuch as they too have renounced sin, and separated themselves from it, so that it has now no more to do with them, nor they with it (rightfully) than a dead body has with the affairs of living men. They are alive unto God, inasmuch as they have devoted their lives to him, and are walking with him in a new life of filial obedience, intercourse, and confidence.

This conformity of believers to Christ is set forth in their baptism, which in the outward act resembles and represents his burial and resurrection, and, in its spiritual import, typifies and declares their dying to sin and living anew to God.

This comparison forcibly illustrates the importance of Scriptural baptism, and the evil that results from any change, either in the subjects or in the act. When any but professed believers in Christ are the subjects, baptism ceases to have the spiritual significance which the Scriptures ascribe to it. When the act is anything else than immersion, it ceases to have the symbolical fitness which belongs to its proper form. And when it loses both these, how much of its validity or sacredness remains?

As to the form in which baptism was administered in apostolical times, and as a general rule for twelve or thirteen centuries, the testimony of the most learned commentators, church historians, and antiquarians is very uniform and emphatic. The few that we give below as a specimen are copied from a recent work, entitled "The Act of Baptism," by Henry S. Burrage, published by the American Baptist Publication Society.

"This passage (Rom 6:4) cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion." (Conybeare and Howson, "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," vol. II., p. 169.)

"There seems to be no reason to doubt that both here (Col. 2:12) and in Rom. 6:4, there is an allusion to the *katadusis* and *anadusis* [the sinking down and rising up] in baptism." (Bishop Ellicott, "Corn. on Colossians," p. 166.)

"Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges thence he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life. . . . Thus baptism is an image of his participation both in the death and resurrection of Christ.... For this two-fold image as it presents itself to St. Paul, see especially Rom. 6:3, et. seq." (Canon Lightfoot, "On Colossians," ch. 2:12.)

"As to the outward mode of administration of the ordinance, immersion, and not sprinkling, was unquestionably the original normal form. This is shown by the very meaning of the Greek words *baptizo*, *baptisma*, *baptismos*, used to designate the rite." (Schaff, "History of the Apostolic Church," vol. II., p. 256.)

"Baptism, which was the sign of admission into the church, was administered by immersion." (Pressense, "Early Years of Christianity," p. 374.)

"There can be no question that the original form of baptism, the very meaning of the word, was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters, and that for at least four centuries any other form was either unknown or regarded, unless in the case of dangerous illness, as an exceptional, almost a monstrous case." (Stanley, "History of the Eastern Church," p. 117.)

"Baptism was originally administered by immersion." (Guericke, "Church History," vol. I., p. 100.)

"The ceremony of immersion (the oldest form of baptism) was performed in the name of the three

Persons of the Trinity." (Waddington, "Church History," p. 27.)

"The Baptists are, in fact, from the Protestant standpoint, unassailable; since for their demand of baptism by submersion they have the clear Bible text, and the authority of the church and of her testimony is regarded by neither party." (Dr. Dollinger, "Kirche and Kirchen," p. 337.)

"The testimony (that immersion was the primitive act of baptism) is ample and decisive, No matter of church history is clearer. The evidence is all one way, and all church historians of any repute agree in accepting it. It is a point on which ancient, medieval, and modern historians alike, Catholic and Protestant, Lutheran and Calvinistic, have no controversy. And the simple reason for this unanimity is that the statements of the early Fathers are so clear. and the light shed upon these statements from the early customs of the church is so conclusive, that no historian who cares for his reputation would dare to deny it, and no historian who is worthy of the name would wish to." (L. L. Paine, D. D. (Congregationalist), Professor of Church History in the Theological Seminary at Bangor, Maine.—" Christian Mirror," Aug. 3, 1875.)

[" All commentators of note (except Stuart and Hodge) expressly admit or take it for granted that in this verse. . . . the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion and emersion is implied as giving additional force to the idea of the going down of the old, and the rising up of the new man." (Dr. Schaff, in Lange's "Commentary on Romans.")

Among these "commentators of note" who have thus expressed their opinion, we may mention, besides those already quoted, the names of Ruckert, Fritzsche, Tholuck, De Wette, Meyer, Ebrard, Lange, Chalmers, Webster and Wilkinson, Alford, Philippi, and Godet, the last three somewhat cautiously.]

Similar testimonies and admissions might easily be largely multiplied ; but there is no need ; these few among the more recent will suffice.

Taken from Romans by Albert N. Arnold., and D.B. Ford; a part of *An American Commentary on the New Testament* published by the American Baptist Publication Society 1882.