

Our Old Man Is Crucified With Him

"We are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The predominant characteristic of this occasion is *joyfulness*. We are told that the awakening of a son of Adam to the love of God and the decision to become united to Christ is a cause of great joy in heaven. One more is added to the family of the sons of God, all knit together in the beauty of holiness.

While an occasion of great joy, it is also an occasion of great seriousness and solemnity. We are hereto witness both a death and a birth. The whole background of baptism is *death*. The act of baptism is a recognition that the end of natural man is death—that all are subject to the power and lordship of the great enemy—that death casts an ever-present shadow over all life's hopes and joys—that the highest and noblest and sweetest of this life's activities all end in the darkness of the tomb.

But this is only part of the picture. This is the *natural* side. While baptism is a recognition of this state, and all the vanity and sorrow surrounding it, its principal purpose is to manifest the *great deliverance from it* that the love of God has, through Christ, provided. Baptism is a death whose purpose is to make way for a glorious new birth.

The chapter just read (Rom. 6) is a strong, intense exhortation to holiness, based on this death-and-new-birth symbolism.

Symbols are but shadows—it is the *reality they symbolize* that counts. The act of baptism itself is only a symbol—it is upon the fulfilment of the reality of the newness of life it portrays that life and death depend.

Paul shows that the reality symbolized is *death to the old natural way of the flesh and rebirth to the new way of the Spirit of holiness*. His conclusion in ch. 5 is this, that—

"As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21).

But *how* does grace "reign through righteousness unto eternal life"? Paul has said that—

"Where sin abounded, grace—that is, the gentle unmerited goodness and kindness of the glorious love of God—did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20).

And also he has said that God had included all under sin, that He might have opportunity to extend His grace, mercy and kindness to all.

"What shall we say then?—(he asks)—Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"
(Rom. 6:1).

Put in this blunt way, the thought seems self-evidently absurd, but actually *it is the unconscious presumption that lies behind any carelessness or complacency about any form or evidence of sin*.

Sin is a terrible, destroying disease—highly infectious—ininitely more deadly than any physical disease. When we are not straining every effort in the war against this evil thing, we are in practice saying, "Let us continue in sin so grace may abound."

"God forbid!—Let it not be!—How shall we, that are **dead to sin**, live any longer therein?"
(Rom. 6:2).

What does he mean: "*Dead to sin*"? How does a man become dead to sin?

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (v. 3).

That is, do you not know that the act of baptism is *an act of recognition of the necessity of a DEATH*—a death in order to end a certain state of affairs—to create a complete severance and separation and termination (v. 4)—

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

We note the words, "*by the glory of the Father*"—"like as *Christ* was raised by the glory of the Father, even so *we* also. . ."

Ours, too, must be "*by the glory of the Father*"—there is no other way—no other possible way of walking "*in newness of life*." We cannot do it of our own weak, mortal, sinful selves. "*Newness of life by the glory of the Father*" is the great thought that gives baptism its beauty and significance. A new life, a completely new beginning. What a wonderful occasion it is!

A natural son of Adam, an earthly creature born under the shadow of death and bound by the dominion of sin, reaches a stage of development and enlightenment wherein he is drawn by the power of God to voluntarily choose that which is good, and holy, and divine, and reject all that is related to the kingdom of sin and the wilfulness of the flesh—not from fear of consequences—not even just from desire for reward—but rather from pure, transforming love for a glorious divine Benefactor and Father—from an overwhelming sense of His infinite goodness and the transcendent joy of His friendship and love—

"Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.

"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

"There is no fear in love: perfect love casteth out fear."

When we look at the beautiful picture John draws of divine love—of its holiness, and purity, and fearlessness, and perfection—we are apt, like Peter, to draw back into the thought—

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

But the beloved apostle allays our fears, and gently draws us onward, teaching us that this beautiful picture is a matter of development and growth, though at first only dimly perceived—

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven;

I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong;

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him from the beginning" (1 John 2:12-13).

And he shows us the way—

"Whoso **keepeth His Word**, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:5).

Paul tells us (Rom. 10:17)—

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the **Word of God**."

That is the beginning. When hearing has brought faith, and faith—belief—has moved to thankful and humble obedience in the waters of baptism, then the joyful course of life and love reaches higher and higher toward the perfection of the divine ideal. This is expressed in many ways, Paul speaks of it as—

"Coming in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).
He speaks of it as being—

"Rooted and built up in him . . . unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding of the mystery of God and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"
(Col. 2:7,

2).

He speaks of it perhaps most beautifully and deeply in this way:

"We all, with open face reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory **by the Spirit of the Lord**" (2 Cor. 3:18).

This is the glorious and exciting spiritual experience that leads upwards in ever-increasing joyfulness from the waters of baptism to the eternal radiance of the day of the Lord.

Baptism, while only the beginning, is the great turning-point in life. The act of baptism is unquestionably the greatest and most important single act and moment of one's entire lifetime.

"IF we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

It is clear that Paul is speaking, not just of the literal act of baptism which all professed believers pass through, but rather he is thinking of the full significance of being "*planted in the likeness of his death*," for the parallel thought—"likeness of his resurrection"—does not just mean coming out of the grave, but the *resurrection of life* in its fullest and most glorious sense.

Resurrection as such—just the coming out of the grave—does not, we know, depend on baptism, but on *responsible knowledge of God*. Therefore the "likeness of Christ's resurrection" to which Paul refers cannot just mean emergence from the grave, for he makes it contingent upon a being "planted together in death."

And likewise this "planting together" cannot just be the external form of baptism for that is no assurance of sharing Christ's glorious resurrection—it must be the reality to which the act of baptism testifies and bears witness—the death of the "old man" and the "walking in newness of life." He continues—

"Knowing this, that our old man is (in baptism) crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rm. 6:6).

"*Our old man is crucified with him.*" We are all double personalities—the old man of the flesh and the new man of the Spirit. Paul tells the Ephesians (4:22) that the old man is "corrupt—decaying—going to ruin—through deceitful lusts."

He calls them deceitful because *they never give the pleasure and happiness they seem to promise*—because they appear good and desirable to the blindness of the natural mind but actually only end in sorrow and regret and emptiness.

The "old man" is the natural man—pleasing ourselves—doing what we think *we* want to do—following the ordinary way of the world—everything that is contrary to the enlightened mind of the

Spirit. We can most clearly see the distinction in contemplating the characteristics of the *new man*—the fruits of the Spirit, as Paul gives them in Gal. 5:22—

Love—that is, thinking, desiring and doing good to all, regardless of what they do to us.

Joy—a consistent spiritual cheerfulness flowing from close and satisfying fellowship with God.

Peace—calm, inward tranquillity—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."—the mind resting at all times upon God.

Longsuffering—inexhaustible patience and kindness toward all human weakness and waywardness, recognizing the frailty and sadness of natural man.

Gentleness—no roughness, or hardness, or bitterness, or pride, or self-assertion—all of which are manifestations of ungodly ignorance.

Now Paul says that in baptism the old man is *crucified*— everything in the flesh contrary to these Spirit-fruits is crucified in the act of baptism.

Crucifixion has 2 aspects: a putting to death, and a public holding up to condemnation and repudiation.

The natural Serpent nature must be put to death, and in its putting to death it must be publicly held up to condemnation on the Rod of the Spirit-Word.

Baptism is a public repudiation of all these things as a way of life—a renouncing of allegiance to the old Master, Sin, whom we all serve from birth, and a pledging of allegiance to a new Master and a new way of life. It is a solemn covenant—

"All that the Lord hath said will we do."

Paul says (Rm. 6:18) that in baptism we are "*made free from sin*." What does it mean to be "made free from sin"? What does it mean in the *actual realities of life*?

It involves much. In the ultimate, if faithfully pursued until the end, it involves complete freedom from the sin-principle and its inseparable companion, death. This is the gracious, unreserved title of freedom and release that we are freely given in baptism—freedom from sin, from sorrow, from pain, disease and death—freedom from all the burdensome limitations of human frailty and corruption.

But primarily, at the present time, it means a great lifting of the burden of the consciousness of sin—of sinfulness—of natural ugliness and deformity of character.

Paul exclaims, as he describes the awakening consciousness of the vicious evil that runs through every fibre of human nature—

"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24).

Baptism is the loving and merciful provision for cleansing from this condition—

"Ye are washed,

Ye are sanctified (made holy),

Ye are justified (made righteous and upright)—in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and **by the Spirit of our God**" (1 Cor. 6:11).

The baptized believer is one with Christ—a part of Christ— an accepted part of the triumphant perfection of holiness which in Christ trod sin under foot and held it powerless.

The baptized believer is a *Brother in Christ*—he has a guaranteed part in the final and eternal victory of sin and death—*as long as he truly abides in Christ*. Jesus said to his disciples, on the night before his death—

"Abide in me, and I in you. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

—the glorious Spirit-fruits of holiness of character—

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

"This is my **commandment**—that ye LOVE ONE ANOTHER, **even as I have loved you**"
(vs. 11-12).

It is an essential requirement of discipleship that we, as brethren, love one another in the same way he loved us. Of that love which he has given us as a pattern, he says, as he continues—

"Greater love hath no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his friends" (v. 13).

This is the love and fellowship to which baptism opens the door. And the new brother, as he rises from the cleansing waters, says with Paul (Gal. 2:20)—

"I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."
—G.V.G.
