Lesson 58 at StudyRomans.org

Updates to Prior Handouts

I have updated two of our earlier Handouts.

First, I found another verse that teaches us something about baptism without using the word "baptism," and so I added that verse (Galatians 4:29) to the Handout for Lesson 54.

Second, in preparing today's lesson, I noticed that I had placed a verse in the wrong column on the Handout for Lesson 56. Ephesians 4:22 should have been in the third column rather than the fourth column, so I moved it to the correct location. And I also added another verse to the third column (Romans 6:6).

The revised versions of those two Handouts have been uploaded to the websites.

Romans 6:4, Continued

> **Romans 6:4** — We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Let's not lose sight of why Paul is talking about baptism here. Remember that Paul is responding to the false allegation that he was teaching people that they should just keep on sinning so that grace may abound. And what we see here in verse 4 is that, to counter that false allegation, Paul immediately points us all back to our baptism. Now,

let's ask a question — what does that fact about Paul's response tell us about our baptism?

The answer is that it confirms what we have been saying about the role of baptism in God's plan of salvation. Remember, here is the question: "Paul, shouldn't we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" And what is Paul's answer? "God forbid! You have all been baptized into Christ!"

When asked whether we should continue in sin, the first thing Paul points to is our baptism. Doesn't that fact alone tell us that baptism is the point where we are no longer under the dominion of sin? We left the slavery of sin behind at our baptism — how can we continue in sin?

That is what Paul says. And perhaps we should also notice what Paul does not say:

- "Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Remember that you prayed the sinner's prayer!" No, that is not what Paul said.
- "Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Remember that the Holy Spirit has supernaturally rendered you incapable of doing that!" No, that is not what Paul said.
- "Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Remember that you invited the Lord Jesus into your heart!" No, that is not what Paul said.

- "Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Remember that you crowned Jesus King of your life and you made Jesus Lord of your life!" No, that is not what Paul said.

None of that is what Paul said. "Paul, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Remember that you were baptized into Christ!" That is what Paul said. And he said that **all** of them had done that. They had **all** been baptized into Christ, including Paul himself (as he tells us here and as we see in Acts 22:16).

Look again at verse 4 — "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

What is meant by "newness of life," and when does that change occur? We know that verse 4 is talking about our baptism — is that when we begin walking in newness of life? Yes, it is, and Paul also tells us about it elsewhere.

> **2 Corinthians 5:17** — Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, he is a **new creation**. The old has **passed away**; behold, the new **has come**.

> **Galatians 6:15** — For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**.

> **Ephesians 4:22-24** — **To put off your old self**, which belongs to your **former** manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and **to put on the new self,** created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

> **Colossians 3:10** — And **have put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Those verses are describing a present reality for a Christian. We are a new creation. We have put off the old self. We have put on the new self. That is all true of us right here and right now after we have obeyed the gospel and as we faithfully follow Jesus.

A great change occurs at the moment of our baptism, and that fact about baptism is crucial to properly understanding the role of baptism in God's plan of salvation.

We are looking at verses here in Romans 6 that describe symbolic aspects of our baptism. Baptism is described in terms of a burial, and baptism is described in terms of a resurrection. Elsewhere, Paul describes baptism in terms of circumcision (Colossians 2:11-12). And all of those symbolic descriptions teach us wonderful things about our baptism — how we put to death the old man, how we are raised a new creation, and how we put off the body of the flesh with a circumcision made without hands.

But, and this is a crucial point, while baptism has these symbolic aspects, baptism is not just a symbol. Baptism is a reality. Whatever baptism symbolizes, baptism is also an actual specific action that creates an actual specific result.

Yes, the physical action of baptism looks something like a burial and looks something like a resurrection, but that physical action is not just a symbol for something else. That physical action is itself creating a spiritual result.

Baptism is not just *telling* us about that spiritual result; baptism is what *causes* that spiritual result. Peter says that very plainly: "baptism … **now saves you**" (1 Peter 3:21). That is not something baptism symbolizes; that is something baptism does. And, yes, what happens in baptism is the powerful working of God (Colossians 2:12) in which we are saved by God's gift of grace through faith (Ephesians 2:5), but God does that powerful working in the waters of baptism (Acts 22:16).

We see the same thing with another resurrection — the resurrection of Christ. Many today say that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did not actually happen but that rather it was just a symbol of renewal and hope created by his disappointed disciples. They see his resurrection as just a symbol and not as a reality. But, of course, that is completely false.

As with baptism, the resurrection of Christ was a powerful working of God (1 Corinthians 6:14), and (as with baptism) that powerful working of God involved a physical reality. Jesus physically died on the cross, Jesus was physically buried in that tomb, and Jesus was physically raised from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is not just a symbol, and neither is our own resurrection from the watery grave of baptism.

And we should note a very important word in verse 4 — "we **too** might walk in newness of life." Just as we rise from baptism to walk in newness of life, so too Jesus rose from the dead to walk in newness of life.

But what does that mean? How did Jesus walk in newness of life after his resurrection from the dead?

One place we can look is Daniel 7, where the Bible shows us the ascension of Christ from the view of heaven.

> **Daniel 7:14** — And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

That is Jesus walking in newness of life after his resurrection from the dead. Paul describes the risen Christ elsewhere.

> **Ephesians 1:20-23** — That he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

And Paul also describes the risen Christ right here in Romans 6. Look ahead at verses 9-10:

> **Romans 6:9-10** — We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

The death he died, and the life he lives. We share in that experience at our baptism. We share in the death that Jesus died, and we share in the life that Jesus lives. That is what Paul is telling us.

And what happened to our old self? Paul will tell us that in verse 6, so let's wait until we get there.

But, for now, let me ask our denominational friends a question: if you believe that you are walking in newness of life, when did that walk begin?

Verse 4 says that this newness of life starts when someone comes up out of the watery grave of baptism. Is that also your answer? If so, then doesn't that means you were not walking in newness of life prior to your baptism? That is what the Bible says — is that what you say?

Paul is dealing with an objection here in Romans 6, and so perhaps we should pause for a moment and do the same thing. And there are plenty of objections out there about the role of baptism in God's plan of salvation that we could consider.

Many people, like Naaman in the Old Testament, can't see how getting wet can have anything to do with being cleansed. And so they reject God's command to be baptized for the remission of sins. And, again like Naaman, they make many objections in an attempt to excuse their disobedience.

We have already dealt with a first objection — that Paul doesn't mention baptism very often — and we have already dealt with a second objection — that baptism is a meritorious work.

Let's look at one more common objection. Some say, that, yes, of course, we all need to be baptized, but they say that this baptism in Romans 6 isn't water baptism — instead, they say it is Holy Spirit baptism!

You may recall that at the beginning of our study of Romans, I passed out a list of some of the commentaries that I am using to prepare these classes. (See the Handout for Lesson 7.) That list includes a 14 volume

set of commentaries on Romans written by Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Here is what he says about the baptism in his book on Romans 6.

> "To argue that the Apostle has water baptism in mind in any shape or form here is to give a prominence to baptism that the Apostle Paul never gives to it."

Let me start by making two immediate comments about that 14 volume set of commentaries: (1) Please remember that my list of sources was not a list of *recommended* sources. (2) Please note that length is not a substitute for accuracy.

That commentator says that Paul did not have water baptism in mind in any shape or form. We can dispatch that ridiculous objection very quickly, and we can do so using one of the Apostle Paul's favorite tools — logic!

- First, Matthew 28:19 commands baptism as part of the Great Commission. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…"

- Second, that Great Commission baptism was water baptism, as we see, for example, in Acts 8:38 ("they both went down into the water"). When we see the disciples of Christ obeying the Great Commission, we see them baptizing people in water.

- Third, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:5 that there is one baptism just as surely as there is one God and Father of all.

- Thus, that one baptism from Ephesians 4 must be the Great Commission baptism commanded in Matthew 28 and the wa-

> ter baptism performed in Acts 8. Why? Because otherwise there would be two baptisms instead of one baptism.

The logic is inescapable. The baptism of Romans 6 is water baptism. And the baptism of the Great Commission is water baptism. And the one baptism of Ephesians 4 is water baptism. And the baptism that saves in 1 Peter 3:21 is water baptism. And the baptism that is for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38 is water baptism. And we will see even more evidence of that fact when we get to the next verse here in Romans 6.

As for what it means to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, we dealt with that question at great length in Lesson 29 of our study of Joel, which is still available at StudyJoel.com. The short answer is that the baptism with the Holy Spirit experienced by the apostles in Acts 2 and by Cornelius in Acts 10 was given to confirm the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28 that God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh. It is not water baptism, and it is not the baptism of the Great Commission.

Romans 6:5

> **Romans 6:5** — For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

In verse 5, we see both a death and a resurrection. What is this death, and what is this resurrection?

I think the first word in verse 5 answers both of these questions — and that word is the word "for." Verse 5 is explaining verse 4.

Paul has not changed the subject in verse 5. He is still talking about baptism. And in verse 4, we also saw a death ("we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death") and we also saw a resurrection ("just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life").

Now, in verse 5, Paul is telling us more about that death in verse 4 and more about that resurrection in verse 4. But what is Paul telling us? We have at least three questions:

- (1) What does it mean to be "united with him" in that death and in the resurrection.
- (2) How are they like his? That is, how is that death like Jesus' death and how is that resurrection like Jesus' resurrection?
- (3) What is meant by the word "certainly"?

I think we can find an answer to all three of those questions just from making an obvious observation about our own baptism — we didn't stay under the water! We most certainly came up out of that water! And we did so rather quickly!

I think Paul is making a spiritual point based on that obvious physical point. God does not leave us in the grave any more than the preacher leaves us under the water! We certainly come up out of that water, and we certainly come up out of that grave! Our newness of life after baptism is just as certain and just as real and just as swift as our first breath upon coming up out of that water.

And that resurrection is not our resurrection at the end of time. Yes, that final resurrection will happen, and yes, the Bible tells us much about it. In fact, I think Paul will tell us something about it later in this same chapter. But I do not think that is what Paul is telling us about here. This verse is describing the newness of life that starts as soon as we come up out of that watery grave as a new creation.

Everything in verse 5 happens in about a second or two as we are lowered into the water and as we come up out of that water. We are united with Jesus in a death like his as we are lowered into that water. And if we were to stay under the water, we would soon be united in a *physical* death like his!

But we don't stay under that water any more than Jesus stayed in that tomb. That baptistry is very soon just as empty as that tomb. We come up out of that water, and when we do we are united with Christ in a resurrection like his. And that resurrection is just as certain as our coming up out of that water.

I think that is what Paul is saying here. And if that is right, verse 5 is additional evidence that this baptism in Romans 6 is water baptism. I think Paul is basing his conclusion in verse 5 on the fact that we don't remain under that water. We certainly come up out of that water! And we are just as certainly raised to walk in newness of life!

Romans 6:6

> **Romans 6:6** — We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Paul uses the phrase "old self" three times in his epistles, with this verse being the first. Let's also look at the other two places where he uses that phrase.

> **Ephesians 4:20-24** — But that is not the way you learned Christ! — assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your **old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

> **Colossians 3:9** — Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the **old self** with its practices.

Let's start by noticing something very important about the timing in each of those verses.

- Here in verse 6, Paul says that "our old self was crucified" — a past event — not "is being crucified" or "will be crucified," but "was crucified." Paul is pointing to a past event.

- In Ephesians 4, Paul says the old self belongs to "your former manner of life" — again, that is something in my past — not my current manner of life, but my former manner of life. Paul is pointing to a past event.

- In Colossians 3, Paul says that "you have put off the old self" — again, that is a past event — not that you are putting off the old self or that you will put off the old self, but that you have put off the old self. Paul is pointing to a past event.

And we could also add another verse from Paul:

> **2 Corinthians 5:17** — Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The old has passed away. The new has come. Again, we see a past event.

But what was that past event? We should let Paul answer that question. What has Paul told us here in Romans 6?

- He has told us that we were baptized into Jesus' death (verse 3). That was a past event.
- He has told us that we were buried with Jesus by baptism into death (verse 4). That was a past event.
- He has told us that we were raised to walk in newness of life (verse 4). That was a past event.
- He has told us that we have been united with him in a death like his (verse 5). That was a past event.
- He has told us that we have been united with him in a resurrection like his (verse 5). That was a past event.
- And now, in verse 6, Paul tells us that our old self was crucified with him. That was a past event.

So when did that past event happen? How could the answer possibly be anything other than at our baptism? What else has Paul been talking about in the verses leading up to verse 6? What death could this crucifixion in verse 6 be other than the death that Paul has been talking about ever since verse 2? The past event in verse 6 is the same past event that Paul has been talking about all along — the past event when "we were buried therefore with him by baptism" (verse 4).

So we know **when** our old self was crucified, but we still have a question — we know when, but what about what? What is the old self?

Well, let's once again let Paul answer that question. Who was it who was once dead in sin? Who were we before we started walking in newness of life? After baptism, we are a new creation — what were we before baptism? The answer to each question is the same — we were the old self. When a sinner obeys the gospel and is baptized into Christ, the "old self" is what that sinner was before his baptism.

But he is no longer that after his baptism. That old self died. That old self was crucified. That old self who was dead **in** sin has instead become a new self (a new creation) who is dead **to** sin.

And that change from the old man to the new creation was a past event. It happened in the past. It is not still happening. Paul is not saying that your old self is weak or sick. Instead, Paul is saying that your old self is dead, dead, dead!

And in case there is any doubt about that, Paul tells us four more times in this verse and the next two verses.

- The body of sin is brought to nothing (verse 6).

- We are no longer enslaved to sin (verse 6).
- One who has died has been set free from sin (verse 7).
- We have died with Christ (verse 8).

Again, what Paul is saying is that our old self is dead, dead, dead! Not sick, but dead. Not weak, but dead. Not hanging on by a thread, but brought to nothing. Not escaping from slavery, but no longer enslaved.

And those verses are all describing the past event of our baptism. As with any death, this death happened at some specific point in time. And I think that anyone, absent preconceptions, must come to that conclusion after reading these verses in Romans 6.

I like how Whiteside describes it in his excellent commentary on Romans:

> Of himself Paul said: "I have been crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Paul the sinner died. What was true of him is true of every one who becomes a Christian. The old man, the body of sin, is the sinner. Every time a person becomes a Christian, a sinner dies. We die as sinners and are raised up as saints.

But what about our daily struggle with sin? When a Christian struggles to overcome sin is that Christian putting the old self to death? No, he is not. Why not? Because the old self is already dead!

The old self died at our baptism. We became a new creation when we came up out of the water. Yes, we struggle with sin, but that is the **new self** struggling with sin, **not** the **old self**. And how do I know

that? Because the old self is dead, dead, dead! That is how I know! The old self can't struggle with sin or with anything else because the old self is dead. The old self is gone.

But, yes, the new self (the new creation) does continue to struggle with sin in this life. That is why we need the blood of Christ to cleanse us from sin as we walk in the light (1 John 1:7). But it is the new self who is walking in the light, not the old self.

And, yes, the Bible does describes that daily walk in terms of death — but, again, let's pay close attention to the verb tense.

> **Romans 8:13** — For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you **put to death** the deeds of the body, you will live.

> **Colossians 3:5** — **Put to death** therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Those verses are not describing a past event, but rather they are describing an ongoing process.

We crucify our old self at our baptism (a past event), and then we walk with Christ, putting to death the deeds of the body (an ongoing process). But, and here is the crucial point, that ongoing process is something that the new man is doing, not something that the old man is doing. Why? Because the old man is dead! The old man was crucified at our baptism. The old man isn't doing anything anymore.

I think the best way to see that is to look at what Paul told the Colossians.

> **Colossians 3:9-10** — Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Paul is **not** telling the Colossians to put off the old self. Instead, Paul is telling the Colossians to behave consistently with the fact that they have already put off the old self with its practices. You have put off the old man; you have put on the new man; so stop behaving like the old man!

And the renewal in Colossians 3 is a present participle — an ongoing process. The new self is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator — that is our ongoing walk with Christ as we daily put to death the deeds of the body and daily follow Jesus.

And when did that change occur? When did the old man die? When was the new man born? When was the new creation created? When did we begin that faithful walk with Christ in which we are being renewed in knowledge and cleansed by the blood of Christ?

Paul answers all of those questions right here in Romans 6. That change happened at our baptism, and not a moment before. Our old self was alive prior to our baptism. It was only at our baptism that our old self was crucified. It was only at our baptism that our old self died and our new self was born.

It was at our baptism that the body of sin was brought to nothing — that is just another way of saying that the old self was crucified. And it was at our baptism that we were no longer enslaved to sin. Why? Because that slavery ended as soon as the slave died! And that slave to sin was the old self who died in that baptism.

But, some might ask, how can someone who is already dead be killed again? If we are dead in sin before our baptism, how are we killed in baptism? We bury people who are already dead, right? How can that burial kill us a second time?

To answer those questions, we need to remember what we said when we looked at the Handout for Lesson 56. That Handout shows us five different ways in which our baptism is related to death. And one of those ways is that we were dead in sin prior to our baptism (we were dead in our trespasses). But another of those ways is that we died at the point of our baptism (our old self was crucified with him).

Were we dead prior to our baptism? Yes, we were. We were dead in our trespasses. And did we also die at the point of our baptism? Yes, we did. Our old self was crucified. The Bible tells us both of those things.

Each of those statements explains our baptism from a different perspective, and we need to keep those different perspectives straight as we study all that the Bible tells us about our baptism.