

Romans

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September 18, 2024
Romans 6:1-7



Vss. 1-2

- Paul here returns to his debate with an imaginary opponent to say some very strong things about baptism and what it means to be a disciple. This is set up by his statement at the end of 5:20: "...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more."
- Playing the other side of the board, Paul asks the objector's question: "If God's grace is greater than all our sin and this grace is the greatest thing in all the world, then wouldn't it stand to reason that we should go on sinning even more enthusiastically so as to release even more of God's grace?" Remember, Paul is able to play both sides because he's had this debate 1000 times over. He's actually had this question thrown back at him many times!
- And it still goes on! Many cult leaders in the 20th century gathered their people with exactly this kind of message. Most famous was Rasputin, the mental and spiritual guide of the last tsarina of Russia. He taught that what was required for salvation was a great amount of sin so that it could be met with a greater amount of grace, leading to salvation.
- "Of course not! Don't be ridiculous!", cried Paul! "How shall we who died to sin, still live in it?" It is easy for us to sit comfortably and shake our heads in disbelief at the likes of Rasputin and the other cult leaders who came after him. But such a skewed view of sin and salvation comes from a wider and common poor understanding of baptism and what it truly means to be saved. Paul next speaks of baptism and salvation as something deeper than even most professing Christians understand.

Vss. 3-4

- "Do you not understand what baptism really means?", Paul is asking. When we are baptized it is not merely some ceremonial thing, some meaningless rite of passage. In baptism we are literally joining Christ in His death. When a new believer comes into the water it represents that time in his life when he was apart from Christ and dead...dead in his sins. Remember the words

of the father as he spoke of his Prodigal Son who had returned, "...this son of mine was dead and has come to life again..." (Luke 15:24).

- But if we have died with Christ, verse 4 tells us that in baptism we have also been buried in death with Christ. But the Good News of the Gospel is that in baptism we are also raised with Christ. In baptism we truly become one with Christ, identifying with Him in death and life.
- I often explain to people asking for baptism that baptism is very much like a wedding. As in a typical wedding, you wear something unique, a baptismal robe, something you will never wear again. In a wedding you make vows and commitments that are for life. You do the same in baptism, knowing that God's vow and commitment to you is that He loved you so much that He gave His only Son's life for you so that you could have eternal life. In a wedding you give each other a gift with strong symbolism – a ring. It is round, symbolizing the unending love you share. It is a pure metal, symbolizing the purity of your love for one another. In baptism, as we have said you are symbolizing the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ **and yourself!** A wedding is the beginning of the marital mystery of the two becoming one. The same is true in baptism as you and Christ become one. There is a reason why the New Testament is filled with imagery of marriage to illustrate and explain our relationship to Christ.

Vss. 5-7

- Having been raised with Christ, we go on living with Christ, but with a new life, a born again life. Martin Luther said that in baptism we experience "the death of death". We no longer allow others to identify us by our old selves, nor do we see ourselves as our old self. Our identity as to who we **REALLY** are, begins with our baptism. This is why so many in the New Testament have new names (The Chosen: Mary Magdalene who was first called Lillith).
- In our old life we were known and defined by our sin. But that life is over, dead. Now we live a new life, empowered by the Holy Spirit and growing to be and look like Christ, who is in us and in whom "we live, move and be".