

Discovering the Sacraments

Baptism (2) Crucified with Christ – Romans 6:1-14

Baptism has a wealth of meanings through scripture and a mass of significance for many who have been baptised.

Being united to Christ – ‘in Christ’ - in an intimate way is one meaning, both crucified and raised with Jesus.

This is our death yet it was his death we have entered into. This is His resurrection life yet it's ours that we have a share in.

With his crucifixion and new life he has given us the riches of his glory and his Holy Spirit's presence and power.

These are all ours because we are ‘in Christ Jesus’.

We therefore need to live lives that bear this out. Not living to sin but living for Jesus.

Your story of baptism...

Questions for meditation and groups

1. Share your own testimony about baptism – what struck you particularly about it, what led you to be baptised? Or share the story of someone else's baptism you have witnessed.
2. What makes us so dependent on Jesus' death and resurrection?
3. Being *crucified with Jesus* sounds pretty dramatic! What can it mean for those who have received Jesus as Saviour?
4. Can the new life that Jesus gives be the same as before? How may it be different?
5. Can you suggest a few other ‘meanings’ of baptism? – you may like to look up a few of the following... John 3:3-6, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, 1 Cor.6:11, Titus 3:5-7, Hebrews 10:22, Matt. 28:19-20, 2 Cor. 5:9 1 Cor.12:12-14, Eph. 4:4-6, Gal. 3:26-28, Romans 6:11-14.
6. How is Baptism linked to Church membership? See 1 Cor.12:12-14, Eph. 4:4-6.
7. Some have been baptised as teenagers and then ‘backslidden’. Others are so grateful they were baptised in their youth. Is there any value in delaying someone's baptism?
8. A dead body is totally unresponsive. How are we ‘dead to sin’? Is this possible? See Romans 6:11.
9. A living body should be totally responsive – how are we alive to God in Christ Jesus? See Romans 6:11.
10. What can we do to be ‘more responsive’ to Jesus?
11. Some people are deterred from being baptised by the massive occasion we have at large Baptist Church. How could we simplify things to encourage people to be baptised?

Baptism is a fantastic symbol – so many meanings and so much significance. I was actually convicted about being baptised by my own preaching! I had been christened through the faithful witness of my Christian mum. So I considered myself baptised and 'OK'! I even led the service when Kathy was baptised. Several years later I was preaching about the life of Moses and came on the section where Moses was busying himself with work but he'd neglected to have his son circumcised (Ex 4:24ff) This was something left undone. And the Lord nagged me so I was baptised.

In Romans 6 Paul tells us we have been united to Jesus. We're not simply legally justified - our sins wiped out and carried by Jesus.

We're not just forgiven and cleansed - washed clean of our sin. These are things that happen 'out there' as it were, but there is a deeper, mystical union with Jesus, a 'share' in him, his riches, his work, his power - that is difficult to understand or explain.

The upshot of what he's trying to tell the Romans Christians is that - because of what Jesus has done - they should live holy lives, new lives - consecrated to Him - not now living in sin. We are new people - changed from the sinful people we once were to holy people.

We have a new destiny, not now bound by sin but sharing the glory of Jesus.

Paul reminds his readers of their baptism and uses that as a main plank in his reasoning.

Read Romans 6:1-5

A picture of the water of baptism as a tomb - Jesus' tomb in the garden. He was laid in it - dead, He, the divine son of God, had unnecessarily experienced death - a violent, cursed death of the cross.

Then on the third day he burst from the tomb, alive, glorious, transformed, - the source of life could not be held down!

And Paul says - you and I - all who put their trust in him were there too.

We were buried in that tomb - his death was our death!

I deserve death for my sin. Sin is so phenomenally disastrous - whatever the form it takes and however subtle it may be - it warps creation, it destroys lives and life itself, it separates us from fellowship with God.

Our lives have been so spoiled by sin that it deserves death itself. The only way to pay for sin is death. God initially instituted the sacrifices in the Old Testament - poor as they were - God

said that the death of lambs, or other animals, could take our place, their death was in place of the people of Israel.

However, he both validated them and did away with them by sending his own pure son, to be our sacrifice, to cleanse us from all sin, to take our death and to be our new life. We have died in him - we will live in him!

Rachel Brown recently did a 'Tandem Sky-dive'. To me it's a strong illustration of what it's like to be united to Christ!

She writes -

I recently did a tandem sky-dive from 12,000ft over Lake Taupo in New Zealand in February. It was an amazing experience but scary. Free falling for 45sec was terrifying until the parachute came out then we just floated around taking in the view before a very smooth landing. I am not sure I would do it again but glad I did it for the experience.

'Skydiving was the scariest thing I have ever done, but an amazing feeling afterwards. I had to put my trust in my instructor who I did not know, that he would attach my harness securely to his and keep me safe. I trusted him with my life. He was in complete control the whole time. There was nothing I could do. I felt safe in the knowledge that he had done this many times before and was experienced. Free fall was terrifying, falling at great speed towards the earth. I had to trust that the parachute would open and that we would land safely on the ground.'

Can you imagine what you feel as you're so united to that partner - your life is in their hands, it's your jump - yet it's his jump, it's your freefall yet it's your freefall, it's your landing yet it's his landing. Everything about it is yours yet everything about it is your partner's. That - to me - is very near to what we're talking about being united to Christ in crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

It's our death - yet all the time it was his that we share and own,

It's our burial - yet all the time it was his that we share and own,

It's our resurrection - yet all the time it was his that we share and own.

His death is our death.

His separation from God is our separation.

His guilt is our guilt - *he was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that we deserved that was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* Isaiah 53:5-6.

His resurrection life is our resurrection life,

His purity is ours,

His righteousness is ours,

His glory is ours!

Paul calls on the Corinthian Christians to be reconciled to God - and describes the way it happens - 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'.

2 Cor 5:21

He gave us his death, his life, his purity, his sonship.

Now, says Paul, if you're united with Jesus like this - then how come you're living so closely attached to sin and sinful ways? Live what you are! Live what Jesus has made you! Live out the life you are united to so intimately and at such amazing cost!

But living out our unity to Jesus is much more than not living in sin, it's being united to him in all kinds of other ways too...

Our **prayer life** for instance - prayer isn't just having a chat to God, it's being united with God.

Our **service to others** is not just done for him - it is Jesus doing it through us - we serve in Christ.

Our **relationships** are part of our life **in** Jesus - the way we relate to our spouse and children - and those around us - we're not just friends we're his family united together in Jesus.

We're told that people recognised that the disciples had been with Jesus - not by what they didn't do but by what they did do - they lived out Jesus' life and did what he did.

Baptism is just the first step in following Jesus (last week), it is an expression of a whole life which we want to live - united to Christ.

There is something mystical and beyond ourselves about the whole thing of living as a Child of God - it's beyond us and in his hands - just like the apprentice sky-diver.