

The Baptism of Jesus / January 11, 2026

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."

Buried with Him by Baptism, Raised to Walk in Newness of Life

Jesus' baptism provides an opportunity to consider our own baptism, the blessings it gives and the benefits it conveys. Forgiveness. Freedom from the control of sin. Empowerment to walk in newness of life. Jesus' baptism was unique in terms of John's baptism, which was of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. John was surprised when Jesus presented Himself for baptism, having no sin that needed forgiveness and no sinfulness that needed repentance. Perplexed, John said to Jesus, *"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me."* Jesus had no sin as the eternal Son of God and no sinfulness having been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Yet Jesus had a part in human sin and sinfulness. He would overcome human sinfulness in our place, living a life without sin in our place. He would pay the debt of human sin, offering His sinless self in our place through His death on the cross. Baptism was the public acknowledgement that He would take our place in bearing the weight of our sinfulness and the consequence of our sin on the cross.

Beginning with His baptism Jesus began the public offering of Himself in our place in fulfillment of the law. The Divine Voice accepted Him in our service saying, *"This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."* The Spirit set Him apart for His work of our redemption from sin, the devil and death, by alighting on Him in the form of a dove. At the end of His earthly life and in fulfillment of His divine mission, Jesus would offer Himself in our place on the cross to make atonement for human sin through the shedding of His blood. The divine voice would be His voice. His cry would be, *"It is accomplished...Father into your hands I commit my spirit."* On the third day the Father would again set His seal of approval on His Son. This time calling Him to rise from the dead. His death for the atonement of human sin, verified by His resurrection to a new and eternal life. As Paul says in the lesson from Romans, baptism is our share in His death to sin and His resurrection to a new and eternal life. We receive this now through faith by the word and working of the Holy Spirit. We will receive this fully and forever when He calls us to rise from death and share in His resurrection to eternal life. We are buried with Him in baptism. We are raised with Him to newness of life.

Paul begins by asking rhetorically, *“Are we to remain in sin that grace may abound?”* The answer is obviously, “No”, or at least it should be obvious, but apparently not. There are always a certain number of people who think that rather than being saved from sin, that grace means being saved to sin. Those who think that way appreciate neither the grace of God, nor the horror of sin. The greater our appreciation of the nature of sin the greater our appreciation of the grace of God. How serious is sin? In Ephesians St. Paul says, *“The wages of sin is death.”* How could someone who was saved from death, think that they could safely return to and remain in the very thing that brings death and continue to live? The worst thing about sin is that it separates us from God, who is the source of life for all things living. Immediately upon disobeying God’s command in the garden, the woman and the man’s sin separated them from God. Their immediate reaction was to cover their nakedness and then to run and hide when they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden.

Grace is that despite the offence of our sin, God does not hold our sins against us. Grace is not something God has to do. God forever holds the sins of the fallen angels against them. Grace is that God does not hold our sin against us. Grace is that more than simply covering sin over in forgetfulness, God sends His Son to join Himself in our sinfulness and to cover Himself with our sin. This is illustrated visually in Jesus’ baptism in the sin polluted waters of the Jordan River, where sinners went for washing. In days of old when water only ran when the one fetching it was in a hurry and was only heated after sitting on the stove, families had one day in which everyone bathed. By the time the last of a family of fifteen got into the bath the water was pretty dark. He or she may have been cleaner going in than coming out. Jesus bathed Himself in the waters dirtied by human sin to show that on the cross He would cover Himself with our sinfulness, so we would be clothed in His righteousness. Consider that when you consider Jesus’ baptism. He was baptised into our sin, so we would be baptized into His righteousness. Consider that when you consider your baptism. That’s grace! Jesus took our sin upon Himself that we would take His righteousness upon us. That’s the difference between His baptism and our baptism. We are buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

He was baptized into our sin and we were baptized into His righteousness, so that we would be made free from both the penalty and power of sin. The penalty of sin is death, in time and eternity. The penalty of sin is separation from God,

spiritually in time, absolutely in eternity, body and spirit. The result of separation from God is abominable behaviour on our part. The world before the flood was so far from God in spirit that every thought and inclination of the human imagination was towards evil continually. There are some places in the world where people act so abominably towards others that there can be no thought of God in their minds at all. There are some people who are so far from God that they are consumed by evil and their evil consumes anyone who comes in their paths. We were baptized into Christ Jesus so that we would be set free from the control of sin over our lives. We were baptized into Christ Jesus so that rather than our own minds we would have the mind of Christ and conform our will to the will of Christ. Free will is the will of Christ. There is nothing but slavery and death in sin and in the mind controlled by sin. There is freedom and life in Christ. We have been freed from the slavery of our sins through our baptism into Christ and empowered to walk in newness of life.

People ask what is baptism? Baptism is God choosing us for the sake of Christ Jesus. Baptism is empowerment for newness of life in Christ. Baptism is empowerment to walk in newness of life, free from slavery to sin and from the desires of the sinful nature. How do we access the empowerment of our baptism? We access this empowerment by taking it to heart and believing it. We access the empowerment of baptism by calling upon the Spirit to help us in our needs, especially in our weakness. We access the empowerment of our baptism by applying ourselves to the words of scripture and by applying the words of scripture to our lives, consciously and intentionally. We access the empowerment of our baptism by nourishing our faith in the bread and wine of holy communion, believing Christ is present with His body and blood to forgive our sins and empower us with the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life. We access the empowerment of our baptism by remembering the sinfulness that continues to dwell within us, confessing our sins to God and each other and hearing Christ's words of forgiveness, washing, cleansing and absolution spoken by the minister in worship and by sisters and brothers in private conversation. Baptism is the power of God for forgiveness and newness of life, promised for the sake of Christ Jesus.

There is nothing more important than our baptism. It is God saying 'yes,' to us for the sake of Christ Jesus. It is God giving us a share in Christ's death for our sins and a promised share in His resurrection to eternal life. There is nothing more powerful than baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ. It is death to sin and newness of life in Christ, in time and for eternity. It is God giving the Holy Spirit

to dwell within us to inspire our faith and empower our faithfulness. It is God's assurance that He will nourish, nurture and sustain our faith throughout life and bring it to fulfillment life everlasting. Baptism is God's promise for the sake of Christ Jesus. If you have not received God's promise in baptism, receive it as soon as you can. Remember your baptism. Remember God's promise. Remember that in baptism your sins are constantly washed away and your sinfulness is covered over by Christ's righteousness. Remember that in your baptism you have God's promise to hear when you call, help when you need, raise you up when you fall and bring you through death to life everlasting. Remember that your baptism is God's promise for the sake of Jesus Christ. And when you remember His promise, believe it. In Jesus' Name. Amen