

HAVE YOU DIED SO YOU MAY LIVE? Cougan Collins

Have you died so you may live? If you asked this question to worldly people, they might think you have lost your mind. They might say, "How in the world could someone die and then live?" While this might seem like a strange question from a human perspective, God's Word makes it clear that a person must die before he or she can live.

"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:11).

Throughout the New Testament, you will find conditional statements such as this one. Notice, Paul tells us that IF we died with Jesus, THEN we shall also live with him. We could also say, IF we did not die with Jesus, THEN we cannot live with him. We only have two choices. We either die with Christ to live eternally in Heaven or we refuse to die with him and spend our eternity in Hell. I would like to think most people would choose to live in Heaven.

With this in mind, the next two questions we need to answer are,

"How does a person die with Christ?" and "Is this a physical death or a spiritual one?" Paul has the answer for us:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it" (Rom. 6:1-2)?

Paul is explaining to the Christians at Rome that even though they are now under the system of grace, this does not mean that they can abuse it. Notice carefully, Paul said that these Christians had died to sin. Since it would be absurd for Paul to write a letter to dead people, we can know the death he speaks of is a spiritual one. Now Paul is going to tell us how a person dies to sin.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

What Paul has said here is important because it answers our question, "When does a person die with Christ?"

Friends, this is not hard to understand. Paul tells us that when we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into his death. Please notice the baptism mentioned here is referred to as a burial. This is the same meaning that "baptism" carries because it literally means immersion. We also learn from these verses that once we are buried with Christ in the watery grave of baptism and raised up with him, we are to walk in the newness of life. Paul continues to describe what happens during our baptism into Christ:

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:5-11).

Within these seven verses, we find many conditional statements related to the freedom from sin. Let's examine these conditional statements carefully. Paul states IF we are united together in the likeness of his death, THEN we shall be in the likeness of his resurrection (verse 5). He also tells us that when we were baptized into Christ, our old sinful body was done away with (verse 6). Paul reiterates the point that one is not freed from sins until that person dies with Christ in baptism (verse 7). He states that IF we died with Christ, THEN we shall live with him (verse 8). Paul then tells us why we can rest assured that we are being freed from sin and that we will live with Christ in heaven (verses 9-11). Friends, it doesn't get any clearer than this. We learn from these passages that one must be baptized into Christ to be set free from sin. Many claim that baptism is not necessary for salvation, but there is no denying these easy to understand passages that explain that one does not become a Christian until that person is baptized. Let's examine another passage where Paul teaches about baptism:

"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses

and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:12).

Again, we find Paul describing baptism as a burial. One thing that should be emphasized in this passage is how our obedient faith and the working of God go hand in hand. Notice, Paul teaches us that it is by our faith in the working of God that we can know that when we are being lowered down into water that we are being buried with Christ and our sins are being removed. When we are raised out of the water, we can know that we have been made alive together with Christ and we are now children of God. The water itself is not magical. It is simply the place that God has appointed where we will receive the forgiveness of our sins.

Baptism is one of the most neglected subjects in the denominations. Many will teach that you must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that you must repent, and that you must confess Jesus as your Lord. However, you will not find them teaching that you must be baptized to be saved. When people neglect to teach about baptism and claim that you are saved before baptism, they are putting a big smile on the devil's face because he knows that you are still lost in your sins. We need

to remember that Jesus commanded baptism in the great commission.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:19; See also Mark 16:15-16).

Those in the first century obeyed this command, and we have many examples of those who were baptized: the 3000 at Pentecost (Acts 2:37-46); the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-13); the eunuch (Acts 8:35-39); Saul (Acts 9:1-18, 22:6-16, 26:12-18); Cornelius (Acts 10:34-46); Lydia (Acts 16:13-15); the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-34); Crispus and others (Acts 18:8); John's disciples (Acts 19:1-6). The same people who deny the importance of baptism, usually make fun of those who teach the necessity of it. It is sad that so many good people that live like Christians will not find their way into Heaven because they have never been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Consider one last point that shows the necessity of baptism. Please notice some of the things that are found in Christ: grace (2 Tim. 2:1), salvation (2 Tim. 2:10), every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3), redemption and forgiveness of sin (Eph. 1:7), eternal

life (1 Jn. 5:11), and no condemnation (Rom. 8:1). It should be obvious that IF we want to have these different things, THEN we must be found in Christ. So then, how and when does one get into Christ?

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27; See also Rom. 6:3).

Paul makes it easy for us to see that one does not enter into Christ until that person is baptized. Friends, I hope you will take a serious look at what has been presented about baptism because it can make the difference of where you will spend your eternity. We must also understand that at the point of baptism our journey as servants of God has just begun. We must continue to grow as Christians and remain faithful to the Lord until the day we die. IF we remain faithful to God, THEN Jesus will give us a home in Heaven (Rev. 2:10). So, the question remains, Have you died so you may live?

If you have questions or comments send them to lgchurchofchrist@cablone.net.

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