

The New Life of the Baptized

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Epiphany / Baptism; Conversion; Cut Off / Genesis 1:1–5; Psalm 29; Romans 6:1–11; Mark 1:4–11

- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Baptized King. Amen.

Jon Metz, in 2010, moved from his dwelling in New Haven, CT, to the suburbs. He had purchased an old home that he was now fixing up. One day, John was cleaning an old boiler-style furnace in the basement when his arm became lodged inside the furnace. The harder Jon tried to free himself from the furnace, the more his arm swelled and he became entrapped. Two days later, Jon realized that his situation was more perilous than he originally thought. In his attempts to free himself, Jon had cut himself on the filthy furnace. He was now infected with poison and according to one news outlet, he said that he began to smell rotting flesh. His arm, once dear to him, was costing him his life. In an act difficult for us to imagine, Jon was able to reach some tools nearby. He fashioned a tourniquet and began to amputate his arm. Now he didn't get all the way through, leaving some cartilage by the time help arrived. Doctors agreed that Jon's heroic act saved his own life.

In our epistle, our text for this morning from [Romans 6](#), St. Paul describes this death-to-life experience of Holy Baptism and what the baptized in Christ give up for the sake of the new life they now have. In Baptism, we receive the benefits of Christ giving his life. Today, let us search the Scriptures anew and learn how

in our baptism, our Old Self is cut-off, so that we then arise to new life in Jesus.

Our old self, our Old Adam desires to continue sinning that grace may abound. That's the notion of the question:

English Standard Version Chapter 6

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Here as you hear it once again was a seemingly plausible—even pious—question the Romans may have been asking: You see Paul had taught that no matter how great our sins, God’s grace always abounded to cover them. Paul writes at the end of the previous chapter:

English Standard Version Chapter 5

20 Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Well, if God’s grace—a very good thing!—is always more than our sin, wouldn’t it be a good idea sin more so that God can be even more generous? It really does sound like a realistic questions.

IT sounds really, pretty holy, but it’s really our old self asking the question. Just think of all the possibilities! We could do all sorts of things we like to do (but really know we shouldn’t). The things that give us pleasure can and do become our idols. The things that you spend your time defending with your time and energy could become your idols. I love my sports, you should hear me on Sundays watching the Packers, I could let that become an excuse for church or other faith building time. We let our words fly around that don’t speak of Christ’s love and use his name in vain or even gossip about others. The pictures on the computers, magazines. Listening to the morally impulsive music, watching the movies or TV shows that promote infidelity, homosexuality, and other sexual sins. You use your money for whatever you like and you fail to give any part of it back to God, let alone the first of it. You like to want and covet so much. But who is it that is inside of us that even those ideas attractive? IT’S OUR OWN SINFUL SELF!

But Paul, He quite forcibly says “No way!” His exact words are:

English Standard Version Chapter 6

2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Sin separates the believer from Christ. Sin is a rejection of the life God designed for his people.

But St. Paul tells us:

English Standard Version Chapter 6

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

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. 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. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

He tells us here that the old self has been drowned and really it has been cut off by Baptism into Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus did indeed die to atone for our sins—every sin!—so that God's grace does always cover every sin we could ever commit. He forgives you for your sins of idolatry, gossip and cursing, adultery and coveting. He forgives your sins that give yourself pleasure. He forgives your sins of selfishness.

Jesus died to atone for our sins. He also died to deliver us from our sin. To free us from our sin. When you were baptized, you were baptized into Christ's death to sin. We are literally drowned to the sin that once separated us from God and enslaved us to the Prince of Darkness. Our sin was once costing us our life, like Jon cutting off his arm, this is what's cut off from the Christian with our new lease on life.

Imagine with me for a moment at the baptism if I took the infant in my arms from Mom and Dad and said, Today this Child is going to be drowned and something is going to be cut-off. The mouths would drop open, but literally this is what happens in baptism. We are drowned and die to sin, and this sin is cut-off...

And we are resurrected with Christ to a new life. That is the greatest news of all. You and I at are baptisms are given new life. Like Jon Metz who cut off his arm to save his life, God, "cutting off" His Son, Jesus on the cross does give life to

you and to me. Our holy and righteous living is now the fruit of faith and the expression of the Holy Spirit working this new life in me...in you.

Jesus tells us:

English Standard Version Chapter 15

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

When you are cut off from sin and grafted into the vine. You are granted new life, and you are connected to the sources of life, Jesus Christ.

So therefore, we arise to new life in Christ that is totally different from the old. Like Lazarus in [John 11](#):

English Standard Version Chapter 11

43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

We cast off our grave clothes and our former ways.

St. Paul writes about this in His letter to the church of Collosae:

English Standard Version Chapter 3

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

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

We clothe ourselves with Christ which binds us in harmony:

English Standard Version Chapter 3

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony

As Christ continues to clothe us we also are given the full armor of God to clothe ourselves with to stand against the devil's schemes:

English Standard Version Chapter 6

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

So yes, we have the clothing and the armor to walk about in newness of life, we "walk about" in newness of life. We are willing to serve our neighbor in body and soul. We are willing to give up time, talents, and treasure for the work of the Lord. When we see someone in need, we step in to help. We willingly walk in the way of God. As we walk about in the newness of life we see the importance to participate in the Body of Christ. One way we can do that is to pray for your church, pray for her leaders, pray that the church and her leaders and her members are focused on the God-given task to make disciples. Right now many are wondering how to still be a part of the Body even amidst separation. What you can do is pray. Call someone on the telephone. Continue to check in on the people around you. There are many things that you and I can

do to help and serve our neighbor and walk about in the newness of life. It could even be just serving your family their basic needs right now.

We consider that is to reckon, ponder, meditate on what it means to be dead to sin and alive to God through Christ our Lord. And this can be seen in a multitude of ways, for if we truly are alive to God through Christ our Lord we will be able to be seen as the City on the Hill that Cannot be hidden.

In the same way Jon Metz cut off his entrapped and infected arm to save his life, Jesus Christ, God's Son, was infected with our sin and enslaved by judgment and death. In our Baptism, we are buried with Christ in his death to sin and resurrected with Him to a new life. Given new life through the forgiveness of our sin and the certainty of eternal life, we now consider the new life we have in him and what it means to live to his glory. Christ cuts off, all that infects us and cast off all that entangles us. We buy repentance cut off all that infects us and all that entangles us.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.