

Baptism of our Lord/January 10, 2021
Romans 6:1-11/Live in Baptism
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church
Pastor Jerry Stobaugh

“For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.”

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul speaks of freedom from the Law. What is freedom from the Law? In Jesus Christ we are justified by faith, not by our own works. For Christ did everything for us on the cross. Christ died, and paid the price for our sins. So, we have forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life.

We have the promise of life in Christ because of Christ and not by our own good works. We cannot earn God's favor by good works. This means freedom for us. We cannot satisfy the justice of God by our works, furthermore by our own merits we deserve eternal death. For us God was an angry judge, not a loving Father. But in Christ we have a new relationship with God, a relationship with our heavenly Father, a God of mercy. Therefore, we are free from the condemnation of the law, the punishment of eternal death.

However, in our epistle, Paul speaks of what freedom is not. There is no freedom from moral responsibility, the responsibility to live as children of God, to love God and love others. Love is the summary of the law, love God and love our neighbors. This is the moral life, God's will for us. We are not free of responsibility to live according to God's will.

On the contrary, in Christ we have the courage to live in this way, no matter our failures and our faults. Because Christ has given us grace. As the Apostle says: What shall we say? Continue in sin that grace may abound? In no way. We who died to sin, how can we live in it?

Some people say, Well, God will forgive me, so I can live how I want, because I can always tell God, sorry, I repent, and God will always forget my sins. I can lie to my neighbors, steal from them, I can kill them, I can abandon my family, whatever, I do not care, because God always forgives me.

Paul says this is not the truth. When we are in Christ, we have a new life, we are free from the condemnation of the law, but we also have freedom from sin. Sin is slavery to the devil. When we live in sin, we are under the condemnation of the law, we are also slaves of the devil and we cannot free ourselves from the consequences of a life of immorality. We cannot overcome anger, fights, diseases arising from our immorality. Several diseases are consequences of drugs and sexual immorality, for example. We cannot separate ourselves from these things without God's grace.

But Christ has the power to free us from these things, to change our lives. Only in God can we be free from sin to live a new life with a clear conscience. How do we receive this new life? Paul speaks of baptism, baptism is God's gift, the gift of new life in God. The blessing of baptism is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives to help us in the way God wants us to live. In what way does Paul speak of baptism? "Do you not know that all who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"

That means, in baptism we share in Christ's death on the cross. Christ died and paid the price for our sins on the cross. In baptism we share in His death because when we join the body of Christ, we die to sin. We die to the condemnation of sin, and to the life of sin. "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."

We share in Christ's death; we will also share in his resurrection after our physical death. We die in Christ and shall rise in Christ, because as Christ was raised from physical death, we too will rise from physical death to eternal life. In baptism we begin a new life, although the old Adam, the sinful nature, stays for a while. So, we are still sinners, while we live in a mortal body, but one day we will have eternal life, because we will be resurrected in glorified bodies as Christ was raised in a glorified body. We have within us a new life, a new creation, which is growing as the old Adam is dying. One day the mortal body will die and we will be resurrected to live with Christ in glory forever. This is our hope.

But to walk in this new life, we have to avoid things that break our new relationship with God. Because of Jesus Christ we do not live in the fear of God, or of His damnation. In this relationship with God, our joy is to serve God and to live as His children. We seek to do the will of God as children want to do the will of their father. We love God because God first loved us and we love others because God first loved us.

Our joy is to live with God and walk with God. But to walk with God is to avoid the bad things, evil desires, all sins with the help of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit. We can walk with God in this earthly life and live with Him forever.

There are only two ways: the way of life and the truth, and the way of sin and death. We cannot walk in them both.

Those who want to justify themselves with good works must know their works are insufficient and do not have the confidence to live in God's presence. We have the confidence of justification through the merits of Christ, so we have the confidence to live as children of

God. No one who knows and understands they by nature sinful and unclean should say “I am a great sinner, so I cannot enter the presence of God, attend church to receive God's forgiveness and praise God.”

In baptism all have the opportunity to change their lives. No matter your age. We baptize children, but also youths and seniors who have not received the gift of baptism too. At every stage of life, a person can change his or her life. Many of you received the gift of baptism and I pray you remember your baptism. On that day, you received the gift of God, the promise of eternal life. Dr. Martin Luther said, “When you wash your face, remember your baptism.” Because of baptism, for all our lives we have the opportunity to repent of our sins and return to the right path; the path that will lead you into the new heavens and the new earth.