

“You were not baptized!” Romans 6:1-11

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

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. 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. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I was not baptised. That's right. And you were not baptised either. That's also true. What do I mean? What I mean is this, instead of saying that I was baptized, we should say - I AM baptised. You ARE baptised. Christian baptism is not an event of the past.

It is our present reality. This is who you are. Your baptism is not something that was done to you while ago, your baptism gives you your core and everlasting identity – a child of God. It is your baptism that gives shape and form to your entire life.

You ARE baptised! As is true with most gifts of our God, we struggle to comprehend how magnificent those gifts are. Your baptism is such an incredible gift of our gracious Father in heaven, it gives you so much that Satan can't stand it.

A few things upset him more than the fact that you are baptised. He hates you because you ARE baptised and because of all the blessings the Triune God has given you in your baptism. Satan is even more furious because he can't take your baptism away. It is God's seal upon you. God's work. And Satan can't even reduce the power of your baptism. He is powerless to do anything against this amazing divine gift.

But, beware! He certainly is not giving up. He can try and deceive us and rob us of the joy and comfort that our baptism gives us according to the gracious will of our Father. There are two main ways - you need to know - how Satan can try to deceive us.

One is trying to deceive us about **what Christian baptism is**. And the other is trying to deceive us about **what being baptized means**. Let's learn briefly about how Satan tries to deceive us so that we are aware and hopefully, equipped to help others as well.

First, about what baptism is. The Triune God who baptises us with water and Word, usually using pastors, He Himself explains what baptism is.

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In our baptism He embraces you by means of His Holy Spirit, He unites you with Himself and the body of Christ, He creates in you a new life, He washes, renews and sanctifies you, He forgives you all your sins, He frees you from your slavery to sin, He welcomes you and adopts you as His beloved child and His heir and more.

This is what Christian baptism is about. But then the enemy questions it. "How could that be? Can you really believe this? How could simple water do such great things? That can't be possible! There must be a different explanation. It seems more understandable to think that baptism is just what you do. Isn't it? When you choose to repent and commit your life to God. And baptism is just a nice, symbolic ritual."

And so many have been trapped by these lies. Whole Christian churches have been deceived this way. God is still faithful with all the gifts and blessings that He gives us in baptism, but those who have believed those lies are robbed of wonderful joy and comfort that our baptism is designed to bring us. So regrettable...

In our Lutheran traditions, we are somewhat sheltered from this deception. But the doors are wide open for the other one. What was it? It was about **what being baptised means for our lives**. This is where Lutheran Christians often fall prey to the devils lies.

How does that work? The lies of the enemy go like this. "You see, God has promised you all those countless blessings in your baptism. Forgiveness and life and more. And that is all God's work. You can do nothing. You can't merit it. It is all by God's grace. [So far so good.] So, you are safe. If you are baptised, you know God has promised you all those things, and now you can just go about your life as it pleases you. Enjoy it!"

This deception acknowledges that Christian baptism is God's work and brings us God's blessings, but then the enemy suggests that baptism works like some magic, you just get baptised and you have basically trapped God to bless you forever. Done. It is not that rare when this deception can be witnessed in Lutheran circles. What about us?

And this one may even be more dangerous than the first one. When someone is deceived to believe that Christian baptism is what they do, sure, they are robbed of joy and comfort of God's abundant grace and forgiveness, but on the other hand, there is often more personal commitment to follow Jesus, to strive to lead God pleasing life.

But with this second deception the enemy basically convinces his naïve victims that because baptism is God's gracious work, and we contribute to it nothing, now we are free to return and embrace whatever our sinful heart desires.

It is like saying: "God has freed me from the slavery to sin, and now I am free to return back to it." How incredibly foolish! But... our gracious Father is not obliged to bless us or to grant us His gifts of forgiveness and life, if we despise His gift of adoption and instead choose to allow sin and devil to be our lords and masters. Why would He?!

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It is like us saying: "I will ignore you, I will act against your will for my life, I will indulge whatever my heart desires, but you... you will have to forgive me and to give me eternal life." Really! Can you see how ridiculously foolish that is?

But what then being baptised means for our lives? This is how Dr Luther explains what Christian baptism means in the Small Catechism: "*What does such baptizing with water indicate?* It indicates that **the Old Adam** in us **should** by daily contrition and repentance **be drowned and die** with all sins and evil desires, and that **a new man should emerge and arise** to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

Fine, but what would this drowning of the Old Adam by repentance and emerging and arising of a new man look like practically? Like this. This is how our baptism helps us to daily repent and drown the Old Adam.

When you are reminded of what led to your baptism. Your baptism reminds you how serious our sinful condition is; that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God had to sacrifice His very life to free us from that condition and its consequences. That He had to take upon Himself the sin of the world, so that in exchange He could offer us forgiveness and life, and the love of His Father.

Your baptism reminds you how undeserved and how all-embracing God's grace is. When the Triune God in your baptism promises you His forgiveness, it is not just about what you have already done wrong in your life so far.

That forgiveness covers your entire life. Every evil and wrong that you have done and will do, every good you have failed and will fail to do. When God the Father said in your baptism: "I forgive you!" He meant all of that. Your entire life!

Your baptism reminds you every day, that it is by God's grace alone, that He freed you from slavery to sin, devil and death. That by His grace alone you have been adopted in His family, that by His grace alone you have eternal life, that none of that depends on any conditions, not on your performance, not on your progress, not on your goodness.

"I am baptised, God is my true and loving Father, Jesus is my Lord and my brother!" How free, how joyful and gratitude-filled it makes your life! None of those gifts depend on us, all of them are given only because of God's gracious and loving attitude.

When we are daily reminded of these divine realities of our lives, then we gladly turn from our old self-centred lives towards the One who baptised us in Christ, and then this ever-flowing grace of God is what drowns the Old Adam in us, as its never ceasing waves wash over us again and again day by day.

Where does this lead us? **To emerging and arising of a new man, as Dr Luther put it.** What does that look like? Once the Holy Spirit convinces you of all the amazing gifts that you have received in your baptism, we are changed. God's grace transforms us. He creates new hearts in us. Yes, He does!

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And those new hearts joyfully confess: "I am baptised. Jesus Christ is my Lord. I want to please Him; I want to live in the obedience of faith to Him who loves me so much!" This is how Paul the apostle describes it further in his letter to Romans.

When we begin to realize how good the Lord is, we don't want to present our members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness anymore, instead, we want to present ourselves to God and our members to God as instruments for righteousness.

When we are reminded of God's grace in baptism, we long to present our entire bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. We want to belong to Jesus. We want to be His. We want to live under His Lordship. A new man in us wants to serve Him.

Because we know: "I am baptized!" That means that you are powered by God's grace to devote your entire life serving your God. And He Himself instructs us how to do that. When we strive to love one another just as Jesus loves us.

When we seek God's wisdom, when we study His commandments, when we let His love flow through us into the lives of everyone around us, when we daily ask: "How can I be more like Jesus for you?" This is how we emerge and arise as a new creation.

See, your baptism shapes and forms all of this. Today and every day.

What a marvelous gift from your Father who are in heaven!

Concluding a few quick tips on how to use your baptism daily.

When you are tempted to sin, whatever sin of doing or failing to do it is, don't hesitate to proclaim to yourself: "I am baptized! And you, sin, you have no power over me! I don't have to listen to you. Nope! Jesus is my Lord; I will listen to Jesus."

Yet, when you still fail and sin, the devil rushes to accuse you: "You, ugly sinner! You are not worthy, you failed again, you don't deserve any forgiveness!" Then joyfully proclaim to yourself: "I am baptized! My Father in heaven assures me that because I am baptised in Christ, He forgives me all my sins. Get that!"

When you are in despair, when the walls are closing in and sky seems falling, and the ground disappears below our feet, proclaim to yourself boldly: "I am baptised! I am a child of the Triune God and He has promised me New Heavens and New Earth. The heavens and the earth may disappear, but God's promises to me remain forever!"

When any of these happen, or when you just wake up, or go to bed, or when you are in the Father's house, or in any situation - mark yourself with the sign of the cross and proclaim to yourself the Good News: "I am baptised in Christ! I am a beloved child of God! No one can take it from me. My Father in heaven loves me. And that is most certainly true!"

Because it is. Amen.