

“THE CHRISTIAN FAITH ONE WORD AT A TIME: BURIED OR BAPTIZED!”

Romans 6:1b-11

In certain parts of the country, a major change is taking place. Wildfires in Colorado, Arizona, and California are completely changing their landscape. We have WELS members who live in these areas. And if one of these wildfires blow across their land and reduce their homes to ashes, **that’s a complete change**. Even when the fires are put out after everything in their path incinerated, a whole different landscape remains. Eventually nature will grow back and the area will recover, but it won’t be the same. Fires have a way of doing that!

Do you realize you have been changed? You are different from how you were before. You’re not the same. Something has happened that has changed your soul. The landscape of your hearts is different from before. A dramatic change has taken place in here.

Today we resume our summer series about our Christian faith. Each week, one word has been used to describe this miracle. We’ve had **“atonement”**, **“righteousness”**, and **“reconciliation.”** Today we have:

“BURIED” or **“BAPTIZED!”**

1. Christ’s death buried our sin
2. Our baptism raises us to live

1

Just a verse before our text, Paul wrote: **Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.** (Rom 5:20) His point was that everyone needs the righteousness of Christ and his changing power to live in the forgiveness that Jesus earned. But that natural sinful heart takes this and concludes: **if God’s grace is such a good thing, then wouldn’t it be good to keep on sinning so that we get more of His grace?** He writes: **SHALL WE GO ON SINNING SO THAT GRACE MAY INCREASE?** You hear the twisted thinking that claims “well, God forgives me anyway, why stop doing what I’m doing?” Why stop a filthy tongue? Why change a perverted lifestyle? Why be honest, or loving, or faithful? Why be sober? Why go to church & communion? If those are sins, God forgives me anyway so what’s the difference?

Paul emphatically denies such twisted logic: **BY NO MEANS! WE DIED TO SIN. HOW CAN WE LIVE IN IT ANY LONGER?...IN THE SAME WAY COUNT YOURSELVES DEAD TO SIN...** Sin separates you from God. Sin is open rebellion to God’s will. Sin is a slap in the face of a holy God who has given His will for all to follow!

We were born with a nature that loves to sin, that **loves to worship self**, that **feasts on the** pleasures/treasures of this world. That Old Adam was the curse which the fall left in its tracks for everyone to be conceived and born in. **That nature hate to obey God and loves to obey self.** That’s what our spiritual problem is—pure and simple. And EVERY human being has it. It’s what makes our sinful world tick.

And that’s what we have to cut off and bury. The story goes of a man who purchased an older home in the suburbs and wanted to fix it up. One day, John was cleaning out an old boiler-style furnace in the basement when his arm became lodged inside. The harder John tried to free himself, **the more his arm swelled** and stayed stuck. He couldn’t get free. A day or two past and in his attempts to free himself, he had cut his arm on the rusty, filthy furnace. Infection started to fester his wounds and a dangerous poison was spreading into his body. Finally, family members found him and he was rushed to the hospital. His arm, once dear to him, was costing him his life. So to save his life, **the trauma team had to amputate** his arm. They cut off what was a part of John because it was going to kill him. [Like an appendix that could rupture...septic]

That’s what Jesus Christ did for you. God’s grace starts first with the love He had in sending His Son to this sinful world of ours to be cut off from him on the cross. **Christ’s death buried our sins.** He took our punishment and curse on himself and suffered our death in our place. God’s justice had to be served on us, but Jesus stepped into our world to walk in our steps holy and pure. His righteousness was perfect, **yet he exchanged his righteousness with our sinfulness.** That’s the great exchange of the Gospel – Jesus (holy/pure) becomes sin for us that we (unholy/damned) might become the righteousness of Christ.

Like John’s infected arm that was costing his life had to be cut off, so our sinful Old Adam has to be buried. When Christ died, sin died. Christ’s death buries our sin. When you bury something, it’s gone for good. Paul says: **FOR WE KNOW THAT OUR OLD SELF WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM SO THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, {buried} THAT WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES TO SIN BECAUSE ANYONE WHO HAS DIED HAS BEEN FREED FROM SIN.** God sees you and me free, forgiven, restored, and redeemed! God sees **NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.** (Rom 8:1) **IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON MAN’S DESIRE OR EFFORT, BUT ON GOD’S MERCY.** (Rom 9:16)

Acts of heroism today are honored highly by all. When an ambassador gives his life to defend a foreign embassy like Benghazi, when an officer risks his life to protect citizens from a crazed shooter, when a fireman puts his life on the line going back into the burning building to rescue people, when a passer-by jumps into a flooded river to rescue a child swept away in the current, these are acts of bravery and courage to which the label **HERO** is attached. And the common response from them is usually “I was just doing my job.”

Well, Jesus was just doing his job, his job of serving, and not being served. He gave his life as a ransom for all and his death buried our sin. Because when Jesus died, He earned that forgiveness for sin that no one else could earn. Sin and its poison are gone – they can't hurt us anymore. That's why we're in church. That's why we worship Christ. That's why we receive His Supper because **Jesus IS THE HERO**. He was **BURIED** right along with our sin. That pretty much **sums up our Christian faith in one word!**

2

Some of you may be puzzled at today's theme because there are two words printed to describe our Christian faith even though there is only supposed to be one. We've had **BURIED**. But let's also consider **BAPTIZED** because **our baptism raises us to live!**

DON'T YOU KNOW THAT ALL OF US WHO WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH. IF WE HAVE BEEN UNITED WITH HIM LIKE THIS IN HIS DEATH, WE WILL CERTAINLY ALSO BE UNITED WITH HIM IN HIS RESURRECTION. The divine power of baptism is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Christ's resurrection is the heart & core of God's plan of salvation. It would do us no good if Jesus did not rise from the dead. Paul said it this way: “**If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, you are still in your sins.**” (1 Cor 15:19) If Jesus remained in the grave, there's no Easter, no forgiveness, no joy, no peace, and no eternity.

By God's grace, our baptism raises us to live. **Baptism connects us** to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection to life. **WE WERE THEREFORE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH IN ORDER THAT, JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD THROUGH THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, WE TOO MAY LIVE A NEW LIFE.** As the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts through the water applied on you in the name of the Holy Trinity, our baptism raised you to live for Christ. He enables us to be free from the worldly trappings of sin and be drawn to the righteousness of Christ. The Spirit used our baptisms to guide our hands to serve Him, our tongues to praise Him, our hearts to confess Him, our thoughts to converse with Him. The Spirit used our baptisms to draw us into a relationship with Christ by faith so that **our entire lives might be living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.** (Rom 12:1)

When was your baptism? You do know, don't you? I hope so because while we are on this earth, we have the same struggles Paul did...**what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.** (Rom 7:19) **Christians aren't people who don't sin.** They are people who know what to do when they do sin and that is to run to Jesus and His cross where your sins are **BURIED**. Then return to your **BAPTISM** to raise you to live in the Spirit to follow Christ and His Word, stay on His path, live His will. You are alive, not dead! Live **in** Jesus and live **for** Jesus in all you think, say, and do, whoever you are and whatever you are, young or old, male or female. Cut off and bury all that infects you and rise to live as God wants you to until we live with him in glory.

So is it one or two **words 'at a time that describe our Christian faith'**? Buried or Baptized? Well, it's both because they point to the same truth that says:

*Baptized in water, sealed by the Spirit,
Dead in the tomb with Christ our King
One with His rising, freed and forgiven,
Thankfully now God's praise we sing! AMEN*