

Lesson 57 at StudyRomans.org

Romans 6:3

Romans 6:3 — Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Few verses in the Bible tell us more about the role of baptism and the importance of baptism than do Romans 6:3-4. And so much has been written about these verses that it is hard to know where to begin. But let's start with the elephant in the room.

And, yes, there is an elephant in the room, and we can see that elephant as soon as we look at the Handout for Lesson 57. That Handout shows every verse in the Bible that uses some form of the Greek word translated "baptism." And, as you can see from the box at the top left corner of the Handout, there are five related Greek words that are used in the Bible to refer to baptism (with one of those five words being the root word of the other four). As you can also see, not all of these verses are describing the baptism of the Great Commission. Sometimes these same words are used to describe other immersions such as dipping bread into a dish or washing cups and pots.

But, if we want to study about baptism or teach someone about baptism, I think that this Handout would be a good place to start — at least that is why I created it. The best (and some might say, only) way to study any topic in the Bible is to first get all of the evidence out on the table, and that evidence will certainly include all of the verses that discuss whatever topic you are studying.

When it comes to the topic of baptism, that evidence certainly includes the verses on this Handout. And, again, some of these verses are describing something other than the baptism of the Great Commission, but it is still a good idea to start with all of the verses that use the word. But we shouldn't stop there. Instead, we should also consider the verses that we saw on the earlier Handout for Lesson 54, which listed many verses that teach us about baptism without using the word "baptism."

Now, back to that elephant in the room — what is it? Well, let's look at the reverse side of the Handout for Lesson 57 and ask ourselves this question: how many times does Paul use one of these "baptism" words in his letter to the Romans? And the answer is three times in two verses — and those two verses are verses 3 and 4 right here in Romans 6. And that is it. The word is found nowhere else in the letter.

And so there is our elephant in the room when it comes to baptism: If baptism is so important, then why does Paul seemingly say so little about it in this letter?

And we can expand that question a bit. Paul wrote 13 letters. In how many of those 13 letters did Paul use one of these Greek "baptism" words?

If we look at the final column on the back side of the Handout, we see that the answer is five letters — fewer than half.

And if we count the number of times Paul uses one of those "baptism" words, what do we find? We find that Paul uses the word 16 times, including the three times we see here in Romans 6. And of those 16 occurrences, six of them are found in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians

where Paul tells us that Jesus did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17).

What is going on here? Does Paul not think that baptism is important? Why doesn't he say more about it? Why does Paul not use the word at all in over half of his letters?

I think verse 3 right here in Romans 6 answers all of those questions. And I think the answer is the same reason why we don't mention our own physical birth very often — we **all** have that in common.

For example, we don't ever hear anyone say, "Now I want to talk to those of us here today who have been physically born." And why is that? Because we have all experienced physical birth! We all have that event in common. We don't need to be told to do it, and we don't need to be reminded that we did it. Each of us has been physically born. Our physical birth is not mentioned very often because it is rightly assumed to have already happened to each of us.

And, for those of us who have been added to the church, what is true of our physical birth is also true of our spiritual birth. And isn't that what Paul says right here in verse 3? Read it again: "Do you not know that **all of us** who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"

Who in the church at Rome had been baptized into Christ Jesus? **All of them!** That is what Paul just told us in verse 3. He said that **all** of them had been baptized into Christ Jesus. Just as they had **all** been physically born, they had likewise **all** been spiritually born.

One thing that all of Paul's letters have in common is that they were all written to Christians. And one thing that all Christians have in

common is that they have all been baptized into Christ. Paul did not need to convince Christians to be baptized any more than he needed to convince them to be physically born. Everyone in the church at Rome had already experienced both of those births.

But what about people who are not yet Christians? Well, we meet quite a few of them in the book of Acts. And how many times do we find these Greek “baptism” words in the book of Acts? 27 times in just that one book! (Not all describing the baptism of the Great Commission, but many of them doing so.) That fact alone should tell us a great deal about the importance of baptism in God’s plan of salvation.

And for those who belittle the role of baptism, perhaps they should note that the majority of occurrences of the word “baptism” are found in the four gospel accounts. The list from those four books takes up the entirety of the front of the Handout, along with most of the first column on the reverse side. And, yes, many of those verses are describing the baptism of John, but that baptism, prior to the cross, was, like the baptism of Acts 2, after the cross, also a baptism “for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4).

And, yes, there are people out there who belittle baptism. God says that baptism saves us (1 Peter 3:21). God says that baptism is his own powerful working (Colossians 2:12). God says that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). God says that baptism is when our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). God says that baptism is where we share in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6).

But, even so, there are a lot of preachers around today who teach the opposite of what the Bible teaches about baptism. They teach that baptism is just a symbol of something that has already taken place.

They teach that baptism is optional. They teach that baptism is not important at all.

But do they really preach and teach that? Yes, they do, and let me give you an example of such a preacher. His name is J. G. Lawson, and he calls himself an “Evangelist” on the cover page of the annotated New Testament that he published.

Here is how that self-proclaimed “Evangelist” describes his annotated New Testament: “This Testament is marked on **every** subject **connected** with the theme of Salvation.” Yes, **every** subject **connected** with salvation. Keep that claim in mind. That is what he says he is doing. But is that what he is actually doing? Is he telling us the truth? Let’s check.

Here is how his marking system works: he assigns a letter to each of those subjects (which he says is “every subject”) connected with the theme of salvation, with all of the letters listed in a table at the beginning of the book. For example, “R” is for repentance, and “F” is for faith. In total, he has 16 different letters. And then, he includes one or more of those letters in the margin next to every verse connected to the theme of salvation in the Bible. Or at least that is what he tells us he is doing.

But what about baptism? Remember, his goal was to mark “every subject connected with salvation” in the Bible. Does he think that baptism is connected in some way to the theme of salvation? He does not, or at least that is what he tells us. Not only is baptism missing from his list of 16 connected subjects, but the letter “B” is missing from his list of 16 letters!

- Acts 2:38 mentions both repentance and baptism. How is that verse marked? It has only the letter “R” in the margin for repentance.
- 1 Peter 3:21 says that baptism now **saves** us. Isn’t that a connection between baptism and salvation? Not according to J. G. Lawson, Evangelist. He has no marking at all next to that verse!
- And likewise, he has no marking at all next to Acts 22:16, where Paul is told how to wash away his sins.
- And he has no marking at all next to Romans 6:3-4 or Galatians 3:27 that describe how we are baptized into Christ.

There is a word for J. G. Lawson and his marking system, and that word is **dishonest**. He is a liar, and he is leading people to Hell with his lies — and I don’t say that lightly, but I do say that. He claims that he is teaching us about every subject that is connected to the theme of salvation, but he knows that is a lie. What he does (or rather, fails to do) with 1 Peter 3:21 is enough to conclusively prove that he is lying to us.

And that self-proclaimed “Evangelist” is not alone. Yes, he might be alone with his ham-fisted marking system, but he is not alone in his efforts to erase baptism from God’s plan of salvation.

My dad, who was a preacher for many years, used to tell me about a woman that he once taught. She insisted that baptism was not necessary for salvation, and she said that there was no verse in her Bible that taught otherwise. And so, Dad told her to open her Bible and read Acts 2:38, at which point she proudly turned to that page and showed

him how she had cut that verse out with scissors! And that is not just a preacher's story; that really happened!

But how is what she did any different from what J. G. Lawson, Evangelist, did? Didn't he also take his scissors to the Bible? Doesn't he also ignore the parts of God's plan of salvation that disagree with his own plan?

Let me give you another example that involves another book. This book was published in 1936 and is entitled "History of Denton County Baptist Association and the Sixty Churches Within its Jurisdiction." On pages 82-83 of that book, we find the following very interesting account about the activities of a "Rev. J. B. Cole."

An incident occurred in the Pilot Point church during Rev. J. B. Cole's pastorate, which involved a point of doctrine that subjected Pastor Cole to criticism, and gave the incident much publicity and notoriety. Pastor Cole went fishing one day with a business man who was not a Christian, and he availed himself of the opportunity to talk to the lost man about his unsaved condition, and led him to an acceptance of Christ. Jo Ives, the man converted, said to Pastor Cole, "Here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptized?" Obviously Brother Cole thought of the story of Philip and the eunuch, and, taking that incident as an example, he led Mr. Ives out into the water and baptized him.

Rev. Cole had been a Baptist but a short time and was not up on their conception of baptism, and how and when it should be administered. The news of the incident soon spread among the members, and then the show began. The following Sunday, Mr. Ives presented himself to the church, asking membership, and his application was re-

jected and he was hurt by the action of the church and turned to another church, which readily accepted his baptism. The criticism of the pastor caused him to ask a committee of eminent brethren to sit in judgment upon his conduct. After reviewing the details of the incident they wrote the church advising it to drop the matter, and Pastor Cole to go his way, but not to repeat the act.

And I suppose that committee would have given Philip the same warning. (If not, why not?)

There are two inscriptions inside the front cover of that book. The earliest shows that it once belonged to Guy N. Woods, who gave it to W.D. Black. And the second inscription shows that in 1950 W.D. Black willed the book to my grandfather, Jess Hall, Sr. And the final line of the inscription reads, "Use this book in the interest of truth and condemnation of error." I am glad to say that is how the book is still being used almost 80 years after my grandfather received it in 1950!

We are surrounded by man-made denominations that daily and loudly trumpet their man-made plans of salvation. But my plan of salvation is irrelevant, as is your plan of salvation. The only plan of salvation that saves is God's plan of salvation. And God says that we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3) and that no one can be saved outside of Christ (John 14:6). God says that baptism now saves you (1 Peter 3:21). God says that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

And so, back to our question of why Paul does not mention baptism very often. I think the answer is that Paul was writing to Christians, which means that Paul was writing to people who had already all been

baptized. He says that right here in verse 3 — “all of us.” And Paul says the same thing elsewhere.

Galatians 3:27 — For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

“As many of you.” Again, that phrase does not leave anyone out. How many of them were baptized into Christ? How many of them had put on Christ? The answers are the same. As many as did one also did the other.

And let’s circle back to that verse in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that we mentioned earlier.

1 Corinthians 1:17 — For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

When we look at the context of that verse, what we find is that Paul’s point is **not** that it doesn’t matter whether you are baptized, but instead Paul’s point is that it doesn’t matter *who* baptized you. People were bragging that they had been baptized by the famous brother so-and-so, something that we still sometimes hear today!

And when we look at that context in 1 Corinthians, we find something else — we find that Paul is yet again assuming that they had *all* been baptized. Look at verse 13.

1 Corinthians 1:13 — Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

The fact that their baptism had occurred was just as certain as the fact that the crucifixion had occurred. They had all been baptized. That is

the same thing Paul says here in verse 3, and the same thing he says in Galatians 3:27.

Paul does not need to tell **Christians** to be baptized because every Christian has already been baptized. Instead, Christians need to baptize others, and Paul doesn't really need to tell us that either. Why not? Because Jesus already told us that. That is the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 — Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

And one final point on this issue comes, not from the Handout for Lesson 57, but from the Handout for Lesson 54. As we recall, that Handout listed verses that teach us about baptism without using the word “baptism.” And when we look at that list, we can see that Paul talks about baptism more than some people think that he does. That earlier Handout adds 12 verses and 2 more letters to our list of Paul's references to baptism!

So, yes, Paul does talk about baptism, but, no, I don't think we will learn very much just from counting the number of times Paul uses the word “baptism.” But you know what? We can learn a great deal about baptism by looking at what Paul says when he does use the word — and Paul does use the word right here in verse 3. So, let's read it again:

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

What does it mean to be baptized into his death?

In addition to the Handout for Lesson 57 and the Handout for Lesson 54, we also have the Handout for Lesson 56 (from last week). That Handout was entitled “Baptism and Death,” and it showed several ways in which baptism and death are related in the Bible. Yes, baptism is closely related to life, as we will see in verse 4, but baptism is also closely related to death, as we see here in verse 3 and in the other verses on the Handout for Lesson 56.

Looking at that earlier Handout, we can see at least five ways in which baptism and death are related.

- First, prior to our baptism, we are dead in sin. That is our condition as sinners outside of Christ. We are dead in sin, as the Bible very frequently tells us. We are dead even while we live. (Please review all of the Scriptures on that earlier Handout.)
- Second, in our baptism, we die with Christ. We are buried with Christ. We are united with Christ in a death like his. And, of course, we are also raised with Christ when we come up out of that watery grave, as Paul will soon tell us.
- Third, baptism also involves a death to the law, which held us captive. We will have more to say about that when we get to Romans 7, but, based on what we have already studied, we can say that a death to the law occurs when we come to Christ through faith. As for whether the law in these verses is the law of Moses or law in general, let’s wait until we get to chapter 7.
- Fourth, we are dead **to** sin. As we saw, we are dead **in** sin prior to our baptism. And after our baptism? Then we are dead **to** sin. That very small change in wording (dead **in** sin becoming

dead **to** sin) is the biggest change that anyone can ever experience! And Paul is telling us right here the precise moment in time when that change occurs — the moment in time when I cease being dead in sin and start being dead to sin. But more about that later. (Again, please review all of the Scriptures on the Handout.)

- Fifth, we constantly put sin to death after our baptism. After we are baptized into Christ, we must be faithful unto death. “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). And living a life of faithfulness means that I constantly put to death the deeds of the body. It means that I daily take up my cross and follow Jesus. It means that I put to death what is earthly in me. It means that I present my body as a living sacrifice.

That is how I go from being dead in sin to eventually receiving the crown of life. I am dead in sin, but then I obey the gospel, and, in the waters of baptism, I am united with Jesus in death and I die to the system of law. I come out of that watery grave with a completely new relationship with sin — rather than being dead in sin, I am now dead to sin. And, no longer being under the thumb of sin, I faithfully follow my new master, Christ, as I daily take up my cross and follow him, putting to death the deeds of the body.

So, with that background, what does the end of verse 3 mean when it says that we “were baptized into his death”?

We have just seen that there are several connections between baptism and death, but this connection in verse 3 is specific — “baptized into

his death.” Paul is telling us here that our baptism is connected in some way to the death of Christ.

But how? How is our baptism connected to the death of Christ? Paul will give us three answers in the next three verses.

- (verse 4) In our baptism, we are buried with Christ.
- (verse 5) In our baptism, we are united with Christ in a death like his.
- (verse 6) In our baptism, our old self was crucified with Christ.

As for what those descriptions mean, let’s wait until we get to those three verses. But, having read verse 3, we at least know at this point that there is a connection between our baptism and the death of Christ.

Now that we have looked at verse 3, let’s remind ourselves of something about the context of verse 3 — verse 3 is the beginning of a longer explanation of Paul’s strongly negative answer in verse 2. We saw the short explanation in verse 2, and now Paul is expanding upon that short explanation with a longer explanation.

Paul has not changed the subject. Paul did not answer that question in verse 1 and then decide to change the subject to baptism. Instead, Paul is using baptism to explain his answer in verse 2. And what that means for us is that we need to make sure that in our study of these verses about baptism, we look for Paul’s answer to the question in verse 1.

But, with that said, that does not mean that we can't also learn many things about baptism in Paul's explanation. And, as an example, let's consider that question of when. When are we saved? At what point in time does that happen? What is the precise point in time when we go from being lost to being saved? What is the precise point in time when we are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Colossians 1:13)?

First, can we know the answer to that question? Is it knowable? Has the answer to that question been revealed to us? Yes, I know that we can know the answer to that question. I am certain that we can know the precise time when we are saved. And what makes me so certain? I am certain that we can know because God tells us we can know.

1 John 5:13 — I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

John tells me in that verse that I can know that I have eternal life. But how can that possibly be true if I am not able to know with certainty when I am saved? I must be able to know with certainty **when** I am saved if I am able to know with certainty **whether** I am saved. Otherwise, there would be at least some period of time when I would not be able to know that I am saved in contradiction to what John just told us.

So, we can know when we are saved. But how? How can we know? There is only one answer to that question — the timing must be revealed to us in the word of God. That is the only way we can know anything about God's plan of salvation. We read about it in the Bible.

So, we can know when we are saved, and we can determine when that happens by reading the Bible. And what does the Bible say about when we are saved? Where can we turn to find the answer in the Bible to that question?

Right here in verse 3. This is not the only verse that answers that question, but it is certainly one of the verses that answers that question. And the answer is that the precise point in time when we are saved is the precise point in time when we arise from the watery grave of baptism. Not before we are baptized as most of the denominations falsely proclaim, and not after our baptism, but at the point of baptism. When we are immersed in that water, we are in the domain of darkness, but when we come up out of that water, we are in the kingdom of Christ.

That is what the Bible teaches. In fact, that is what verse 3 teaches. Let's read it again: "Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death?"

Did you catch it? "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus." Are you in Christ or are you out of Christ? That question is the same as this question: are you saved or are you lost? Can anyone argue the opposite? Can anyone argue that people outside of Christ are saved? Can anyone argue that people in Christ are lost? God adds us to the church when we are saved (Acts 2:47), and the church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18). Those in the church are those in the body of Christ, and those in the body of Christ are those who are in Christ.

And so, how do we get from being out of Christ to instead being in Christ? When does that happen? Verse 3 answers that question: we

are “baptized into Christ.” That is how, and that is when. And this is not the only place where Paul tells us that.

Galatians 3:27 — For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Here in verse 3, Paul says that all of us have been baptized into Christ, and in Galatians 3:27 Paul says that as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. That’s everybody in the church. We entered into Christ, into the body of Christ, into the church of Christ at the moment when we were baptized into Christ.

And Paul certainly knew this from his own experience. We sometimes hear people talk about Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, but Paul was not converted on the road to Damascus. How do we know? We know because Paul was still in his sins when Ananias met him in the city of Damascus and said to him: “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Paul was converted when Paul obeyed the gospel of Christ, and not a moment before.

Paul continues telling us about our baptism in the next verse, so let’s keep reading.

Romans 6:4

Romans 6:4 — 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.

Verse 3 told us that we have shared in Christ's death. Verse 4 tells us that we have also shared in Christ's burial and in Christ's resurrection. And those two verses together tell us **when** we did all of that — we did all of that at the moment of our baptism.

And one thing this verse tells us about baptism is that it is not just a physical event. Yes, it involves the physical act of being immersed in water, but baptism is much more than that. Baptism is also a spiritual event. And absent that spiritual aspect, baptism is just a bath — and no one will be saved by a bath. Peter tells us that very plainly.

1 Peter 3:21 — Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In that verse, Peter tells us that baptism saves us and tells us how baptism saves us. Yes, baptism necessarily involves the physical act of immersion into water, but that necessary physical aspect of baptism is not what saves us. What saves is the spiritual aspect of baptism — “an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

And, of course, 1 Peter 3:21 confirms in two different ways that we are not saved prior to our baptism. First, Peter just says it very plainly: “Baptism ... now saves you.” But second, Peter also tells us that baptism is “an appeal to God for a good conscience.” Why would we need to make such an appeal if we already had a good conscience? The cleansing of our sin is what gives us that good conscience, and that cleansing occurs at the moment of our baptism, as Paul was told by Ananias in Acts 22:16 — “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” And Paul, more than most, knew what it

meant to have been given a good conscience. Up until he met Jesus on that road to Damascus, Paul, then Saul, had been a persecutor of the church. But he asked God for a good conscience in his baptism, and God gave that to him.

And here in Romans 6, Paul tells us more about the spiritual aspect of our baptism. Yes, we are physically immersed in water, but we are also spiritually immersed in the grave with Christ. We spiritually share in the death of Christ. And when we come up out of that physical water, we are spiritually raised with Christ to walk in newness of life.

And for those who think baptism is a meritorious work of man, they need to open their Bible. Peter just told us that baptism is not the work of man but rather is the work of God. Baptism is an appeal to God. What happens in baptism is something God does, not something that I do. And, of course, Paul tells us the same thing.

Titus 3:5 — He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

The “washing of regeneration” in that verse is the same washing that Paul himself experienced when he was baptized in Acts 22:16 — “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”

Titus 3:5 is describing baptism, and what does that verse tell us about baptism? It tells us that baptism is not a work done by us, but rather is a work of God — “the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” And Paul told us the same thing in Colossians.

Colossians 2:12 — Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

What happens in baptism is “the powerful working of God.” When you were baptized, God was the one who raised you with Christ through faith. That was not a work that you did, but rather that was “the powerful working of God.”

And Paul tells us the same thing right here in verse 4: “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” Just as Jesus was raised by God the Father, so we too are raised to walk in newness of life. Again, that is something God does, not something that I do.

Over and over again, God tells us that baptism is something that he does, not something that we do. Yes, we are physically lowered into the water and physically raised out of the water, but the saving work of baptism is the powerful working of God, not the working of man.