



9/26/24

Well, we had a great kickoff to our women's study, Undivided Heart. I'm excited to see what the Lord is going to do in my life and others through this study. I always pray that He will help us come to His word, not just for information, but for transformation.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 6:1-11

John said that he baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. What is the difference? Baptism by water is the symbol of what God does in us when we turn to Him in repentance. Water baptism is a demonstration of the fact that we are saved. Baptism by the Holy Spirit is the actual moment of salvation.

Vs. 1-4 ~ In this passage in Romans 6, Paul had just finished telling the believers that God's grace trumps sin. He said in Romans 5:20, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." So...in Romans 6, he starts with a question, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin (make rebellion against God our practice) that grace may abound? By no means!"

What does sinning or not sinning have to do with baptism by the Holy Spirit? Baptism by the Holy Spirit has to do with what has taken place in our souls and how we respond to that. Baptism by the Holy Spirit means that we have died to sin. So, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" How can we make it our practice? If we truly know Jesus as our Savior, we will know that sin is a trap. It is a deception that ruins us. It was Adam and Eve's choice to sin...to rebel against God...that ushered death into the world. So...Knowing that grace trumps sin is not a reason to sin...it's a reason to praise the Lord for His mercy. We have died to it. In other words...it no longer has the power to lock us in chains. God's grace has taken away the sting of death caused by sin.

By being baptized into Jesus, we were baptized into His death...with Him. This is so hard for me to get!!! His death was my death. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old

has passed away. Behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). God wants to give us new, eternal life...and to do that, our old self has to die so that our new self can live. The old self embraced sin. It craved rebellion against God. When we were living for the old self, we "lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:3). But since we have died with Christ, we were baptized into death...our old self was buried with Jesus as He took the punishment for all our sin...all our rebellion against God. Then...the glory of the Father raised His Son from the dead...all the debt of sin covered and nailed to the cross...and when we died with Christ, we were also raised with Him to new life...not just so that we could go to heaven...but so that we could walk in that newness of life while on earth...free from sin.

Vs. 5-7 ~ When I turned to Jesus in repentance, I was united with Him in His death. It's like He took my hand and we went down to death together. But He didn't leave me there. As He rose from the dead, He also continued to hold my hand so that I would be united with Him in His resurrection. I have new life in Him...eternal life...Otherwise, I would be stuck in eternal death and separation.

Spiritual death is not the same as physical death. It's not just that one who refuses to turn to Jesus dies and is buried and is no more. That person is in an eternal state of separation from God...separation from His love, His presence. All good things come from being with Him! "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect is from above (not from selfish desires), coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:16-17).

If I don't understand the gravity of what I would face without Jesus, I will never understand the massive hope of being with Him. If I don't understand the repulsive evil of sin, I will never understand the incredible price Jesus paid for me. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned...rebelled against God...and fall short of the glory of God." By falling short of His glory, my payment for sin would have been eternal separation from Him. It is only by His grace and mercy that I live! Too often I view sin as acceptable or justified. I measure it by the really bad stuff...especially stuff done against me! And then there's the little things like a little bit of gossip...or being annoyed with a person so I avoid her...or being rude to a telemarketer. Those aren't so bad, right?

I remember hearing an illustration about sin. A kid got caught doing something that he wasn't supposed to do and he told his dad it was no big deal. All the other kids do it! So his dad made him some brownies and asked him if he'd like some. The kid, of course, wanted the brownies. The dad said, "Okay. Before you eat these brownies, I just want you to know that I put a little bit of dog poop in them. Not much. It's really no big deal. Go ahead. Enjoy!" Of course, there was no way that kid was gonna eat the brownies. That's a picture of my sin. Just a little bit of sin (I'm guilty of so much more) made me dirty and gross. Jesus took that on Himself, not so that I could keep doing the very thing He had to die for...the thing that would have separated me from Him forever. He did it to "bring the body of sin to nothing." He did it so that I would no longer be enslaved to sin. Because I have died with Christ, I am free from sin. It no longer has the ability to

condemn me.

Why is that so hard for me to get??? I think it's because, though my old self is spiritually dead, it's like a snake with its head cut off, still slithering around and trying to get me to rebel against God. Sin is enticing...but it's a trap. Sin promises to make me in control and happy. But it sneaks in and tries to take control of me. It's like the alcoholic who says, "I can stop whenever I want." But he can't. God is not trying to spoil my fun by telling me to turn away from the very things that made His death necessary. He's saving me from sin's destruction. And though sin no longer has the power to destroy my soul, it can definitely still do a lot of damage to me and others while I'm here on earth. Let me not be deceived...I have been set free FROM sin, not free TO sin.

If I can think of my old self in sin as being a part of a gang. As part of the gang, I was told I would be protected by my other gang members, but I had to do horrific things to stay in the gang. Some of the things were fun...but I could tell they were rotting my soul. And the other gang members would harshly punish me if I didn't comply. Then Jesus stepped in and showed me a better way. He showed me that He would never condemn me or hurt me. He let the gang members beat Him rather than letting them beat me so that I could get out of the gang.

Then I went to be with Jesus. He ADOPTED me and made me His family! He cleaned up all my wounds from all the "fun" I had with my old gang. He showed me love and kindness. And when I didn't understand something or I slipped into an old pattern from the gang life, He didn't beat me like they would have. He gently showed me that what I did was hurting me and Him. I felt so loved by Jesus...so peaceful. Would it ever make sense for me to go back and live with that gang who was so harsh to me and others? O Lord, I so easily get drawn to the things that go against who You are! Please help me to recognize what an amazing thing You've done for me by setting me free from sin...by taking me down into death with You so that I could be raised to new life with You.

Why is someone who never turns to Jesus not saved? Because their old self never died with Him. They are never united with Him in death so they can't be united with Him in life. Jesus said, "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE LIFE. No one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). O Lord, please help me not to sin against You by being apathetic to those who are without You! Help me to love them and be a witness to them of Your incredible gift and sacrifice.

Vs. 8-11 ~ I absolutely believe that I have died with Christ...as surely as I know I displayed that in the symbol of my water baptism when I was taken down into the water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And I absolutely believe that I have been raised to new life with Him and will LIVE with Him forever. Because Christ will never die again, my physical body may die, but my soul will never die. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again the third day, He didn't say, "Okay Father, I'm alive now...but I will go My own way. I'm leaving You." That would be crazy! That would take away the whole purpose of His death!!! The life Jesus lives, He lives to God. Jesus died to sin. Because I have died with Him and been raised with Him, I also need to consider myself dead to sin and alive to God IN CHRIST JESUS. Just as Jesus would never walk away from the Father, I will never walk away from the Father. I'm His daughter just as

much as Jesus is His Son.

Instead of trying to get away with as much sin as I can so that I don't look bad but can still do my own thing, I pray that I will see the massive sacrifice Jesus made for me...and so may I no longer view ANY personal sin as acceptable. I know the Lord won't beat me up for sinning. Choosing not to sin is not about avoiding punishment. God won't beat me up for sin because Jesus was beat up for me! Choosing not to sin is something I do with His help because I'm so grateful for what He's done for me! Lord, because of what Jesus did for me...because You have baptized me by the Holy Spirit...taken me down to death with Jesus and made me alive forever with Jesus, please let 1 Peter 4:1-2 be my pursuit!!! "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God." Help me to think like Jesus...to live the rest of my days on this earth no longer for myself...justifying sinful passions that Jesus died to free me from...but living wholly for Your will...where I experience the greatest peace and joy. O Lord, please make it so!