



If a picture is worth a thousand words, then baptism is one of the most profound pictures in the New Testament.

Ceremonial washing was not all that uncommon in ancient times. It was a kind of holy bath that worshippers underwent before entering the temple. The temple courts were surrounded by a number of limestone pools that people would immerse themselves in before entering the temple courts and offering their sacrifices.

John encouraged his Jewish audience to undergo a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. John's message was that they needed a lot more than a quick dip in a pool. They needed a change of heart and a whole new direction in life.

After Christ's death, burial and resurrection, baptism exploded with meaning. It became a vivid portrait of what Christ did for us and what Christ does in us.

"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."

OUR UNION WITH CHRIST (vv. 3-8)

One of the most profound privileges we have as believers is to be united with Christ. He is in us and we are in him. Paul tells us that the oneness we experience in a rich marriage is the closest human parallel to the unity we have with Christ, but even that pales in comparison.

Read Verses 3-8 and take note of every instance of the phrase "with Christ" or "with Him."

1. What are some of the specific ways we have been united with Christ?
2. Based on these verses how would you describe what it means to be united with Christ?
3. How is baptism a perfect portrait of what it means to be united with Christ?

UNITED WITH HIM IN LIFE

We often describe our unity with Christ in this way: "He lived the life we could never live, and his life becomes our life. He died the death we should have died, and his death becomes our death. He was powerfully raised to life in victory over death and sin, and his victory becomes our victory."

While this particular passage describes how we benefit from Christ's death and resurrection, it does not touch on how we benefit from Christ's life.

How do we ultimately benefit from Christ's life here on earth (the incarnation)?

UNITED WITH HIM IN HIS DEATH (vv. 5-7)

1. How would you describe the difference between "your old self" and "your new self?"
2. What is the ultimate benefit we gain from sharing in Christ's death?
3. Why do we often choose "the freedom to sin" over "freedom from sin"?
4. What happens when we make this fatal choice?

UNITED WITH HIM IN HIS RESURRECTION (vv. 8-10)

1. We will benefit from Christ's resurrection both now and in the future.
 - a. How will we benefit from Christ's resurrection in the future?
 - b. How will we benefit from Christ's resurrection now?
2. What does it mean for us to "live the life we live for God?"
3. Why do we more often than not choose to live the life we live for ourselves?
4. What happens when we make this fatal choice?

OFFERING EVERY PART OF OURSELVES TO GOD (vv. 11-14)

1. Paul leaves us with a negative and a positive application?
 - a. What is the negative application (the one thing we shouldn't do)?
 - b. What is the positive application (the one thing we should always do)?
2. What do you think it means to "offer every part of yourself to God as an instrument of righteousness?"
3. What are some of the areas in your life you have the most difficulty offering to God?
4. What happens when we try to deal with sin without offering every part of ourselves to God?