

The Cross of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: Crucified with Christ: United to His Death in Baptism

Romans 6:1-11

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This is the central baptism text of the study, and it carries the heaviest doctrinal responsibility of all twelve lessons. The truth to be established without compromise is this: baptism is the God-appointed point at which the believer is united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, contacting the cleansing power of his blood and rising to walk in newness of life. Paul says it as plainly as it can be said. All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death; we were buried with him through baptism into death, and raised to walk in newness of life. Baptism is not a symbol of a salvation already received at some prior moment of faith only; it is the moment, appointed by God and entered by faith, at which we are joined to the saving death of Christ. Teach this with clarity and conviction, for much of the religious world has emptied baptism of exactly this meaning.

Set this firmly within the consistent New Testament teaching on the response to the gospel. Peter told convicted believers to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Ananias told the believing, praying Saul to rise and be baptized and wash away his sins. Paul says those baptized into Christ have put on Christ; Colossians says we are buried and raised with him in baptism through faith in the working of God; Peter says baptism now saves us. None of this makes the water a magical thing or baptism a human work that earns salvation. It is the obedient faith reaching out to lay hold of the grace and blood of Christ at the place God appointed. Avoid two errors: the error that makes baptism a mere outward symbol of a prior salvation, and the opposite error that treats the water itself as saving apart from faith and the blood of Christ. Baptism saves because in it, by faith, we contact the death and blood of Jesus.

Aim the lesson at holiness flowing from union. Paul does not teach baptism in the abstract; he teaches it to answer the question of why a Christian cannot go on living in sin. Because we died and rose with Christ, sin no longer has the right to rule us, and we are summoned to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. The formational target is that students would grasp their union with the crucified and risen Christ as the foundation and the power for putting sin to death daily. This is not willpower religion; it is living out what is already true of us in Christ. Lead the class to wonder that they were brought inside the cross, and to walk, this week, in the newness of life they received.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul asks, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" and answers, "By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (vv. 1-2). Why is it unthinkable for a Christian to treat grace as a license to keep sinning, and what does it mean that we have "died to sin"?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the question Paul anticipates, because it reveals a real danger. He has just exalted grace so highly, where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that someone might twist it into a license: then let us keep sinning, so grace can keep increasing. Paul recoils: by no means. The very suggestion shows a fundamental misunderstanding of what has happened to the Christian.

Explain the foundation of his answer: how can we who died to sin still live in it? Paul does not first appeal to rules, fear, or willpower. He appeals to a fact about the believer's identity, that we have died to sin. The Christian is not merely a forgiven sinner who must now try hard not to sin; the Christian is one who has died to sin's reign and been raised to new life. To go on living in sin would contradict who we now are.

Help the class see why treating grace as a license is unthinkable. Grace is not God lowering the standard or winking at sin; it is God breaking sin's power and making us new. To receive that grace and then use it as permission to keep sinning is like a freed slave volunteering to return to chains, or a person raised from the dead choosing to climb back into the grave. It misunderstands the very nature of the gift.

Clarify what died to sin means, since the next verses will unfold it. It does not mean the believer can no longer sin or feels no pull toward sin. It means we have been severed from sin's rule and claim over us; its mastery has been broken in our union with Christ's death. We will still have to fight sin, but we fight it as those for whom its reign is already broken, not as helpless slaves.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace as the breaking of sin's power, never a license to keep sinning (Romans 6:1-2; Titus 2:11-12)
- Christian identity as those who have died to sin, not merely forgiven sinners
- The contradiction of using grace as permission to sin
- Dying to sin as severance from sin's rule, not the end of all temptation

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it unthinkable for a Christian to treat grace as a license to keep sinning?
- What does it mean that we have died to sin?
- How is using grace as permission to sin a misunderstanding of the gift?

Question 2

Student Question:

Where are you tempted, even subtly, to treat God's grace as permission to keep a favorite sin, telling yourself that grace will cover it? How does the truth that you died to sin confront that bargain?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses Paul's warning into the subtle bargains believers actually make. Few would say outright let me sin so grace can increase, but many quietly strike a softer version of the same deal: I will keep this one favorite sin, because grace will cover it. The reasoning feels safe, but it is precisely the attitude Paul calls unthinkable.

Help students bring these bargains into the light. The favorite sin we excuse, the area we have decided is off-limits to change, the habit we have made peace with while presuming on grace to forgive it, these are the places the bargain hides. Naming them honestly is the first step to renouncing them.

Show how died to sin confronts the bargain. We cannot, at the same time, claim to have died to sin and deliberately keep a sin alive as our master. The truth of our union with Christ's death exposes the bargain as incompatible with who we are. Grace did not come to make peace with our sin but to free us from it.

Aim at one concrete renunciation. Invite each student to identify the sin they are most tempted to keep under the cover of grace, and to renounce the bargain this week, bringing that sin into the light of their death and resurrection with Christ. Grace is not permission to keep sin; it is the power to be free of it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The subtle bargain of presuming on grace to keep a favorite sin (Jude 4)
- Honest naming of the sins we have made peace with
- Union with Christ's death as incompatible with deliberately kept sin
- Grace as the power to be free, not permission to remain bound

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to treat grace as permission to keep a favorite sin?
- How does the truth that you died to sin confront that bargain?
- What sin will you bring into the light of your death with Christ this week?

Question 3**Student Question:**

Paul says, "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" (vv. 3–4). What does Paul teach here about what happens in baptism, and why does he describe it as being united with Christ in his death and burial?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here Paul gives the answer to how we died to sin, and the class must hear it with full clarity: 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. Paul assumes every Christian knows this; baptism into Christ is baptism into his death. The union with Christ that breaks sin's power happens, Paul says, in baptism.

Explain the prepositions, for the gospel is in them. Baptized into Christ, into his death. Baptism is the point of entry into Christ and into the saving benefit of his death. This is not Paul speaking loosely; he is explaining the mechanism by which we who deserved death died in Christ's death instead. We were united to his death by being baptized into it.

Draw out the image of burial. We were buried with him by baptism. Burial follows death and confirms it; you bury the dead. In baptism the old self, having died with Christ, is buried with him, laid in the grave, the matter settled. This is why immersion so fits the meaning: going down into the water is a burial, a putting away of the old life in union with the crucified Christ.

Guard against the common evasion that baptism here is merely symbolic, a picture of something that already happened. Paul's language is not that baptism pictures our union with Christ's death; it is that we were baptized into his death, buried with him through baptism. The New Testament consistently places the washing away of sins, the putting on of Christ, and the new birth at baptism. Teach the class to take Paul's words at face value: baptism is where we are united with the death of Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as union with Christ in his death and burial (Romans 6:3–4; Colossians 2:12)
- Baptized into Christ and into his death: the point of entry into the saving benefit of the cross
- Burial with Christ confirming the death of the old self
- Immersion as fitting the burial language of the text
- Rejecting the reduction of baptism to a mere symbol of a prior union

Discussion Prompts

- What does Paul teach happens in baptism here?
- Why does he describe it as being united with Christ's death and burial?
- How does Paul's language resist the idea that baptism is merely symbolic?

Question 4

Student Question:

Think back to your own baptism, or to what baptism means if you have not yet obeyed the gospel in this way. How does seeing baptism as the moment of being united with Christ's death and raised to new life deepen its meaning beyond a mere ceremony or symbol?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question invites students to reconsider the meaning of their own baptism, or, for those not yet baptized, to consider what Scripture says baptism is. Many who were baptized think of it mainly as a public ceremony, a sign they had already become a Christian, or a rite of church membership. Paul's teaching lifts it to something far greater: the moment of union with Christ's death and resurrection.

Help students reframe what happened, or what is meant to happen. In baptism, by faith, the believer is joined to the crucified Christ so that his death counts as theirs and their sins are washed away in his blood, and joined to the risen Christ so that they rise to walk in new life. This is not the believer doing a meritorious work; it is the believer's obedient faith reaching out to lay hold of what Christ has done, at the place God appointed.

Be pastorally wise with the varied people in the class. Some were baptized with full understanding and can deepen their gratitude. Some were baptized long ago and have forgotten its weight. Some may realize they were never baptized as Scripture describes, having only made a decision or said a prayer, and the lesson may stir honest questions. The teacher can welcome those questions warmly and point to the consistent New Testament pattern without pressure or shame.

Aim at renewed appreciation and, where needed, honest seeking. Invite students to let baptism's true meaning deepen their sense of being united with Christ. For any who sense they have not yet obeyed the gospel in the way Scripture describes, hold out the invitation gently, as good news, that this union with the crucified and risen Lord is offered to them.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as the moment of union with Christ's death and new life, not mere ceremony (Romans 6:3–5)
- Obedient faith laying hold of Christ's work at the place God appointed
- The washing away of sins in the blood of Christ at baptism (Acts 22:16)
- Welcoming honest questions about one's own response to the gospel

Discussion Prompts

- How does seeing baptism as union with Christ's death deepen its meaning for you?
- How is baptism an act of obedient faith rather than a meritorious work?
- What does it mean to you that your sins were washed away in the blood of Christ?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says we were buried with Christ “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” (v. 4). Why does Paul tie baptism so closely to a transformed life, and what does it mean to “walk in newness of life” rather than simply being forgiven?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul does not stop at death and burial; he moves to resurrection: just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Baptism is not only union with Christ's death but union with his resurrection. We come up out of the water to a new life, raised with the risen Christ. The purpose clause is crucial: we were buried with him in order that we might walk in newness of life.

Help the class see why Paul ties baptism so tightly to a transformed life. He is still answering the question about continuing in sin. His point is that the very purpose of our union with Christ was a changed life. We were not raised merely to be forgiven and go on as before; we were raised to walk differently. Newness of life is not an optional add-on to salvation; it is the goal of it.

Distinguish walking in newness of life from simply being forgiven. Forgiveness clears the past; newness of life transforms the present and future. Paul envisions an actual new way of living, new desires, new direction, new master, made possible by the risen life of Christ at work in us. The Christian is not the old self with a clean slate but a new self with a new life to live.

Press the word walk, which pictures the steady, ordinary progress of daily life. Newness of life is not only dramatic moments but the daily walk, step after step, in a new direction. The resurrection life we received in baptism is meant to show up in how we actually live, day by day, in the concrete details. This sets up the next, more personal question.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as union with Christ's resurrection, raised to new life (Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 3:1)
- Transformation as the purpose of our union with Christ, not an optional extra
- Newness of life as more than forgiveness: a new way of living
- The daily walk as the arena of resurrection life

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul tie baptism so closely to a transformed life?
- How is walking in newness of life more than simply being forgiven?
- What does the word walk suggest about how the new life shows up?

Question 6

Student Question:

What does “newness of life” look like in a specific, practical area of your life right now? Where is the risen life you received in Christ meant to be showing up that it currently is not?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question makes newness of life concrete. It is easy to affirm in general that we are raised to new life and hard to say where, specifically, that new life is meant to show up. Paul intends the resurrection life to be visible in the actual details of how we live, our relationships, our speech, our habits, our use of time and money, our response to temptation.

Help students locate a specific area. Ask where the risen life they received is meant to be evident but currently is not, the relationship still marked by the old bitterness, the habit unchanged since their baptism, the area of life still run by the old self. Naming one such area turns the doctrine into a target.

Address the source of power, because students may hear this as a call to try harder. The new life is not generated by willpower but lived out of union with the risen Christ. We walk in newness of life by drawing on the resurrection life already given, reckoning ourselves alive to God, and yielding the specific area to Christ’s rule. Effort is involved, but it is effort that flows from and depends on the life Christ supplies.

Aim at one concrete area for the week. Invite each student to name the specific place the risen life most needs to show up, and to take one step there this week, walking in the newness of life they received. The resurrection we share with Christ is meant to be seen, and it begins in the particular.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Resurrection life made visible in concrete areas of daily living (Colossians 3:1–17)
- Newness of life lived out of union with the risen Christ, not willpower
- Identifying specific areas still ruled by the old self
- Effort that flows from and depends on the life Christ supplies

Discussion Prompts

- Where is the risen life you received meant to show up that it currently does not?
- Why is this a matter of drawing on Christ’s life rather than mere willpower?
- What one step will you take this week to walk in newness of life there?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says, "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" (v. 6). What does it mean that our old self was crucified with Christ, and how does union with his death break the enslaving power of sin in our lives?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul now explains the deepest purpose of our union with Christ's death: 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. The old self, the person we were under sin's dominion, was crucified with Christ. Sin's claim of ownership over us was broken at the cross we were baptized into.

Unpack the old self crucified with him. Paul pictures the person we used to be, enslaved to sin, as having been put to death in union with Christ's crucifixion. This is the basis of our freedom. We are no longer the same person under the same master. The tyrant that owned us has lost its legal claim, because the self it owned has died with Christ.

Explain how this breaks the enslaving power of sin. Sin enslaves by its claim of ownership and by the lie that we cannot help ourselves, that this is simply who we are. Union with Christ's death shatters that claim: the old self is dead, the body of sin is brought to nothing, and we are no longer slaves. We may still be tempted, and we must still resist, but we resist as free people, not as helpless captives. The chain has been broken; we are summoned to stop living as though it were still fastened.

Hold together the already and the not yet. Sin's reign is decisively broken (already), yet sin still tempts and must be daily resisted (not yet). The believer is not perfect, but neither is the believer a slave. We fight from victory, not for it. This guards the class from two errors: a perfectionism that denies ongoing struggle, and a defeatism that denies the real freedom Christ has won.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The old self crucified with Christ, breaking sin's ownership (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20)
- Freedom from slavery to sin grounded in union with Christ's death
- Fighting sin from victory rather than for it
- Holding together the broken reign of sin and the ongoing battle against it
- Guarding against both perfectionism and defeatism

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that your old self was crucified with Christ?
- How does union with his death break sin's enslaving power?
- What is the difference between fighting sin from victory and fighting for it?

Question 8

Student Question:

Sin promises freedom but delivers slavery. Where have you experienced sin as a master rather than a friend, and how does knowing that your old self was crucified with Christ give you hope of real freedom rather than mere management?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes the freedom Paul describes and presses it against the experience of sin as a master. Sin always advertises freedom, do what you want, be your own master, and always delivers slavery, the habit that owns us, the appetite we cannot satisfy, the pattern we cannot break. Most students will recognize this from somewhere in their own lives.

Help students name where they have felt sin's mastery. The point is not to shame but to make the gospel's offer concrete. Where a person has experienced sin as a cruel master, the news that the old self was crucified with Christ comes as hope of real freedom, not just better coping or tighter management.

Distinguish freedom from management. Much of what passes for dealing with sin is mere management, white-knuckling, behavior modification, managing the symptoms while the mastery remains. Paul offers more: actual freedom grounded in our death and resurrection with Christ. We are not merely managing a master we still serve; we have been freed from a master who no longer owns us, and we learn to live in that freedom.

Aim at hope and one concrete step. Invite each student to bring the sin that has most mastered them and to lay hold of the truth that their old self was crucified with Christ, taking one step this week to live as free rather than enslaved. The goal is not perfect performance but a real turning, grounded in real freedom, away from a master already defeated.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin's false promise of freedom and its delivery of slavery (John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19)
- Union with Christ's death as the ground of real freedom, not mere management
- The difference between freedom and white-knuckle behavior management
- Hope of genuine deliverance for the sin that has most mastered us

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you experienced sin as a master rather than a friend?
- How does knowing your old self was crucified with Christ give you hope of real freedom?
- What is the difference between managing a sin and being freed from it?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul gathers it all into a command grounded in fact: "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). Explain how baptism is the God-appointed point at which we are united with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, contacting the cleansing power of his blood and rising to walk in newness of life, and why this means baptism is far more than a symbol of a salvation already received. How does this truth, that we have genuinely died and risen with Christ, become the foundation for daily putting sin to death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the entire study, and it must be taught with both clarity and reverence, because it gathers everything Paul has said about baptism and union with Christ. Begin with the plain teaching of the passage and the consistent witness of the New Testament: baptism is the God-appointed point at which the believer is united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul could not be clearer. We were baptized into Christ, baptized into his death, buried with him through baptism, and raised to walk in newness of life. The union with Christ that saves us, that puts the old self to death and raises the new self, occurs in baptism, entered by an obedient faith.

State directly what this means and what it does not. It means that baptism is not a symbol of a salvation already received at some earlier point of faith only. The New Testament never separates the moment of salvation from baptism in the way much of the religious world does. Peter said, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins. Ananias told the believing, praying Saul, rise and be baptized and wash away your sins. Peter wrote that baptism now saves us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul says those baptized into Christ have put on Christ. This is the consistent pattern: baptism is where, by faith, we contact the cleansing power of the blood of Christ and are united with his saving death. It does not mean the water has power in itself, nor that baptism is a human work that earns salvation. It means baptism is the obedient faith of the sinner reaching out to take hold of the grace and the blood of Christ at the place God appointed.

Reject firmly the doctrine that baptism is a mere outward symbol of an inward salvation already complete. That view empties Paul's words of their force; it has to read into the text the word symbol that Paul never uses and to deny the plain statements that baptism is into his death, that it washes away sins, that it now saves us. At the same time, reject the opposite error that treats the water as magical or saving apart from faith and the blood of Christ. Baptism saves not because water cleanses the body but because in it, by faith, we are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus and washed in his blood. Faith and baptism belong together; Paul says we are buried and raised with him in baptism through faith in the working of God.

Now show the class how this is the foundation for daily holiness, which is Paul's actual aim. He gathers everything into a command grounded in a fact: consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The word consider, or reckon, means to count as true what God has

declared true. We do not make ourselves dead to sin by reckoning; we reckon ourselves dead to sin because we already died with Christ in baptism. The fight against sin is not an attempt to achieve a union we lack but the daily living out of a union we already have. Every day we say to a tempting sin, you have no claim on me; my old self died with Christ, and I am alive to God in him.

Hold the doctrine and the life together, for they are one. Because we have genuinely died and risen with Christ, sin's reign is broken, and we are summoned to live accordingly. This is why baptism matters so much: it is not a bare ritual but the entrance into a real union with the crucified and risen Lord, a union that is at once the ground of our forgiveness and the foundation of our transformation. Teach the class to treasure their baptism, not as a ceremony completed, but as the moment they were brought inside the cross, and to draw daily on the death and resurrection they share with Christ.

Finally, keep the tone one of wonder and invitation, not mere argument. The aim is not chiefly to win a debate about baptism but to lead the class to marvel that they have been united with Christ in the deepest way imaginable, and to live in the freedom and newness that union secures. For any not yet baptized into Christ, let the truth shine as good news: this union with the crucified and risen Lord, this washing in his blood, this newness of life, is offered to you, at the place God appointed, through the obedience of faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism as the God-appointed point of union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12)
- Baptism as the place where, by faith, we contact the cleansing power of Christ's blood (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)
- Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, into Christ and into newness of life (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27)
- Rejection of baptism as a mere symbol of a salvation already received by faith only
- Rejection of any view that the water saves apart from faith and the blood of Christ
- Reckoning ourselves dead to sin as living out a union already real in baptism (Romans 6:11)
- Union with the crucified and risen Christ as the foundation for daily putting sin to death

Discussion Prompts

- How does Paul present baptism as the point of union with Christ's death and resurrection?
- Why is baptism far more than a symbol of a salvation already received?
- How does having genuinely died and risen with Christ become the foundation for fighting sin daily?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Romans 6:1–11 as a whole, where you are brought inside the cross, crucified and raised with Christ. Name one specific way that knowing you died and rose with Christ is changing how you fight sin and live for God, and one concrete step you will take this week to walk in newness of life.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers this pivotal lesson and calls for a personal response. Remind the class of where Paul has taken them: from looking at the cross to being brought inside it, crucified, buried, and raised with Christ in baptism, freed from sin's mastery, and summoned to reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God. The cross they have studied is the cross they have been united to.

Invite each student to name one specific way that knowing they died and rose with Christ is changing how they fight sin and live for God. For one it may be fresh hope of freedom from a mastering sin; for another, a renewed treasuring of their baptism; for another, the shift from fighting for victory to fighting from it.

Then ask for one concrete step to walk in newness of life this week, whether reckoning themselves dead to a specific sin, renouncing the bargain with grace, or yielding a particular area to the risen Christ. For any not yet united with Christ in baptism, hold out the invitation warmly. End by looking ahead: having died and risen with Christ, the next lesson celebrates the triumph of that same cross, where Christ disarmed the powers and led them in his victory procession.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Union with Christ's death and resurrection as the foundation of the Christian life
- Treasuring baptism as entrance into that union
- Daily reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God
- Walking in newness of life as the fruit of the cross

Discussion Prompts

- How is knowing you died and rose with Christ changing the way you fight sin?
- What does your union with the crucified and risen Christ mean to you now?
- What concrete step will you take this week to walk in newness of life?