

# Easter Vigil

## Celebrating God's Love for All

Romans 6:3-11

Easter Vigil

Analysis by Brad Haugen

<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.



By Anonymous – [Wikipedia](#)

*Our baptism becomes an unexpected kind of celebration. ... We no longer celebrate ourselves or the parents or the individual who decides to get baptized. We no longer decide how to fit God into our lives, if at all. We instead celebrate the new creature, the new person, that is raised and alive with Christ.*

## **DIAGNOSIS: Death of the Old**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Celebrating Ourselves**

If it were up to us, all that baptism would be is a celebration. A congregation celebrates the parents' decision to have their child baptized. Or a celebration marks the occasion

of an individual deciding to get baptized. Perhaps we'd even serve cake after the service in which the baptism takes place. The baptism adds yet one more person to the family of God and helps to offset the overall decline in church membership. A reason to celebrate ourselves. The baptized person and the prospect of growing the church become the focal point, while God's action too often remains an afterthought.

### ***Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Baptismal Burial***

What we fail to understand is that baptism indicates a burial, first and foremost, not a celebration. Before it is a celebration, baptism is a burial—our burial. The Apostle Paul announces the nature of baptism that we'd just as soon ignore or skip over: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (v. 3).

Joining ourselves to Christ in this way is not a cause for celebrating ourselves. Rather, the celebration of ourselves—either desired or enacted—is cut short by burial: Christ's burial and our own. Even though outwardly a sprinkle, splash, or a dunk in water, baptism inwardly joins us to Christ's death and burial. Baptism does not reinforce who we are or who we want to be. As Paul makes clear: "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death..." (v. 4).

### ***Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Death by God***

Baptism actually marks death and burial as the inescapable horizon of our own lives too. Obviously, we don't literally end up on a cross like Jesus did. But our old self—the only self that we know—is in effect put to death and buried—and God wills this! Going forward, our wants, desires, plans, and projects will no longer be our own. In our death in Christ God puts an end to us getting our way. We don't get to decide how God fits



into our lives in Baptism. God has already decided that our old self must go, since the old self refuses God's ways.



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## **PROGNOSIS: Birth of the New**

### ***Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): United with Christ***

But old self dies while we remain united with Christ—and that makes all the difference. The Apostle Paul proclaims the hinge on which our baptism turns, bringing forth a new creature, a new self, in place of the old: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (v. 5). In our baptism, we are united with Christ. We are not only joined to Christ in death and burial; we are united with him in the power of his resurrection,

too.

### ***Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Alive with Christ***

Our baptism becomes an unexpected kind of celebration. Having been united with Christ in his death and resurrection, we receive newness of life. We are alive with Christ. We no longer celebrate ourselves or the parents or the individual who decides to get baptized. We no longer decide how to fit God into our lives, if at all. We instead celebrate the new creature, the new person, that is raised and alive with Christ. We rejoice in the birth of this new creature—in ourselves and in others who are baptized into Christ. The new creature will continue to struggle with the old. But trusting in the love, forgiveness, and mercy of Christ is nevertheless possible because we are baptized: “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11).

### ***Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Living for God***

Speaking about the risen Christ, Paul says: “The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; the life he lives, he lives to God” (v. 10). God’s power to raise up new creatures living for God gives us confidence to look beyond ourselves. Now we see our own needs and the needs of our neighbors in ways we had never seen before. And we experience a freedom to serve others, to love them as we love ourselves. We celebrate God’s love for all, and we love others and ourselves more like God truly loves God’s beloved children.