

*What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4Therefore 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. 5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6We 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. 7For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Sue tells me he was five the first time he made the declaration: I'm not going to church any more. For many months thereafter, a battle was joined each Sunday morning. Things cooled off for a few years, then the battle began again at age eight. Then a period of peace, then again at age eleven our son, Matthew decided church was not for him.

Why do I have to go? Because our family worships God together, and you are a part of this family.

How much more lonely for Sue the battle would have been had I not been a church goer. Maybe then I would have taken Matt's part, and shouting and tears would have followed. And division.

Jesus said, Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

So many of you could tell about this so much better than I. Someone in your family had plans for an evening, but you had made a commitment to be at choir practice.

Money is short. Bills pile up, and maybe your spouse raises an eyebrow as your write out a check for the Sunday offering, or to feed those who are hungry.

Company is in for the weekend. They are unchurched. You invite them to join you in worship. They refuse. You leave them at home as you go to worship the Lord who is first in your life.

Whenever our faith in Jesus sends us down a different road from the crowd, someone in our family won't like it.

I remember conflicts over TV. I don't approve of this show. Turn it off.

"But all my friends watch it. If I don't I will be left out when they talk about it tomorrow."

Then what is a father to do?

I know my heart. I want everything. I want my children to believe in Jesus, to follow Jesus. I want my children to have many friends, and to never be lonely. I want my children to have all the clothing and stuff I imagine will make them happy. I want them to want to go to church and I hate to force them, or come into conflict with them.

But Jesus says, "Not peace, but a sword."

The second lesson talks of baptism. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death so that as Christ was raised by the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life.

What is a father to do? Die with Christ.

Baptized into his death, buried with him.

Your life in this world is over. The final judgement day came to you and you were put to death with Christ. Killed, buried. God stood as your judge and from all of your life and from all that you have done God has reached this verdict: nail it all to the cross with Christ. Bury it all in the grave with Christ.

My children have come to the same end. All that they do and say and win in this life God has put into the grave with Christ. Dead. None of it will follow them to Easter morning. God has prepared a new life for me, for you, for my children and for yours - the life Jesus lives. Perfect love and joy and peace and hope belong to this new life. But for now all of these are only ours under their opposite, the conflict that faith in Christ brings into the world and our homes.

We have been buried with Christ by baptism.

When it is my body resting there at the head of the aisle what shall I take with me? Nothing but Christ. Not the color of my eyes, nor the gratitude of those I was privileged to

help. I will not be able to take with me the sorrows I feel over all my failures. No regrets can I carry with me. Nor pride. Dead.

But dead in Christ. Sharing all the shame and rejection and dishonor that was his in his dying, so that I might share all the glory and love and honor that is his in his resurrection.

“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 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.”

Our old self was destroyed. That God has done in your baptism. Your whole life in this world was crucified. Are you rich and famous? In your baptism it is all in the tomb.

Are your children the best in their class? In their baptism they are all with Christ in the tomb?

Is your neighbor the object of vicious rumor and shame? In your neighbor's baptism all that is with Christ in the tomb.

Now how shall we live? Letting status and power and whispers and all that glitters rule over our days? How could we? Paul is asking. All of that is already judged, crucified, buried.

How shall we live? We live in newness of life, the life that is the gift of God to us.

Do you see the war we are caught up in here, between an old age that wants to own us and claim us and rule over us, and our Lord Jesus whose death was the death of that old age? Every day in our homes the war goes on, the old age of this world wanting us and our families, the life of Christ that is our future calling us away from all that is already dead.

Luther spoke of it in this way:

“What does baptism mean for daily living? It means that our old self should be drowned through daily repentance and day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Who are you? Are you a person who can be described by numbers, a job, and relationships? Or are you the one whose only identity is your life in Christ? Every day we fall prey to putting our hope and our dreams in the hands of a world that is dead, judged, no more. Every day, says Luther, we drown that world in us, and God raises a new person once again, a new person in Christ