

content is from BibleRef.com.

Isaiah 42:1-9 Page 1

Psalms 29 Page 2

Romans 6:1-11 Page 10

Matthew 3:13-17 Page 19

Isaiah chapter 42

New International Version

1 Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. **2** He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. **3** A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; **4** he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.' **5** This is what God the LORD says-- the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: **6** I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. **8** I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols. **9** See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.'

Psalm chapter 29

New International Version

1 A psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. **3** The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. **4** The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. **5** The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. **6** He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox. **7** The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning. **8** The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, 'Glory!' **10** The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. **11** The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

Context Summary

Psalm 29:1–2 call on angels to credit God for his glory and power. Three times David uses a word translated "ascribe" to direct the angels. In response to all that the Lord stands for, these spiritual beings should worship Him in the splendor of holiness. These two verses are an apt introduction. What follows is the psalmist's description of the Lord's power and sovereign control of nature.

Psalm 29:1, NIV: A psalm of David. Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

What does Psalm 29:1 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

This first and last verses of Psalm 29 mention the Lord's strength. *Omnipotent*—literally meaning "all-powerful"—is one of God's descriptors. Anything which can be done, He can do. Nothing is too hard for Him. God is also glorious. "Glory" is typically used to describe something that makes God's nature and wonder apparent. In some cases, this means the visible manifestation of His divine

power. David calls upon the heavenly beings to attribute glory and strength to the Lord.

Similarly, Psalm 96:6 refers to strength and beauty as being in the Lord's sanctuary. Wherever the Lord is, strength and glory accompany Him. Heavenly beings associate glory and honor and thanks with God, according to Revelation 4:8–11, where twenty-four elders join in their praise. They say, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

It should comfort and encourage believers to know the Lord has unlimited strength and glory. Paul was uplifted by knowing this fact. He writes in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Psalm 29:2, NIV: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

What does Psalm 29:2 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

In this verse David summons the heavenly host—angels—to credit the Lord with the glory He deserves. His "name," in this verse, stands for all that the Lord is. Believers as well as angels are called upon to glorify the Lord. First Corinthians 10:31 admonishes believers to "do all to the glory of God."

David also instructs the angels to "worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness." This phrase might also be translated as "in holy attire." In Old Testament times Israel received countless reminders that God is holy, and that His people must come before Him in holiness. Aaron, the high priest, wore a turban with a pure gold plate on its front that read, "Holy to the LORD" (Exodus 28:36). First Chronicles 16:29 instructed Israel to "worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness."

Isaiah caught a vision of the Lord on His throne and heard angels calling out to the Lord, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3). This psalm lifts up God's perfect and absolute worthiness to be praised in the strongest terms.

Context Summary

Psalm 29:3–9 uses the phrase "the voice of the LORD" seven times. Each time, the designation precedes an example of God's power over nature. God's speech represents His will: that which He commands to happen will always happen.

These examples offer a strong reason to associate God with glory and to give Him worship. Psalm 8 also expresses wonder at God's creative power

Psalm 29:3, NIV: The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.

What does Psalm 29:3 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Judging by the imagery used in this passage, David might have seen an exceptional storm breaking over the Mediterranean Sea. He uses those symbols to attribute power to the voice of God. The thunderstorm is evidence of the Lord's might. He commands thunder to appear and clap loudly. Certainly, the God who created everything by His spoken word (Hebrews 11:3) is powerful enough to control nature. He is not a disinterested, distant god, as deism insists. He did not simply create the world and then let it run down by itself. His hand is on nature, and it is His to command.

Jesus, the Son of God, provided incontrovertible proof of His power over nature. He stilled a storm that arose over the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:39). He turned water into wine (John 2:6–11). He brought a great catch into nets that were empty after a night-long attempt to harvest fish, twice (Luke 5:1–11; John 21:1–14). He fed 5,000 hungry men, plus women and children, with five barley rolls and two small fish (Matthew 14:13–21). He rode into Jerusalem on an unbroken colt (Mark 11:2, 7).

Psalm 29:4, NIV: The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.

What does Psalm 29:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David describes the voice of the Lord as powerful and full of majesty. This expression points out that God is king with the power to command all His subjects—every person and all nature.

How powerful is God's voice? At creation, the Lord said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). He spoke, and waters separated from waters (Genesis 1:6). He spoke dry land into existence (Genesis 1:9). His spoken word created vegetation, seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees (Genesis 1:11). By His word He created the sun, moon, and stars (Genesis 1:14). Marine life, birds, and animals of all sorts owe their existence to God's spoken word (Genesis 1:20–25). Finally, God spoke man into existence as He formed Him from dust (Genesis 1:26–27).

During His earthly ministry Jesus healed many by just saying a word (John 5:8–9). He even commanded the dead to rise, and they arose (John 11:43–44). Someday, the dead will hear His voice, "and those who hear will live" (John 5:25).

Psalm 29:5, NIV: The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.

What does Psalm 29:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

In this psalm, David compares God's voice—representing His will and His power—to a colossal storm (Psalm 29:3–4). A measure of power for any storm is damage to trees; when especially large trees are brought down, it implies the storm was intense.

Cedar trees of the Lebanon mountain range in the northern region of Israel were prized for their size and strength. According to 2 Chronicles 1:15, Solomon imported so much cedar that it became as plentiful as the sycamore fig trees in Israel's western foothills. Hiram, Tyre's king, provided cedar and cypress timber for Solomon's temple. He recognized that the Lord had bestowed wisdom on Solomon and promised to load it onto rafts and ship it to Israel. First Kings 5:10

reports: "So Hiram supplied Solomon with all the timber of cedar and cypress that he desired."

Cedar was also used in the construction of David's palace (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Chronicles 17:1), in the building of Solomon's palace (1 Kings 7:2), in the rebuilding of the temple when the Jews returned from captivity (Ezra 3:7), and in purification (Leviticus 14:4, 6, 49, 52).

Psalm 29:6, NIV: He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.

What does Psalm 29:6 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Vivid imagery continues after David likens God's voice to a potent storm (Psalm 29:3–5). Here, the Lord's power is depicted as moving the earth. Sirion was the name the Sidonians applied to Mount Hermon (Deuteronomy 3:9). The Lebanon mountain range, considered by the Canaanites to be the dwelling place of their gods, stood high but could not withstand earthquakes sent by God. At God's voice, these massive mountains jump like running animals. They rupture and rise as if they were calves or young ox jumping into the air.

Earthquakes will strike the earth in the tribulation period. Revelation 11:13 mentions a cataclysmic earthquake leveling a tenth of Jerusalem and killing 7,000 people. An earthquake will also split the Mount of Olives in two when Jesus returns to earth (Zechariah 14:4). One half of the mountain will shift to the north; the other half will move southward.

Psalm 29:7, NIV: The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.

What does Psalm 29:7 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

In this psalm, David celebrates God's power. In poetic form he described God's voice as a potent thunderstorm or series of earthquakes (Psalm 29:3–8). This verse refers to lightning, often described in the Bible as a form of "fire" (Exodus 9:23).

Perhaps it was lightning that consumed Elijah's sacrifice at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:38). It may have been fiery lightning that consumed the men whom the king of Samaria sent to Elijah (2 Kings 1:9–14). In Job's description of God's works he credits God with decreeing rain and a way for lightning (Job 28:26). In his description of four heavenly beings, Ezekiel writes that they had the appearance of torches. When they moved, their appearance resembled "a flash of lightning" (Ezekiel 1:14).

Jesus compared His second coming to the lightning that comes from the east and shines as far as the west (Matthew 24:27). When God judges the city of Babylon in the tribulation period, flashes of lightning will strike it (Revelation 16:18). God controls all things, including lightning!

Psalm 29:8, NIV: The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.

What does Psalm 29:8 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

To depict God's incredible power, David speaks of the Lord's voice as a raging thunderstorm or an earthquake (Psalm 29:3–7). This verse seems to blend both images. God's "voice" is not merely a matter of speech or communication. What God "speaks" is that which He wills (Genesis 1:1–3; Psalm 33:6). God's voice, per this psalm, shatters mighty trees and makes mountains leap like playful calves.

Here, David refers to the wilderness of Kadesh. This was desert territory near a town about 75 miles or 120 kilometers north of Damascus. "Shaking" could mean the emotional impact of desert-dwellers seeing divine power, or a literal physical experience (Acts 4:31). It could also refer to the results of a huge storm or earthquake (Acts 16:26).

Those who have been in earthquake zones are aware of the devastation an earthquake can cause. However, nothing happens by chance. The Lord commands weather and nature, and He uses both to accomplish His purposes. He allowed lightning to fall (Job 1:16) as part of the testing Job endured to demonstrate the genuineness of his faith in the Lord. The apostle Peter writes: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been

grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6–7).

Psalm 29:9, NIV: The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'

What does Psalm 29:9 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

God's power and glory are being described using terms referring to thunderstorms and earthquakes (Psalm 29:3–8). God's will is represented by His voice (Genesis 1:1–3; Psalm 33:6). His voice has the power to shatter great trees, uproot mountains, and shake deserts.

Here, David implies the fear that God's unlimited power can cause: a terror that would cause premature labor in deer. Pet owners know how terrified of thunder and lightning their pets may be. Young children—even some adults—dread a storm's thunder and lightning. Under a tornado warning, many adults seek shelter in closets or basements.

Some scholars note that the Hebrew phrase used here, often interpreted as deer going into premature labor, can also be pronounced in a way that implies "making the oaks to shake." That would dovetail with the next phrase, where David continues the storm imagery, speaking of forests being stripped bare. A strong wind may take some leaves from trees, but only a tremendous blast would rip every leaf from a forest. The terminology used here, in fact, echoes Joel 1:7, which suggests trees having their bark blasted from the trunk.

As the storm David describes caused fear and defoliation, those who watch give praise. The reference to the temple may mean the heavenly "temple" of God (Psalm 11:4; Revelation 11:19), where the angels are. The cry of "Glory!" follows David's earlier plea for heaven to praise God (Psalm 29:1–2). Angels rejoiced in God's creative power and artistry. Job 38:7 states: "The morning stars [angels] sang together and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy." First Timothy 3:16 points out that angels observed Jesus' life and ministry. Believers today can

follow the example of the angels mentioned in this psalm by giving glory to God for His wonderful works.

Context Summary

Psalm 29:10–11 is the closing section of David's proclamation. He lifts up the Lord as King forever and prays the King will strengthen and bless His people with peace. This is a fitting conclusion to a psalm that extols the Lord's omnipotent power over nature. The eternal King, who is strong enough to control nature, is strong enough to empower and calm His people.

Psalm 29:10, *NIV*: The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.

What does Psalm 29:10 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David rightly perceived the Lord as sovereign over the Mediterranean Sea—this psalm seems to be inspired by the awesome power of a thunderstorm (Psalm 29:3–5). This verse seems to speak of the aftermath of such storms, in the form of a flood. It's possible David has in mind the overflow and storm surge which comes with some natural disasters.

More likely, this is a reference to the flood of Noah's day (Genesis 7:4). Like the storm depicted in this psalm, that was an act of nature over which God had sovereign control. It was the Lord who sent the rain, opened fountains of the deep, and eventually stopped the flood. That absolute control is captured by David's image of God seated on His throne above the deluge. He rules everything. He is the eternal King.

God's people should be encouraged to know their lives are not ruled by randomness or pure luck. All things are in the hands of this same eternal King. Believers have steadfast hope (2 Corinthians 1:10; Hebrews 6:19) that someday Jesus will reign over all the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. The world may experience calamity, conflicts, and near chaos now, but peace will prevail when King Jesus takes His place on the throne of David.

Psalm 29:11, NIV: The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

What does Psalm 29:11 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David concludes Psalm 29 with a benediction. He asks the Lord, the eternal King, to give His people strength. David has already alluded to the Lord's strength in His display of control of nature (Psalm 29:3–10). Now David asks the Lord to impart strength to His people. In this context, that "strength" is mostly about perseverance: the ability to maintain faith in God, trusting His power rather than our own (Hebrews 10:23).

Isaiah 40 promises strength to the Lord's weary people. Isaiah 40:30–31 promises: "Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." However, the Lord is not just the source of power for His people, but also the source of peace. David asks the Lord to "bless his people with peace." The world cannot capture peace. Political peace treaties rarely last long and new threats are constantly emerging, health deteriorates, accidents happen, relationships are broken, economies crumble; there seem to be no end of reasons a person could be anxious. But those who love the Word of God and the God of the Word have great peace (Psalm 119:65; Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27). Our hope is not in this world or the things of this world, but in the very God who created the world and who adopts all who put their faith in Jesus Christ as His own (Galatians 4:4–7; John 1:12). We will still experience hardship, but we have God's promise of peace in the midst (John 16:33; James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 1:3–9; 5:7), and we know we will one day be with Him forever.

Romans chapter 6

New International Version

1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** 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.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- **7** because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Context Summary

Romans 6:1–14 explores how Christians should think about and respond to sin now that we are in Christ and our sins are forgiven. In explaining this, Paul reveals new information about what happened when we put our faith in Christ. In a spiritual sense, we died with Him, and to our sin. We were then resurrected to a new spiritual life. Now Paul instructs us to continue remembering that we are no longer slaves to sin. We must not offer our bodies to be used for sin, but we must offer ourselves as instruments of righteousness, instead.

Romans 6:1, NIV: What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

What does Romans 6:1 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul begins this chapter by posing a question about the implications of the statements that ended chapter 5. There, he wrote that where sin increased, God's grace "super-increased." That is, as sin increased, so did God's grace abound to cover the sin of all those who trusted in Christ's death to cover their sin. We literally cannot out-sin the grace of God.

What does that mean, though, for those who have been reconciled to God through faith in Christ? What are Christians supposed to do about sin now that

we are Christians? As Paul asks here, should we just keep sinning so that God's grace can just keep increasing? This seems to have been a common criticism of Paul's teaching, as it is one he refutes often in his writings (Romans 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:19–24). It's a frequent charge against Christianity, even today, suggesting that the gospel is really just a license to sin. In the following verse, Paul will answer this slanderous charge with an emphatic "no!"

Romans 6:2, NIV: By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

What does Romans 6:2 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul asked a strange-sounding question in the previous verse about something he wrote at the end of chapter 5. There he said that as sin increased, God's grace for those who trusted in Christ's death for their sin increased even more. In that way, God's grace always reigns over sin. We cannot out-sin God's grace and forgiveness. So, Paul asked, should we just keep sinning now that we are believers in Jesus in order to keep increasing God's grace?

He answers here with, "By no means!" This is the same use of the Greek phrase *mē genoito* that Paul often uses in response to posing ridiculous questions as a teaching tool. In short, Christians should not keep sinning to increase the grace of God. In fact, Christians should not keep sinning willfully and intentionally, at all. Elsewhere in Scripture, we're given more details on why a life of persistent, willful sin is actually inconsistent with those who have truly been saved (Galatians 5:19–24; 1 John 3:6–9).

Paul responds to this question with another question: How can people who died to sin still live in it? This raises a whole new aspect of Paul's gospel message. As he will show in upcoming verses, all people who come to God in faith, believing in Christ's death in their place on the cross to pay for their sin, are said to have "died with Christ" in a sense. More specifically, we are said to have died to sin in that moment.

Paul will expand this thought, but the idea is this: Those who are not in Christ live under the rule of sin. They *cannot* avoid sinning. It is the only option on the menu. Christ's death on the cross to pay for our sin, however, broke sin's rule

over our lives. We now have the power, in Christ, to stop sinning. We have not lost our *desire* to sin, however.

Romans 6:3, NIV: Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

What does Romans 6:3 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has asked if Christians, those who have received God's free gift of the forgiveness of our sin through faith in Christ, should keep sinning. No, we should not, he has responded. He poses a counter-question to explain why: can those who have died to sin keep living in sin? His implied answer is again "no."

What does it mean that we have died to sin, though? Part of that answer is found in the question of this verse. All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.

Paul does not seem to be talking about water baptism here. From the context of the chapter, we take him to mean a kind of baptism that happens when the Holy Spirit comes into a person at the time he or she becomes a Christian. In that "spirit baptism," a new believer is spiritually baptized into Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:13). We enter into Christ's identity, in a sense, becoming so closely attached to Him that God gives us credit for Christ's righteousness and accepts Christ's payment for our sin. That baptism places us, our whole self, in Christ. Water baptism, on the other hand, is an outward sign of that spirit baptism. For those who practice believer's baptism, it is a public declaration to the world around us that we belong to Christ and to belong with all the others who belong to Him, as well (Acts 10:44–48).

So, then, Paul says here that when a person trusts in Christ for salvation, that person is baptized in the Holy Spirit into Christ's death. We die with Him. This death somehow breaks sin's rule over us and frees us from our need to obey our sinful desires. Those urges do not entirely vanish, however.

Romans 6:4, NIV: 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.

What does Romans 6:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul is introducing a collection of teachings about what happens when a person trusts in Christ for his or her salvation. In the previous verse, he wrote that Christians have been baptized into Christ Jesus and into His death. This seems to mean that, through the Holy Spirit, a person who comes to faith in Christ experiences a spiritual baptism that takes us into Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 12:13). We become so closely identified with Him that God gives us credit for Christ's righteousness and accepts His death as payment for our sin.

Paul has also said that on that spiritual level we were baptized into Christ's death on the cross. Now he writes that we were also buried with Him into death. Paul means to communicate that a real spiritual transaction took place when we were saved. On a spiritual level, we experienced death and burial with Christ. Then God gloriously raised us from that spiritual death just as He raised Christ from physical death. The Father did all of this so we would be able to walk in, to experience for the first time, spiritual life.

This is a huge and mysterious idea, but it is at the heart of what it means to truly be a Christian. Those who come to God through faith in Christ do not merely sign some documents and get their Jesus card. A real, spiritual transformation takes place inside of us. We do not remain the same as we were before. We come to life for the first time (Ephesians 2:5), and God means for us to participate in this new life in a meaningful way. This is not only profound, it helps to explain why a life of persistent and willful sin is incompatible with a profession of faith in Christ (Galatians 5:19–24; 1 John 3:6–9).

Romans 6:5, NIV: For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

What does Romans 6:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

This passage explains why the idea of salvation by grace through faith is not a license or excuse to sin. Paul has just said a remarkable thing in the previous verse. Those who come to God through faith in Christ experience rebirth on a spiritual level. Through the Holy Spirit, God responds to our faith in Christ by causing us to die with Christ, spiritually, and to be buried in that same spiritual sense. Then we are raised to new spiritual life as He was raised to a new physical life by the Father.

Paul means for us to understand that we are newly alive, spiritually, in Christ. That's not all, though. This verse says that since we have been united with Christ in a spiritual death like this, we will also be united with Him in a physical resurrection like the one He experienced. In other words, we will also come back to life after we die physically instead of staying in the grave (2 Corinthians 4:14).

Romans 6:6, NIV: For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

What does Romans 6:6 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul began this chapter by asking if believers in Jesus—those who have been saved through their faith—should go on sinning to somehow increase God's grace. He said no, but then he backed up to explain some things about what happened to us when we trusted in Christ for our salvation from sin. For one thing, we died with Christ, in a spiritual sense, and then we were resurrected spiritually to new life. We are not the same spiritually dead people we were before (Ephesians 2:5).

Now Paul adds a new layer of understanding to what exactly happened to us when we died spiritually with Christ. He writes that we also experienced a crucifixion. Our "old self," the one that existed in sin and self-reliance before we were in Christ, was spiritually crucified in the same way that Christ was physically crucified on the cross. In response to our faith, God mysteriously, powerfully put to death our old self that was under the rule and power of sin.

When the old self was crucified, the "body of sin" was brought to nothing or done away with. Paul pictures sin as having a body, as an entity that controlled us before we were in Christ. Now that sin's body has been removed in the spiritual crucifixion of our old self, however, sin is not in charge of us any longer. We were slaves to sin, and we have now been freed from its power and authority in our lives.

Does that mean we don't want to do sinful things anymore? Paul will show that the "want" to sin remains. The requirement to sin is gone, however. We can never be compelled to sin again, because Christ has rescued us from that slave owner. Now we can only volunteer to sin. This is consistent with other New Testament passages, which describe a saved person's life as imperfect (1 John 1:9–10), but not marked by pervasive, deliberate sins (Galatians 5:19–24; 1 John 3:6–9).

Romans 6:7, NIV: because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

What does Romans 6:7 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has described a startling and strange idea in the previous verse, though it is truly joyful once we understand it. The big idea is this: Those who are not in Christ live under the control of sin. They are compelled to sin, to serve self in all the ways that are against God's direction for us. When someone comes to God by faith in Christ, however, that person actually experiences a spiritual death. Specifically, their "old self" is spiritually crucified, as Christ was physically crucified. The slave-driver of sin is done away with in that crucifixion. That person is literally freed from the power of sin to control his or her life.

So Paul writes in this verse that one who has died in this way, being spiritually crucified with Christ, has been set free from sin. Sin is not in charge of our lives any longer. It can no longer compel us to do it our way instead of God's way. It will become clear in the following verses that we have not lost our desire to sin, but it no longer controls us. Now if we sin, we are simply giving in to temptations and old habits.

Paul will show us why we should not continue to do so.

Romans 6:8, NIV: Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

What does Romans 6:8 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The word "if" near the start of this verse can be read as "since," as a reference to those who are in Christ. As Paul showed in the previous verse, our faith in Christ began with a spirit-baptism into Christ. This caused us to be so closely identified with Him that God gives us credit for His righteousness and takes His death as payment for our sin.

In that sense, we died with Christ on a spiritual level and were resurrected to a new spiritual life. We are spiritually alive for the first time ever (Ephesians 2:5). Paul now writes that because we died with Christ in that way, we will also live with Him. It's unclear if Paul is referring to living in Christ now as spiritually-resurrected people or living with Christ for eternity as physically-resurrected people. However, both are true, and both might be indicated by this verse. God intends for us to live this new spiritual life He has given to us with Christ. And we definitely look forward to the day we will be physically brought back to life to spend eternity with Christ.

Romans 6:9, NIV: For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

What does Romans 6:9 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul reveals an essential truth about Christ's physical death on the cross, as well as His resurrection from death by God's power. Christ's death was a one-time occurrence. It can never happen again. God defeated death when Christ left behind the grave, and it can never drag Him back again. Paul wrote in the previous chapter that Adam's sin introduced sin and death into the world. In truth, death reigned over all who came from Adam. It had dominion, or authority, over humanity. Every person had to submit to it eventually.

Christ, too, submitted to death on the cross, but once He was resurrected, death no longer had any power over Him. The resurrection set Christ free from the authority of death. In the same way, we who are "dead" to sin through faith in Christ are no longer forced to submit to sin. Further, this separation from the power of sin is permanent; death can never again reign over the life of a believer. This does not mean we are incapable of sin (1 John 1:9–10), but it does mean we are never obligated to it (1 Corinthians 10:13), and those who have been saved will not live in incessant sin (Galatians 5:19–24; 1 John 3:6–9).

Romans 6:10, NIV: The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

What does Romans 6:10 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Christ is both our Savior and our role model. Paul has revealed in this chapter that when we put our faith in Him for our salvation from sin, we experienced a spiritual death with Him. Spiritually speaking, we died, were buried, and were then resurrected to a new spiritual life. The same will eventually happen for those who are in Christ physically, as well.

Now Paul is showing, in Christ's example, what will happen for us. Christ died to sin. Of course, He did not die to His own sin, for Christ never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). He died to pay for the sins of all those who trust in Him. He died once for all (Hebrews 9:26). It was a one-time payment for the sins of others, including past, present, and future sins. Christ does not need to go back to the cross every time someone sins again. He has finished the job of dying for the sins of humanity. It's over.

Now that Christ is resurrected, He lives again "to God." In other words, Christ's continued purpose is to live, to keep living, as God and for God's glory forever. He has no other agenda. Our new lives in Christ, with Christ, therefore, are headed in the same direction.

Romans 6:11, NIV: In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

What does Romans 6:11 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Paul has described Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of humanity as a one-time, once-for-all event. He submitted to death in that moment, but once He was resurrected, death was defeated. It no longer had any hold over Him. Jesus was free from death forever. Since, spiritually speaking, those who trust in Christ for their salvation also died, were buried, and then were resurrected to new spiritual life, we are on the same path that Jesus is. We are so closely identified with Christ now that God gives us credit for Christ's righteousness and takes the payment of His death for our sin. Christ literally "is our life" (Colossians 3:4).

Paul now writes that we must change the way we think about ourselves. We must no longer think of ourselves as self-reliant, self-serving, independent operators. Instead, as people in Christ, we must think of ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

What does it mean that we are dead to sin? Paul explained it in verse 6. Our old self was crucified with Christ and the "body of sin" that held us as slaves was done away with. We have been freed from sin's power. In that sense, we are dead to sin. It can't compel us to do wrong (1 Corinthians 10:13), though we have not lost the desire to sin (1 John 1:9–10). That's why we must keep reminding ourselves that we are dead to sin, as Paul will show in the following verses.

Matthew chapter 3

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. **14** But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'

15 Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

Context Summary

Matthew 3:13–17 describes Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Jesus arrives at the site of John's baptismal ministry somewhere along the Jordan River. John resists, but Jesus insists that His baptism is meant to fulfill all righteousness. As Jesus emerges from the water, He sees the heavens open, and the Holy Spirit descends to rest on Him in a dove-like form. The voice of God the Father declares that Jesus is His Son and that He is pleased with Him. Jesus' ministry is both confirmed and revealed on earth.

Matthew 3:13, NIV: Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

What does Matthew 3:13 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Matthew now introduces Jesus, the subject of his gospel, for the first time as an adult. When last we heard of Him in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus was a small child living in the disreputable town of Nazareth in Galilee (Matthew 2:19–23). His parents had settled there to keep their distance from Jerusalem and the region of Judea, where a former king had tried to kill Jesus as a baby (Matthew 2:13–16).

Since Jesus arrives on the scene from Galilee at around 30 years old, most scholars assume that He had lived in Galilee up until this point in his life. He finds John preaching and baptizing somewhere along the Jordan River. Jesus wants John to baptize Him.

We know from Luke that John and Jesus were extended family through their mothers; Mary and John's mother Elizabeth were related (Luke 1:36). Both men were born by the intervention of God. Jesus, of course, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, making Him the Son of God, the long-promised Messiah. John's birth was also predicted to his father, Zechariah, by an angel. This was despite the married couple being past the normal age of having children. The angel told Zechariah that John would do exactly the work Matthew has described of him so far. John would "make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (Luke 1:17).

Now the Lord Jesus Christ and John meet face to face in an unexpected way. That is, John did not expect this request from Jesus.

Matthew 3:14, NIV: But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'

What does Matthew 3:14 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Jesus has arrived at a place along the Jordan River where John the Baptist is preaching to Israel with the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). John has been baptizing those willing to publicly repent of sin and renew their commitment to live in faithfulness to the Lord.

John recognizes that Jesus is the very Messiah he has been preaching about. We don't know when John discovered this. He may have been taught it as a child, accompanied by his parent's explanation of the circumstances of Jesus' birth (Luke 1—2). In any case, John resists the idea that he should baptize Jesus. He had said of the Messiah, after all, that he was not even worthy to carry His sandals (Matthew 3:11).

As a prophet of God, John had the authority to baptize the people of Israel as a sign of their repentance before God. He could not imagine he had the authority to baptize the Messiah. Also, he likely understood that Jesus had no sin to repent from. Nor would God's Promised One need to declare a change of mind to the people. From John's perspective, there was no point in such a baptism!

John, as a humble man, was aware of his own sinfulness. He declares that he needs to be baptized by Jesus, not the other way around. By this, John may have meant that he wanted Jesus to conduct his own baptism of repentance. Or, perhaps, he wanted Jesus to baptize him with the Holy Spirit and fire as he said the Messiah would do for those who repented (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus explains His insistence on being baptized by John in the following verse.

Matthew 3:15, NIV: Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented.

What does Matthew 3:15 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

John has been preaching a simple message: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. He has been baptizing those who repent from their sin in order to be ready for that kingdom to arrive (Matthew 3:1–2). Now the King of that kingdom has come to John and asked to be baptized, as well. John resisted, saying he was the one who should be baptized by Jesus (Matthew 3:13–14).

Jesus insists. His explanation is not immediately easy to understand. He tells John "it is fitting for [them] to fulfill all righteousness."

Scholars have offered many interpretations of Jesus' explanation. The most widely held view is that Jesus had no sin to repent from, but had come to earth to die on behalf of the sins of humanity. Baptism would identify Him with that sacrificial role and symbolize His coming death and resurrection. In this way, baptism would allow Jesus and John together to "fulfill all righteousness" by publicly foreshadowing the way all sin can be forgiven. This would also serve as an example for Christians to follow later (Acts 18:25; 19:3–6).

A simpler possibility is that it was just God's will for Jesus to be baptized by John. Jesus may be saying to John that they will be "fulfilling all righteousness" in the sense of doing what God wants—of doing the right thing. In other words, Jesus may have been saying to John, "We're going to do this because it's what God wants us to do."

In either case, John immediately agrees to baptize the Messiah.

Matthew 3:16, NIV: As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

What does Matthew 3:16 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus, the Messiah, in His first recorded public appearance in Matthew, finds John the Baptist somewhere along the Jordan River and asks the prophet to baptize Him. John resists and then agrees to participate (Matthew 3:13–15). Some interpreters see this as the moment Jesus formally began His mission on

earth, culminating in His sacrificial death for the sins of humanity, followed by resurrection and ascension Christian baptism certainly serves as a symbol of death, followed by resurrection: a new beginning.

God the Father immediately responds to Jesus' baptism in a powerful way. As Jesus emerges from being fully immersed in the water of the Jordan River, the heavens are opened. Jesus sees God the Holy Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and coming to rest on Him.

It's unclear from these descriptions in the other Gospels whether only Jesus saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descend. This might have been witnessed by everyone present. Or, perhaps it was only perceived by Jesus and John (John 1:32). Luke does specify that the Holy Spirit took solid, bodily form (Luke 3:22). However, the phrase "like a dove" can either refer to the visual appearance of the Spirit, or to the manner in which the Spirit descended. As such, it's not explicitly clear that the Holy Spirit looked like a literal dove.

Regardless of such details, the Spirit coming to rest on Jesus served as a powerful confirmation that Jesus was being empowered by God. That confirmation is made even more explicit in the following verse.

Matthew 3:17, NIV: And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

What does Matthew 3:17 mean? [[↑↑ See verse text ↑↑](#)]

Perhaps as an act of obedience to God, or as foreshadowing of His sacrificial death, Jesus asks John the Baptist to baptize Him in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13–16). In the moment that Jesus resurfaces, He sees the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descend "like a dove," to rest on Him in a bodily form (Luke 3:22).

It is unclear if only Jesus and possibly John the Baptist saw the action in the heavens and the arrival of the dove-like Holy Spirit (John 1:32). It seems clearer that all who were present at Jesus' baptism heard the voice of God, however. Matthew quotes God's voice as saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

All three members of the Trinity are involved in this moment. God the Son, in human form, is joined by God the Holy Spirit in dove-like form, while the voice of God the Father calls down from heaven. This is one of the most potent examples of the mystery of the Trinity in the Bible.

What God says in this moment makes the claim of the Bible crystal clear: Jesus is the Son of God. This firmly confirmed to all who heard it that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by God to fulfill the prophecies and begin to establish His kingdom on earth.

The tenderness of God the Father toward Jesus reveals His character. He describes Jesus as beloved and says that He is well pleased with Him. God's love, even for His own Son, is central to who He is. It also adds heartbreak to the sacrifice God is making in offering the life of Jesus for the sins of humanity.