

baptism, does water baptism, either in itself, or by means of the accompanying work of the Holy Spirit, accomplish the death to sin being spoken of? Does water baptism bring about death to sin?

Of course, one may say that this is referring to positional death to sin, and that water baptism symbolizes this death to sin. The only problem is that Paul says that this baptism of which he is speaking actually brings about the death to sin of which he is speaking! And very few who view this as referring to water baptism would wish to hold that water baptism brings about even our positional death to sin!

What then, is mean by Spirit baptism? Simply put, Spirit baptism is the act of the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Christ by faith. The Holy Spirit unites us to Christ and to the benefits of His atonement. The baptism is instrumental. It actually brings us into saving relationship to Christ, and unites us to the benefits which He has purchased for us. And interestingly, water baptism can signify and symbolize this!

In verse 2, Paul says “We died to sin”. How did we die to sin? “As many of us as were united to Christ Jesus were united to His death and His resurrection, not that we died on the cross and rose out of the tomb (He alone did that !), but that just as Christ died and rose again physically, so we died and rose again spiritually. Of course, this is true only for those who have been baptized into Christ, those who have been united to Christ by the Holy Spirit through faith.

This union with Christ is foundational, basic, crucial to each step in sanctification. If we are not joined to Christ, we cannot share in the benefits of His saving work. If we are united to Christ, we have already begun to share in the blessings of salvation, and need to consider what steps to take to enter in even more fully.