

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 7, 2013
Romans 6:1-11

In Christ Jesus, who died for sin so that in baptism, we in Him have died to sin, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our study in the letter to the Romans this morning leads us to chapter 6. With this chapter the Apostle Paul takes up a new topic in his letter---Sanctification, the life of the Christian.

Thus far Paul has laid before us two major points.

1) What Adam did brought sin and death upon all of mankind. None of his descendants have any righteousness of their own to bring before God---neither the Gentiles, who did not know God and did not have God's Law, nor the Jews, who knew God and who boasted in having God's Law. None of them could keep it. All showed the effects of Adam's sin in their original sin and its consequence of death.

2) But just as what Adam did had the effect of bringing death and condemnation upon all people, so what Christ did had the effect of regaining righteousness and giving the free gift of life and salvation to all people. Jesus lived the perfect life us sinners couldn't. Jesus died the death we sinners deserved. Through His work there is now a robe of righteousness given to all who believe in Jesus.

Martin Luther called this an "alien righteousness." It is righteousness that comes from outside of us, credited to the believer without any inner change or moral improvement in the recipient. God declares us to be righteous. We have been justified. All of this is done by God upon us, done by His grace.

But now that we are brought to this saving faith, a marked change does take place. The driving force or power behind the believer's life change from living in sin to living for God is the same driving force or power that brought life and salvation to him in the first place. The perfect life, the sacrificial death and the victorious resurrection of Jesus.

His death and resurrection frees us from an old life of disobedience and empowers us to now live a new life of obedience to God's will.

We have entitled this: **FREEDOM FROM THE CLUTCHES OF SIN**

I: BY BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH THROUGH BAPTISM.

II: BY BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION THROUGH BAPTISM.

Paul ended chapter 5 with this surprising statement: **BUT WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE ABOUNDED MUCH MORE.**

Paul anticipated the unbelieving perverse logic to then conclude, "If that's the case, then why not go on sinning all the more, so that grace will abound all the more."

Paul cuts off any such notion in no uncertain terms with his response in verses 1-2: **WHAT SHALL WE SAY THEN? SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND? CERTAINLY NOT! HOW SHALL WE WHO DIED TO SIN LIVE ANY LONGER IN IT?**

But how did we die to sin? Paul answers with his next statement: **OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT AS MANY OF US AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH?** Baptism is not just some mere symbolical ritual. It is a means of Grace. It is effective in doing something. It accomplishes something. It brings God's grace to us. It puts us in touch with Jesus, or more precisely it unites us to Jesus, makes us partners in His death and burial.

That is Paul's next statement: **THEREFORE WE WERE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH.** Not only did Jesus die for us, or in our place, in baptism we died with Christ. In baptism we enter into all of the events of Jesus' life for us. Our sins became His, and His righteousness now belongs to us. Even as He was buried in the tomb, we are buried with Him. And all of this frees us from the clutches of sin!

The purpose and power of baptism is to forgive sins; in some cases to create faith; and in all cases to strengthen faith and to unite us with Jesus. It is to make us Christlike. In Galatians Paul put it this way: **FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.**

We were baptized that we might live a new kind of life, totally different from our old way of life, which was doomed in slavery to sin. Through baptism we have real life, spiritual life here and eternal life hereafter.

Baptism into Christ's death means death to sin. Here Paul portrays baptism as a funeral ceremony which proclaims and seals the testimony that a death has occurred—the old Adam is being put to death. In 2 Corinthians Paul writes: **THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION; OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW.**

But there is more! Being united with Christ means we are also united with Him in His resurrection. Paul writes: **THAT JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, EVEN SO WE ALSO SHOULD WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.** Even as God so gloriously showed His almighty power by raising Jesus from the dead, so also He shows His power in the lives of those who have been baptized through the Gospel message leading us to live a new life. The Old Man is put off and the New Man is put on.

Christ's death and resurrection was the basis for God to declare all of us righteous in His sight and to credit Jesus' righteousness to us. But that same death and resurrection of Jesus also empowers us to lead a new life doing what is pleasing to God. It is that life of obedient faith to God's will, not rebellion against His commandments. We have been set free from the clutches of sin!

Paul restates or summarizes what he has just written in the next few verses: **FOR IF WE HAVE BEEN UNITED TOGETHER IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH, CERTAINLY WE ALSO SHALL BE IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION, KNOWING THIS, THAT OUR OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH HIM, THAT THE BODY OF SIN MIGHT BE DONE AWAY WITH, THAT WE SHOULD NO LONGER BE SLAVES OF SIN. FOR HE WHO HAS DIED HAS BEEN FREED FROM SIN.**

We see that our Old Man was crucified with Christ. Crucifixion was one of the cruelest means of execution, reserved for only the worst criminals. That kind of death was very appropriate for us "criminals" who were conceived and born with the sinful seed of Adam. Our "Old Man," or "Old Adam" is the evil nature we were born with, which is always inclined only toward evil. It will not and cannot be changed or trained in the way of righteousness. This is the sinful human condition of all people.

But in our baptism that body of sin is done away with so that we are no longer sin's willing slaves. The power of the Gospel message has freed us and continues to give us daily strength to crucify our sinful flesh, to say "no" to sin and to live for Christ.

Paul's next statement is so wonderful, so glorious we should have it printed on every one of doorways in our homes, on our bathroom mirrors, at work, wherever we spend a lot of time. **NOW IF WE DIED WITH CHRIST, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM.**

Paul goes on to describe our new life in Christ: **KNOWING THAT CHRIST, HAVING BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, DIES NO MORE. DEATH NO LONGER HAS DOMINION OVER HIM. FOR THE DEATH THAT HE DIED, HE DIED TO SIN ONCE FOR ALL; BUT THE LIFE THAT HE LIVES, HE LIVES TO GOD.**

When someone is in a deep sleep we sometimes say, "He's dead to the world." Meaning nothing can make an impression on that person; it has no control or influence on him—he is so deep in sleep.

That is the situation between Christ and sin. Sin has been paid for and the sinner justified. The wages of sin, which is death, has been taken care of with Christ's death. Death no longer has any hold on Jesus. He swallowed up death in victory. Forevermore, because of His resurrection He lives a holy, blissful existence to God. Although Jesus still has His human nature, it is a human nature that is now glorified and immortal. It is this kind of blissful life that Paul has in mind with this statement: **NOW IF WE DIED WITH CHRIST, WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHALL ALSO LIVE WITH HIM.**

As part of His humiliation, Jesus subjected Himself to human weakness, to mortality, to the consequences of sin, even though He had no sin. When God made Him, who had no sin, to be sin for us, death truly had dominion over Him. The lifeless body of Christ was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. Death had its way with Jesus...but then came Easter! **DEATH NO LONGER HAS DOMINION OVER HIM.** And being baptized into Christ, death no longer has dominion over us!

Jesus died once. He subjected Himself to sin's curse once, but that is now all over! Now He lives, He lives forevermore. So we shall die once, but then be resurrected to eternal life. Eternal death is not our future, eternal life is!

What Paul has been leading up to is the Christian's grateful response for everything that has been done for him. What Christ has done for us and what He continues to do in us now enables us to respond with a life of cheerful obedience to God.

Paul writes: **LIKEWISE YOU ALSO, RECKON YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD INDEED TO SIN, BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.**

So, should we sin all the more, so God's grace abounds all the more? Paul again answers that unbelieving perverse logic and says "Christian look upon yourself as dead to sin, but alive to God."

According to the new man we strive to please God, not the sinful desires of our flesh. We want to live a life pleasing to God because we are in Christ Jesus. Through Jesus' work of redemption, we find the motivation to live as our Savior lived. His sacrificial love and the power of His resurrection in us moves us to live in cheerful obedience even in the face of suffering and sadness. Our comfort and the strength to resist temptations in those times comes only from our Savior's great love for us as found in His powerful Word.

We close this morning with the reading of Hymn 298 verses 1, 2 and 6.

Amen.