

Raised with Christ: Romans 6:1-14

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Last Sunday we began looking at Romans 6, and we saw the argument that Paul is beginning to develop in response to an objection. In Romans 1-5 he has taught the wonderful truth of justification by faith alone. We are saved by trusting in Jesus Christ, not by keeping the law. The objection to this teaching is: If we're saved simply by trusting, and not by doing, then it doesn't matter how we live. We can continue living in sin, and God's grace will abound. Paul reacts strongly against this objection. "By no means" he says in verse 2. Then he uses this rhetorical question, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" He's making the statement, "There's NO WAY that we who died to sin can still live in it!" If you think that salvation by faith alone means that you can continue living in sin, then you don't understand biblical faith. On the other hand, if you think we need law and rules to keep everyone in line, then you don't understand grace. There's something much deeper about the Gospel. Those who are in Christ have died to sin, and therefore cannot continue living in sin.

As we talked about in Sunday school last week, and as I also discussed in the sermon, this doesn't mean we no longer commit any sins. It doesn't mean perfection. But sin is no longer our master. Sin no longer has complete dominion over us. We are no longer enslaved to sin. We have a new master, and we have new desires, and we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and that He's so much greater than the hollow and deceptive pleasures of this world.

That's a quick review of last Sunday. This morning I'll trace the logic of this passage, and then I want to focus on the first part of verse 10 as we first think about the death of our Lord. Then we'll meditate on His resurrection and our resurrection with Him.

Verse 2 says that we have died to sin. In verses 3-4 Paul refers to baptism in order to illustrate the connection between Christ's death and resurrection and our death and resurrection. Then in verse 5 he speaks of our union with Christ: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Then in verse 10 he shows that Christ's death was a death to sin. "For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God." I think verse 2 is explained by the points made in verse 5

and in verse 10. We died to sin (verse 2), meaning we have been united to Christ in a death like His (verse 5), and Christ died to sin (verse 10).

Or if you start with verse 10, you can look at it like a simple syllogism. Premise 1: Christ died to sin (verse 10). Premise 2: We have been united to Christ in a death like his (verse 5). Conclusion: We have died to sin (verse 2).

The logic is the same regarding resurrection, as we'll focus on in the second half of this sermon. Christ was raised from the dead. We are united to Christ. We walk in newness of life.

Let's start in verse 10 and the truth that Christ died to sin, once for all. If our death to sin is our union to Christ in His death to sin, then we need to understand what it means that He died to sin, once for all. I'll highlight three aspects of this.

He Paid the Penalty for Sin

First, Christ died to sin in the sense that He accepted the penalty for sin. Verse 10 begins with the word, "for," showing that it is a ground or explanation for what has just been said. Look at verse 9. "We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." And we might ask, "Why does death no longer have dominion over him?" The answer is, "for" or "because" "the death he died he died to sin, once for all."

At the end of Romans 6 it says "the wages of sin is death." Christ had never sinned, and therefore he did not deserve death. But He took upon Himself the guilt of our sin, and therefore voluntarily put himself under death's dominion. In this way He died to sin in the sense that he accepted the penalty for sin. He died, fulfilling the legal and just punishment for sin. And He did this in our place, so that we can go free.

Before we move on, let this sink in for a moment. Sin deserves death. Eternal death. Spiritual death. Separation from God. Everlasting conscious torment is the only just penalty for sinning against our Holy God. And if it wasn't for Christ's death to sin, every one of us would be condemned to that punishment, which the Bible calls hell. But Christ died to sin, once for all, and by His death He purchased the salvation of those who belong to Him, His sheep, the elect. He suffered under the dominion of death and sin, in order that we could go free. He offered Himself as our substitute.

I hope that this truth will always be fresh and new and exciting for us, and that it will continually transform the way we live. Some people think, “Oh, yeah, I understand that Christ died for my sins.” That was important for me to understand back when I started the Christian life, but I’ve moved on to other things now. Many people assume, and some even preach, that the Gospel message is just the entrance gate to the Christian life. You have to walk through it to become a Christian, but once you’re a Christian you don’t need it anymore. You can move on to the other aspects of the Christian life, like Bible study and prayer and evangelism and discipleship and holiness and relationships and missions and theology etc.

But the Gospel is not something you move beyond. The cross is not something that you move beyond. None of those other things are distinct from the Gospel. They are out workings of the Gospel. To be understood rightly, Bible study and evangelism and holiness and all those other things need to be seen as integrally related to the cross. J. Knox Chamblin wrote, “The Spirit does not take his pupils beyond the cross, but ever more deeply into it.”

Don’t move beyond this truth that Christ died to sin. He died to accept the penalty for sin. He died in my place, and in your place, if you are trusting Him. And as we understand this more deeply, it will transform our Bible reading, because we will continually see the wonder of the cross written across the pages of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Our joy and excitement about the gospel will spill over in evangelism and discipleship as we seek to draw others into our enjoyment of the gospel. The gospel will shape the way we pray, and it will spur us on in our pursuit of holiness. It will transform our relationships: our marriages, and family relationships and friendships. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, as God in Christ forgave you.” Enriching your marriage and getting along with your family and having healthy friendships is not something that is beyond the gospel or separate from the gospel. The more deeply we’re impacted by the truth that Christ died for our sin, the more we will be freed to forgive others and show grace to others, and that’s what will produce vibrant, edifying relationships.

He Broke the Power of Sin

The second observation I want to make is that Christ also died to sin in the sense that He broke the power of sin. He overcame the power of sin and death. This, also, is seen in the connection with verse 9. “Death no longer has dominion over him.” Death exercised its dominion over Christ as Christ offered

Himself up to suffer the punishment for sin. But through His death, and then His resurrection, He triumphed over death. He shattered death's dominion.

Death entered the world when sin entered the world, as we learned in Romans 5. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were cast out of Eden, and all of humanity was condemned in Adam. The curse that God pronounced against the serpent in Genesis 3:15 was that there would be enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring (ultimately referring to Christ). God said to the serpent, "he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Satan bruised Christ's heel by putting him to death on the cross, a significant triumph, but not ultimate. Because in that death Christ bruised Satan's head. He triumphed over sin and death, and in the end He will throw Satan into the lake of fire to be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10). Satan inflicted a serious wound when He conspired to put Jesus to death. But God had ordained everything that took place, and in Christ's death, He defeated sin and death and Satan. Hebrews 2: 14 says "that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil."

Christ died to sin in that He suffered the penalty for sin, and in so doing He triumphed over death and sin and Satan. This is our great hope. We're no longer enslaved to sin. Sin no longer has dominion over us, because Christ died to sin. The penalty for sin has been paid, and we live in triumph over the power of sin and death. "Death is swallowed up in victory," as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" It's taken away, because Christ died to sin.

Once for All

The third observation about Christ's death is that He died to sin, *once for all*. The Greek word that is translated "once for all" is used in the book of Hebrews in several places. For instance, Hebrews 7:26-27 says, "For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this *once for all* when he offered up himself." Or in Hebrews 9:12, "he entered *once for all* into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."

Unlike the high priests, Jesus Christ did not need to make sacrifices daily. He came as the ultimate sacrifice, the once for all sacrifice. And as our passage in Romans says, “We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all.” Christ is so powerful and perfect and infinite, that in one sacrificial act He was able to satisfy the just punishment of sin, triumph over the power of sin and death, and do this once for all.

Christ’s Resurrection and Our Resurrection

Now let’s turn our focus from the death of Christ to the resurrection of Christ, and let’s consider the connection between Christ’s resurrection and our resurrection. In verses 3-4, as he’s using baptism as an illustration of our death to sin, he writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” And in verse 4 he expands the illustration to include the other piece of the analogy. Water baptism (being immersed in water), which is the ordinance at the beginning of the Christian life, not only symbolizes death, but also resurrection. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Here’s the connection. Just like Christ was raised from the dead, we are raised from the dead to walk in newness of life. This is why we can’t continue living in sin. This is why we’re different. The old self died. The old self was crucified, as verse 6 says. And now we’re new creatures. We walk in newness of life.

Verse 5 makes an even stronger connection between Christ’s resurrection and ours. “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” This is such a glorious verse, because it communicates such a glorious reality for believers. We are united to Christ! By trusting in Him, resting in Him, looking to Him as our only Savior, we have been united to Him. And do you know what that means? It means what is His becomes ours. His death on the cross is counted as payment for our sin. And His righteousness is credited to us so that we’re seen by God as perfect and sinless.

If you’ve been struggling with this idea of union, think of this illustration. In chapter 5 we learned about our union with Adam. We’re now seeing a clear statement about our union with Christ. As an analogy to these, think about the union of marriage. A man and a woman unite their lives together, and they become

one. They remain two distinct individuals. But in a mystical and profound way, the two become one. Now, here's a very practical outworking of that union that may help us think about these other unions which Paul is teaching us about. In marriage, the husband and wife ought to think of their money as *their money*. It's not: her money over here, and his money over there. I know there are some sad situations where finances may need to be separated for a time, but under normal circumstances a concrete implication of the oneness of the marriage is oneness in financial matters.

Here's the illustration. If I go out one day and decide to buy a boat, and I take on a huge amount of debt in order to get that boat, who else does that debt belong to? My poor wife. By virtue of her union with me in marriage, my debt is her debt. That's similar to what happened with Adam. The debt of his sin is credited as ours, because of our union with him. Now, on the flip side, when I bring home a paycheck, who else does that paycheck belong to? My wife. What is mine is hers. Similarly, Christ achieved righteousness which is credited as ours, and He erased our debt by dying on the cross. This is the Good News of our union with Christ!

Present of Future Resurrection?

Now, notice in verses 5 and 8 that future tense verbs are used in talking about our resurrection. In verse 5, "we *shall* certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." And that may not sound right coming right after verse 4, where walking in newness of life is not something for the future, but for the present. We died to sin, and we walk in newness of life (something that's already a reality, not something that is yet to come in the future). And we would expect verse 5 to say, "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we *have* certainly *been* united with him in a resurrection like his." But it doesn't say that. It's referring to a future resurrection, "we *shall* certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Verse 8 is the same way. "Now if we *have* died with Christ (past tense), we believe that we *will* also live with him (future tense)." Again, it's a future resurrection—something that has not yet happened.

But verse 4 refers to something that is already happening. We are already walking in newness of life. And verse 11 suggests the same. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." We're already alive to God in Christ Jesus. There are other passages, too, that speak even more clearly about our resurrection as something that has already happened. For instance, Ephesians 2:4-6, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we

were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (past tense) – by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him (past tense) and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” There our resurrection is spoken of as something that has already happened. Colossians 2:12, “having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised (past tense) with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

What are we to make of this? Have we already been raised, or have we not yet been raised? The answer is both. Our resurrection is already and not yet. This is another example of this already / not yet tension that we see over and over again in the Bible. Christ’s kingdom has already invaded the present evil age. That happened in His first coming. But His kingdom is not yet here in all its fullness. That will happen at His second coming. And in this interim period between His first and second coming, we live with the tension of a glorious kingdom that is already but not yet. It is already at work among us in powerful ways, but it has not yet been revealed in all of its fullness and glory. In this way we have already been raised to walk in newness of life, but we have not yet received our resurrection bodies or been fully delivered from the temptation to sin.

Here’s the encouragement: The resurrection to new life that we are already experiencing is a taste of what our future glorious resurrection will be. The joy that we have in Christ, which is now mixed with sorrow and sin and trials, will then become joy that is untainted by any sin or hardship. Now we have a delight in God, but we are so easily distracted and tempted and undisciplined and uncommitted and apathetic. But on that day when we are resurrected, all the shackles of this world will fall off, and we will worship our glorious God with such intensity and passion and delight, and we will do so forever.

Let’s press on toward that, brothers and sisters. That’s the great inheritance that is reserved for us, and the little bit we’ve tasted of it already ought to spur us on to greater holiness, greater purity, greater passion and a greater longing to be in His presence.

New Desires

The last thing I want to point us to in this passage is the fact that our newness of life in which we walk is due to a new set of desires that God gives to us. Let’s look at the imperatives (the commands) that Paul gives in verses 11-13. In verse 11, Paul, for the first time in this letter, gives some commands for us to follow. Everything up to this point has been doctrine—truth about who we

are and what God has been pleased to do in spite of who we are. Paul has spent a lot of time showing the depth of our sinfulness. And then he shows how God saves sinners. Now, finally, he mentions a piece of application. And the command he gives is not what we might expect. Look at the command in verse 11, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” The command is to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. That may not sound like a command, but that’s it. Paul is telling us to meditate on all these things he’s been saying in this chapter so far. Let it sink in. Dwell on it. Stand in awe of it. Know it to be true. These are not just words. This is reality. Because of our union with Christ, we have died to sin, and we have been raised to walk in newness of life. And the first instruction we get is simply to dwell on this truth and believe it.

Verse 12 continues with another command, “Let not sin *therefore* . . .” Take note of the “therefore.” In other words, he’s saying, Because you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, *therefore* don’t let sin reign in your mortal bodies. It is so freeing to me to see how the Bible gives us commands. These commands are so tightly bound to promises. Can you see that? Paul doesn’t just tell us, “Stop sinning!” “Don’t let sin reign in your mortal bodies.” To have rules like that imposed on our lives would be to live under law, to use the phrase Paul uses in verse 14. It would be rules without the grace to enable our obedience.

But that’s not what Paul is doing here. He has spent the first five chapters of this letter explaining God and sin and salvation by faith alone. And now in chapter six he has spent the first ten verses telling us how we have died to sin and been raised to walk in newness of life because of our union with Christ. It’s only after all of these truths and promises that he tells us first to reflect upon the reality that you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. And then, verse 12, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.” Verse 13 continues the instruction, “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.” And then, Paul concludes this section with another promise. The commands are sandwiched between promises. The truth of Christ’s death and resurrection (and therefore our death and resurrection) comes before these commands, and the promise that sin will not be master over us comes after the commands. These promises give us the power to fight.

As verse 12 says, we must refuse to obey sin's passions, or more literally, sin's desires. Here's the point about desires. When we died to sin and were raised to walk in newness of life, God implanted in our hearts a new set of desires. Before God saved us, all we desired was sin. We desired sinful pleasure. We desired praise from other people. We were selfish and prideful and jealous and hateful. And we might have been very nice people in the world's estimation. We might have been kind, helpful, successful, upstanding citizens, even upstanding church members. And yet everything ultimately revolved around self.

But when God saves a person, He gives that person a new heart—a new heart that has new desires. This new heart desires God. This new heart understands that sin fails to bring the pleasure it promises, but God offers pleasure that is infinitely greater. And once we have this new heart and new desires, living the Christian life is about striving to stoke the flames of these new desires and smother the old desires.

Ephesians 4:22 says, “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.” Sin tempts us through desires. It attacks our desires by offering us pleasure. But the promises it makes are deceitful. Sin lies to us. The pleasure it offers, it cannot produce, or at least not for very long. We must see through the deceitful desires of sin and prefer a higher a pleasure. We must pursue a greater delight in God so that the temptations of sin hold less sway over us.

How do we do this? We must consider that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We must dwell on the fact that we have a new master, who has given us new desires, and a new power to rise above the deceitful desires of this world and experience much higher pleasures. The commands in these verses are essentially to “become what you are.” You are dead to sin. You are alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore die to sin. Live to God. Become what you are.

This truth that we are dead to sin and alive to God, or in other words that we have been given a new set of desires, this is the answer to the question back in verse 1. “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” The answer is: We've died to sin, and therefore we cannot still live in it. We have a new set of desires. We have been set free from sin's passions, and the reason we cannot continue to live in sin is because we don't want to. Those who have been set free from sin don't WANT to continue living in sin. Just like a slave set free shouldn't ever want to go back to his cruel master. We fight sin because we have new desires. We long to experience more of God and less of sin.

I long for everyone here, and everyone in this city, to know and love the Gospel. The Gospel is such a radical thing! It's so much deeper than changing a few habits. It's so much deeper than following some rules. It's so much deeper than doing good deeds. It's death, and resurrection. Do you see how drastic this is? Jesus doesn't want to come into your life and tweak something here and adjust something there. He's not just wanting to help you overcome some bad habits and develop better ones. He wants to put you to death, and then raise you from the dead as a new creature.

Jesus is an awesome Savior! He is worthy of all praise and honor. And He is the only One who can bring eternal delight to our souls. I pray that even in this moment He will give you eyes to see Him for who He is. If you are an unbeliever and have never truly come to know Him, I pray that you will have eyes to see the futility of sinful pleasure, and to see the great joy of following Him. Cry out to Him. Repent of your sin and put your trust in Christ alone for forgiveness. He is our only hope.

If you are a believer this morning . . . If you do have a desire for God, even if that desire is mixed with sinful desires, as it will most certainly be in this age. Here's Paul's encouragement and exhortation to us: Become who you are. Consider the breathtaking truth that you are dead to sin and alive to God. You are no longer enslaved to sin. Sin will have no dominion over you. We are free. And we have new desires to draw us to what is truly good and beautiful. Dwell on the truth of who you are in Christ, and let us live according to that reality. May we fight with all our might to strengthen our desire for God and kill our desire for sin. And may we be strengthened in this fight by fixing our eyes on our future resurrection, when sin and death and tears will be no more and we will enjoy the presence of our risen Lord for unending ages.