

## Our Union with Christ

Romans 6:5-14

*Studies in Romans #24*

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**I** think a passage like this is hard for us to grasp. We live in a culture in which if you claim to be born a certain way, then you cannot change. Or we see criminals become repeat offenders because there's nothing they can do about it. Or when we get caught in sin we say, "It's just who I am." But there's one difference with how we should think and act as Christians: God's almighty transforming grace. Amen?

And so the big question Paul is answering here is this: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (v. 1) In other words, since we cannot out sin God's super-abundant grace and we have already been forgiven of past, present, *and* future sins, can we consciously go on sinning knowing that God will forgive us anyway? And we hear the resounding, "By no means" (v. 2). We cannot live this way because through faith as its is tangibly illustrated to us in our baptism we have been vitally united to Jesus Christ's death and resurrection; therefore we are to flee sin and live for God. We are united to Jesus Christ. Think of a baby. The baby has a birth certificate with its name and the names of its parents. This is the title deed

to its existence and relation to the mother. But its relationship is not exhausted by a legal piece of paper. It has a vital connection to its mother. In the same way so do we with Jesus

### **Our Union with His Death (vv. 5-7)**

Paul first explains our *union with Christ's death*. When we says, **for if**, he's not putting us in doubt; it's a rhetorical way of saying "since." **For if** or **since we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his** (v. 5). This is his major thesis. But what does this actually mean for us?

Then Paul says **we know that our old self was crucified with him** (v. 6). **Old self** interprets the phrase "old man," which communicates better, I believe. Why? Because to say **old self** might lead us to think that what Paul saying is that you are like Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde, with two halves of your personality, and that the Mr. Hyde part only was crucified. No, what Paul is saying is that who you were in Adam before Christ was crucified. And the reason for this was **in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin** (v. 6). **The body of sin** is our sinful and selfish nature. And it was **brought to nothing**.

Think about a wild lion that is taken into captivity. It has to be de-clawed so it cannot do what it did before. The penalty that was due for our sin before Christ has been rendered powerless against us! It has been de-clawed. It's the same word Paul uses when he says in Ephesians 2:15 that the enmity between Jew and Gentile was "abolished." How certain is that? Absolute. In the same way it is with our sin nature. How is this? **For one who has died has been set free from sin** (v. 7). To be **set free from sin** is to be declared free of all charges against us (Rom 8:33). We are freed from guilt and at peace (5:1).

So I have **been united with Jesus in a death like his**. This means we can say that when Jesus was crucified, I was crucified there and then with him. On the other hand, we say that when I believe in him it's as if I go back and experience that crucifixion, or better, that by faith I bring the crucifixion up to my moment in history. But my union with his doesn't end there. I am also **certainly...united with him in a resurrection like his** (v. 5).

### **Our Union with His Resurrection (vv. 8–10)**

And as Paul explains our *union with Christ's resurrection*, note how he begins the same way with the rhetorical *if* or since **we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him** (v. 8). Let me illustrate

with marriage. All that a husband has at the time of marriage becomes his wife's. More likely, all that he doesn't have becomes his wife's!

What's interesting is how as he's explaining our union with Christ that he goes on to focus more on Jesus' resurrection than on us: **we know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him** (v. 9). Jesus died once for all; he cannot die again because as second Adam, death has no authority over him anymore. If you've ever read Tolkien's, *The Two Towers*, there's the account of Gandalf the Grey battling the Balrog. Gandalf said he passed through fire and the deepest water, fought from the lowest dungeon to the highest peak in order to defeat the Balrog. But in doing so, he died himself. But when he arose, he was no longer the Grey but Gandalf the White. Death touched him once, but would not do so again.

Paul states his point again in verse 10: **for the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God**. And because I believe in Jesus, Paul says in Ephesians 2 that God, "made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5–6).

## **Our Communion with Him (v. 11–14 cf. Col. 3)**

I have died with Christ; I have been raised with Christ. Now what? Our union with Christ results in *our communion with him*. And you see in verses 11–14 two phrases that are key: **so...also** and **therefore**. Paul is saying, “Because of the truth that you are dead to sin and alive to God,” now you are to respond. Here Paul transitions from the indicatives or statements of truth to the imperatives or the exhortations to action. There are two ways we participate in communion with Christ.

### *In Reckoning (vv. 11)*

First, I commune with Jesus Christ *in reckoning* myself dead and alive: **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus** (v. 11). Did you catch that? Up to this point Paul has you have died with Christ and you have been made alive with Christ. That’s the principle of who you are. This is your identity. Now he says practically you have to **consider** yourself to be this on a daily basis.

### *In Presenting (vv. 12–14)*

Second, I commune with Jesus Christ *in presenting* my alive self to God to serve him. He says, **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body—**

not your body *per se* but how it's used—to **make you obey its passions** (v. 12). Sin is always trying to re-exert its authority over us. It's like a political party that is trounced in an election, but always trying to get back into power. So how do I do this? Look at verses 13–14:

**Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness** (v. 13). **Instruments** is the ancient military term for Greek soldiers: a hoplite. Sin is like an evil king who needs to enlist our bodies as his weapons. And he even pays! With death! (6:23)

Instead Paul says, **but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness** (v. 13). God is my new king and I owe him allegiance; so I give myself to him.

Then Paul tells us why we make this presentation of ourselves: **For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace** (v. 14). Not being under law means you are not under a principle of works as the driving force of your life. You are under new ownership: the grace of God!

You are united Christ in his death and resurrection; live like it! Amen.