

## **Introduction**

One of the highlights of every year for followers of Jesus is the celebration of the anniversary of his resurrection. That is on its way. Next Sunday morning we will gather for a morning resurrection service at Honey Creek park. And then, of course, we will be here at the regular time. And undoubtedly you will be greeted with those glorious words, "Christ is risen!" Some will respond, "Christ is risen indeed!" If Christ is not risen then we are in the wrong place doing the wrong thing. Without the resurrection of Christ, we have no gospel to preach. But the gospel of God, the good news from the Lord is about more than Jesus' resurrection. It is the uniqueness of Christ's death that makes his resurrection so important.

When Jesus commissioned the apostles to go into all the world, they went as his witnesses. The message they preached was about Jesus. It consisted basically of three points. First, you killed him; he died. Second, God raised him; he lives. And third, we are his witnesses; we speak. The substance of the apostolic message to which we are witnesses is twofold: the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. Those who belong to Christ are united with him in both. The Apostle Paul puts the spotlight squarely on this reality in Romans 6. For the next two weeks this is where we are going to study. We will examine the benefits of our union with Christ in his death and his Resurrection. Today we are focusing on our union with him in his death.

[Read Text Romans 6:1-11]

The Apostle Paul comes to talk about the believer's union with Christ as he is addressing the grace factor. In chapter 5 of Romans, Paul explains that sin came into the world through one man. God then gave the law because without it people do not take sin seriously. The result of the law is that people sinned even more, trespassing the law. But, says Paul, where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. He then anticipates a line of reasoning that would advocate living in sin. If an increase of sin means an increase of grace, then should those who are justified should continue to

live in sin so grace can be even more abundant? "No," says Paul, "absolutely not." The reason is because of what has happened in those who have been united with Christ. They have been united with him in his death and resurrection. And the results enable believers to live a transformed life. In fact, the results of the believer's union with Christ INSURE a transformed life. Our study of this text explains how that is. We start by considering that our union with Christ is . . .

### **I. A Matter of Fundamental Importance.**

A. At the beginning of verse 3, Paul asks, "Do you not know?" He is asking, "Can it be that you have not yet learned this principle?" Here is a way of expressing that what he is talking about is so basic and so fundamental that it is one of the first things a person would learn if he knew the gospel at all.

B. Jesus also used this approach when he dealing with Jewish leaders. The Pharisees confronted his disciples for picking heads of grain on the Sabbath, and Jesus confronted them regarding their knowledge of the scriptures, "Have you not read what David did?" On another occasion, Pharisees were testing Jesus with a question about divorce, and Jesus said to them, "Have you not read where God said "a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife?"

C. Here is a way of correcting ignorance and pointing to a clear teaching that should be understood. "Did I not tell you to clean your room?" Did I not tell you to take out the trash?" Parents, have you ever spoken like that? I know I heard it when I was a kid. And no doubt have said those kinds of things as an adult. The Romans are hearing from Paul as he addresses the very idea that a Christ-follower might continue willfully living in sin so grace might increase. Here is something you should already know, but in case you do not, here it is. So what we are looking at this morning is something we should all know, and so just in case we do not, here it is.

Our union with Christ is

### **II. A Matter of Death with Christ**

Paul asks in verse 3, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?"

A. The phrase "baptized into Christ Jesus" points to those who are identified with Jesus. It is those who are "in Christ," who are trusting in Christ. These are the ones who have taken up their cross and follow him, who belong to him. It is those whom Jesus identified in John 10 as "my sheep." "They hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." These are the people out of the world whom the Father gave the son. They believe in Jesus. Through faith they are united with him.

B. And these who have been joined together with Christ have been united with him in his death. The wording Paul uses is "baptized into his death." The picture of water baptism is helpful here. A little over a month ago we had the joy of baptizing followers of Jesus right here. Each one got in the tank and they were plunged down into the water. They were immersed in such a way that for a split second they were completely in the water.

When Paul speaks of those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, whose identity has become one with Christ, he draws upon the image of baptism to give us a picture of this union. Believers are plunged into Christ. They are immersed into him. And this is the kind of union in which there is no extraction. When we baptize, we immerse, but we quickly lift the believer out of the water lest they drown. But gloriously our union with him is not a momentary dipping but a permanent immersive union. And this baptism into Christ involves a baptism into the death of Christ. We were plunged into the death of Christ. We were immersed in it. Having become one with Jesus, we are one with his death. His death is our death.

C. Paul continues, "we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death." This statement reiterates the previous one. Burial is confirmation of his death. When Paul summarizes the elements of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he declares, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day." The thing about the burial of Jesus is it confirms his death. He didn't just swoon on the cross, go unconscious for a while and then re-awaken. He truly died, and he was buried, and he remained in the tomb until the third day. And being united with him, we share with him in his death. It is not a temporary

spiritual state of unconsciousness but death. Verse 5 restates the emphasis of union with Christ's death. "We have been united with him in the likeness of his death." His death is also the death of those who come to Christ in faith. And though we are alive, we have died a death like his.

Our Union with Christ's Death is . . .

### **III. A Matter of Two Key Features**

We are going to explore this text's emphasis on resurrection next week. So at this point we skip down in the text to verses 6-10 to see two important features of Christ's death in which we share.

A. Feature #1. Through our union with Christ in His death, we are set free from sin's authority over us. Look how Paul explains this.

1. He says, "Our old self was crucified." Who we are in Christ is our new self. Who we were before we were baptized into Christ is our old self. That was our pre-Christ self. In Ephesians 4:22, Paul speaks of the old self. He writes, "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires." It is the spiritually dead person we were in Adam with all our proclivities to sin and ungodliness.

All human beings are conceived in slavery to sin. A child of a slave is a slave. And that is what human beings are by nature because of our forefather's sin. David said, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The condition is described by Paul in Ephesians 2:1-3 this way. "We were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience . . . and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." We were slaves to sin. We could not do other than sin. Tom Schreiner puts it this way: "Slavery to sin is the lot of all those in Adam. Unbelievers do not possess freedom to choose the contrary. ... This does not mean that sin is forced on them against their will. It means that they invariably choose to sin because sin is the circumference of their desires."

For believers, who now have a new self, this person dead in trespasses and sins is the old man. The rest of the world is still in that old condition.

2. As Christ was hung upon the tree, we who belong to him were hung there too in our old selves. And our old self died there with him. That old self was destroyed. It was brought to nothing. Here is the picture. Jesus hung on the cross enduring great agony, the agony of the cruelest form of execution the world has ever known. At last he said, "it is finished." And he breathed his last and yielded up his spirit. His body became a lifeless corpse. He was dead. No life there. Dying with him, our old self became a lifeless corpse. The body of sin was brought to nothing. It was destroyed!

Destruction is generally a sad and repugnant thing. The mess left in the wake of a hurricane or a tornado or an earthquake is ugly and sad. The destruction remaining in the aftermath of war is also horrific. And no doubt as they took the body of Jesus down from the cross, it was a sad, sad testimony of the destruction of sin and death. But there is a certain beauty in this death. The fact is that when I imagine the lifeless body of Jesus, I see a picture of the condition of my old self. That old self has been destroyed. That enemy has been brought to nothing!

And the beauty of that destruction is wonderful for the one who is in Christ. That one is no longer enslaved to sin. The significance of our old man being crucified with Christ is that he has been done away. Those who are in Christ have been delivered from the mastery of the old man. He is no longer their master. He is no longer in charge. There is now freedom to abstain from sin and obey God! Paul's words are these: "Our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin."

B. Through our union with Christ in His death, we are set free from sin's mastery and authority over us, but now here is feature #2. We are also set free from sin's power over us. Through our union with Christ in His death, we have died to sin and are no longer under its penalty or its power.

Look down to verses 10-11. "For the death he died he died to sin, once for all," now verse 11, "so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin." These words reinforce what Paul had said at the outset of the chapter, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?"

Christ died to sin once for all. He never has to die again. Once for all Christ has satisfied sin's penalty. Once for all he has rendered sin incapable of keeping his people from pursuing righteousness and obedience to God. Peter puts it this way in 1 Peter 2:24: He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

We therefore should consider ourselves dead to sin. We are like a lifeless corpse before it. It has not the power to force us to disobey God. It has not the authority. We are no longer operating under the prince of the power of the air.

Our union with Christ's death is . . .

#### **IV. A Matter of Two Important Lessons**

A. God's grace is truly amazing. At the close of the fifth chapter Paul extols the grace of God. The law came in to increase the trespass. But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more! In the last week I have shared with several of you my recent amazement at King Manasseh. He followed godly Hezekiah, but he was anything but godly. He is notoriously one of the most wicked of Jewish kings. 2 Chronicles 33 describes Manasseh's 55-year reign. "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the Lord . . . And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. And he burned his sons as an offering in the valley of the son of Hinnom and used fortune telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. The carved image of the idol he made he set in the house of God. . . . Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel. The Lord spoke to Manasseh and the people, but they paid no attention. So finally the Lord sent the Assyrians against Manasseh. They bound him and took him away to Babylon. And then something amazing happened! In great distress he humbled himself before the Lord and sought his favor.

And where sin escalated, permeated, and proliferated, grace abounded all the more. God was moved and heard the plea of Manasseh and brought him back to Jerusalem, and Manasseh knew the Lord was God. He was a changed man. He took away the foreign gods and the idol he had made from the house of the Lord. He restored the house of the Lord and offered to the Lord sacrifices of peace and thanksgiving, and he commanded the Judah to serve the Lord. I see a glorious conversion.

Where sin abounds, God's grace abounds. And it abounds in this that he frees us from our old self and from sin so that we do not continue to live in it. It is absurd for a person to think that grace gives license to further sinning. And when we are baptized into Christ, grace abounds not to endorse further sinning but to sustain a repentant heart. Praise God for his bounding grace!

B. Lesson #2. God, through the death of Christ has not only removed from those who come to faith the penalty of sin, but also the authority and power of sin so that we might walk in obedience and righteousness. And so we should, and we will. The death of our old self and our death to sin in Christ is not a possibility but a fact for those who are in Christ. And the result is that we in fact will not continue to live in a pattern of willful sin. John states it this way in 1 John 3:9: "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God."

John MacArthur states, "The idea that a Christian can continue to live habitually in sin not only is unbiblical but irrational. Christians obviously are able to commit many of the sins they committed before salvation, but they are not able to live perpetually in those sins as they did before."

So we need to heed the exhortation of Paul in verses 12 and 13. Do not let sin reign in you and do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Don't do it. You are free to present them to God. Motivated by the grace of God, obey him. But also obey God because you have the freedom to do so!

## **Conclusion**

Will you sin even though you have died to sin? Indeed. There is no sinlessness until the work of God is completed and we take our place in heaven. If anyone says they have no sin, they lie and the truth is not in them. But if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things passed away, behold new things have come. Because of the death of Christ, those who are in Christ are set free not only from sin's penalty but also from its power. And so this week as you think about Jesus' death and his suffering, dwell much on the fact that he became sin so as to satisfy God's wrath and satisfy divine justice for the sins of his people. But dwell much on this reality as well. He died not only to remove the penalty of sin but also the power and authority of sin so that you can obey him, so that you can do what pleases him and so you can be happy doing so.