

## DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE IN CHRIST

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Praise God, this is true every day and not just on Easter Sunday.

First Corinthians 15:1-4 says,

**1** Now I make known to you, brothers,  
the gospel which I proclaimed as good news to you,  
which also you received,  
in which also you stand,  
**2** by which also you are saved,  
if you hold fast the word which I proclaimed to you as good news,  
unless you believed for nothing.  
**3** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,  
that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,**  
**4** and that **He was buried,**  
and that **He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ...**  
**(1 Corinthians 15:1-4, 2022 LSB)**

This is our salvation and hope. It is our reconciliation with God and one another. It is our peace and hope. We have a Savior who died in our place, taking our death upon Himself. We have a Savior who lives to make intercession for us, so that, as Romans 8:34 says, no one can condemn us:

**34** who is the one who condemns? **[Answer? No one! And why not?]**  
**[Because]** Christ Jesus is **[present tense]** He who died **[past tense]**,  
yes, rather who was **[past tense]** raised,  
who is *constantly* **[also present tense]** at the right hand of God,  
who also *constantly* intercedes **[again, present tense]** for us.  
**(Romans 8:34, 2022 LSB)**

It is not just Jesus' work in history that saves us, but His ongoing ministry. Without a living Savior, Christianity is nothing, and we are still under God's judgment, dead in our

sins.

The thing is, we are living in the in-between. We see this frequently in Scripture. We see Noah and his family on the ark, delivered from the flood, while the flood still rages around them. We see Israel in the wilderness, delivered from slavery in Egypt but not yet in the promised land. We see David anointed as king but not yet on the throne. And we see the earthly church of Jesus Christ, built by Him but neither perfected nor complete.

In a few weeks, as we continue our study through Matthew, we will carefully examine what his Gospel says about Jesus' death and resurrection. This morning, I want to take you to Romans 5 & 6 to consider just some of the benefits we have because of Jesus' resurrection.

Let's pray and then give our attention to God's good Word.

## JUSTIFIED BY HIS DEATH, SAVED BY HIS LIFE

*Romans 5:9-10*

Let's begin where we left off last week.

**9** Much more then, **having now been justified by His blood** [His death, as v. 10 says],

**we shall be saved** from the wrath of God through Him.

**10** For if while we were enemies **we were reconciled** to God through the death of His Son,

much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved** by His life.

**(Romans 5:9-10, 2022 LSB)**

If your faith is in Jesus Christ, you have been justified by Jesus' blood and reconciled to God through Jesus' death. These are really parallel phrases that describe the same event. We were born under the judgment of God because of our sin nature. Our many sins only added to His judgment against us. Those who sin die, as God told Adam in Genesis 2:17. Sin earns the wage of death (Romans 6:23).

By the way, the Bible describes saving faith as ongoing, consistent faith in Jesus

Christ, not simply a moment or moments of faith every once in a while.

For those who believe in Jesus Christ with ongoing, consistent faith, the blessings of justification and reconciliation are fully accomplished. We *have been* justified. We *were* reconciled to God.

On the other hand, salvation is described in past tense, present tense, and future tense.

- Past tense: **by grace you HAVE BEEN saved through faith** (Ephesians 2:8).
- Present tense: **For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who ARE BEING saved, it is the power of God** (First Corinthians 1:18).
- Future tense: **we SHALL BE saved from the wrath of God through Him ... we SHALL BE saved by His life** (Romans 5:9-10).

You see, your salvation began before creation when the Father foreknew you as His own, precious child (Romans 8:29). The foundation of your salvation was firmly established when Jesus died in your place and rose from the dead. It became real to you in a moment of history when the Holy Spirit softened your heart, granted you faith, joined you with Jesus in His death and resurrection, and granted you repentance. From that moment on, you could truly say, "I have been saved." But your salvation continues day by day through the will of the Father, the intercession of the Son, and the labor of the Holy Spirit so that you can also truly say, "I am being saved." And until the day the Father finishes His saving work in you, you can truly say, "I shall be saved."

Being trapped in time as we are, we realize that almost nothing is guaranteed. We are almost certain to see our daughter Grace this summer. *Almost*. Lots of things could prevent her from making it home. As I write these words, we hope to have an outdoor cookout on Easter Sunday with our church family, but it really depends on the weather.

But God is not trapped in time, and His works are not dependent upon time. For God, there is no difference between *have been* and *shall be*. Both are equally guaranteed. Can anything change your history so that you didn't believe in Jesus at whatever point you did? Of course not; it's been done. Can anything change your future so that, while having been reconciled in the past, you are not saved in the future? No, absolutely not. What God

says about the future is just as certain as what happened in the past.

Having been **reconciled to God through the death of His Son**, we shall be saved by **His life**. I don't know exactly where Jesus is right now; that is, I couldn't show you His location on a map. But I can tell you exactly what He is doing. Hebrews 7:25 says **He always lives to make intercession** for those who draw near to God through Him. Right now, Jesus is praying for you, and me, and all of His people. That is the key element of building His church. Please understand this: Jesus Christ is not preoccupied with "running the universe," whatever that means. He doesn't have His hands full with the troubles of the world. He holds everything together by the Word of His power (Hebrews 1:3), and it costs Him zero effort. The idea that you are too small for Him to pay attention to is a lie from the pit of hell. The idea that you need the intercession of others in heaven is equally wrong and equally demonic.

He always lives to make intercession for His people. That doesn't mean He is praying for one person at a time. Within the mysterious relations of the Trinity, the Son of God and the Holy Spirit are interceding for us with the Father right now. Everything about you is being lifted up in prayer at the same time, and the Father is receiving and answering those prayers at the same moment. We pray for one thing at a time; it's all we can do. But the Son and the Spirit are constantly holding up everything concerning you throughout all time, and the Father is constantly receiving and answering "yes." God doesn't change, which means that there has never been a time when that intercession has not been taking place. A mystery? Yes, certainly.

Jump ahead with me to Romans 5:20-21.

## **SIN & DEATH, GRACE & LIFE**

*Romans 5:20-21*

**20** Now the Law came in so that the transgression would increase,  
**but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,**  
**21** so that, as sin reigned in death,  
even so grace would reign through righteousness  
to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**(Romans 5:20–21, 2022 LSB)**

**The Law came in to increase transgressions.** This doesn't mean the Law *causes* transgression. Rather, just like a scalpel that opens up and reveals an infected wound. Paul says in Romans 7:7-8, **I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment [the Law], worked out in me coveting of every kind** (Romans 7:7-8). In other words, sin was present in Paul but hidden. It wasn't until the Law said to him, **You shall not covet** that coveting erupted within him.

Saving sinners required that their sins be revealed, so God gave us His Law to force our sin out into the open, where we could not deny it. Those who are without the written Law are not off the hook; their own conscience serves as a substitute. It's not a perfect substitute, to be sure, but it is sufficient to get the job done.

But we see that **where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.** God did not reveal our sin through His Law to destroy us, but that we would be saved. Sin can never outweigh or dominate the grace of God. Sin seems deadly until God pours His grace out upon us, and then sin is drowned and washed away.

You can think about it this way. Your sin has done nothing but steal from you. It has stolen your peace, your contentment, your joy, your delight in life, and everything meaningful. Left on its own it will steal your very soul. But when God's grace overwhelmed sin, it gave you back infinitely more than sin ever stole. He doesn't give grace by the thimbleful or cupful, or even by the oceanful. His grace is given without measure. It is given in its entirety.

There is no question that sin reigned over you in death. But when the Father poured out His grace upon you, grace began to reign in your life. By His grace, you have been justified – declared righteous. By the Holy Spirit, you are being sanctified – transformed a little bit every day. In the end, grace will have its way, and you will have eternal life.

Oh, I want it all now, don't you? But where would it go? There isn't yet room in us for every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). They are promised to us, and are ours according to that promise. But we must be built up and grown until we are able to take hold of them. That only happens by His grace as we trust in Jesus Christ.

Oh, amazing grace, how sweet the sound! He left His Father's throne above, so free,  
so infinite His grace! See the price of our redemption, see the Father's plan unfold,  
bringing many sons to glory: grace unmeasured, love untold! When through fiery trials  
thy pathway shall lie, His grace all-sufficient shall be our supply!

But overwhelming our sin with grace was just the beginning. Jesus didn't die on the  
cross merely to reverse our eternal destiny. He died to give us abundant life, not just in the  
sky in the dear by and by, but abundant life today, at this very moment.

Let's keep reading a few verses into Romans 6.

## DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE IN CHRIST

*Romans 6:1-7*

How should we live in light of God's conquering grace?

**1** What shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? [There's the question.]

**2** May it never be! [There's the answer.]

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? [There's the reason.]

**(Romans 6:1-2, 2022 LSB)**

Do you remember dying to sin? I don't either. Paul is not talking about our physical  
death but our union with Jesus in His death on the cross:

**3** Or do you not know

that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus  
were baptized into His death?

**(Romans 6:3, 2022 LSB)**

Baptism here is not water baptism. Water baptism is just a picture of what has already  
happened in the spiritual realm. It is a physical reenactment of our regeneration in Christ.  
That's why *biblical* baptism is *believer* baptism – it is a picture of what *has* already  
happened, not a picture of what we *hope* will happen someday. And that's also why biblical

baptism is by immersion. It is a picture of being completely and fully joined with Jesus in His death and resurrection, immersed with Him in His death so that we may be fully united with Him in His resurrection.

Now, why has the Lord done all this for us? Why has He joined us with Jesus in His death and resurrection?

First, **so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.** Without question, that new life will be fully ours in eternity. **For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.**

And yet, we are not waiting until the resurrection for our new life to begin. If you are in Christ, your new life has already begun. Our **old nature was crucified with Jesus in order that our body of sin might be done away with.** The old man, the old nature, is every aspect of our slavery to sin, including the sinful way we respond to the world around us and our natural inclination toward sin and rebellion. That old nature is done away with, crucified with Jesus on the cross **so that we are no longer slaves of sin.** Our death with Christ brought our justification to completion.

Now, we have truly been joined to Jesus in His death and resurrection from a spiritual point of view, but we have not yet died or been raised physically. Sin continues to exist within our physical bodies, and so Paul commands us in Romans 6:12, **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.** We are very accustomed to sin and rebellion. It is our natural response to the world. It is still what feels comfortable and familiar to us. Praise God, our enslavement to sin has ended. But, honestly, we didn't only sin because we were slaves to it. We sinned because it was natural, comfortable, and quite often pleasant to us.

That's a hard truth to face, I know, but there is a wonderful, positive side to it. Having been freed from our slavery to sin, we can now begin to learn to live in newness of life. We have the privilege as disciples of Jesus Christ and children of God to learn how to trust and obey Him in every area. We began life as sinners and never knew anything but spiritual death. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life for the first time. We are raised to understandings that we never had before. We are raised to desires and hopes that we never

had before. We truly become new creations in Him, just as Second Corinthians 5:17 says.

## BRINGING IT HOME

*Romans 6:8-14*

We don't have to look hard to see how these truths are applied to our lives.

Romans 6:8-9 is the first point of application: faith in what Jesus has done for us. **Now if we died with Christ** – that is, if we trust Him and have been born again in Him – **we believe that we shall also live with Him.** To be born again is to be spiritually regenerated, but this is speaking of our entire being, physical as well as spiritually, being raised from the dead. That hasn't happened yet for any believers. Saints in heaven are awaiting the resurrection just as we are. And when we are raised, since we **know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again,** we will never die again, either. **Death is no longer master over Him,** and when we have been raised in Him, it will hold no terrors for us.

**In brief, trust in the salvation you have received, even though it's still in process.**

The second point to make is in Romans 6:10-11. **For the life that He died, He died to sin once for all [time], but the life that He [now] lives, He lives to God. Even so, consider yourselves to be [equally] dead to sin, and [equally] alive to God in Christ Jesus.** What does it mean to consider ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ? It means that we must work to change how we think about ourselves. Oh, friends, we go back and forth. It's easy to think of ourselves as dead to sin and alive to God when a sinful conscience doesn't burden us and when we have heard the Scriptures preached and worshiped our God. But it's so hard to think of ourselves as dead to sin when sin is pounding at the door and when God *seems* to be far away. Second Corinthians 5:7 says that **we live by faith and not by sight,** not by experiences, sensations, emotions, or self-perceptions. Faith is always in God's Word, so what does His Word say? It says that if – and perhaps it's a big *if* – we have died with Christ, we shall, without question, also live with Him in the resurrection. That promise is so guaranteed that right now, before our physical resurrection has taken place, we are to think of ourselves as though it took place a million years ago.



**In brief, live as though you are already raised from the dead.**

And finally, **Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.** Resist sin; fight it; stop letting it control your life.

**And do not go on presenting your members as sin as instruments of unrighteousness.** Sin doesn't exist in a vacuum; it needs something to work with. If your issue is lust, then stop letting sin use your eyes and imagination. If your issue is gossip, stop letting sin feed on stories and rumors. If your issue is pride, stop believing the lies sin tells you.

Instead, **present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.** We were created in God's image to be His servants as well as His children. Serving others is built into us. When Adam sinned, he rebelled against serving Yahweh and began to serve sin. Jesus died to free us from that indentured servitude to sin, not to make us free agents in creation, but to restore us to our rightful place as servants of the Most High God.

**For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.** The complete fulfillment of our freedom is yet in the future, as the text says: **For sin shall not be master over you.** While our freedom is not yet complete and won't be as long as we are in these bodies of sin (Romans 6:6), it has begun. Sin no longer has any right to dominate us; it is no longer our master. This last bit is an important key: our strength in fighting against sin is not the Law of God but the grace of God. The Law threatens us with punishment for failure. The grace of God strengthens us in our weakness, forgives our sins, and builds us up for the next battle.

Beloved, Jesus Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! He bore our sins on the cross. He lives now to intercede for us, and He never stops His intercessory work. He came to destroy the devil's destructive works, replacing death with life, wickedness with godliness, and despair with hope. Keep your eyes on Him as the days pass!

Let's pray.

