



What an encouraging, Christ-exalting worship service this has been thus far! What a blessing to see so many believers go public with their faith, testifying of God's saving grace in their lives. How thankful I am that our text in Romans this morning ties in beautifully with these baptisms that we have witnessed and what that means for us as believers.

As we resume our series in Romans today, I thank God that in his providence, he had this particular passage scheduled to be preached on this particular Sunday, long before these baptisms were scheduled to take place. Today's text is relevant not only to the believers who were baptized today, but to *all* baptized believers – whether you were baptized today or decades ago.

So, I hope you will listen carefully to what the Lord says to us in this portion of his Word. Even though I will be preaching a shorter sermon than usual, it is no less significant. The theme of this passage is . . .

### ***DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD***

#### **Romans 6:1-14**

That's a pretty big deal, isn't it? This spiritual reality of the Christian life is conveyed powerfully through the ordinance of baptism.

#### ***Baptism portrays death to sin and new life in Christ.***

Paul begins Romans 6 with back-to-back questions: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul raises these questions in light of what he stated a couple of verses earlier, in Romans 5:20: "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." If God's law, such as the Ten Commandments, was given to show us how sinful we are, but no matter how sinful we are, God's grace is always greater, then why not "keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?" (Rom. 6:1 NLT). You might remember from our study back in Romans 3 that Paul's opponents slanderously charged Paul and his fellow preachers of the gospel with teaching this very thing – that the more evil we do, the more good God does, so we should just do it.

My guess is that no one in this room would say such a thing, and it's unlikely that any other professing Christian would either. But this view of sin and God's grace is more common than we think – not because of what people say but because of how they actually live.

That's why many first-century Christians felt that the way to keep believers in line was to have them keep the law of Moses. But Paul trusted the gospel to do what the law could never do. As John Bunyan, the author of the classic book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, famously wrote:

*“Run, John, run!” the Law commands  
But gives neither feet nor hands.  
Better news the gospel brings:  
It bids me fly and gives me wings!*

The law gives us God's standard of righteousness without giving us the ability to keep it. That's why Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience in our place and to die as a spotless, substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf, so that God could declare us righteous on account of our faith in him. Our union with Christ by faith in his death and resurrection is portrayed in baptism. It portrays not only *pardon* for sin, but also the *power* to overcome sin because of our new life in Christ.

That's the truth that Paul presses on us beginning in Romans 6 as he transitions from our justification (being declared righteous by God by our faith in Christ) to our *sanctification* (the progressive work of God in us and with us that makes us less and less sinful and more and more like Jesus in our actual lives).

Paul provides the initial explanation at the beginning of chapter 6 but continues to expound on this theme of sanctification throughout the next three chapters. Paul answers three questions for all believers in relation to their baptism:

1. What happened to us?
2. Why is this significant?
3. What do we do now?

### **1. What happened to us?**

Paul answers this question in verses 2-5 in response to the question he posed in verse 1: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”

<sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.

- Romans 6:2-5

Basically, Paul says that when we were baptized, “our former existence came to an end; a new life began.”<sup>1</sup> Paul is using baptism as “a shorthand way of referring to the whole conversion experience.”<sup>2</sup> Since baptism is the public expression of our faith in Christ, it includes the concepts of turning from our sin, trusting Jesus to save us, receiving his Holy Spirit, and confessing him as our Lord and Savior. Paul refers to believers as baptized because all believers were expected to be baptized, and this was the common practice throughout the New Testament. The only exception to this in the New Testament was the thief on the cross, because when he believed he was already nailed to the cross and couldn’t come down.

So, if you are a believer, what’s keeping you from being baptized? Jesus hung naked on a cross, publicly shamed in the midst of a crowd that hated him. He did this for you. How can you believe in him and yet be unwilling to publicly confess him as your Lord and Savior before a crowd such as this that loves the Lord and would rejoice with you in this act of obedience, as we have done with these ten believers today?

But Paul’s point here is to explain the spiritual reality expressed through baptism. By faith we are united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus’ burial is mentioned because it verified that his death was real. His burial confirmed it. In the same way, our death to sin is real. It occurred the moment we trusted in Christ. Just as Jesus conquered sin and death by his resurrection, so do we through the power of Jesus’ resurrection. “Those who are baptized belong to Christ and are united with him.”<sup>3</sup> Sin no longer has dominion over us. It is no longer our master. Jesus is. We now belong to him. That is our position as believers.

## 2. Why is this significant?

Our position affects our practice. That’s what’s meant by the word “walk” in verse 4: “We were buried ... with [Jesus] 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.” The word “walk” refers to our outward way of life – our conduct as Christians.

The phrase “in order that” indicates that this new way of life was the purpose for which Jesus died and was raised to life for us. Paul uses this same phrase again in verse 6, saying, “We know that 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.” This is true in our present newness of life and will culminate at the return of Christ when the sanctification process will be complete (1 John 3:2-3).

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<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, second edition. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985, reprinted 2008), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, second edition. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, eds. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), p. 308.

In Titus 2:10, Paul says that believers are to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” in everything we do. That word “adorn” translates the Greek word *kosmeō*, from which we get our word “cosmetics.” I remember my dad telling my sister during her teenage years that makeup should always highlight a woman’s beauty, not hide it. That’s the purpose of cosmetics, and that’s the purpose of Christian living with respect to the doctrine of God. Biblical truth is already beautiful, but we *show* people that it is by how we *live*. Paul then tells us *why* we’re to do this:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- Titus 2:11-14

That’s the *purpose* for which Jesus died – so we might be liberated from sin and live to God’s glory. That reality is portrayed in baptism, which is why it’s significant.

### 3. What do we do now?

That’s the third question to consider, and Paul answers it in Romans 6:11-13:

<sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> 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.

Here Paul moves from the indicative to the imperative, from telling us what’s true to telling us what we are to *do* in light of what’s true. First, we’re to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. Count on it. Reckon it as a fact. Get it in your head that sin is no longer your master. Jesus is.

Get that *mindset* and work it into all the *members* of your body – your eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. There’s a negative command followed by a positive one. The negative command is: Don’t let sin reign over your body by presenting your members – your various body parts – as instruments for unrighteousness. The word “present” means “to put at the disposal of another.” The word “instrument” (*hoplon*) can also be translated as “weapon.” The same Greek word is used in John 18:3, where we’re told that Judas, having procured a contingent of soldiers from the chief priests and Pharisees, went to the Garden of Gethsemane with

“lanterns, torches and weapons [*hoplon*].” When we allow sin to rule any part of our bodies, that part becomes a weapon in Satan’s arsenal. So don’t let sin reign.

The positive command is to present the members of our body as instruments of righteousness. Yield every part of your body as a weapon for God – a tool in his hand that accomplishes his purpose.

When I was kid we sang a song at church that told us to be careful about how we use the members of our body.

*O be careful little **eyes** what you see...  
 For the Father up above is looking down in love.  
 So, be careful little eyes, what you see.*

*O be careful little **ears** what you hear....*

*O be careful little **tongue** what you say....*

*O be careful little **hands** what you do....*

*O be careful little **feet** where you go....*

Oh, Christian, be careful. At any given point on any given day, any part of your body can be used as a weapon for Satan or as a weapon for your Savior. Your baptism should be a perpetual reminder that you belong to Jesus and are united with him. I think that’s why Paul, after giving us these imperatives, returns to the indicative, saying in verse 14, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” Remember the words of John Bunyan:

*“Run, John, run!” the Law commands  
 But gives neither feet nor hands.  
 Better news the gospel brings:  
 It bids me fly and gives me wings!*

That’s true of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why we can “walk in newness of life.” With that in mind, let me ask three more questions in closing:

1. **Do you believe** in Jesus? Are trusting him alone for your salvation?
2. **Have you been baptized** as a public expression of your faith in Christ, in obedience to our Lord’s command?
3. **Are you walking in obedience**, presenting yourself and all the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness?

By the grace of God, you can answer “yes” to all three of these questions today if you are willing to surrender yourself to God. Then you will be able to testify as Paul did in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”