

Dead to Sin: Alive to God

Romans 6:1-11

Introduction

The Epistle reading for the feast of the Baptism of Our Lord is **Romans 6:1-11**, in which Paul says that when we were baptized into Christ Jesus we were baptized into His death. In **verse 11**, he tells us we are to consider ourselves *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*. Without a right understanding of this, it can be very disconcerting. Dead people can't feel. Yet, I still feel tempted by sin, even to the point of yielding. Therefore, I must not be dead to sin since I am still responsive to it. But I am baptized into Jesus Christ. So, I should be dead to sin. What's wrong with me?

The Argument in Context

As I mentioned at the outset of last week's sermon, in **chapter 5**, Paul had been talking about how great God's grace is. In **verse 20**, he says, *but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*. There were actually people who were thinking: *If that's the case, shouldn't we just keep on sinning, so God can shower us with His grace?* Throughout the church's history, there have always been antinomians, which means "against the law", those who taught that because of Paul's teaching on salvation by grace, good works don't matter. Hence, the Law doesn't matter. Hence, morals don't matter. **Articles III, IV, and VI** of the **Formula of Concord** address this controversy as it presented itself in the Lutheran church. Paul is being misunderstood and his teaching on grace twisted into something he wasn't saying. If we are properly teaching Paul's justification by grace, we will be misunderstood and attacked falsely.

The Analogy Properly Understood

The first step to understanding this passage is properly applying the analogy. Not every aspect of an analogy applies. Being unresponsive to stimuli is one aspect of being dead. But is that the one Paul is talking about here? He is comparing our being dead to sin with Christ's being dead to sin. To say that Christ died to sin doesn't mean that He was responsive to it until He was crucified. He was tempted, yet He didn't respond, that is yield to it. When He died to sin, He died to its effects. In so doing, He destroyed the effect of sin for those who are baptized into Him. The effect is the penalty of sin, eternal death. As baptized believers we are no longer under the penalty, the effect of sin. As **Revelation 20:6** says: *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power*.

Dead to Sin = Justified, but with a Fallen Nature

So, being dead to sin means we are justified. Our sins have been removed from our lives. We are no longer under its curse or penalty. We have died to the penalty of sin and have been raised to eternal life in Christ. The life we live is a new life. We still have our fallen nature. That hasn't changed. We still live in a fallen world. That hasn't changed. The devil is still stalking around like *a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (**1 Peter 5:8**). That hasn't changed. What has changed is our orientation. Being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection gives us a new outlook on life. Living in sin is incongruous with living in Christ.

A Rite of Passage

A married woman cannot live like a single woman. Well, I suppose she *can*. It's not impossible. But let her remember who she is. Let her feel her wedding ring, the symbol of her new life with her husband and she will want to live accordingly. Can a baptized believer live as though they were still in their sins? Well, I guess they could. But not for long. Let them remember their Baptism and remember who they are, and they will want to live accordingly. This is what crossing yourself is about. We cross ourselves to remember our Baptism.

Resistance Is not Futile

In *Star Trek*, there is a species called the Borg, who are bent on taking over the universe. They assimilate cultures into their own and make those people into Borg. Their motto is "resistance is futile." Many people act like that's the way it is with sin and temptation. We are weak. We still have our fallen nature. We will sin, so resistance to temptation is futile. But that's not what the Apostle John says (Read **1 John 4:1-4**). Christ has given us the Sacrament of Baptism to forgive our sins, work faith in us, and give us His Holy Spirit. He has given us the Sacrament of the Altar in which He gives us His body and blood. As He does, He continues to forgive our sins and give us the strength to resist the temptations thrown at us by the devil, the world, and our flesh. Because of our Baptism we are **DEAD TO SIN AND ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS**. And in Holy Communion He gives us the strength to walk in the new life we have received through our Baptism.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
