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*“We Who Died To Sin”*

ROMANS 6:1-4

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## AT A GLANCE

In Christ, our identity has been changed. We have died to sin; how can we still live in it? Paul’s answer: find your identity in Christ. We have been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him to walk in newness of life!

## INTRODUCTION

When I was a freshman in high school my parents allowed me to go to a party with the cast of the play I was in. They did not know the address to the host home, they did not know the name of the parents, nor the phone number. To say the least, I put them through incredible grief until I waltzed in the door at 3:00am.

When you preach the gospel of super-abounding grace, people begin to tense up a little, worried that too much freedom is going to get people into trouble. They imagine, that like me as a freshman, if people understand grace, they’ll go too far and begin living in sin.

This begs the question, how should we respond to what Paul said in verses 20 & 21, “...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness...”?

He knew some people would twist his words and put them in the worst possible light. He knew some would respond, “Let’s party!” while others would clutch their pearls and accuse him of being a front-man for debauchery.

Paul wanted to address a pretty common objection to his gospel – that accepting this would naturally lead to reckless, sinful living. How, Paul, ought we to live? How can we truly appreciate God’s super-abounding grace while not abusing it?

The answer is found in our identity in Christ. When you understand that you have been united with Christ and have been given a new identity, you will come to truly cherish grace without abusing it.

**Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 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.**

**What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** This is actually a logical question. If you haven’t realized that all your sin is covered and that you stand right with God the moment you’re justified, then you’ve not fully comprehended the Gospel. In reality, you will sin today and ten years from now and if you live this long 50 years from now; and it will all have been

paid for on the cross and Christ's imputed righteousness will still be credited to your account. That's justification by faith.

This begs the question, if my abounding sin causes God's grace to super-abound, why shouldn't I continue to sin? Why wouldn't I want to do whatever causes God's grace to super-abound?! Again, Paul was accused to being a front-man for debauchery, for basically permitting what is called a licentious lifestyle – antinomianism.

Daniel Doriani says, "A preacher who is never accused of antinomianism may not be preaching the gospel." That's because if you're really preaching the Gospel of grace, the message is that you're made right with God forever by faith alone. And you stay right with God by faith alone.

To be fair, the New Testament warns of some who pervert God's grace. *"For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."* Jude 4 They twist "no one can be saved by keeping the law" (cf. Romans 3:20) to mean "no one needs to live a holy life."

Not only that, but some people who heard Paul's gospel of super-abounding grace embraced that perverse lifestyle Jude rebuked. We have Paul's letters to the Corinthians precisely because of this. There were at least some who saw the endorsement of an adulterous affair between a man and his father's wife as a virtuous thing. The church cheered them on in their sexual sin and looked at themselves as beacons of tolerance and grace. Paul was having none of that! "Kick the man out!" Paul said. (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:13)

But examples like that, and there is myriad more in the church today, cause people to overreact and conclude that the only way we can prevent it is by getting really legalistic. That was the pharisee's response. "We have ten commandments, let's make hundreds of additional rules to keep people from getting close to breaking the commandments." But behavior modification is not the answer to man's sin problem. It isn't sufficient to cover our sin nor is it efficient in preventing it. Instead, we need a new identity and a new life.

A couple things we need to notice here. Paul asks, **Are we to continue?** This verb **continue** is written in the present tense. He's talking about ongoing, habitual sin. This is unrepentant sin.

Paul's question is not, "Is it possible for saved people to sin?" but "Does the gospel of super-abounding grace permit ongoing sin?" We get another clue about what Paul has in mind from **verse 2. By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

He asks **How can we...still live in it.** To live in sin is to be stuck in it, to be controlled by it, to be enthralled by it. To live in sin is to desire to engage in it with no desire to be set free from it. You get the idea from the man Paul rebuked in 1 Corinthians 5. He was open about his affair with his step-mom. He was out and proud of his sin.

We see this today in churches where the sexual sin of homosexuality, transgenderism, polyamory and all the other sins of the sexual immorality alphabet are not only tolerated but affirmed. There are drag queens standing in pulpits. Openly gay priests. These churches are affirming what the bible condemns. They think they act in love, but they only keep people trapped in sin.

How can we still live in sin? It is antithetical that a person who has died to sin still lives in it. What about those who haven't died to sin? How can we expect those who haven't died to sin *not* to live in it? It's who they are and who we all were at one point.

What do we do with this? What do we say to someone living in sin? If they're a Christian, we tell them to repent. If they're not a Christian, we tell them to repent.

What we don't do is pretend that what God says is sin is ok because our culture says it's ok. Because our culture calls us names if we don't say it's ok. Because our friends and family members distance themselves from us because we don't celebrate their sin and pretend with them.

But let's back-up to the answer to his first question. Should we keep on sinning that grace may abound? **By no means!** No way! Not a chance! Why? Because **we have died to sin**. We've been given a new nature in Christ. Our old nature in Adam, which was corrupt in sin and death and condemnation, has been replaced with a new nature in Christ.

What does it mean to **die to sin**? Whatever it means, it cannot mean that as soon as you are born again you stop sinning. We're going to read of Paul's frustration with sin in his own life in Romans 7.

Not only that, but our very shared experience reveals to us that no one has ever stopped sinning when they were born-again. Instead, what we see among those who have been justified is an increasing submission to His authority, a weakening of the flesh, and a strengthening of the spirit – all of which contribute to an increasing conviction about sin and obedience to Jesus.

I think it is super important to notice that Paul does not command us, "Die to sin!" He doesn't say, "Try harder and do better!" At least not yet. Instead, he begins by reminding us the good news that **we have died to sin**.

In verse 11, we'll see a command. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin." That's something we do. We must consider. We must determine in our minds. We must act. But look, the imperative comes *after* the indicative.

The command to act comes after the statement of fact.

Because of who we are, we do. We are dead to sin, so we count ourselves dead to sin.

Before Christ, we were dead *in* sin. Now we are dead *to* sin. **How can we...still live in it?** How can we continue to do the things that brought death and condemnation, things that dishonored the Lord in disobedience?

How can we who received the righteousness of the one man, Jesus Christ, continue to live as if we were still caught in condemnation and death in Adam? Our identity has been changed. Who we are is no longer the same. How can we live the same way?

How has our identity been changed? We have been united with Christ. We are no longer represented by our federal head Adam, along with his corrupt moral nature, but we are now represented by Christ, our righteous head. This is pictured beautifully in baptism.

**Verse 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** Paul introduces baptism here for the first time and emphasizes it's importance. **Do you not know** presupposes that they not only know about baptism, but indeed they have been baptized. When Paul says **All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus** makes it clear that Paul assumes this is a normal activity of the Christian.

This serves as the basis of his argument that we've died to sin. We who were baptized into Christ **were baptized into His death**. We were buried with him in the symbolic act of baptism.

R.C. Sproul describes baptism this way, "Baptism is not what saves us, but in our baptism God gives us a tangible sign of his promise of redemption. All the processes that are wrought through the redeeming work of Christ are contained in that sign. Baptism is a sign of our being regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It does not affect regeneration, but it is a sign of it. It is a sign of our sanctification.

It is the sign of our being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of our glorification. It is a sign of our identification with Christ.”

We belong to Christ and are united to him. How can we who have been united with Him in death continue to live the way we used to live when we were united to the world in sin? “What does light have to do with darkness?” “Can a freshwater pond produce salt water?”

The emphasis here is on the realization of who and whose we are. The emphasis is not presently on behavior, but on belonging. You belong to Christ. You belong to the Father. You belong in the family of God. This is your new identity and it is an identity of life, not death.

This is the point Paul makes in **verse 4. 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.**

Our baptism represents more than a wish to be part of a community. It represents a dying to self and dying to sin. It symbolizes the unification of the believer with Christ in His death so that **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

The purpose of being buried with Christ in baptism is so that we can be raised with Him in life! So that we would live no longer following the prince of the power of the air, carrying out the desires of the body. But so we would live and do the things God created for us to do.

Martin Luther was persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church for his doctrine of Sola Fide – saved by faith alone. But he did not advocate for faith that is alone. He said we are saved by faith alone, but where there is saving faith, good works will follow. There will be change. How can a person who was dead and is made alive claim that they have not been changed?

If we have been buried with Christ, then we have also been raised to walk in newness of life. The life we live now, we live to Christ. *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...” Galatians 2:20*

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Colossians 3:1*

We are immersed beneath the water just as Jesus was immersed in the earth in his tomb, and we are raised up out of the water just as Jesus was raised up out of the tomb. He died *for* our sin. We died *to* our sin. He lives in righteousness. We live in *His* righteousness.

We live life in Christ from a position of victory over sin and the flesh. We have been made new. So many people I’ve ministered to are still striving *after* victory rather than living *from* victory.

But what does the bible say? We are more than conquerors! (Romans 8:37) Everyone born of God overcomes the world (1 John 5:4). And our victory is based on Christ’s victory which is already complete – *“...Take heart, I have overcome the world!” John 16:33*

We have been given Christ’s righteousness. We have been made alive together with Christ. We have been raised from the dead to walk in newness of life.

I think the biggest issue in the fight against sin is understanding who we are in Christ. It is recognizing that in Christ, I have already been made right and acceptable to God. I have already received God’s full and final pardon. I have been united with Christ. All the identity parts are complete the moment a person is born-again. They are all in the past. The task for the born-again believer is to understand and then live out of that identity no matter how much the flesh or the devil wants to distract you with who you used to be.

Paul says **Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father**. It was the glorious power of God that brought Jesus out of the grave. And by that same glorious power, we who died to sin might **walk in newness of life**.

As we examine our hearts for communion, do you know the glorious power of God? Have you been made new? Perhaps you need to repent and believe the Gospel today. You know that the promises I've spoken of today do not apply to you. You're trying in your own strength to be a good person. Stop, believe, be born again.

Or perhaps you are a born-again Christian and you're struggling with a sin that you cannot shake. First of all, in Christ you are righteous. Second, you fight from a place of victory. Remind yourself of who you are and whose glorious power caused you to be born again to a new life. Call upon Him, rely upon Him. Walk in the newness of life that is already yours.

That night in my freshman year my father should have disciplined me severely. I was wrong. When I considered it, I knew I was wrong. But my dad didn't begin with discipline. He began by reminding me of who and whose I was. He reminded me that I was a beloved child, part of a family. He showed me grace and love. Oh, he gave me a curfew from that point on. But he began with grace and he began with identity.

I believe the Lord would have me remind you of the same: in Christ, you are a beloved child of God. Live in light of who you are.

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