

"BREAKING THE BONDS OF LEGALISM"

{Romans 6:1-14}

Trinity Presbyterian Church

May 18, 2008

The theme of our text of the morning is that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are not only historical facts and significant doctrines; *but*, **personal experiences of the Christian believer!** This is paramount to understanding the central premise of Romans 6—*and*—our position in **Christ!** *If* you are a believer in Jesus Christ then **you have been UNITED to Christ in His death...and His resurrection!** *If* this is indeed true, then it is inconceivable that we should go on living in sin!

“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized INTO Christ Jesus were baptized INTO His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a NEW life!” {6:1-4, NIV}

Two questions are posed by Paul...

1. What shall we say then?
2. Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

To understand what lies behind these questions we must go back to verses 20 and 21 of the previous chapter—

“The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more; so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In Romans 5 Paul speaks of death entering through one man’s sin—Adam; and, because of this—ALL die...for ALL have sinned {Romans 3:23}. Remember what God told Adam in Genesis...

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die!” {2:16b-17, NIV}

We all know the story of how Adam and Eve ate from the ONLY tree that was off limits to them [*isn't that a perfect description of human kind—tell them “do not touch” and the first thing they do...touch!*] We read in Genesis 5:5...

“Adam lived 930 years, and then he died!”

That's it—and since that time...all die!

Secondly, Paul says that though many die because of one man's offense; yet, **because of God's incredible gift of grace—through His Son, Christ Jesus—many have the opportunity to be justified with God {made right} and receive life—eternal life!**

In-between Adam and Christ came Moses through whom God gave the Law. You might ask—why was the Law given if indeed God knew beforehand that we were incapable to keeping it?

Quite simply—**God gave the Law to EXPOSE sin!** {*If you're traveling down one of California's freeways as if it's the German autobahn with no posted speed limit you're in big trouble when you see the Highway Patrol flagging you to the side of the road and pointing to the speed limit sign.*} The law set limits and exposed right from wrong. To deviate from that invoked punishment.

H. P. Liddon said: *“Things had to become worse with the human family before they could be better!”*

So, just as sin reigned in Old Testament days through the Law and resulting in death; so, God's will in the New Testament...because of God's

incredible GRACE...is that we can be made right with God...justified...and receive ETERNAL LIFE!

Against that background Paul asks those two questions:

1. What shall we say then?
2. Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

Paul's response was a firm and emphatic negative: "BY NO MEANS!"

And in so doing he asks yet a third question...

3. We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Paul is addressing critics who maintain that because one is saved by the grace of God they are free to live as they please...sin all they desire.

That is a total misunderstanding of grace and God's gift. His logic is clear—how can one who has died to sin continue to live in sin?

J. B. Phillips translates this verse...

"We, who have died to sin—how could we live in sin a moment longer?"

That then brings up two additional questions that I want to pursue with you...

1. What does it mean to have died to sin?
2. How and when did it happen?

...and Paul takes the rest of this section to discuss this step-by-step.

I. BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

We now turn to verse 3 of the text...

"Don't you know that ALL of us who were baptized INTO Christ Jesus were baptized INTO His death?"

This verse explains the believer's position...baptized INTO Christ!

Paul wrote in Colossians: **“Christ IN you, the hope of glory!”** {1:27b}

A Christian is not merely one whose sins have been forgiven [and praise God they have]; but, they are one who has entered into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. There is absolutely NO possibility of being justified with Christ without being in UNION with Him.

Baptism has other meanings; i.e., a washing from sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit; however, essentially it signifies UNION WITH CHRIST! Baptism indeed implies that God has washed away our sin and poured out upon us the Holy Spirit; but, more importantly, it says that God has placed us INTO Christ Jesus—and this is the very essence of the Christian life.

Where is Christ today? IN you! IN me! IN the believer! This happens when by faith we receive God’s grace and baptism signifies this act; therefore, Paul’s first point here is that being a Christian involves a personal, vital identification with Jesus Christ, and this union with Him is dramatically set forth in our baptism.

Secondly...

II. BAPTISM INTO CHRIST IS BAPTISM INTO HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized INTO Christ Jesus were baptized INTO His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. If we have been united with Him in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection...” {6:3-5}

Our Baptist friends practice baptism by immersion. The candidate is taken into a stream, or into a baptismal tank...and they literally go down into

the water. When they are then immersed into the water it signifies burial [death] and resurrection [new life]. One writer suggests this is in essence a funeral service...and a literal resurrection from the grave!

Therefore, the second stage in Paul's discussion says: **A Christian, by faith INWARDLY and by baptism OUTWARDLY, has been UNITED with Christ in His death and resurrection.**

Dear friends, **don't just think of yourself as just united with Christ in some vague sense...**it is much, MUCH, deeper and intimate than that. **The only Jesus Christ with whom we have been identified and made one is the Christ who died and rose again.** So, we have actually shared by UNION with Him in both His death and resurrection.

CONCLUSION

There are two more points that Paul emphasizes in this section and I'll discuss them with you next Sunday.

I want to conclude by quoting Earl Palmer from his book, "**SALVATION BY SURPRISE.**"

*"Baptism is explained by Paul in a way which puts the most weight upon the event of baptism as **THE SIGN OF IDENTIFICATION** of the Christian with Christ. For Paul, baptism is not a heroic act on the part of the Christian believer nor does Paul show the slightest interest in ceremonial or liturgical procedures to be followed by the community of faith. He assumes that his readers understand what the word "baptism" means. For him, **what is vital is the theological meaning of baptism as IDENTIFICATION with Christ; and, therefore, IDENTITY for the believer.***

“IDENTIFICATION is brought forth by the phrase ‘INTO CHRIST JESUS’ which means that **being a Christian involves our unique and individual relationship with Christ. Paul is teaching that baptism is the ‘yes’ of faith in response to God’s grace!**

“Paul then points up the fact that **to be IDENTIFIED with Christ means that the old self has died and the new self now stands.** This new self is found in the phrases: **‘We may live a new life...and...we will certainly be united with Him in a resurrection...’**”

Dear friends...the bonds have been broken...by the death and the resurrection of Jesus and **we are now forever engrafted INTO Him!**

So...

1. **What shall we say then?**
2. **Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**

“BY NO MEANS!”

3. **We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?**

Free at last...thank God Almighty...we’re free at last! Christ has set us free!