

1st Sunday after Epiphany
January 9th, 2022

"Dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text for this 1st Sunday after Epiphany is from the Epistle reading for today, Romans 6:11.

“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Here ends our text.

Did you know that you, believer in Christ, have already attended your own funeral? Oh yes, you died! This is a fact. There was a ceremony. And there was a burial. And that’s not all! After your burial, there was a resurrection! Ahh, you may ask when did all this happen? Where is the obituary?

When was your funeral? When you were baptized! Oh it was a beautiful funeral! There was beautiful singing. Candles were lit. And God’s people were gathered to observe and testify to your death, your death to sin, that is!

For at your baptism, your old Adam died. Your sinful flesh died. Your baptismal certificate was your obituary. For on your baptismal certificate, the date of your birth, the date you entered into this sinful world with the inheritance of sin, Adam’s sin is listed. But also recorded on your baptismal certificate is the date of the death of your sinful flesh. It is the date of your baptism! Paul says in verse 3 of our epistle from Romans 6:

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”

For when you were baptized, your sinful flesh that controlled every thought and action of your life was crucified. The lord you served, the devil himself, was

conquered. And your new life of freedom from sin and living to God began!! So Paul continues in verse 4.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Christ’s physical death to sin is your spiritual death to sin, once and for all! Christ’s physical burial after His death, is your spiritual burial after your old Adam’s death. And Christ’s physical resurrection after His burial is your spiritual resurrection, EVEN NOW, to newness of life!

This new life, your new life now in Christ, was pure and simple, was a gift from God...pure grace. For Christ has done it all for you by His death and resurrection. And your baptism unites you with all that Christ has accomplished.

And Paul adds one more glorious thing to this progression of our death to life in verse 5.

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5)

Your resurrection! Your physical resurrection will be like Jesus’ physical resurrection! You will be raised with a perfect body in which the sinful flesh exists. Yes, we can’t wait for that day!!

In the meantime, however, a daily battle rages within each Christian. It is a battle which the Christian daily wins because of Christ’s victory but it is a battle nonetheless.

You see, my friends in Christ, though the crucifixion and burial of our sinful flesh occurred at our baptism so that it no longer reigns, but Christ reigns in our hearts...our sinful flesh still desires to take back its reign and rule over us again. On that last day of our resurrection, it will be done away with forever, but in the meantime, it fights to reign once again. It fights to use our bodies and minds as tools for its evil.

Our sinful flesh is our greatest cross that we bear. For it causes us all kinds of grief as we daily crucify it anew, daily bury it anew and daily rise again in the newness of life of our baptisms by not giving in to all its daily temptations. Each of us can

provide the personal illustrations of our battles. And again, temptation is not a sin. For Christ was tempted. He waged the battle against the devil and won every time.

So, we also, united with Christ in His new life, continue also in our daily battle, but if there was no battle then we would still be dominated by our sinful flesh. The new year is always a time to make resolutions. Our daily resolution is to not give in to the temptations of our sinful flesh. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can and must live the new life without giving in to sin.

Paul begins our epistle reading with this very question.

**“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”
(Romans 6:1)**

The devil constantly tempts us to turn our liberty from sin into a license TO sin. Because God’s grace abounds more than sin, the devil’s tempting logic to us is, well, sin more that grace may abound more!

And what is God’s answer to that lie from Satan?

“Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”

You’ve died to sin in your baptism. It’s not your master. Why would you want it to rise again and live in it again? All of Christ’s work was to defeat the devil, sin and death that we could not defeat. He’s done it once and for all. And has graciously given you this victory in your baptism. Why would you ever want to go back to the life of the dead, zombie living under the evil rule of Satan? Certainly not!

When you are tempted to use your freedom from sin as a license to sin, quickly answer with Paul “Certainly not!” And then remember your baptism which unites you to your Lord’s death, burial and resurrection. Daily make the sign of the cross reminding yourself that you are a child of God, not the devil. For you have been rescued in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the water of your baptism.

Christ Himself, though He had no sinful flesh, fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized to show that He came to take all our sin to the cross and give us His righteousness as our robe in baptism.

“Certainly not!” Paul reminds us what it cost Christ to make all this our new reality of life with Him.

For you see, Paul assumes that you have been reading the first 5 chapters of Romans. He goes into great detail in chapter 5 describing what was our hopeless lot according to our old Adam.

“12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

One man’s sin, Adam’s sin entered the world and spread to all men. As contagious as the coronavirus is, it doesn’t spread to all men. Some people will never get it. And many people will never die from it. But, not so with sin. It HAS spread to all people. All are infected and death, as a result, is common to all men.

So, Paul continues in verse 14 of chapter 5.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”

Look at Genesis 5 at the account of Adam’s descendants. After each, the phrase is added, “and he died.”

Yet, Paul doesn’t leave us without hope for he speaks of the new Adam who was to come. In the next verse we read.

“For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.” (v.15)

Much more abounds the grace of God in the gift of His Son Jesus. It abounds not just to some but to all. When Paul says “many”, he is, in fact, saying all. For this is what he says in vs. 18-19.

“18 Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

This free gift of salvation is for all men. It has been accomplished. Christ died once and for all. He no longer bears our sin. He is dead to sin.

By Christ's perfect obedience He has buried all the world's sins at the cross. And that means yours and mine and the Gentile Wise Men. All people have been forgiven!

But to receive this free gift, and become united with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection so that it becomes your death to sin, burial and resurrection, God in His mercy instituted baptism!

In your baptism, all that Christ has freely won for the whole world becomes yours personally! Your baptism therefore is your funeral of the old Adam, it's burial and the resurrection of the new life to God through Jesus.

“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Alive! Alive in a joyful battle to daily crucify your sinful flesh! More abundant is His grace than your sin!

For we are more than conquerors as Paul says in Romans 8.

As we began the new year hearing these verses, we hear them once more today as we remember our baptisms.

“Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written:

**“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”**

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”

Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)

