

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourteenth Sunday After Trinity, September 6, 2026

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 245 (139:4) 298, 409, 51

Lessons: Psalm 1; Acts 8:26-38; Matthew 21:28-32

Sermon Text: Romans 6:3-11.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In the name of Jesus, fellow redeemed,

Did you ever hear anyone say something like this? “All you Lutherans know is that you are saved by faith. You keep emphasizing that a sinner is justified by faith alone. Don’t you believe in good works at all? Do you think that you can comfort yourself with being justified by faith and then live as you please?”

When such accusations are made, what do we answer? First of all, we have to make it clear what the Scriptures teach about works **before** justification: ***“No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law,”*** Romans 3:20. Our works have nothing whatever to do with our justification. Only Christ’s work of redemption accomplished that. **After** we are justified through faith in Christ, then our works come into the picture. Paul writes, ***“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do,”*** Ephesians 2:10.

The second thing we have to clear up from the Scriptures is what kind of a life we are to live after being justified by faith. Can we be careless about leading a sanctified life just because we are justified purely by God’s grace and with no credit given for our works? This is the very thing Paul speaks of in introducing our sermon text. He asks, ***“Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”*** And he emphatically answers: ***“By no means!”*** Romans 6:1-2. In other words, we are not to live as we please in sin after being justified by faith. The very opposite is true. This is what our text teaches in these words:

“DEAD TO SIN BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS”

- 1. This is a blessing justified believers have through Baptism.**
- 2. It describes the new life we can live because of this blessing.**

Paul begins our text with a question; ***“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”*** These are words that sound strange to us- ***“baptized into Christ Jesus”*** and ***“baptized into his death”***. They do, however, tell us an important fact. In Holy Baptism we entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul states the same fact in another Bible passage, ***“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,”*** Galatians 3:26-27. When we were baptized, God the Holy Spirit created faith in our hearts. By Holy Baptism as a means of grace we became believers in Christ. That was the beginning of our Christian life. All that Christ did for us is ours through the means of Holy Baptism. When our text says that we were ***“baptized into his death,”*** it means that by Holy Baptism all the blessings of Christ’s death on the cross are ours. Christ was sent to this earth by the heavenly Father because of man’s sin. He was sent to do away with sin. Christ died for our sins. He, as sinful man’s Divine Substitute, took all the sins of all people upon himself, and he paid the price for our redemption from sin. He gave himself as a sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, on the cross, and he shed his blood to pay for our sins. ***“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin,”*** 1 John 1:7.

Two things were accomplished by Jesus' death on the cross. He freed us from the guilt of sin, first of all. God no longer counts our sins against us for Jesus' sake. ***"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them,"*** 2 Corinthians 5:19. Christ made it possible for God the Father to say to us sinners: You are not guilty! But he also accomplished something else. By his death on the cross Jesus freed us from the **power** of sin. That blessing we also have through the means of Holy Baptism. In our Baptism, when we became children of God by faith in Christ, sin ceased to rule over us. Another way of putting this: a Christian life became possible for us when we were baptized and entered into a relationship with Christ. It then became possible that we could be ***"dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*** So then Baptism is so much more than a mere church ceremony. It is so much more than a mere symbol of God's grace, as the Reformed churches teach. It is a precious **means of grace** that actually gives us all the blessings of Christ's death on the cross. It is a means by which God delivers his grace, that is, his undeserved love and mercy to us.

The apostle in our text also makes a reference to Christ's burial after his death, and says, ***"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."*** When a person is buried, he is done with sin. When Christ was buried, his life of humiliation as a Servant of God was to an end. After that when he descended into hell to proclaim his victory over Satan and sin, his exaltation began and now he lives and reigns at God's right hand over all things in heaven and on earth. Just as Christ was raised from death to live in glory and exaltation, so also a new life apart from sin is possible for us. This is a precious blessing, a gift from God that we have through the regeneration worked in Holy Baptism.

Does that mean that since we have been baptized and are believers in Christ that we now sin no more? Does it mean that a life of perfect sanctification is now possible? No, that is not what our text teaches. But it does mean that Christ has won the victory over Satan, and the devil can no longer force his rule upon us. We are no longer slaves of Satan. Sin no longer has the mastery over us. Through the ***"washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit"*** (Titus 3:5), we can by the Holy Spirit's power overcome sin and temptation. Every day Satan will try to mislead us. Every day we will have before us the evil examples of unbelievers in this world. Every day, because we still have our sinful nature to contend with, we will in weakness fall into sin. We as believers in Christ have the power to live what our text calls ***"a new life"***. Now our text further describes **the new life we can live because of this blessing**.

2.

"If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." There are two comparisons that Paul makes in our text; the one has to do with Jesus' death and the other with his resurrection. In the first comparison, it is the death of Jesus that is similar to our dying unto sin. It is also referred to as the crucifixion of our Old Adam. Our Old Adam is crucified with Christ. The purpose of this is that our ***"body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."*** Our body is no longer to be a tool or an instrument of sin. Our Old Adam is no longer to control our thoughts and actions. It is certainly a fact that the body that is buried in the grave is no longer controlled by sin. So also our Old Adam has been crucified with Christ and we no longer have to be dominated by sin. Rather, it is now possible that we can be ***"dead to sin."***

The second comparison in our text has to do with Christ's resurrection. ***"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."*** Christ's resurrection is similar to our spiritual rising again to live a new life. In his state of humiliation Christ's entire life was governed by sin because the sins of all mankind were laid on him. But,

having paid for all sins in full by his sacrificial death on the cross, he then was done with sin. He now lives unto God. So Paul says, ***“just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*** Now we are to live as governed by the new man created in us in Holy Baptism. According to the new man in us we want to do what pleases God. Paul writes, ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”*** 2 Corinthians 5:17.

What is this new life like? Paul sums it up in these words, ***“dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*** Following our text Paul speaks about this new life of sanctification. ***“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness,”*** Verses 12-13. So then, our body is not supposed to be a kind of pleasure factory so that we satisfy our sinful lusts and desires by what we do with our body. Our body is not to be used for experimentation to see what it feels like to get high on drugs or alcohol. Paul asks, ***“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”*** 1 Corinthians 3:16.

We find these exhortations to live a sanctified life in many Bible passages. ***“You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness,”*** Ephesians 4:22-24. The apostle Paul gratefully wrote, ***“The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,”*** Galatians 2:20. That new life we are to live with heaven in mind. ***“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory,”*** Colossians 3:2-4. As we look forward to the Last Day and know that it will come unexpectedly as a thief in the night, we should consider Peter’s question, ***“What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God,”*** 2 Peter 3:11-12. May these words of our text, ***“dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”***, be our guide each day while the Lord still has us here on earth. Amen.

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