

Resurrection and the End of Sin

Romans 6:1-11

April 4, 2021

The Scripture readings foreshadowed what I want to share with you this morning about one of the most significant implications of the Gospel, and one that is in dire need of redressing in our modern day. In the message of the Gospel, we learn that God saves sinners. We learn that God reconciles sinners to himself, not counting their trespasses against them because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

All who repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ, God delivers them from death. He delivers them from suffering an eternal wrath of judgment for their sins. Instead of that wrath and suffering, he removes that, and he gives them in its place a new life to live, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

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And that's it. That's the Gospel. It takes unpacking, for sure, but that is the simple message of the Gospel. And yet how easily it has been ignored, that message of the Gospel. It's been so easy for so many people to lose sight of that simple message that God saves sinners, and that he saves them from his own wrath.

And why has he been angry? Why has he been wrathful? Why will he judge those who continue in their sins with an eternity in hell? Because sin defies his righteousness, because sin is transgression of his law, because sin is rebellion against his holiness. And so when God saves sinners, he delivers them from their sins, not leaving them in their sins, but he saves them out of their sins so that they may live a new life, so that they may walk in righteousness and holiness.

We're assured of this because of what God has done in our Savior. He handed Jesus over to crucifixion, that he might die and be buried in a tomb and then be raised from the dead. And what God did in Jesus Christ established a pattern for all who

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follow Christ, that they, too, would die, be buried, and be raised to walk in newness of life.

Sadly, as we look around to see what passes for Christianity these days, we have to admit that we see, we can see publicly anyway, very little newness of life. It seems to be a low ebb moment in our day as professing Christians have lost sight of the Gospel's true power, which is, at its most basic and fundamental level, the power to raise the dead.

The professing church, the visible church, has failed to appropriate the power of Christ's resurrection for their day-to-day lives. They believe the lies of the world instead, and that has thereby seriously damaged the witness of professing evangelicalism.

For decades, now, the press has served dish after sultry dish of the sins and the scandals of Christendom. It started with the charismatics and the PTL scandals of the 1980s, and those may have been, for many of us, easy to ignore because they're all out on the lunatic fringe of evangelicalism, a real

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safe distance from what many of us would mark as true Christianity. Everybody knew that, even in the secular world.

In 2002, though, the *Boston Globe* ran a series of stories that brought to light what had been whispered about for decades about the Roman Catholic Church tolerating abusive priests. Victims were silenced through hush money shuffled around, abusive priests were shuttled around the country, reassigned, redeployed. When criminals in priestly garments sin with impunity, it's understandable when people become angry and cynical.

Still, us evangelicals felt relatively unscathed by the bad press. After all, the evangelicals, Protestants, they've always opposed the false Roman Catholic doctrines of the priesthood, and especially of clerical celibacy, which is certainly part of that story. But they're not the whole story.

The real issue in the Roman Catholic abuse scandal is the fact that Rome's Gospel is unable to save a sinner from his sins. No false gospel has divine power to overcome sin, to renew

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the mind, to transform the outward life, to conform a former sinner, even a degraded sinner, and take that person and form him into the image of Christ. No false gospel can do that. We expect dead works to result from a false, powerless gospel.

Where we become more uncomfortable, though, is when those same dead works start showing up, as they have been more recently and with increasing frequency, within our own camp, within evangelicalism, professing evangelicalism. On March 23 this year, not even two weeks ago, a 146-page report was published, the findings of an independent review into the decades-long abuse by a high-ranking conservative evangelical named Jonathan Fletcher.

That name may mean very little to many of us in the United States, but in the United Kingdom, the scandal has shaken evangelicalism, even Anglican evangelicalism, to the core. It's maybe on par with our current understanding of the fall of Ravi Zacharias. Investigations into Fletcher's life and leadership and that of another high-level evangelical named John Smythe, they reveal an abusive culture within their churches and in

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their parachurch organizations. Both men abused others, ostensibly to punish and purify them for their sins. Severe physical beatings, horrible things.

All that has become an occasion to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ and to sling mud on the church and on conservative evangelicalism, as a whole. I mean, the secular press is having a field day; once again, all that that reveals is yet another false gospel, one that is completely powerless to transform sinners.

Here in our church, we see sinners transforming all the time, and it doesn't take beatings and punishment. It does require truth. It does require the regeneration of a sinner to be born again. Without that, there is no change.

Lest we look down our noses at the failures in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, we need to remember, 2019, the abuse of faith story that was released by the *Houston Chronicle* that exposed a wide-scale Roman Catholic church-style scandal within the Southern Baptist Convention, churches that affiliate

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with them, hundreds of cases of abuse. For the sake of time and, really, propriety, I'm going to pass over the deluge of scandals that have been hitting the press over at, wave after wave of the scurrilous revelations into what's really been going on behind the scenes, what's really happening within these churches, within these institutions, what's really going on in the lives of some of these individuals.

Another evangelical celebrity falls. Another well-known, well-respected figure, another once-reliable church or institution, falling like dominoes. We barely have time to pause and ask the question, how did that happen? How did we miss that? And then another report comes out.

I'm telling you all this not to ruin your Easter Sunday, but for a different purpose: to illustrate the desperate need for the text that's before us this morning. It is vitally important that we acknowledge the magnitude of the problem of sin, and that we recognize the depth of the problem of sin, and not just what's going on in that immoral revolution happening in the culture around us, which is so easy to shoot at, but rather

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to take a look at our own house, at our own life. Peter says, "It is time for judgment to begin in the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God?"

Christianity Today ran a story on March 21. Ti, the title is this: *The Cohabitation Dilemma Comes for America's Pastors*. The subheading says: *More evangelicals are living together before marriage; Church leaders struggle to respond*. The story tells of a pastor who said he had stopped conducting weddings because so many of his engaged couples were cohabitating and got angry when he addressed it. Oh, no! They got angry. Grow a spine. Call sinners to repentance, and hold the line.

It's not just for the sake of the purity of the church and the purity of the Gospel. Though it is at, definitely that. What are cohabitating couples doing? They're sinning. And what does sin do to the soul? It destroys it. The devil loves to entice and hold people with guilt and shame, hold them under sin, enslave them.

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It's not just a matter of bad teaching and weak theology in the pulpits, though it is that. We're reaping the fruit of no theology. We're reaping the fruit of preaching that is ostensibly, it's, it's professed to be expository preaching, and yet it just gives the high points of everything and jumps directly from just talking about the text to some moralistic lessons from the text, a little bit of therapy from that passage. Doing public therapy is mostly what's going on in pulpits today. No theology, no depth. So how do people grow if they don't know the truth?

But what we're seeing, I think, is more severe. It's an abandonment of the Gospel. And it's an abandonment of the Gospel among those for whom the Gospel is in the name. Evangelical refers to those who have the *evangel*. The *evangel* is the Greek word for the Gospel. And sadly, on the whole, evangelicals have lost sight of the Gospel, not only because they're not articulating a clear Gospel to people, often just giving a subpar version of the Gospel that, they pass it off that way.

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But I think more deeply they're not practicing the Gospel. They're not obeying the Gospel. They're not applying the Gospel to their daily lives, internally in how they think, and externally in how they act, how they behave, how they speak, which is why sin runs riot through the evangelical ranks.

And that tells lies about God. What lies? It's saying that his Gospel really has no power to save. That's a lie. His Gospel saves sinners. I'm one of them. He's transformed my life because of the power of the Word of God, because of this all-sufficient Scripture that he's given us, because the Holy Spirit has regenerated me to new life. I could stand here and tell you, as a satisfied customer, I believe the truth. You should, too.

What we're seeing around us is not an indictment of this. It's an indictment of a false gospel. It's, it's a false message giving false assurance to false professing believers. They're not believers.

In the text I read earlier, Romans 6, you can turn there in your Bibles if you're not there already, Romans chapter 6, Paul

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opens that section of teaching by posing a question, and it's a question that had been used by his opponents as a charge against his ministry. Paul is the, the one who taught a Gospel of grace, the grace of God that overcomes the law, overcomes the condemnation of the law, and so his opponents said, Oh, yeah? Well, if your Grace, the Gospel of grace is so powerful, I'll just keep on sinning. That's what you're saying. Paul, you're giving an antinomian message. You're giving a message that says, Keep on sinning. The more you sin, the more grace abounds.

That's wrongly applied to Paul and his Gospel, as he's going to make clear, but it's a fair question when it's directed at us, the question that may very well indict our modern form of evangelical religion, and much of the substance of it as well. The question's there in Romans 6:1, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"

And I look around at what's, a lot of the shenanigans that are happening around the land, that's publicized now. You might think that that's actually what the professing evangelical church believes. We just continue sinning because grace abounds.

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Pastors these days commit all kinds of sin, sexual sins, and otherwise, sins of abuse of power and all kinds of horrible things. They go through a little bit of therapy, and then they're back in a pulpit the next year with their new church launch funded by some enterprise.

Who, who, who's keeping these people accountable? you might think. This is what they say: Now that I've fallen, I really understand the grace of God. I can really connect with people who, who just struggle with sin, who are overcome. See how attractive that message is to people who love their sin? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? You're thinking about that question for yourself. Perhaps you're a decent enough biblicalist to look at the next verse and say, "By no means! May it never be!" And perhaps you think for yourself, That's not true for me.

So why are we in this state of affairs today? I remember once I was trying to help a young man with this thought life. He was debilitated by some, overcome by sinful thinking and debilitated because of it. I recommended that he memorize some

passages of Scripture. I was going to work with him on that, memorize with him, have him meditate on those passages, have him answer a few questions, and he, he reacted with incredulity, even a bit of scorn, responding to my counsel and my plan for helping him, saying, Isn't this a bit legalistic? Ah, thwarted again! Silenced by that unanswerable charge of legalism.

Throughout my years of pastoral ministry, I've found that people are quite happy to listen to preaching, quite pleased to come into churches, sit and listen to expositions of biblical passages. The more educated, the more erudite the exposition, the better. Here's some interesting illustrations, even consider, considering making some applications about that message. As long as no one holds them accountable for following through with any of it, as long as one's religion remains on one's own terms, all's well and good. That's why we really like radio preaching. We really like preaching on YouTube. We really like podcasts because none of those guys are getting into my home. Start poking around in anyone's life, and now you've gone from preaching to meddling, haven't you?

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Paul asked a general question. He said, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Let's get just a bit more specific because I think Paul would authorize us to do that. Are we to continue in selfishness, living for ease and comfort, that grace may abound? Are we continue, to continue enjoying our retirement because that's what I deserve. Don't ask me to do anything, so that grace may abound?

Are we to continue in spiritual laziness, content with spiritual mediocrity that grace may abound? Are we to continue dabbling with sexual sins that grace may abound? Are we to continue gossiping, slandering, lying, exaggerating, sinning with our tongues? Are we to continue in hypocrisy, pretending before others to be what we're actually not? Are we to continue in a bitter, unforgiving spirit, having a critical spirit, complaining spirits, ungrateful hearts?

Are we to continue living unaccountable lives, keeping everyone at their arms' length, never committing to anything or anyone? Are we to continue in fear and worry and anxiety? Are we to continue fearing man rather than God, doing what people want

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us to do because they tell us to do it, because we don't want their, their disappointment, because we don't want their judgment, rather than doing what God expects? Are we to continue using our personalities as an excuse for our sins? You've heard it: Man, she's kind of angry, critical. Well, she's just like that. Man, I feel like I'm egg, on egg shells around that guy all the time. Well, you know, you just need to understand, that's just him. Really, is this what the Gospel does, just leaves us like that?

Are we to continue blaming our physiology, our chemistry, the trials we've gone through, the pains we've suffered, what happened in childhood? Are we gonna continue blaming all of that, or our poor health, or whatever it is, that grace may abound? Does grace just cover over all that? Is that what we think of God's grace?

Paul's answer, "By no means! May it never be!" Emphatically no; strongest form of negation possible in the Greek language, that's what he's used here. It's emphatically denied, the toleration of any sin, and it's not just in the specific and the

general and the vague. He's talking about sin in specific, concrete forms because God desires truth in the inward parts. All of them. He shines his truth and his light and his salvation on the heart. All of it. He intends to radically transform the entire personality. He's going to dominate your personality, and he's going to conform it to Jesus Christ. If you don't think that that's good news, then you don't understand the Gospel.

That's what Paul speaks of, here, when he says in verse 2, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" We can't. By no means can we do that. Truth is, no true Christian can continue living in sin. No true Christian can be comfortable with sin. Did I say no true Christian sins? No. I said no true Christian can continue in sin. Every Christian wants to mortify sin that he finds in himself. And believe me, we find a lot in ourselves. The more we grow into maturity, the deeper we see. You realize what's at the root, producing all that bad fruit. And when we see it, we want it gone.

Every Christian wants to mortify sin. Every Christian wants sin dead, because sin is what we're saved from. Sin is the

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obstacle that prevents us from full enjoyment of the life of God in Christ Jesus. So let's move the meter a little bit and help us think differently. We need to think differently.

So we're going consider some implications of Christ's resurrection for how we live today, and the key is to change how we think about this. Five times in these verses, really Romans 6:3-11, five times in those verses, Paul uses a verb that has to do with the thought life, has to do with how we think, what we think. Look at verse 3. He says, "Do you not know?" Verse 6, "We know." Verse 8, "We believe," which has to do with what you know and understand and embrace. Verse 9, "We know," and in verse 11 also he says, "So you also must consider yourselves." The verb *logizomai*, thinking.

And just as Paul's words here to the Romans, they're fitting to reorient the minds of Christians in his own day, those who are steeped in Greek philosophy, all manner of wacky mythology. You think The Avengers or Marvel is anything new? It all came from this stuff. They've even got one called Thor. Where's that coming from? It's like dipping into the old

mythologies and putting it on the big screen. These guys are steeped in that stuff.

So his words are fitting to reorient the minds of those Christians coming out of that culture, having really believed all that stuff. And if his words are powerful enough to reorient their minds, his words are just as fitting to reorient the minds of Christians today. We're not in any more significant culture of lies than these Romans were. We have been raised in a climate of moralistic therapeutic deism.

Moralistic: just teaching rules to live by. Therapeutic: it's about salving your hurts, trying to help you heal and overcome, and even though you'll always be addicted, even though you'll always be recovering, there's no "done with that," that's therapeutic. And it's deism. Why? Because there is no accountability. God is remote. He wound up the universe and then stepped away and let us run the show. Moralistic therapeutic deism: that's what, that's coming out of most pulpits in churches today.

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Listen, we've entered into the Christian faith with our heads full of error, with our hearts saddled with wrong desires, with our, our habits of living, they're trained by the world. So Paul tells us we have got to start at the bottom level, basement level, in our thinking, in our minds, at a radical fundamental, we need to think differently.

And that means that when you walk in here every Sunday, I have to tell you you're wrong about something. You're wrong. I'm wrong. That's why I go to the Word of God, to have my theology sorted out. We need to relearn everything. That's not a message that the unbelieving world wants to hear, and sadly, increasingly, that's not a message that many professing Christians are patient with either.

But that is the message of the Gospel. That is the Gospel of divine grace. Grace has power to change this, the repenting sinner. We're transformed by a resurrection of power, demonstrated first in the power that raised Jesus from the dead, and now demonstrated daily in every single life, to show fundamentally, radically, the change that comes in our lives.

Now we can't do justice to everything that's here in the text, but ever so briefly, I want to show you three reasons this morning that the Gospel of a crucified and resurrected Christ means that we cannot continue living in sin. Three reasons that this Gospel of a crucified and then resurrected Christ means we cannot continue to live in sin.

Here's the first reason, reason number one: We've been baptized into Christ in order to live a new life. We've been baptized into Christ in order to live a new life. Just trying to summarize verses 3 and 4 there, we've been baptized into Christ in order to live a new life.

Let's read that again. "Do you not know that all of us who've been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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."

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When we think of that word baptism, I think most of us today imagine in our mind's eye the ritual of water baptism by which a new convert is immersed in water as a public testimony. It symbolizes his, out, outwardly, it symbolizes his identification with Christ. And that's a fitting symbol for the one who is truly converted, who's been brought from death to life, from error to truth, from sin to righteousness. It's a good, fitting symbol for the one who's been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, into the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

The symbolism of baptism, that is, the full immersion into, under, and up out of the water is a most fitting symbol, perfect picture to portray what God has done for the person who puts his faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus died, was buried, he went down, he went under, and then he rose up from the dead, and by a mysterious work of grace, God reckons the believer to have joined Christ in that death, burial, and resurrection.

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Exactly what Paul says, verse 4. "We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism." So it's not our water baptism that does add; the water baptism pictures the spiritual reality. "Buried therefore with him by baptism into death, into the death of Christ." So entering the waters of baptism symbolizes that old nature that we inherited from Adam, that old nature that bears the guilt of original sin, that old nature that, that is responsible for all the guilt of sin that we incur by doing sins.

A simple washing in the water will not do, only death kills the old nature. So it's full immersion. That's what pictures the death of the old nature that must die. The seal of death, as we all know if you've ever been to a funeral and you see, seen a body buried into the ground, the seal of death is the burial of the body.

Again, that's pictured in the full immersion in the ritual baptism. It's pictured in the full immersion under the water. I tell every baptism candidate that I meet with, Get ready. You're going all the way under. If you don't go all the way under, I'm

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going do it again. So don't wrestle me in the baptism tank. I've got to go all the way under. Why? It's because that's the picture. Burial. No more visible to the, to the eye.

And what is it that is dead and buried? What's the spiritual reality that that water symbolism symbolizes? What's dead and buried is the old self, the old nature, which is driven by sinful desires, which is dominated by sinful habits, a mind that is filled with sinful worries and sinful fears, pursuing all manner of futile ambitions. In fact, for the one, this is what, this is what Jesus is talking about, being baptized into Christ, it buries the old self, seals the old nature in a tomb. And this is what Jesus is referring to when he says in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Anyone would come after me, let him deny himself," what does that mean, to? It means to refuse to live by the old self. It's basically a departure from the self; death, burial of the old self, no longer following its desires, no longer pursuing its ambitions. "And for the one who would come after me," when

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Jesus says, "Let him take up his cross daily," he's saying, Join me in dying every day. It's how you live.

Salvation means it's the end of you. It's disassociation with all that you used to be, all that defined you, all that became comfortable to you, all that became familiar, what was second nature to you, what you didn't even have to think about. Invisible to you. Salvation means that old person, all that stuff as driven by that old sinful nature is dead and buried and gone forever. That's how you need to count it.

It's not that there's anything wrong with the human nature per se. That's because God gave us a human nature, and everything that God created is good. So it's not the human nature that's the problem. It's not the human nature that needs to die. It's the sin that is woven into the fabric of the fallen human nature, that's the problem. It's been welded in there. It's become so thoroughly intertwined that that old nature, it can't be relieved of it. It just must die if it's ever going to be raised to life.

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That's what Jesus meant when he said in John 12:24-25, he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Whoever loves his life loses it. Doesn't hold on to it. He loses it. "Whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." You willing to lose your life? Are you willing to hate your life in this world? If so, you're going to keep it for eternal life.

It brings us to Paul's purpose in this first section. Purpose clause, verse four, "We're buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death." There's the purpose clause, "in order that," purpose, "just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, might walk in newness of life." Look, we've been baptized into Christ in order to live a new life, that we, too, like Christ, might walk in newness of life. It's new, not only in the sense of being recent to us in a temporal sense. It's new in a radical sense, in the sense of being fundamentally different than it was, extraordinarily different.

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I find it fascinating how many ways people growing up in the modern world are always trying to reinvent themselves. That's what the transgender movement is all about, is the reinvention of the self. That's what creating an online personality that's, has no association really with what you are. But that's what it's all about, is trying to reinvent the self. We tend to think of this in terms of expressive individualism. Everyone feels the need to tweak something about themselves, change what isn't quite right, and then go online to tell everybody about it. Don't be fooled. It's not only the young who are tweaking and plucking and preening and posting and broadcasting all that. Older people are doing that, too.

Obviously, this is hitting sinful proportions in our time in the form of homosexuality, transgenderism, all kinds of definitions of marriage and family that have no basis in reality whatsoever. But this has been going on, this, this, the same pattern of sin, though it's taken a form today that we're unfamiliar with, this same pattern of sin has been going on for a long time in our country. Adulterous dalliances, things that people call midlife crises. The guy who's always been really

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conservative shows up one day to work wearing a Hawaiian shirt and smoking cigars, or whatever.

It's just the abandonment of responsibility to pursue a new ambition, try a different kind of life, turn over a new leaf, reinvent the self. I'm not overlooking the sinfulness of any of that, but what I'm saying is that we just seem to know in our heart of hearts that something is not right, that we need tweaking, that something's got to be done. We need to change.

And most of the time people try to change stuff that's just external; put a new Facebook picture up or something like that, or tweak your profile, or that, that's so superficial! But what it points to is the fact that we understand that deeply, we need change. Radically, fundamentally, something's got to be different.

Rather than take up that project in an ineffectual and superficial way, why not look to God, who has the power to do the very deepest work, to get to the, to do the greatest miracle in us that could be accomplished, is regeneration, to get to the

soul level? Why not seek him to bring about a genuine spiritual transformation through the death and burial of Christ, in order that we too, like him, might walk in newness of life?

That's what I want. That, after all, is exactly what Christ has done. Having died, having been buried, and after his resurrection, which is confirmed in John 20 as a bodily resurrection, just as we read, the resurrected body that Jesus now lives in, it walks in newness of life, having ascended bodily into heaven, the physical entering the domain of the heavenly. What was formally purely spiritual, a body has entered in Christ. How does that happen? How do we describe that except by using Paul's language? We can only call what Paul called it here, newness of life.

This body is not fit for heaven. It must be glorified to enter there, and obviously, we know our old nature, the sin nature, has no place in heaven. Sin and the deeds of the sin nature have no place in the new life, which is what the Gospel is about, no place in the Holy of Holies, where God is. And this is what the *evang*, *evangel* is in our evangelicalism, to proclaim

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new life in Christ, a new kind of life, radically different, extraordinarily different. So that's the first reason that living in sin is emphatically wrong for the Christian. May it never be. We have been baptized into Christ to live a new life.

Second reason sin has no part in the Christian life, number two: We've been united to Christ in order to live a liberated life. We've been united to Christ in order to live a liberated life. In other words, to live a liberated life, a life of true and total freedom, you must be joined to the Liberator. Verse 5, "If we've been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin, for the one who's died has been freed from sin."

There are two concepts I'd like to bring to your attention here. Both of them are guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, by the historical reality of the empty tomb, the dual spiritual realities: first, of our union with him

and second, of our freedom in him. First, union with him and second, freedom in him.

In verse 5 you see that phrase, "united with him." That's, that's actually a profoundly strong concept. The word united is a good word; it's appropriate, but it's unfortunately been watered down somewhat by our cultural use. We see unbelievers, right, these days who are united in all kinds of causes: Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ plus, social justice, climate justice, et cetera, et cetera.

And all one needs to do these days to show solidarity, to be united in a cause, no need to go burn something down or join some other manner of peaceful protest. The only thing necessary is to click the, Like, button. That's how you show solidarity, unity: clicking a button. Stare fiercely at your computer screen and feel outrage and then maybe even post something, a meme, a picture, Like, an article. That's what the world counts as being united and showing solidarity.

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That is not what united means, here. It's not meaningful at all to be united in that way. The word Paul uses here, *symphytos*, literally means, to be born with. *Symphytos*, to be born with. It came to mean to be planted with, to grow up together with. It describes an organic union; united with Christ, born with him, being organically, spiritually united to him.

One lexicographer illustrates the use of this word in the ancient world, saying, "In medicine, it refers to the healing of fractured bones and means specifically to grow back in such a way as to connect the two fragments to mend." Hence, *symphytos* has this meaning of cohesion and interpenetration, so that in time, when you look at that mended bone, you just see one bone.

This is a deep, profound spiritual union, joining together of life to life, our life with his and vitally, his life with ours, in ours. That's what Paul is speaking of here. The same lexicographer goes on to add an important note on the word, fills in what Paul means by this phrase, united with him. He writes this, "The idea of growth must not be left out because

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the very use of the word *symphytos* suggests the image of a single plant that is getting bigger and in which the life of the trunk conveys life and fruit-bearing strength to the branches.”

Remind you of anything? Paul may have borrowed this concept, the word picture that the Lord used in John 15:4, when he said, “Abide in me, and I in you.” There's that concept of cohesion, that no, notion of interpenetration. And then Jesus said this, “As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing,” the vitality of the vine coming out through the branches to produce life and fruit.

In this resurrected life, united as we are with Christ, we're growing up in him, with him, growing with him, into him. God the Son, he's the Son of God, the Son of Man, his divine nature is in perfect union with his human nature. One person, one personality, and yet he still possesses a truly human

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nature. And a human nature, by definition, is mutable. It changes, it grows and matures.

He grows into greater, fuller expression of the perfect humanity that God has designed, what God intended from before the foundation of the world. And we in union with him, we grow up, Ephesians 4:15, "in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

Now, the utter incompatibility of sin with this union with Christ's life that we've been given, that's obvious. What's the point, though? Again, two spiritual realities in this section. First, our union with Christ. Second, our freedom. Freedom. True liberation. The new life that we live is one that's completely free of our old enslavement to sin. Verse 6, "Our old self is crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so we no longer be slaves to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin."

There it is, the old self, the old nature, the sin nature crucified with Christ, exposed to shame, put to death in a most

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cruel and humiliating manner. That's exactly the proper end for the wickedness of the sin nature. We applaud that. Why this fitting, proper end for our old self? In order that this body of sin, that is, the principle of sinning, which tempts us, entice us, entices us, tries to dominate us, in order that that body of sin might be brought to nothing.

I don't like that translation as much. It's accurate. It's not strong enough; it's not clear enough. Christian Standard Bible translate that phrase, translates the phrase, "in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished." New American Standard, that's good, too, "Our body of sin might be done away with." I like the old King James, here, "that the body of sin might be destroyed." That's strong. That's clear. Basic idea in this verb *katargeo*, it's a non-physical destruction by a superior force that comes on the scene to dominate another force, an inferior force that was previously in control.

We got plenty of illustrations in this as our men went over to fight wars in Afghanistan, in Iraq. Al Qaeda once exercised an outsized influence in the city of Ramadi, Iraq, in 2006, put

fear into the hearts of people and its willingness to perform acts of terror on a, on a few. That is, until U.S. forces directed some attention to Al Qaeda. The famous battle of Ramadi ensued. The superior U.S. forces dominated the one that was previously in control, and Al Qaeda's hold of fear on the people was broken. People felt comfortable to walk around outside again.

It's a physical illustration, so it's imperfect. We might say that the idea of the superior force dominating and expelling us inferior force, the idea, here, is more like turning on a light in a dark room. When the light shines, by nature the light is sup, a superior power that completely and permanently dispels the darkness.

That's what we see here; old self crucified in the death of Christ. It means the death of death in the death of Christ. Since the old self operates by a sin-and-death principle, that old self has lost all of its power. The body of sin rendered impotent, its hold broken, its dominion abolished, its power over us destroyed.

The Liberator has liberated his people, not by breaking down the door and breaking the chains. No, the Liberator has liberated his people by coming into the prison and killing the prisoner. The guard enters the cell, sees the prisoner has died. He takes the corpse out of the cell, he buries it in the ground, and he moves on.

In the same way, we've died to our former Lord. Slave-master sin no longer owns us because the self that was under his dominion is now dead. "For one who has died has been set free from sin." All that stands before us now is the life and growth of freedom in Christ. Because of his death and burial and resurrection, we too have died with him, been buried with him, and we've been raised with him.

Three reasons the Gospel means we're no longer to continue in sin: number one, we've been baptized into Christ in order to live a new life. Number two: we've been united to Christ in order to live a liberated life. And finally, number three: we've been raised up in Christ in order to live a glorified life.

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We've been raised up in Christ, resurrected with him, in order to live a life of glory.

A life of glory and sinning do not mix. Look at verse 8, "If we have died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him." Why would we believe such a thing? What's the basis of our confidence that our dying with Christ means we're also going to live with him, we'll share in his resurrection life?

Once again, Paul makes his point appealing to what we already know for sure. Verses 9-11, "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has mastery over him, no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ."

Just briefly, here's his argument, impeccable logic. We know that we, too, will be raised from the dead, that we, too, will receive glorified bodies, just as Christ was raised from the dead, just as Christ received a glorified body. That's our

hope of resurrection, that our life in a future resurrection will follow the pattern laid down by his first resurrection.

How do we know this? Three reasons. First of all, because he said it. He said it. Any more argument? Did Jesus ever lie? Did he ever say anything that wasn't true, ever predict anything that wasn't fulfilled? No. We believe that whatever he says is true, whatever he says, he will do, so we take these promises in faith. We know for certain his Word is good, reliable, trustworthy, true. In fact, to doubt him is the very essence of sin. So that's the first reason. We believe that we will follow the pattern of his resurrection because he said we will.

Number two: We know that we, too, will rise from the dead because we experience the same kind of victory over sin that he did. Same in kind, not always, I'll admit, in frequency or in degree. But it is the same ability by the Spirit of Christ to reject sin. And our assurance of these truths grows when we see the same pattern in our lives of the end of sin's dominion as we turn away from sin, not just an outward conformity, but due to an inward change.

What do I mean by inward change? I'm talking about a growing abhorrence for sin, a growing awareness of sin, to see the depth of sin, to hate its insidiousness, to discern its source, to want it gone, to see the outcome in the end of sin and to hate it in ourselves and in everybody else. So we make war against sin. This is what's going on in the inside. We want to make war against it. We hate it. We want to mortify it. We want to repent of it, with, so with increasing frequency, with increasing intensity, we experience greater and greater levels of victory. We no longer smell the stench of death on our lives, but we ourselves become the pleasing aroma of Christ.

So if we've died with Christ, we have certainty, believing we also will live with him because he said it, number one, and because we see, number two, a power over sin that we never had before, which means we share in the death of Christ that he died to sin once for all.

Third reason that we know we will rise from the dead like Jesus did is because we see the same kind of life at work in us.

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It's a resurrection kind of life. It's a new life, a life that was never there before. "The life he lives, he lives to God." So when we see that same kind of life in us, animating us, filling us with joy, hope, gratitude, giving us spiritual energy, producing spiritual fruit in our lives, motivating us toward righteousness, changing our personalities, which are inflexibly stubborn apart from new life in God, well, you know what? That's proof positive that there is new life in us from God, and it's alive and well in us. It's productive. It's doing things.

Believing God, taking him at his Word, repenting of sin, forsaking sin and mortifying it, living for God to bring glory to God in the name of Jesus Christ, this is what it means to be a Christian. Those who do not live this way, they're either deceived and disobedient Christians, which I'll admit there are such creatures, but they're soon to repent if they're Christians.

Or more commonly, those who do not live this way are not Christians at all. As you stop to consider yourself this morning, look at Paul's counsel in verse 11. And I might say

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it's Paul's command, to "consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." What does that look like? Going to get some application of all this good news. How do we apply this?

Now that you've oriented your mind to what is a truly Christian way of thinking, here is the great news of the Gospel, that you don't need to stay the same as you've been. You change, therefore, verse 12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions." You know what? You have the power of a new life in Christ. You have power of Christ's resurrected life, power to raise the dead. You don't need to obey the passions and desires of the flesh any longer. You can learn new desires, you can have an elevated life, sublimity of thinking with your thoughts fixed on heavenly things instead of acting like a brute beast, rummaging around for your next sensual pleasure.

You can live an elevated life. Verse 13, "Don't present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who've been brought from

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death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness."

A lot of talk about people and their bodies these days, people using their body and their body parts to display their rebellion. That's not to be us. Your body, your body parts, no longer are they used as tools to pur, pursue sin or pursue worthless goals, or to chase futile ambitions, or for all kinds of aimless and empty and soul-wearying pursuits. Your body, your body parts, no longer for degradation, no longer producing in you things you're ashamed of, no longer chasing things that'll one day make you look back and want to hide all that. Why is that? Because you've been baptized into Christ. Dead. Crucified with him. Dead. Buried. And then raised in order to live a new life.

You've been united to Christ so live a liberated life. You've been raised up with Christ in order to live a glorified life. That's a Gospel that's utterly incompatible with sinning, "for," as Paul concludes in verse 14, look at it there, "sin will have no dominion over you." Sin is not going to be your

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Lord anymore. You are not in bondage to sin any longer. You don't have to commit that sin anymore, because you're not under law; you're under grace. Grace is the power not to sin, and grace is the power to do what's righteous.

Praise God for his amazing grace. Amen? And grace, that's just a shorthand way of summarizing the meaning of this Passion weekend as we remember his crucifixion for our forgiveness, and as we celebrate his resurrection for our justification. He died to sin once for all, that we too, having died with him, might never die again. He was raised that we, too, might walk in newness of life. And by living this way, we'll give a true and living testimony that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is alive and well, still, on planet Earth, here in America, here in Northern Colorado, and that Christ continues to build his church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for sending us the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is your plan of eternal salvation for all who repent of sin and believe in him. We're so grateful to you for the Apostle Paul and for the superintendent and

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superintending work of the Holy Spirit to cause him to write this inspired letter of Scripture, that we might learn, that we might think differently, that we might understand what we're saved for, that this salvation life, this new life, starts right now.

We no longer have to be under the dominion of sin. We're not under the dominion of sin if we're truly in Christ. We're dead to that. We thank you for that death, burial, and we thank you most especially for that resurrection in life because in Christ all for us is, yes and amen. Thank you, Father, for this Gospel. Thank you for this resurrection weekend. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.