

Dead To Sin

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“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:1-2).

“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?’ That question would naturally arise in the minds of the uninformed. Besides, some people would like to have an excuse to indulge in sin. If God’s grace abounds where sin abounds, why not keep sinning, so that grace may abound the more?” (Commentary on Romans, Whiteside, p. 128). When our understanding of grace is so misconstrued, it is no surprise that such a fallacious idea would come to mind! Paul assaults the false idea immediately by stating that if we have died to sin, it should be inconceivable to have a desire to continue practicing it. A practitioner of righteousness is as far removed from sin as is possible – to the point that Paul’s analogy is the difference between life and death. One can understand how a reader might make this argument, though, based on a misapplication of the context (Romans 5:20-21).

The idea of death, though, is key to understanding salvation. I must be dead to sin in order to live for righteousness. I cannot think that these two will dwell in me simultaneously. I am either totally saved or not – there is no middle ground. I have either died to sin or I still live in it. *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 4:20-24).*

Sadly, man has crafted many scenarios in which it is acceptable to continue living in sin. It is simply easier to overlook sin – to save relationships rather than souls, to avoid the risks of faithfully ordering one’s life according to the will of God. I have often heard people justify a sinful situation by saying, “But God’s grace is limitless. I’m just going to trust in His grace.” While I would never argue that God’s grace is *not* limitless, I would say that it has God-established boundaries. It is like a well in the desert that is practically inexhaustible, but nevertheless bound by location. That well, like grace, is narrowly defined. One cannot continue “living in sin” (Colossians 3:5-11) if one is truly living in a state of spiritual renewal. I can only ever become a “vessel for honor” in God’s household if I take some initiative and “cleanse myself” from sinful activities (2 Timothy 2:20-23).

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3).

Paul takes for granted that his readers understand that they are baptized into Christ, but queries whether or not they know they have been baptized into His death, as well. Indeed, they are one and the same baptism! He plainly implies that if they knew they were baptized into Christ, they should also know that they are no longer to live in the habit of sin. Baptism receives an interesting meaning in these verses:

- Notice that baptism is not entry into a denomination, or a congregation. We are not baptized as an initiation ceremony into anything earthly. We are baptized into the body Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:13), His death, and the benefits of that

union. While congregational membership is necessary, since many things commanded of the Christian can only be performed in the context of a local church, we must abandon the denominational thinking that permeates our culture.

- The implications of baptism are not purely physical. There is nothing literally magical about the water itself, or the fact that we are wet. Peter carefully points this out in 1 Peter 3:21). What is most powerful about baptism is the spiritual aspects of sharing something so intimate with Christ as His own death, burial, and resurrection. Can one make a more intimate statement than that we are “clothed with Christ” in our baptism (Galatians 3:27)?
- Does baptism sound optional in this verse? Does baptism sound like just a formality? Or the outward sign of an inward grace? Is baptism the response of a person already saved? If so, then a person can be saved without being “in Christ” or sharing in His death! Freedom from condemnation is found in Christ (Romans 8:1) and we enter Christ through baptism.