

Rom 6:1-14
Dying and Rising with Christ
Leith Valley, Sept 27.
Paul Trebilco

Paul begins by addressing the issue of sin. Now that we are Christians, what do we say about sin? He's not talking about bank robbery or murder – but about selfishness, harsh words, unloving actions, mean-spiritedness and so on. These things are clearly wrong, but we – certainly I – keep doing them. Perhaps I make progress in one area, but then fail in another.

This raises the question that Paul addresses in Rom 6:1: 'Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?' If we keep on sinning aren't we giving God the opportunity to be even more gracious? That is - lots of good comes out of our sin. So why not sin more that grace may overflow? Paul's answer – 'By no means!' But why not? V2-4:

'How can we who died to sin go on living in it?' ³ Do you not know that all of us who *have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴ *Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death*, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

When did we 'die to sin'? He's writing to people who are clearly alive! When did they die to sin?

Answer: 'all of us who *have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death*'.

He's talking about baptism as an adult and baptism as an outward demonstration of conversion, of having become a Christian. He's thinking very concretely of baptism by total immersion.

Of course, in such a baptism the person goes completely under the water. PP

Paul is thinking of that as portraying someone's *burial*. Going under the water is like going into the ground – being buried. And hence dying.

And so he can go on: *Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death*,

Baptism symbolizes death, Paul calls it 'baptism into death' – death to the old life, death to sin.

Two points to note:

The early Christians first started to build churches in the third century – before that they met in homes and rented spaces and so didn't build churches. Gradually Christian architecture developed – and baptismal pools were part of those churches. What shape do you think they chose for baptismal pools?

At least some of them were crosses.

And this makes perfect sense given Rom 6:

³ Do you not know that all of us who *have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴ *Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death*,

Baptised into his death – symbolized by going under the water, But how powerful that is

when the baptismal pool is *shaped as a cross*. This was a vivid way of saying – when we are baptized, we die – we share in Christ’s cross. Christ has died – for us, and to sin – and we share in that death – so that what has happened to Christ, happens to us. He has died – we have died too.

But there’s another point of importance.

There are a number of different senses in which we as Christians die to sin. Let me start with two:

- Paul says we *have been baptized into Christ’s death*? As I’ve said, this means that we *actually share in Christ’s death*. God sees us as *included in Christ’s death* all that time ago. When Christ died on the cross, we shared in that, we died too and so we died to sin. So **Gal 2:19-20**:

‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’

Or

2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.

So what has happened to Christ – happens to us. We died on the cross with Christ.

There is a door marked death – and the room we live in is called sin. The only way to get out from the room, out of the door, is to die. Christ has done that – he has died. But we have died with him – and gone out the door! In fact, we are carried through the door by Christ! So we too have died, and died to sin.

- But we also *died in our conversion and our baptism* – baptism as the seal following conversion. So Christ’s death for us, becomes *real* in our lives at our conversion and baptism. When they were building those cross-shaped baptismal pools (PP), they were saying that in our baptism, we actually, personally share Christ’s death, it becomes real in our lives.

So why is the Christian not to go on sinning – perpetually, habitually, without caring? Because we have died to sin, we have been crucified with Christ. The old life has died, has been put to death – when Christ died, and this has been made real in our conversion and baptism. We’ve actually died to sin with Christ.

But there is a third sense in which we die:

- We die daily – we consciously decide to die to sin – to not sin, but rather to live for God.
- And of course there is a fourth sense. We die to sin at our own death. Then we can sin no more.

So note how in this passage Paul goes on to call us to consider ourselves dead to sin – and to not let sin rule us – so actually to die daily to sin:

PP

¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their

passions. ¹³ No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

So the daily call that Paul makes is that having died to sin with Christ on the cross, and in our baptism, we need to die *daily* – to actually live a different life. This is where the Spirit comes in, as the power of the new life.

We're used to the idea of a *decisive* event followed by a change of life.

Marriage – something decisive happens – we are married – but *then* we need to live in a different way! He's a foolish man who doesn't change!

Becoming a parent – something decisive – but then we live differently!

So too with sin. We've died with Christ, appropriated in baptism – *now* we are called to live differently, not perpetually sinning. We have a new status, we are in a new situation – and need to live in that new status. This is the call to daily discipleship – by the power of the Spirit to daily, hourly, consider ourselves dead to sin.

But there is another side to this too:

What about the resurrection? Do we share in that too? Note again what Paul says:

⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

So, we have died with Christ – and we might expect him to say that 'we have been raised with him'. But he does not: we have *not* been raised in the same way, only Christ now is raised. But v4 says 'so we too might walk in newness of life'. Not been raised, but walk in newness of life. We share in his death, but we do not share in the same way – yet – in his resurrection. We are not yet raised.

But our hope in v5 – we *will be* united with him in a resurrection like his – future.

BUT now we *DO* 'walk in newness of life'. We share in the transformation that comes with the resurrection. The power of the resurrection has embraced our world – and we share in that, we are part of that! Resurrection life is ours – before actual resurrection! Think then of how wonderful this 'walking in newness of life is'! We share in the power and transformation of the resurrection. A new kind of life!

Or as Paul says in 6:13 we are said to be those who 'have been brought from death to life,' He's thinking of baptism again – of rising out of the water – in new life!

Its very easy to under-estimate the power of this change.

Wesley's hymn: And can it be that I should gain:
 Long my imprisoned spirit lay
 Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
 Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
 I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

The metaphor from slavery to sin – breaking the handcuffs – perhaps the best analogy of the dramatic change.

The Typewriter to the digital age!!!
 Imagine life with no computers! That is the dramatic change.
 Or going from sailing ships to aeroplanes.

So the 'newness' involved in 'newness of life' is amazing!

In fact what Paul is doing in this passage is to *remind us of who we are!*
 You'll have seen people in movies who have had a terrible accident – and who have lost their memories. They don't know their name, or where they live, or what job they do, who their family is and so on. Its deeply disturbing to them – and very strange to family and friends. Sometimes we're like that as Christians – we've forgotten who we are. Paul is helping us to discover who we are – so that he can bring our lives back into line with our actual identity. Memory can be recovered – Paul is trying to do that!
 We are those who have been set free from slavery to sin – we have been crucified – and so can no longer be bound by sin. Once you're dead – sin has no more claim on us! Now we are to live that out!
 But now too we share in Christ's newness of life – we are not yet raised, but we are still transformed. And we are to live that out too!

Or think of Paul as giving us a road map – of the journey ahead.

I want to finish by talking about the explanatory power of all this.

1) Notice the mixed nature of the Christian life!

We have died – but need to die daily. The transforming power of the resurrection is at work in us! But we have not been raised. We can sin. Caught in the middle.

So we are living between the death and resurrection. There is sometimes struggle, frustration and tension. We need lots of patience with ourselves and others, and lots of humility because we fail and get things wrong. We live in an age of death – and bad things happen because we are still in the Adamic age, the world of Adam where death still has sway, and bad things happen to good people. And yet resurrection power is also at work! WE are being transformed!

2) The mixed nature of the Church!

Not only do we find it 'mixed' as individuals, but also together!
Some put too much emphasis on the death, some too much on the life!

3) Yet Strong hope

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Our hope is sure because Christ is risen! And Christ is at work among us, calling us to be true to our baptism, to live out of our new life and to die daily to sin and to be convinced in our hope that death has no dominion over us! Our hope is secure – for Christ is risen!

To God be the glory!
Amen.

¹ What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³ No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.