

Shorter Catechism 29-30      “Union with Christ”  
Ezekiel 36  
Psalm 19  
Romans 5:19-6:14

February 3, 2013

Ezekiel speaks of how the Spirit will be poured out on Israel.

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses,  
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes  
and be careful to obey all my rules.”

Our Catechism articulates this well in questions 29-30:

**Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?**

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

**Q. 30. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?**

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

The problem – as we have seen over the past several weeks –  
is that we have rebelled against God,  
and so in Adam, we inherit the estate of sin and misery.

But the solution is that God has done what we could never do.

We could never escape the estate of sin and misery.

And so God sent his Son to redeem us –  
to deliver us from the estate of sin and misery  
and bring us into an estate of salvation!

But how can we partake of this redemption?

How can we benefit from the mighty deeds that Christ has done?

Ezekiel says that God will put his Spirit within us –  
and thus *cause us* to walk in his ways.

Psalm 19 speaks of how the heavens declare the glory of God –  
revealing the handiwork of the Creator.

But Psalm 19 also speaks of God’s word – God’s law –  
and how perfect and pure are God’s commandments.

Psalm 19 also looks forward to the day when sin will not have dominion.

*Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;*

*Let them not have dominion over me!*

*Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. (Ps 19:13)*

So let us sing Psalm 19...

Psalm 19 prays, "let sin not have dominion."

The answer to that prayer comes in Romans 6,

So let us hear the Word of our God from Romans chapter 6...

### **The Question: How Can We Who Died to Sin Still Live in It? (6:1-2)**

Is this true?

Sin shall not have dominion over you?

You know the problem well:

you seek to obey God and live a life that is pleasing and holy before him,  
but you keep falling into sin.

Then you repent and confess your sin to God with the promise of new obedience,  
but then you sin again,

and the cycle of sin and repentance wears you down.

"How could God forgive me for the same sin, over and over?" you ask.

Paul says: "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."

But in my experience, I do not feel that my old self is dead--  
it seems all too alive and well for a corpse.

Children, do you find yourselves doing things which hurt your parents  
or your brothers and sisters?

Are there times when you do it on purpose?  
when you know exactly how to make them mad--  
and you know that you shouldn't do it--  
but you do it anyway?

And parents, husbands and wives,  
you may be more sophisticated,  
but don't you do the same thing?

Wives, are there times when you bring up something your husband did,  
simply out of spite?  
simply because you are upset with him?

And husbands, do you ever make fun of your wife, or say something rude,  
just to show that you're the boss?

My friends, these things should not be.

That is why Paul asks:

*How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

That is our question for today.

Paul has told us that in Adam all sinned.

In Adam all died.

The covenant was made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity.

And so all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation

sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

In Adam all became guilty.

But Jesus Christ is the second Adam.

Through his death and resurrection he has triumphed over sin and death.

As Paul says at the end of Romans 5

*Therefore, as one trespass unto condemnation for all men,  
so one act of righteousness unto justification and life for all men;  
for as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,  
so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.  
Now the law came in to increase the trespass,  
but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,  
so that, as sin reigned in death,  
grace also might reign through righteousness unto eternal life  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. (5:18-21)*

Just think about what Paul has just said.

The law came to increase the trespass.

And where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

In other words, God gave the law

in order that sin might increase,

so that grace might abound even more.

The next question is obvious:

*What then shall we say?*

*Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*

After all, if the more I sin, the more God's grace abounds,

then why not keep on sinning????!!

Paul is horrified at the thought:

*me genoito!!! By no means! May it never be! Absolutely NOT!!*

If you understand the gospel, then you will not allow any place for sin in the Christian life.

Sin is *intolerable*.

Have you gotten used to sin?  
Is sin your friend?  
Do you tend to say “well, I’m only human!”?  
Who cares!  
Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven!!

The first part is true – Christians are not perfect.  
I know my sin – and it grieves me.  
But the second part is false.  
It is *not* true that Christians are “just forgiven.”  
It is *not* true that God forgives your sin and then says,  
“okay, now go back to your sinning again!”

*How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

Paul’s point is not that Christians don’t sin.  
His point is that you cannot think that it is okay to sin!  
Sin has no place in the Christian life.

There are two parts to this passage.  
There is the indicative – the gospel message of who Christ is and who you are in Christ  
in verses 3-10–  
and there is the imperative in verses 11-13.

The indicative consists of three parts:

- 1) **You Have Been Baptized into Christ’s Death (6:3-4)**
- 2) **You Have Died with Christ and Are No Longer Enslaved by Sin (6:5-7)**
- 3) **Because Jesus Died to Sin, Death Has No Dominion Over Him (6:8-10)**

Paul then lays out four imperatives:

- 1) **Reckon Yourself Dead to Sin (6:11)**
- 2) **Do Not Let Sin Reign (6:12)**
- 3) **Do Not Continue to Present Your Members to Sin (6:13)**
- 4) **But Present Yourselves (and Your Members) to God (6:13)**

So let’s look first at who you are in Christ.

## 1. Who You Are in Christ:

### a. You Have Been Baptized into Christ’s Death (6:3-4)

It is interesting (and important) that Paul starts with baptism.

When Paul asks the question *How can we who died to sin still live in it?*  
he immediately thinks of baptism:

*Do you not know that all of us who have 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.*

If you have been baptized into Christ, then you can no longer live in sin.  
Because in your baptism you were baptized into Christ's death,  
and he died to sin,  
as Paul tells us in verse 10.  
Therefore, all who are baptized into Christ, share in his death.  
This means that through your baptism, you died to sin.

I'm not saying that just getting wet saves you.  
But let's take Paul seriously when he says that  
"all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death."

Paul is talking about ordinary baptism.  
Some people try to make a distinction between water-baptism and spirit-baptism,  
saying that these are two different things that are pretty much unconnected.  
But the New Testament connects the two.  
On the day of Pentecost,  
Peter stood up and said,  
"Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins,  
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
In baptism, water and the Holy Spirit are connected.  
It is not that everyone who is baptized is saved automatically.  
After all, water cannot save you.  
Rather, baptism is the means of uniting you to Christ and his church.  
It is the way in which we enter the promises of God.

As our catechism puts it:

**Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?**

A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

**Q. 30. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?**

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

How are we united to Christ?

I like how the catechism puts it:

First, *the Spirit* unites us to Christ.  
But the Spirit unites us to Christ by *working faith in us*.  
And the Spirit unites us to Christ *in our effectual calling*.

[And then later, the catechism says that the sacraments  
“become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them,  
or in him that does administer them;  
but only by the blessing of Christ,  
and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.” (Q91)]

Or to say it another way:  
baptism unites us to Christ *by faith*.

Baptism is a means of grace--  
it is the instrument by which God grants us (by faith)  
the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection,  
through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

But it is more than just that--  
it is the means by which we are united to Christ in his death.

Verses 5-7 explain this:

**b. You Have Died with Christ and Are No Longer Enslaved by Sin (6:5-7)**

Paul uses two pictures of our union with Christ: “united with” and “crucified with”

*For if we have 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.*

The word for “united with” (*sumphutos*) means literally to grow along with,  
or to be planted with.

Later in Romans Paul will use the idea of being “grafted” into Christ.  
Even as Christ has died – so now we have been planted into his death.  
And Paul connects this with our being crucified with Christ.

Several of the early fathers drew attention to this very organic image.

Basil commented that “he who is baptized into Christ is baptized in his death  
and is not only buried with Christ and planted together with him  
but is first of all crucified with him.

Thus we are instructed that, as he who is crucified is separated from the living,  
so also he who has been crucified with Christ in the likeness of his death  
is completely set apart from those who live according to the old man.”

When Jesus Christ was crucified,  
he died in your place  
--as your substitute.

But the only way that his sacrifice could have any benefit for you,  
is if his death becomes yours.

Paul says in verse 6-7 that "we know that our old self was crucified with him  
so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing,  
so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin --  
for one who has died has been set free (or justified) from sin."

Do you believe that?

Do you believe that your old self--  
that sinful, prideful, lustful, hateful, old self --  
is really dead?

Paul tells you that you *were* crucified with Christ,  
so that you should no longer be a slave to sin.

Because the only way to be freed from sin is to die.

Baptism is a picture of that death.

It is indeed a baptism into death, as Paul calls it in verse 4.

When you were baptized,

whether as an infant, or as an adult,

you were baptized into Christ's death.

Because the only way to enter into life,

and the only way to become free from sin,

is to be united to Christ's death.

And Paul promises that those who have been united to his death,  
will also share in the glories of his resurrection.

Therefore when you are tempted,

when you face the lure of sin,

remember your baptism!

You have died with Christ -- and if you have died,

then you have been set free from sin -- you have been justified from sin.

Verses 8-10 then explain the consequences of our union with Christ:

**c. Because Jesus Died to Sin, Death Has No Dominion Over Him (6:8-10)**

*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

*We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again;*

*death 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.*

Jesus was raised from the dead.

Death no longer has dominion over him.  
And because death no longer has dominion over him,  
    death no longer has dominion over those who are united to him!

You have been united to Christ's death,  
    therefore you will also live with him.

Romans 5 says that there are only two men in all of history:  
    Adam and Christ.  
In Adam we died.  
In Christ we live.

## 2. Therefore...

Okay, what does all this mean?

Paul immediately starts explaining the implications of this  
    with a series of four imperatives.

If this is who you are in Christ,  
    then there are four things that you need to do.

### a. First, You Are to Reckon Yourself Dead to Sin (6:11)

In chapters 3-4 Paul spoke frequently about being “reckoned” or “counted” righteous in Christ.  
There, Paul was speaking of how God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness.  
Now, Paul turns to you and says, that since you have been united to Christ,  
    therefore you must count yourself dead to sin and living to God in Christ Jesus.

Why does Paul use this same “legal” language of imputation or “reckoning”?  
He does this precisely because he understands that *in your experience*  
    you may not *feel* dead to sin.

But if you have been united to Christ, this *is* true – whether you feel like it or not!  
Because you *are* dead to sin,  
    your old self *was crucified with him*  
        *in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing,*  
    therefore you need to believe it!

So the first imperative is something you need to believe.  
Because unless you believe this,  
    unless you reckon yourself dead to sin and living to God in Christ Jesus,  
    the next three imperatives will be quite impossible!

Let me say that again.

Unless you reckon yourself dead to sin (because you *are* dead to sin)  
    the next three imperatives will seem utterly absurd and impossible.



**b. Second, Do Not Let Sin Reign (6:12)**

*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.*

Notice that Paul does not say “Let sin not exist,” but rather, “Let sin not reign.”

What is the difference?

The early Fathers (long before the modern doctrine of “the consent of the governed”) distinguished between a “reign” and a tyranny in that “a tyrant rules without the consent of his subjects, whereas a reign applies in those cases where the subjects have assented to it.”

The tyranny of sin has been overthrown in Christ Jesus.

You have been set free – you have been justified from sin.

Now Paul says, “Let sin not reign” – “give no consent to sin!”

Freedom from sin is *legally* ours.

Jesus is our Lord and King.

We acknowledge his reign!

But our old master, that old tyrant sin, still seeks to control us.

Sin *wants* to master you!

Satan wants nothing more than to dominate you.

But you can say no to him!

Indeed, the only way that sin can reign over you is if you let it.

The dominion of sin has been overthrown.

Sin is NOT your master anymore!

In Romans 7 Paul will explain the struggle that continues within me –

but he starts by showing us that sin is no longer in control.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies.

The third and fourth imperatives are linked together:

**c. Third, Do Not Continue to Present Your Members to Sin (6:13)**

**d. But Present Yourselves (and Your Members) to God (6:13)**

In Greek there are two different tenses for the imperative:

the present imperative and the aorist imperative.

The present imperative refers to continuing action.

The aorist imperative refers to punctiliar action.

Why do you need to know that?

Because the two imperatives in verse 13 are in different tenses.

The first is present tense:

Do not continue to present your members to sin.

Or STOP presenting your members to sin!!

You *cannot* continue to do this.

Knock it off!

The second is aorist tense:  
Present yourselves to God.  
Decisively.  
Definitively.

Stop playing with sin!  
Don't take a half-hearted approach to it.

Christ didn't – and you have been united to Christ!

Also notice that Paul distinguishes between presenting our *members* to sin,  
and presenting our *selves* (and our members) to God.  
Your old man is dead – crucified with Christ.  
You belong to God.  
So present yourself to God.

And your members – present them to God as well – as instruments for righteousness.

This word “instrument” is the word “hopla.”  
Perhaps you may have heard of hoplites? (Greek soldiers)  
Hopla is Greek for weapons.  
Elsewhere Paul uses the word to talk about the weapons of our warfare (2 Cor 10:4).

We are not to use our members as weapons of unrighteousness.  
Rather we are to present our members as weapons for righteousness.  
We are engaged in spiritual warfare –  
in putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

The picture is this:  
there are two men in all history – Adam and Christ.  
There are two powers in all history – sin and God.  
There is the dominion of sin and there is the dominion of grace.

But these powers are not equal!  
In Jesus Christ God has destroyed the power of sin.  
Therefore do not let sin reign.

There is sin – the defeated foe – seeking to prop up his lawless tyranny.  
Stop presenting your members to sin as weapons for unrighteousness.  
Here is God – revealed in the triumph of Jesus Christ over sin and death.  
Present yourselves to him.

Whose dominion will you serve?

In conclusion, Paul returns from the imperative mood back to the indicative.  
But this time he uses the future tense:

**Conclusion: Sin Will Have No Dominion Over You (6:14)**

*For sin will have no dominion over you,  
since you are not under law but under grace.*

Paul seems awfully confident!

Sin will have no dominion over you.  
He has just told you to stop presenting yourself to sin.  
Stop serving in the army of unrighteousness.

But your old master will not like it if you walk away from him!  
Sin will come after you – seeking to control you.

But Paul says that you may have confidence in your war against sin.  
Sin will have no dominion over you.  
Sin shall not be your master.

If you have believed in Jesus Christ and been united with him through baptism,  
then you died with Christ.  
And if you died with Christ,  
then you have died to sin.  
You have been delivered from the power and dominion of sin.

Therefore:

**Sin is not your master--so do not let it master you.  
Sin has no more authority over you, than it does over Christ.**

I think sometimes we make this too complicated.

Paul says that it is very simple:

You were baptized into Christ's death.  
You have died with Christ, so that you are dead to sin.  
Therefore stop acting like you still are under the power of sin and death!

BUT, if you hear this as law – as an onerous burden and demand – then you are missing the point!

You are not under law – you are under grace.

This is grace!

You have been crucified with Christ.  
Your old man is dead.  
You have been given new life.

So act like it!

Be who you are in Christ!