

Our Sure Identity

Romans 6:1-23

10:30 AM Halifax: 26 March 2023

Introduction:

Today we have our annual congregational meeting.

- As we are members of the church of Jesus Christ, I thought it might be helpful for us to consider our true identity...
 - not in a specific way as a particular congregation or denomination,
 - but in a very general way as those who are baptised into Christ Jesus.
- Paul takes up this topic in Romans 5 & 6.
 - In Romans 5:12-21, he contrasts two great identities.
 - Each person has one or the other of these identities (or perhaps I should say realities) whether they know it or not.
 - We are either in Adam or in Christ.
 - Actually, all of us are in Adam by nature because he is the father of the human race who represented us and set our direction for us.
 - That's right—to him it was given to set the course that we would traverse either as servants to God or rebels to God.
 - He took the way of rebellion.
 - Romans 5:12 says: **through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—**
 - His sin was not just a slip-up—it was a declaration of independence from God as our Master—a sinful rebellion—an act of inexcusable treason.
 - And he acted and spoke for all of us.
 - God arranged that way as evidenced by the fact that we are all born in sin and by the fact that we all die.
 - We would not die if we had not sinned—that would be unjust.
 - But as it says, “death spread to all men, because all sinned.”
 - It is perhaps clearer to say, “inasmuch as all sinned.”
 - We did not actually sin, but Adam, the one who represented us, sinned so that we all sinned in him.
 - As it says in v 15, **For by the one man's offense [or sin] many died.**
 - This is reinforced in verse 16 where it says that **For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation,**
 - And verse 17: **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one,**
 - And verse 18: **through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation,**

- And verse 19: **For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners,**
- But all the way through this passage in Romans 5, there is a contrast set up between those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ.
 - You can see the contrast in verses 17-19: (... **For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.**)¹⁸ **Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life.** ¹⁹ **For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**
- So we might say that life as it was meant to be—life in communion and service to God, was restored by Jesus Christ.
 - This was done by Christ, the Son of God, coming into the world in our human nature to live for God as we were meant to live, though in a world that had fallen into sin and condemnation, and then by Him going to the cross to atone for our sin as a sacrifice.
 - As the only righteous man who was also the Son of God, He was the only one who could do this.
 - Our sin and rebellion in Adam had put us beyond the reach of restoration by any efforts that we might make.
 - Not only did we lack the ability to pay for our sin, but we were so in our sins that we were incapable of even desiring to be reconciled to God.
 - We were truly dead in Adam's transgression because his transgression was our transgression. We were constituted sinners.
 - We are made alive by the grace of Christ who brings righteousness to us where we had none. We are made righteous servants to God.
- To summarise this in a few words, we might quote from 1 Cor 15 which says, **"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."**

So there are two identities.

- These are foundational to what follows in Romans 6.
- Our scripture reading is from Romans 6:1-23.
 - In this passage, the focus is on the identity of those who are baptised in Christ Jesus.
 - This is your identity if you are in Him.
- The launching point of Romans 6 is Paul's declaration at the end of chapter 5 that where sin abounded, grace far more abounded in Jesus Christ.
 - He answers the objection that if it is true that the more sin we have, the more the grace of Christ is magnified in saving us, that must mean that we should sin all the more so He will be glorified all the more.
 - Paul explains that this is not even possible.
 - When grace comes, it transforms us so that we cannot continue in sin—we are not just forgiven, but we are also fundamentally transformed.

- In other words, Christ’s work not only provides justification (or a righteous standing), it also makes us who were dead in sin alive in obedience...
- We who could not serve God now cannot keep from serving God because the grace of Christ has transformed us and brought us into God’s service with Him.

Listen now as I read Romans 6. Here is God’s word. Please give careful attention to it.

Romans 6:1-23: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present

yourself to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to *more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thanks be to God for His holy and infallible word!

- May the Lord add His blessing.

I. You who are baptised into Christ Jesus have a radically new identity.

A. By baptism, you are moved from one who is “in Adam” to one who is “in Christ.”

- This is to be transferred from death in sin to live in obedience and righteousness.

1. Note the language in verse 3—it says that at baptism, we “were baptised into Christ Jesus.”

- By this we were united to Him for cleansing from sin.
 - Baptism is a ritual of washing with water that was widely used in the Old Testament—as Hebrews says, there were many baptisms. Things were ritually purified by sprinkling with water.
 - The ritual must not be disconnected from the cleansing from sin that it represents.
 - Baptism remains a water ritual of purification in the New Testament, but the difference is that the purification represented is the purification we have by our union with Christ.
 - Our sins are washed away because we are associated with Him as our new representative instead of Adam—we are baptised into Him.
 - As our representative, we are not longer either dead in sinful rebellion or condemned to death as guilty.
 - This is because the one who now represents us is righteous, has taken responsibility for our sin and atoned for it, and has given us His Spirit to deliver us from rebellion and transform us to be servants of God.
2. Baptism into Christ means that He takes responsibility for your salvation.
- He has taken all of His elect people to be His bride, and that means that we are His charge—that He is responsible for us.
 - Our debt incurred by sin He took as His debt when He went to the cross.
 - He bore the penalty for it so we could be pardoned.
 - Our rebellion became something that He is now obligated to fix.
 - He must transform us so that we are no longer in rebellion but have a heart to serve and obey God.
 - This is appropriately represented by washing with water in His name.
 - He took responsibility to cleanse you from sin, and He does not fail to accomplish it—
 - He brings His saving work on the cross and applies it to you and He gives you His Spirit to turn you from your rebellion to believe in Him and to be His disciple who now serves God.
 - He does that by baptising you with the Holy Spirit so that His saving work becomes effective in you.
3. God has appointed that baptism be applied to those who come to Him to be cleansed from their sins. They and their children are to be baptised.
- There are some who make a false profession and so receive the sign without receiving the purification that Christ gives to His elect.
 - They are those who are never actually born again and so do not truly look to Him for cleansing from sin.
 - They claim to do so, or, in the case of children, are privileged to be brought up under the gospel, but they never actually receive Him or rest in Him for their salvation.

- Like Simon Magnus, they are baptised with water, but they are not actually baptised into Christ Jesus—nor are they ever baptised with the Holy Spirit.
- B. The implications of baptism into Christ are clearly spelled out in Romans 6.
- We are told of two radical changes that take place.
 - First, that you are now dead to sin; and second that you are now alive to God.
 - Let's look at these.
1. The first aspect of your new identity is that you are now dead to sin (6:3).
- This is described in many different ways to get the point across and to show us how complete this death is.
 - Verse 3 says that you are “baptised into His death.”
 - His death was a death to sin—it was a death to bring an end to our sin and our death—we might call it the death of death in the death of Christ.
 - Sin was reigning over us because we were dead in our sins—we lived for sin and He brought us from life in sin to death to sin.
 - When He came, He entered into our death so that He could conquer it for us and that He did.
 - He did not yield to sin, and then He went to the cross to bear its penalty so we could be pardoned and released from it.
 - In verse 4, we are said to be buried with Him in baptism—in other words, we become associated with the one who was buried on account of our sin.
 - We become those who have died to sin by association with Him.
 - By association, we have already been buried.
 - In verse 5, it explains that we have been united together in the likeness of death—we did not physically die, but we died *in the likeness* of his physical death—it is as if (like) we have already died for our sins.
 - Verse 6 speaks of it as our old man being crucified with Him.
 - We, who were under the dominion of sin, were crucified with Him so that we could be freed from sin—as verse 7 says: **For he who has died has been freed from sin.**
 - We have born the penalty of sin—again, but association with Him.
 - Verses 8-10 emphasise that He brought death to death.
 - By His death, He took away the penalty of sin which is death...
 - And by His death He took away the power of sin which holds us in rebellion and keeps us from serving God.
 - So the purpose of His death is that we might die to sin and no longer be either rebellious or guilty.
 - Sin no longer dominates us, and death no longer looms over us as the penalty that we must pay.
2. The purpose of delivering us from death is that we might live to God.

- This is clear in the verses we just looked at—about death. We died to sinful rebellion and to sin’s penalty with Christ so that we could live for God.
 - Verse 4 says that we were raised with Him that we might walk in newness of life.
 - Rebellion died when we died with Him so that now we can live with Him in obedient service to God.
 - Verse 5 uses ‘likeness’ again to show that we experienced death and resurrection, not physically, but spiritually—the likeness of them—in that we were brought from death in sin to new life in obedience.
 - Verse 8 is clear—We died with Christ in order that we might live with Him—as verse 10 says, that we might live with Him who lives to God.

TRANS> So our Lord Jesus does everything to change our identity from those who are dead in sin and condemnation, and to bring us into eternal life in union with God.

- Our identity is clear. We are those who died to sin with Christ and are raised to life with Him with God in righteousness.

II. The world, on other hand, is quite confused about their identity.

- They do not know (or accept) who they are.

A. They refuse to accept what ought to be obvious.

1. First, that they were made in God’s image to know Him, to worship Him, to serve Him, to love Him, and to live in beautiful virtue in loving harmony with one another and with nature.
 - To accept this is to accept too much.
 - If this is true, then it makes their sin too great because they have fallen from what God made them to be and that is much worse than never having such virtue in the first place.
 - It also prevents them from being able to blame God for making them the way they are—something some of them use to excuse themselves and others to deny Him in various ways.
 - Some to deny His very existence and others to deny His divine nature — that He is sovereign, that He is holy, or that He is going to judge us.
 - The religions of the world are idolatrous—they alter God to be a god that they can be comfortable with—be it the impersonal god of Hinduism or the New Age or the unholy god of liberal Christianity or Islam who can accept us apart from Christ.
2. Second, they refuse to accept that they are under the wrath of God, dead in their trespasses and sins, justly cut off from Him and condemned.
 - This obviously follows from the first denial and for the same reasons.
 - Until the Spirit of God opens our eyes and transforms our stubborn heart and will, we will not accept that we are dead in sin.
 - There is a sense in which we cannot accept it until we see that there is a real remedy—it is too intolerable for us.

- B. Denying these fundamental basic realities about who they are leaves the world in tremendous confusion.
- There is a restlessness—a grasping for identity that is never satisfied because it is so far from the truth.
1. Some choose to look at themselves as a tiny speck in an impersonal universe that crushes them.
 - Some who hold this try to make the best of it by living for the moment—living without reference to anything beyond this life.
 - For some, it may be by filling their lives up with frivolous things—eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.
 - For others, it may involve trying to live a virtuous, responsible life—in some cases, caring for others; in others, pursuing personal success, prosperity, power, or whatever.
 2. Others latch on to the idea that there must be some great purpose to life that they must fulfil.
 - They may even accept false religions—mentioned before.
 - Some of them saying that God is unwilling or unable to help them...
 - Others believing in some kind of destiny that is built into everything...
 - Still others believing that they have some kind of inner self that is held down by nature or society that must emerge and become great.
 3. All of this can lead to conflict and turmoil.
 - They are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.
 - There they are, jockeying for position, full of envy, discontentment, pride, covetousness, anger, anxiety, depression, suicide, confusion about sexuality and gender—and all the works of the flesh.
 - You often hear of teenagers and now even of those in their twenties who are trying to discover who they are.
 - But older adults do not have the answer either apart from Christ.
 - They have just learned to go on with life without true meaning.

III. But Christian, you do not need to be confused about who you are. God has told you!

- A. You are commanded to embrace your identity.
- verse 11: **Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
1. You must avoid assimilating the confusion of the world.
 - Verse 11 is a command!
 - We have been given indicatives—statements about what is true of us, in verses 1-10—That as those baptised into Christ Jesus, we have died to sin and been made alive to righteousness.
 - It is one thing for this to be true—it is quite another to embrace it.
 - To reckon yourselves this way means to think of yourself in this way.

- As one who is in Christ, His death for sin is your death to sin, and His resurrected life is your life.
 - You are to go on with Him in faith, not supposing that He has not taken care of your sin or given you life, but accepting that He has.
2. You must teach your children of their God-given identity.
- Many Christians today want to leave their children to make a choice instead of declaring to them that they are God’s people born in the covenant.
 - God is their God and Jesus is their Saviour and they need to embrace their identity.
 - Again, verse 11: **Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
- B. You are to live in this reality by presenting yourself in service to God in Christ.
1. Because you are dead to sin, you should not let it reign. You are free.
- Verse 12 says: **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**
 - You are to say to your lust, “You have no right to me. I am baptised into Jesus Christ. I belong to Him. I do not behave that way anymore.”
2. You must put off the sin and put on righteous service to God.
- Verse 13: **And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**
 - If you are a servant to a fisherman, you report to the boat each day and go out to sea and are busy working sails and nets.
 - If you change and become a servant to a farmer, you don’t keep going down to the boat to work. Now you are into soil and harvests and tractors.
 - What business do you have serving your old master now that you have a new master?
 - That is what verse 13 is saying—present yourself to the one whose servant you now are.
 - You are alive to God and dead to sin, so busy yourself doing the will of God—it mentions your body to make it concrete—it is not just mental—you are to use your body to serve God.
- C. The benefits of your new identity are presented to you in the second part of Rom 6.
1. Verse 14 promises that sin will not have dominion over you because Christ has transformed you to be God’s servant.
- It says, **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**
 - Just what does it mean to be “not under law but under grace?”
 - I would suggest that to be under the law means that you have presented to you, as Moses did, what is required of us, not only as human beings, but also as fallen sinful human beings.
 - There are demands that we could never ever meet.

- We forever come grossly short and are left in bondage to the law with many unfulfilled obligations—and all of them are inflexible because they are bound up in the holiness and majesty of God.
 - We have sinned and God’s honour and glory must be maintained by the execution of His holy judgment against our infractions.
 - But being under grace means that we have our Saviour who has been sent by the Father in love to meet the demands of the law for us.
 - Not only the demands of perfect obedience, but also the penal demands for our sin and transgression.
 - To be under grace is to have all the demands of the law met by Christ so that we are no longer under any obligation to the law.
 - This, of course, does not mean that we are no longer to live in conformity to God’s moral law.
 - It means that Christ has not only satisfied the law’s demands that we failed to meet and could not meet after we fell into sin,
 - it also means that He works in us by His Spirit and power to turn our hearts to God’s law and that by His grace He will enable us to conform to it more and more.
 - What we have now is a downpayment of the Spirit and His transforming work in us that guarantees that He will bring us into perfect conformity so that we are like Christ.
 - To summarise, being not under the law but under grace means that Christ does everything that needs to be done to reconcile us to God.
 - We are dead to sin and alive to God in righteousness and are able to get on with serving Him with joyful hope that He will complete what He has begun.
 - By the grace of Christ, we have a righteous standing, we have a complete atonement for the forgiveness of sin, we have a new heart of faith and obedience, and we have the hope of perfection.
 - This ought to spur us on in our joyful service to God.
 - As verse 17-18 say, thanksgiving is due to God: **But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.** ¹⁸ **And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**
2. Verse 21-23 encourages you what the outcome of being in Christ will be in contrast with what the outcome would have been apart from Christ.
- It says: 21-22: **What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death.** ²² **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**
 - Apart from Christ, the only fruit we had was death!

- But now in Him, we are growing in holiness which will culminate in everlasting life.
- Verse 23 describes explains that the wages of our sinful condition were death.
 - But that the free gift of God is eternal life by the grace of Jesus Christ.
 - It says, **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
 - Eternal life is certain to all who are baptised into Jesus Christ.
 - Note: Baptism should be understood not merely as a water ritual, but as a water ritual associated with the cleansing that it represents that brings us from death to life.

TRANS> In Christ, you have every reason to consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God. He is faithful to bring us to God.

D. But what can you do if you are unsure about whether you are in Christ?

- What if you are unsure if you have actually been brought from death in sin to life in righteousness?
 1. One thing: simply cast yourself upon Him.
 - Say to Him, “Into your hands I commit myself. You take care of my salvation as you have promised.
 - “You have given me the sign of washing, so wash me or I die. Wash me and I shall live forever.
 - “I am here for you, with all my sin and with all imperfections. I give myself into your care to save me. I have no other hope.”
 - That is all! He will not refuse you.
 - You will not fail to reach glory because He will not fail.
 - Already He had fulfilled God’s righteousness requirements.
 - Already He has atoned for your sin.
 - Already He has given you a new heart to serve God.
 - He will complete what remains and perfect you in glory.
 2. God has told you who you are.
 - You are one who is washed from your sin by Jesus Christ.
 - You are one who is not under the dominion of sin and death, but one who has been brought into God’s service through Jesus Christ.
 - Embrace that!
 - Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.
 - Get on with serving Him!
 - That is your God-given identity in Jesus Christ.