

Introduction:

- A. On this day we celebrate the defeat of the bad death—the death that cuts people down and cuts people off, the cursed end, the great tragedy. God raised Christ from the dead and everything has changed. Death has lost its sting. The world will not end with a whimper but a shout. Jesus shall reign! And we can sing, *“Made like him, like him we rise! Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!”* At a pastors’ gathering this week I sat with my favorite pastoral father, Howard. Someone brought up Easter. *“Christ is risen!”* someone exclaimed, and Howard grinned and said, *“You betcha!”* The end of the bad death.
- B. But you may not have ever thought about this: today we also celebrate the gift of the good death. In fact, if you don’t know about the good death you’ll miss one of the great benefits of Easter.
- C. Turn to **Rom. 6**. We’re stepping into the middle of a carefully argued explanation of our Christian faith. Paul has explained how sin has spread through all humanity like an epidemic killing everyone. But then he points to Jesus Christ and explains that through faith in Jesus we stand in God’s grace. Even though sin has spread through the whole human race, God’s grace in Christ can match it. Every sinner can be forgiven. At the end of **Rom 5**, he wrote, *“But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.”*
- D. But grace always seems to carry the risk of being played. *“Give ‘em an inch and they’ll take a mile.”* Paul anticipated that so he poses a question in **Rom 6:1**, *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?”* It sounds absurd, doesn’t it? Of course not. Illus.: But I remember visiting with a young couple many years ago whose marriage was coming apart. He had decided he didn’t want to be married to her any longer. “I

know it's wrong," he said, "but I can always ask God for forgiveness." Have you ever thought like that when some sin wagged its finger at you? **There's an Easter answer to that.**

To answer that question Paul basically says, *Let's review what happened when you became a Christian.* Three times in these next verses he'll say, "You know..." because he builds on the basics. Listen to **Rom 5:1-5**... So let's start with this:

I. WE KNOW THAT WHEN WE BECOME CHRISTIANS WE ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS

You knew that, right? Every Christian should be baptized and every baptized Christian is instructed in this truth. Illus.: On a beastly hot night about 30 years ago we say in a theater and watched the movie, *Tender Mercies*. In it a man with a heavy past and a heavy heart comes to faith in Christ and is baptized in a little Baptist church. I remember a guy behind me in the theater whispering to his wife, "What are they doing?" "It's a baptism!" she hissed back.

Baptism is the perfect symbol of our faith because just as we are immersed into water so we are immersed into Jesus and when we come up out of the water we're Jesus-y [Ann Lamott]; we're clean and new and resurrected. Our coming to Christ, like our baptism, has two parts. Down and up.

- A. We typically think of Jesus' death and resurrection being *for us*, which is true. We not realize that we were *with him* in those things. Our baptism into Christ means we were baptized into his death. When they took Jesus down from the cross and wrapped him in linen and put him in that tomb, our old selves were in him. We were immersed into his death with him. Illus.: Remember the lady who told me just before I baptized her, "Hold me under a little extra long. I want to always remember that I have died."
- B. Likewise, when Jesus rose from the dead we rose from the dead with him "through the glory of the Father". Always

remember that the Father didn't resuscitate Jesus. The Father created a new man—a new Adam—not from a lump of clay but from a dead body. **Christ was the Adam of a new race of human beings—the righteous immortals. And when we are raised with him, that is what we are.**

- C. We rode with Jesus—in Christ—into that new kind of life.

V.4 says, “*we too may live a new life.*” Listen to how vividly *The Message* paraphrase puts it:

That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

Now Paul takes further into these two parts—the down and the up—so we understand what they mean to us. Again he reminds us of what we *know*. **Vv.6-7...**

II. WE KNOW THAT OUR OLD SELF HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED AND BURIED

- A. V.6 says that “*our old self was crucified with him.*” There is an essential part of us—our nature—that controls us and that nature is what has been spoiled. Sin got into us and it became our very nature to sin—to disregard and disobey God. To do what *we* want. When a person comes to Christ, that old self—that old nature, that tainted humanity—is crucified—retroactively, you might say—with Jesus. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, but he also absorbed all those sinful natures and when he died, they died. So the sin that once drove us and controlled us is not alive any more. It isn't that we can't sin, but that sin cannot own us. We have been given a new nature freed from sin's control.

- B. **V.6:** “so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with.” *Illus.:* My dad had polio in one leg. His leg was withered and he had to wear a big heavy metal brace in order to walk. When he died, one of the first things I did was through his old braces in the trash. If you asked if my dad has polio, I’d say, *“Not any more. Not since he died.”*

So Christian, do you still have a sinful nature that controls your life? *Not anymore. Not since I died.*

You and I may sin, but here’s the huge difference. We no longer *must* sin. We are no longer *ruled by sin*. **You are not once you once were.**

- C. Do you see in **v.7** where it says, *“because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.”* The sense is that when you were born, sin owned you, like a child born into slavery. And the only way out of that slavery was death. Well, happy day! You died!! The price was paid and your freedom was bought.
- D. But if we stop there we’re dead. Being crucified and buried with Christ kills our old sinful self but we’d be in limbo—a spiritual no-man’s-land—if it ended there.

Remember **v.4**... How is it that *“we too may live a new life”*? **Vv.8-10**...

III. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE A NEW LIFE WITH CHRIST

Think about what Jesus’ resurrection means:

- A. One thing it means is this, in **v.9:** “Since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.” When Jesus died on the cross death *lorded it over* the Lord Jesus. When Jesus took on all our sin death was inevitable. Even Jesus was defenseless once he drew in all the sins of the world. Death owned Jesus and death claimed Jesus as its rightful victim. But after death had done its worst God gave Jesus, lying there in tomb, new life. Not the old life back, but *a new kind of life.*

- B. Here's another thing in **v.10**, *"The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God."* Sin killed Jesus. The sins done too him and the sins he took upon himself for us. But once he died, sin is done for. Sin has gotten its pounds of flesh. So when Jesus rose from the dead, sin and death had not hold on him. Thus, *"the life he lives, he lives to God"* unhindered, untempted. Sin is silenced. Sin has no poison nor power as far as Jesus is concerned.
- C. Now where does that put us? **V.11**, *"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."* Illus.: Imagine a census lady comes to your door. *"How many people live here,"* she asks. *"What race?... Oh, never mind, I see that you're all the race of the dead ones. Everyone I visit, that's how I count them. Dead ones."*
"Ah, not so fast," you say. *"I am one of the dead ones, but not like you think. Count me among those who are **dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.**"*
"Well, you look just like all the other people on your street," she says. *"How would anyone tell you apart?"*
*"Look at how I live. I live like a man who does not have to go against God. **I live like a person who gets to be good.**"*

Remember the original question: *"Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"* No, follow the logic of Easter and you'll come to **vv.12-13...**

IV. OUR DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN CHRIST IS WHY WE WANT TO BE GOD'S INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- A. As long as we live in these mortal bodies sin within us will have a voice. The sin crouching within us is like a convicted con man living in your house. Sin will lie to you and sweet-talk you. Sin will order you around and remind you what you were and what you've done. Sin will mimic the lies of people who led you astray or hurt you. But this one thing

has changed: **Sin no longer owns you! We do not have to sin.** So don't go back to slavery.

What's more, if you have been born again, if you've been baptized into Jesus, this is certainly true: **you do not like sinning. There is nothing more natural to you as a Christian than wanting to do what is right.** When you sin, there is Someone deep within you who whispers, *"That is not who you are now!"* Whereas sinning was once all you could do, now it is unnatural and unsettling; it is dis-integrating and disappointing. It is no longer who you are.

"Don't offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness." Because that's what our sin makes us. We don't just sin, as if that weren't bad enough; we construct sin, we spread sin, we cultivate sin. But praise God! We don't have to do that anymore.

- B. **V.13b**, *"Rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life."* Remember this journey you've taken with Jesus. *"Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God,"* and then do the good, the righteous, the loving things you want to do. You are *"an instrument of righteousness"* because you have Jesus' Godward life.

Conclusion

In a moment you will hear two stories of people who died and rose again and then you're going to see those stories dramatized, re-enacted in water. It is a wonder and a miracle of grace that Jesus Christ has forgiven all the sins in Linsey and Lynne's lives. A free and undeserved gift of grace. But it is an even greater gift of grace that they are free *not* to sin; free to live like Jesus, all for God.

Have you died and risen again? Would you like to? Listen to these stories and then simply pray. Tell God you want to turn from your sins and be saved. That you want to die *now* and live again *now and forever*.

V.14: *“For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, **but under grace.**”* I propose some new lyrics for an old Easter song:

*Up from the grave we arose,
With a mighty triumph o’er our foes
We arose the victors from the dark domain
And we live forever with his saints to reign.
We arose! We arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!*