

# Your Identity in Christ – Romans 6

## *The Treasure that is Your Life in Christ #2*

**Introduction** – Your justification and your sanctification are distinct but cannot be separated. Think of it this way. Death is an event and life is a process. Your death in Jesus' death is a one-time event. Your life in Jesus is an everlasting, ongoing, cascading life. Romans 6 defines your identity and it is in Christ, not in your old man. This is the treasure that is the Christian's life in Christ. This is who we've become. Sanctification is the process of living out who we have already become.

**Overview of the Passage** – In Rom 5:12-21, the profound parallels between Adam and Christ are made, both covenant heads of particular kinds of humanity. The combination of sin, condemnation, and death introduced by the sin of Adam is contrasted to the superabundance of grace bringing forth righteousness, justification, and life through the mediation of Christ. As Paul continues, the continuity between our justification and our sanctification (our holiness, 6:19, 22) is made evident.

The shocking suggestion of the flesh arises, looking to take advantage of this grace that covers death and all sin, but Paul reminds us that our baptism was into His death, and His resurrection is ours as well unto a walk in newness of life (vv1-4). Our old man was crucified with Him and died in Him, liberating us from the death of sin (vv5-7). United with Him in His death, we are also united with Him in His new life (vv8-9). Christ died unto sin once, and now lives continuously before God – so too we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin but in an ongoing life in Christ to God (vv10-11). Released from the dominion of the law of sin and death, we now naturally present ourselves as slaves of righteousness (vv12-18). As slaves of sin, we went from iniquity to iniquity, so now, we yield every member of our body, soul, and spirit to righteousness unto sanctification (holiness) (v19). When we were slaves of sin, we did not care about the shame upon us, but now we see the fruit and the end of those things is death; and now we have our fruit unto holiness and the end, eternal life (vv20-22). The one was our wage; this last is nothing but gift (v23).

**Certainly Not!** – Theologically sound Christians have no trouble answering the questions of v1 and v15. Theologically, that is. But dig down a bit further into your soul on this. When you knowingly sin, isn't that exactly the question you are failing? "*Hey, I can sin and then God can forgive me. That's how it goes. That's how it always goes.*" And when we stumble in this way, we bolster the temptation to think that we *can't* or *don't need* to fight the sinful desires. It is true that we will continue to battle sin, but that does not mean that some sinful tendency is part of your identity ("*that's just who I am*"). You have died with Christ and your baptism defines your identity.

**The Principle and Pattern** – When we have died in Christ, our old man is crucified – just once – dead and buried. Verse 6 tells us that this happened in order that the body of sin might be done away with. The old man is that old nature, the old constitution that always chose sin – and there was a whole body of sin to choose from. The only way to mortify our flesh (telling it "no" to sin) is to first have the old man crucified and then begin the work of putting off the deeds of the flesh and putting on the work of the new man, the new way of being human (Rom 8, Eph 4-6). Paul explains this activity in Romans 6 in this way. "XYZ is true of you. Therefore, you must consider or reckon XYZ to be true of you." This is what your baptism declares and now you are to say it too. Your baptism is your identifying tattoo. Your baptism is Christ, His death, burial, *and* resurrection. It instructs you as to how to live each time the body of sin tempts you.

**Do Not Let Sin Reign** – Before you were in Christ, not only could you not obey this command (v12), you never would want to. Now, to reckon yourself "*dead to sin*" (v11) is not to pretend that you are never tempted. It is to declare that you no longer obligated to follow it. To fall under the reign of sin is to be as foolish as the Israelites, brought out of their slavery to Egypt, but then to talk with longing to go back (Num 11:4-6). You might have that old-Egyptian slave accent, but you are now a free citizen of a new people: your citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). Your flesh still leans in a particular way, but you have the opportunity and obligation to walk according to the Spirit (Rom 8:1-2, Gal 5:16). You have not been freed to sin; you have been freed from sin. And those who are genuinely born-again are the ones who hear that as good news – and rejoice with a song of freedom (Ex 15).

**Fruit Unto Sanctification** – But the flesh still screams like a dragon within. Sin remains, but as an outlaw now. It may oppress as a tyrant, and we feel overcome by it, yet we do not have to render obedience to its lusts as we did...If we have made the spring sweet, the streams will yield that sweetness; the newness of heart will bring forth a newness of life - (M. Henry). This is what it means to be "*alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (v11). And so our sanctification is twofold in this life. First, we will grow in grace to continually mortify the flesh (Rom 8:13). John Owen warned that a man should not think he makes any progress in godliness "*who walks not daily over the bellies of his lusts.*" Second, we will grow in grace to delight in God as our most agreeable place to be, Person to enjoy, and King to serve. This is who we will be because this is who we are.