

Let us pray: Lord God, heavenly Father, too often during this life we allow ourselves to be overrun by our sin. We pray, Lord, that You would continue to strengthen us through Your word and sacraments so that we may fight the good fight of faith. Lord, please, continue to love and guide us as only You can do. We ask this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in Saint Paul's letter to the Roman Christians the sixth chapter beginning at the third verse:

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.

And now may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and

acceptable to You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

To be alive carries with it a whole host of meanings: breathing, thinking, moving, being active. To be full of life usually connotes happiness and joy. Living things are usually more highly valued than dead things. And in being alive there are certain requirements or expectations of you.

However, death carries with it a host of meanings as well: no movement, no breathing, no thinking, not active. To be dead usually connotes lacking something or completely devoid of something. Dead things are usually not very highly valued. And in being dead there really are no requirements of you, you are dead.

The concepts of life and death do indeed sit on opposite ends of the same spectrum; yet, in our lives we constantly confuse them.

When it comes to our life of sin and grace, of salvation and damnation, of good and evil many times we can forget what we are supposed to be alive and dead towards.

However, as we hear from Paul in our text, and as we live our lives, may we always be ***Dead to sin but alive to God.***

Let's consider an example from the animal kingdom. When a bird is alive it is flying, it is seeking, it is soaring. When a bird is dead it is not moving, it is decaying, it is lifeless. That bird, once it dies is no longer looking to gather food, it is no longer looking for shelter, it is no longer soaring... it is dead.

And according to Paul, we are to be dead to sin... but we are not. We should be dead to sin, we should act as if it does not exist, we should not be moving toward it, not enjoying

it, nothing; we should be dead to sin. Unfortunately, our Old man does not allow this to happen.

Our sinful flesh constantly wants to be in cahoots with sin. Our sinful flesh wants to sin; it does not act 'dead' to sin, rather it is very alive when it comes to sin. Our sinful nature wants to sin and it delights in sin. Our sinful nature wants nothing to do with God, in fact, it is dead to God. Our sinful nature does not seek God, it does not love God, it wants nothing to do with God. And, sadly, our sinful nature is with us every moment of our lives. It is always there, wanting us to sin, wanting us to turn from God, wanting us to 'enjoy' all that this life has to offer... it wants nothing to do with God.

However, at the same time, within us is our New Man: our New Man which God placed in us at our baptism or at our conversion; our New Man which is strengthened when it is

drawn to God through His word and sacraments; our New Man which wants to strive for God and be with Him constantly. Inside of us is that New Man just trying to overcome.

Our New Man is alive to God and wants to be in cahoots with Him, wants to love Him, wants to strive for Him, wants to spend eternity with Him. And our New Man wants nothing to do with sin. When we sin, we are showing our New Man how little he means to us. When we sin we show our New Man that he must take a backseat to sin and the world. When we sin we show that God is not the one in control of our lives... we are. But our New Man continues to fight every day. It tries to beat the Old man. Our New Man wants to remember our baptism, in which we died with Christ and were buried with Him, and through that baptism it wants to drown the Old man and his sinful ways.

As Luther says about this text, ***“The spirit, or soul, says, ‘I am dead unto sin and will not sin any more.’ But the flesh says, ‘I am not dead and must make use of my life while I have it.’ The spirit declares, “I believe that God has forgiven my sins and taken them away from me through Christ.’ But the flesh asks, ‘What do I know of God or His will?’ The spirit resolves, ‘I must be meek, pure, chaste, humble, patient, and seek the future life.’ But the flesh in reply makes a loud outcry, ‘Away with your heaven! If only I had enough bread and money and property here!’ Thus the flesh does continually, as long as it lives here; it draws and drags sin after itself; it is rebellious and refuses to die. Therefore God must finally put it to death before it becomes dead unto sin.”***

And God has put our flesh to death. In our baptism we are buried with Christ into His death. In fact, our Old Man was crucified

with Christ so that it can no longer live. Our Old Man is dead once God has put Him to death.

And it is within us, that our Old man is put to death on a daily basis. For when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came into this world, He came so that He could do away with sin, death, and hell. He came into this world to live a perfect life, a life in full obedience to God and His commands. And Jesus suffered during this life for us, culminating in His death upon the cross. Jesus was nailed upon the cross to pay for all of our sins and all of our wrongs. Jesus was nailed to the cross to pay the punishment for all the times we are alive to sin and not dead to it. Jesus hung on the cross to pay for all the times that we are dead to God and not alive to Him. Jesus paid for all of our sins when He hung on that cross.

And now through faith in Him and in all that He has done, our Old Man has been slain. The Old man is drowned in the waters of our baptism, which finds its power in the word of God and comes to fruition in the blood of Christ. Through faith in our Savior, we have heaven waiting for us, not because of how well we control our Old man but because now, through faith, our New Man is strengthened and can hold the Old man at bay. Yes, because of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we have salvation full and free, we have heaven, and we have a strong New Man who continues to fight for us against sin and the Old man.

As Luther says about this text, ***“Christ, innocent and sinless, being crucified for our sins, sin must be crucified in our body; it must be utterly condemned and destroyed, rendered lifeless and powerless. We dare not, then, in any wise serve sin nor consent to it. We must regard it as actually***

condemned, and with all our power we must resist it; we must subdue and put it to death.”

And that is the final encouragement from Paul in our text today, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We, as Christians, should consider ourselves dead to sin. In fact, as Luther says, sin was crucified with Christ and we should abhor it. We should look upon sin as the one thing that needs to remain dead in our lives constantly. Never allowing it to poke its head up. Never allowing it to take root in our heart. Never allowing it to overrun our New Man.

And God gives us the means to make this happen. He gives us His word which strengthens us in our faith in all that Jesus Christ has done. He gives us baptism which washes away all of our sins and also buries

us with Christ and promises us that we will rise with Him also. And He gives us His very own body and blood and the promise of forgiveness of sins when we come to the Lord's Supper. God has given us so many ways to strengthen us and to help our New Man continue to fight against our sinful nature and our Old Man.

Dear friends in Christ, "*simul justus et peccator*," "at the same time saint and sinner." This is the motto that we live our lives by. While we are on this side of heaven we will always be both saint and sinner. Our Old man will continue to strive to pull us away from Christ and all His benefits, but our New Man seeks daily to drown Him in the remembrance of our baptism and the assurance of all of God's promises.

Thanks be to God as He continues to strengthen and love me. Thanks be to God that my sin and my Old man are crucified

with Christ. And thanks be to God that He makes me dead to sin, but alive to God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.