

He is Risen!

A week ago today we began our journey at Berean down the path of Christ's death and resurrection. Friday we were sobered as we remembered his death on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous. Sunday we rejoiced as we remembered his triumphant resurrection. Often times these periods of reflection cause us to make commitments to serve with more gusto, to dedicate more time to prayer or to commit to some other worthy endeavor.

Yet for many of us, sometime between Monday and today, we came off of our mountaintop weekend to land squarely in the valley of everyday life. Circumstances came knocking (or maybe kicked in the front door!) to remind us that we still live in a fallen world. Sadly, all of us sin and fall short of the glory of God.

Frustrated, we speak to ourselves saying, "After all that Jesus did for us, aren't we supposed to die to sin?" Verses like Romans 6:2 pop into our heads, **"How can we who died to sin still live in it?"**

When we fall short (again!), our fleshly conscience twists biblical truth and tempts us to become depressed. Or perhaps our merit-based wiring causes us to press on with the renewed effort to "do better". And so we either wallow in the downward spiral of shame and self-flagellation or jump back into the hamster wheel of self-performance...neither of which helps us actually die to sin.

So how should we respond to the good question Romans 6:2 proposes?

To begin with, it is helpful to realize that the question of Romans 6:2 is not asked in order to condemn you in your sin or drive you purely to better performance. What the question is intended to do is to cause you to ponder your relationship with Christ. If we look a little further into Romans Chapter 6, we will find some really helpful direction on how to properly respond to our focus this past weekend – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here are two of many helpful reminders:

1) Remember what Christ has accomplished and confess you need him (you are free to do so!)

When we remember what Christ has done for us, it changes everything. Our flesh wants us to remember what we have done and believe that we are condemned, but the opposite is true. Jesus died on that cross so that our sins would be completely paid for. As a result, we actually can live differently. Romans 6:3-4 says,

"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."

We celebrate Christ's death and resurrection because he actually made it possible for us to confess our sin when we fail and to walk in newness of life. We are no longer bound to sin like we once were, but made free to live in the Spirit, capable of doing what is right. His death and resurrection brought us freedom to step out of the cycle of self-focused depression or performance and into a relationship with Him. So confess if you have failed this week and call out to him for help.

2) Come to him rather than flee from him.

A little further down the passage, in Romans 6:13, Paul says this,

“Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members as instruments of righteousness.”

Of course, this passage would have us consider how we should live as instruments of righteousness. But it also subtly tells us where we should be. It calls us to be in his presence...to come before him if you will. It is not only a reorientation of direction or will, but also a reorientation of place – present yourselves to God – so that you might actually be able to walk in newness of life. Rather than running away from his presence after sinning, we should be presenting ourselves before him, not based on our merit, but on the merit of Christ. Dane Ortland, in his book called *Gentle and Lowly*, says this,

“Do not minimize your sin or excuse it away. Raise no defense. Simply take it to the one who is already at the right hand of the Father, advocating for you on the basis of his own wounds. Let your own unrighteousness, in all your darkness and despair, drive you to Jesus Christ, the righteous, in all his brightness and sufficiency.”

The sufficiency to do what we so desire, to live righteously, is not sourced in us. It must come from Jesus, the righteous one. So we must necessarily go to him. When we do - when we run to him and confess our sin - we demonstrate that our hope is in Christ, not ourselves. In that moment, we die a little more to sin and live a little more with him (Rom 6:8). And from this place, He will continue the work that He began in us, a work that He will complete one day when we meet him face to face. On that day we will be triumphantly free from all sin and will never again be diverted from his presence (Rom 6:5).

So continue to be sobered as you remember his death on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous. Continue to rejoice as you remember his triumphant resurrection through which he set you free! And as you continue to confess failure and run to him, new life springs from death, the fruit that leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life (Rom 6:22).

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Pastor Brad