

A New Identity

by Michael Durham

We have died with Christ and have been raised with Him, giving us a new identity and a new life.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Romans 6:6-8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:4

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Freedom From Sin"

Description

Michael Durham preaches on Romans 6:1-14, emphasizing the profound truth that believers have died with Christ and have been raised to newness of life. He explains the significance of being baptized into Christ's death and burial, highlighting the freedom from sin and the old self that comes through this union with Jesus. Durham delves into the fact that believers have died to sin itself, emphasizing the separation from the old sinful nature and the new identity found in Christ. He encourages believers to focus on the victory over sin that has already been achieved through Christ's death and resurrection, leading to a life lived for God's glory.

Transcript

Romans 6:1-14

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 yourselves 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.

It's a great joy to remember the message I last delivered to you, which said because of our union with Jesus Christ we have the forgiveness of sins. The guilt and penalty of our sins has been removed. You and I stand as clean in the Lord. The holy blood of the spotless Lamb of God has washed our sins away--we are one with Him. When He died, He died for our sins. He took our place. He thought of me. And in His dying, He identified with me. My sin was nailed to that cross, and the ordinances that were against us were nailed to the cross, and we bear them no more. We stand pristine in the sight of God. "Righteous ones" are you and me.

Oh the joys of sins forgiven! As I think of this I can't help but for my eyes to begin to leak and fountains begin to flow. My sins are gone! Though sometimes haunting memories come to me and Satan reminds me of sin, I have this abiding assurance--my sins are gone and I am free. All because I am one with Jesus, united to Him.

As happy as that makes me, my joy is often pierced with sorrow when I sin. My joy is tainted with pain when I break my Father's heart. My joy is not yet complete because I still have something in me that is wayward, corrupt and ugly. There's something about this poor soul of mine that is still enticed to go astray. There is this present knowledge of inner corruption and sin that makes me long to be free from sin.

One of the reasons I can say, "Lord, even so, come quickly," is because all sin will be removed. Not just the guilt and penalty, that's already been taken care of, but the presence of sin within me will also be removed. One day all sin will be wiped away and then we'll be like Jesus in this regard, temptation can no longer tempt or entice us because there will be nothing within to be enticed. We will not be able to sin. In this regard we will be like our Lord. That is a joyous thought. But until then, I confess to you that many of my days are riddled with pungent sorrow because of present sin.

However, I have good news. I want to preach to you the sermon I preach to myself when I feel that pain. I want to share with you the message I have preached thousands of times to my own soul. I can preach it without notes. I can preach it blindfolded. And sometimes even in my dreams, I preach it to myself. I've literally dreamed myself preaching and getting blessed while listening. I want to share with you about what this text says, that in Christ you have more than just the forgiveness of sins. In Christ you have more than the penalty removed. You have something wondrous, which is at this moment dealing with the inner corruption. Did you know that inner corruption has already been dealt with and God does not need to do one more thing about it?

In our text the Apostle Paul establishes a fact. This is a man driven by logic. He was a logician of the best sort. He knew if there was to be any practical help there had to first be laid a foundation of facts from which the practical is derived.

Let me establish that fact for us.

I. The Fact of Having Died With Christ

When Jesus died, we died. That is the foundational fact upon which he will teach us to live overcoming lives even before we are glorified and cannot sin ever again.

A. Our Union With Christ Makes His Death on the Cross Our Death.

"How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

Paul states it as a question. How is it possible for you who have died to sin live to it? You're dead to sin. How am I dead to sin? He answers.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:2-3)

The fact is that at the precise moment they drove the spikes through Jesus' wrist and feet, and dropped, with a sickening thud, the cross into the ground, you were nailed to that cross as well. This is Paul's point. It happens by a spiritual power that is unexplainable. He tries to explain it though.

We were baptized into the Lord Jesus and baptized into His death. The common belief is that Paul is now referring to water baptism. I disagree. This cannot be referring to water baptism but to a spiritual immersion into Christ that water baptism represents.

What Paul says here is that God does something to us the moment we place our faith in Him and follow Him. The Holy Spirit immerses you into the very person of Jesus Christ and a union is formed. "He who has been joined to the Lord is one spirit." You are baptized into the very death of Christ because you have been immersed into Jesus. That means that whatever is true of Jesus Christ is true of you.

When I put a piece of paper into the Bible, whatever I do with the Bible I do with that piece of paper. Since you have been immersed into Jesus, whatever is true of Jesus is true of you. You have been crucified with Christ and it is this immersion into Christ that makes His death our death so that the Apostle Paul could say to the Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ . . ." (Galatians 2:20)

Not "I am in the process of being crucified" or "I will be crucified," but I have been crucified. It's in the past tense.

That is the fact upon which everything we will say today and next week is based upon. If you have turned from your sins and turned to Christ and follow Him in faith, you have been dealt with at the cross. You've been crucified and not just your sins, but you.

B. Our Union With Christ Makes His Burial Our Burial.

"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." (Romans 6:4)

That means this: when those few broken followers of Jesus Christ--Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and dear women--took His dead body off the cross, they tried to clean it the best they could, hurriedly wrapped Jesus' body with burial clothes not to violate the approaching Sabbath hour, and laid Him in Joseph's tomb, you also were buried.

I've never been to Israel, I've certainly never been to Jerusalem or into the garden area where they say the tomb of Jesus was, and yet I've been there. When they laid His body in the grave, they laid me in that grave, and as far as God is concerned, you have been crucified and buried.

That means whenever Jesus rose from the dead, you rose too. We're going to deal with that in a completely different message. Today we are focusing on the death and burial. You did come up out of the grave when He came up, and you were raised with a new identity.

I want to direct your attention to this question:

II. Who and What Died With Christ?

I ask it that way purposefully. Who died? We've already answered that--believers died with Him. Listen to me, if you put your faith in Christ and follow Him from this moment on this morning you will have been immersed into the death and burial of Jesus. Any and all who have done who belong to Jesus have been crucified with Him. But if I've died with Christ, how am I still here? Besides that, I was not alive 2000 years ago. Thus, we can say with certainty that our death with Christ is not physical for our part, although it was for Jesus.

Wouldn't it be an odd evangelistic approach if this were the Gospel: Anybody who wants to follow Jesus, come, and you will physically die. But don't worry, in three days you'll rise again and you'll be a new person.

I doubt anyone would respond, and I doubt Christianity would have survived this long if that's the way it worked.

Our dying with Christ doesn't mean we die; we're very much alive. So if I have died, what about me has died? What about you has died?

Who and what has died?

A. Our Old Man.

"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him . . ." (Romans 6:6a)

Paul answers our question answering it was the old man that died. What does Paul mean by old man? He's not talking number of years or chronological numbers. He defines what he means by using other words to describe it and he begins in the middle part of verse six.

B. Our Body of Sin.

". . . that the body of sin might be done away with . . ." (Romans 6:6b)

The old man was crucified, that means the old man was put to death, and then he says, "that the body of sin might be done away." What does he mean by body of sin? Does he mean that our bodies are sinful? Not at all. Your body is not sinful.

If you remember, we went through the first epistle of John and showed the heretical teaching of the Gnostics that said anything material is sinful. That's why they taught the heresy that Jesus Christ never truly was a man because if He were really a man He would have a sinful body and He Himself would be sinful. But the body is not sinful and Paul will go on to show that even though he calls the body a body of sin, he's not referring to the tissue, bones, sinews or cells, he's talking about the deeds of our bodies.

It is the deeds of the body that are in contradiction to God's will, that is sin. It's your thoughts, your words, your very nature that's in opposition to God.

"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13)

It's the deeds of the body. It's what we do; it's what we are. Because what we produce is a reflection of what we are.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."(Romans 6:12)

The body is not sin, but we can let sin reign in this body. That, my dear friend, is a clue to what Paul means by the old man. It's a human body allowing sin to rule and captive it.

So what does the term "body of sin" mean?

In Romans 6:6c he answers this question.

C. We Died to the Dominion of Sin.

". . . that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:6c)

The body of the old man was under the dominion of sin. Sin is a law or ruling principle in a person and we are born with this principle in us. Sin is not a physical substance, but rather an enslaving influence we cannot rid ourselves of. You're born into it and under it and you cannot free yourself of it because it's in you. It's a part of who you are. It taints and corrupts everything we do so that even our good and religious deeds are sinful to God.

That's why Christianity is wrongly portrayed when described as balance scales. This wrong understanding of the Christian faith has God weighing your good deeds on one side and your evil deeds on the other of a set of scales. You're supposedly a Christian if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds. No, not at all. Absolutely not. That disregards what this passage from the Apostle Paul is saying.

Sin is a ruling principle, a law we are born under and it taints and corrupts everything we do. When I was born to Paul and Wanda Durham, I was born with that principle of sin in me. When I was a child, whether I was in elementary school or Pipken Jr. High or Central High School, I was under the enslaving influence of that principle. When I married my wife after college and pastored two churches I would have you to know all that was under the influence of this sin principle and it was not pleasing to God. It was unrighteousness, evil in His sight. Your goodness cannot merit you heaven because it comes from an influence that is anti-Christ. It doesn't matter how good it is on the outside, God looks on the heart. He looks at the motive. He wants to find out what's influencing the behavior and good deed, and if it comes from an evil fountain His holiness must call it what it is--sin. A fountain can either produce sweet water or bitter water. The same fountain cannot produce both bitter and sweet.

When a person becomes a Christian by the grace and power of God that principle of sin is broken and that person is no longer a slave to it.

Maybe the best way to illustrate this is to go back into our history prior to the Civil War. If your mother and father were slaves, owned by another human being, when you were conceived and brought into this world, you were, by virtue of your mother and father being a slave, also a slave. You were property of the man who owned them. But when slavery was abolished, all the slaves were set free and gained their freedom.

Listen to me. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the Apostle Paul is saying you died with Him. You died as a slave. You died as a slave to sin, but you rose from the dead with Him. You are not the same person who was crucified with Christ. You are a new man or woman with a new identity--you are free.

The old man is who I was by nature, ruled and slaved by sin. No matter how much I wanted to be free from it, I could not be. I was bound to it to fulfill its every desire. But when I placed my trust in Jesus Christ I was placed in Him so that His death is now my death.

D. We Died to Sin Itself.

We're not talking about Jesus dying for our sin, we talked about that two weeks ago, we're talking about Jesus dying to sin. And now you have died to sin. What does this mean?

"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." (Romans 6:10)

Jesus died to sin. Even though He never sinned, He was still in the realm of sin. Let's stop and make this abstract thought concrete if at all possible. Here is the King of Glory prior to the incarnation and prior to the Christmas story. He's eternal, without beginning and without end, but as the Father established the plan of redemption the Son of God submitted to it gladly, joyfully and willfully. He became a man. He entered into this realm we call earth, but the Bible also calls it--a place of present darkness, a realm of darkness, a realm of sin. Jesus came into the realm of sin, and submitted Himself to it without sinning Himself, without violating God's law or will. This sin principle is not in Him as it is in you and me because He was born without a human Father, and that which was conceived in Mary was of the Holy Spirit. He was innocent. He was just like Adam in the Garden of Eden before the fall; He was without sin and innocent. But nonetheless He brought Himself under the law of God and what does the Bible say is the strength of sin? The law.

He lived in that realm that we live in right now. Since Adam's fall, this whole earth has been under the dominion and rulership of the prince of the power of the air, temporarily given guardianship because Adam forfeited it, and Christ became a part of that. He identified with Adam's sinful posterity who were ruled by the law or principle of sin.

Even though He did not have the governing principle of the sin nature in Him, He so loved you that He was willing to be identified with that ruling principle of sin. He identified Himself with Adam's sinful posterity. He identified and joined with sinful humanity's nature, its being, and its sins.

Friends, this is the grand mystery. A few weeks ago I said it is an amazing thing that we can be identified with Jesus. It is not to be underestimated, it ought to be extolled--we are one with God. This is a great and mysterious thing. But what is more remarkable and mysterious is that Jesus would be identified with us. That Jesus, the One who is holy and pure and despises sin, would come in a way we cannot fathom and say, "I will not only take their sin upon Me, but I'll be identified with it," so that when He died, He died to that identification. It ended with His last breath.

"He who knew no sin became sin for us." It means more than Him taking the penalty; it means He identified with your crimes so that they were His crimes. He so identified with this wretched man that I am that He identified with the ruling power that controlled me, and when He died that day, having never sinned Himself, He died to that ruling principle and influence that was in me.

Therefore, when He died, any identification with sinful humanity was finished. He arose from the dead with a new identity. This is little explored by theologians. When Jesus died, His relationship to sin and the law--being under it and in it, yet without sin, ended. I am not saying in any way that Jesus was sinful; He

was not, but He had a relationship to sin. What was that relationship? It is this, that like we who are sinful, He lived in a world subjugated by sin. He joined in man's lot. He identified with sin's curse; why He even identified with sin itself, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). However, the moment Jesus expired on the cross that relationship was severed, and thereby His identity with Adam's lost humanity was severed.

When He said, "It is finished!" He meant more than that He had triumphed over our sins but that He was finished with His submission to and His identification with sinful humanity. When He arose on that Sunday morning, He arose with a new identity--no longer under the law or in the realm of sin. He was completely severed and free from it. He arose a new man.

Again, very few go this route because it's dangerous and there is very little known about it. But this has to be so and here's why: He is now the head of a new race, a new humanity. His identification with the first Adam had to be severed so that He becomes the last Adam, a new progenitor of a new race of men.

When He rose from the dead, isn't it interesting that nobody recognized Him? He always had to identify Himself. Why is that? There was something different about Him. He had abilities He didn't have as a natural man. He could appear and disappear. There was something different about this resurrected man. He could no longer identify with Adam's lost and sinful humanity. Now He's the head of a new generation so I can say to you that if you have died with Christ you have been raised with Christ and you have a new Father, a new identity. You are a new person! You're not the same person you were before you were saved. It's true. You have a new Father.

Isn't it odd that that passage in Isaiah, chapter nine verse six, says,

"For to us a child is born,

to us a son is given;

and the government shall be upon His shoulder,

and His name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Why would you call the Son the Everlasting Father? Didn't the Father send the only begotten Son and yet His name is Everlasting Father as well as Prince of Peace? Here is why--when He rose from the dead that day, He rose as the last Adam, the new progenitor of a new people that we are. We do not flow from the first Adam any longer; we are from the last Adam--the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our everlasting Father. From Him we come. We were born of His Spirit.

Therefore, because we died with Him what we were died. Your identity died. The person you were died with Christ, and you are no longer that person. Everybody ought to be standing up and clapping but I forgive your Baptist decorum.

Pastor, I love what you're saying. This is awesome. But I have to confess, I know it's supposed to mean a great deal but to me it's just the opposite.

I sympathize with that statement and here's the reason you feel that way--you still struggle with sin. So what I'm saying sounds like something good for a Bible study but has nothing to do with you right now. You still have this issue with sin. But this truth that sounds so theological and not so practical is the basis and foundation of victory over present sin and temptations. You'll have to come back next week to find out how.

The fact of this is enough for a whole sermon itself because if you don't get the fact, what I'm going to share with you next week will not work. The practical application will not avail for you if you don't have the facts down and believe them.

God knows that our sin problem is not only what we do but also what we are. We are the source of all our sins. Therefore, He has to have a plan to deal with who we are, otherwise we are going to continue to live the same kind of life that we did before becoming a Christian.

I want to ask you a question about the wisdom of God. Think about this. How wise a use of Jesus' death would it be to use it to deal with my actions of sin and not the source of my sin? It would be like trying to end America's drug problem by arresting only the users and not the dealers. How much sense would that make if they only arrested and imprisoned those who use drugs but they let those who produce and peddle the drugs go untouched? It would be like the US government passing a law that said no alcohol use and sending agents and authorities into every bar, tavern, club and establishment that sold liquor and smashing it all while the breweries and distillers are allowed to continue to produce it. I know our government makes some stupid decisions and it sounds like something they would do, but not God. That's the point.

God knows not only did He have to nail your sins to the cross of Calvary, He also had to nail you to the cross.

That's what Paul is telling you that God did that very thing, He nailed you to the cross.

In light of that wouldn't it be quite silly for us to pray, "Oh, Lord, let me die!" Or, to pray, "Lord I'm still get angry and loose my temper, help me. I want to live a resurrected life, a new life of power." I say silly for this reason. Let's suppose this pen with which I write had a mind of its own and could pray, "Lord, I want to be a pen. Will You help me be a pen? I'll promise to serve You forever. I'll give my ink to Your glory. Not one word will be anything but to Your praise, if You make me a pen."

That would be ludicrous. I don't think a pen would be so silly. Yet, in a similar way we pray. "Lord, I want to die to my sin; I want to live for you. I want resurrection life and power." And the Lord answers you, "But, my child, you have died. You have been crucified, and you have been resurrected with new life and new power. You already have what you're asking for because I have immersed you in Jesus!"

This is why the text cannot be referring to water baptism but only something God does.

When He died, we died. When He arose, we arose. You don't need to wait to die. You are dead to sin, and you are alive unto righteousness.

I want you to leave happy in God today. What can I do to make you do that? You couldn't be a Christian if you loved sin, so if your sin makes you miserable that's a good thing. I know if you hate your sin you are not the same person you used to be. Though you still sin, you are not a sinner by nature. That nature has been dealt with. That old man has been gone, it's buried and a new man or woman has come in its place.

You are not the same person. You're alive unto God.

Why do you mourn over your sins? Because you are a Christian. In my case, I major on my sins and where I miss the mark. That's where my focus usually is. My problem is that I see all my glaring mistakes, my failings, and frailties. However, when I recognize I'm doing, this is when I stop and preach to myself: Stop looking at what you have done, Michael, but what God in Christ Jesus has done. Thank Him for the grief over your sin because that means you are a new person. Thank Him that you do more righteousness than you acknowledge. Your Father knows you're not the same person.

This is the way you've got to talk to yourself. You have to analyze it Scripturally. I died to sin and more of my life is lived to the glory of God than I realize because all I can see and pay attention to is my sin. If you're a saint today, you're alive unto God and God is delighted with His children. What Satan is doing with your sins is creating a spiral downward because the more you focus on your sin the less you focus on the solution, which is Christ Jesus the Lord and your death and union with Him.

I suppose that all this talk of death, to a lost person, sounds quite morbid. You say this is what you find unappetizing about Christianity It doesn't make sense because Christians are always talking about death and dying and blood and being crucified.

I understand that it does seem morose. It doesn't seem like a very happy topic, but let me explain what we're talking about. We're talking about being separated from who we used to be. Our identity is no longer the same because death has taken place.

Let me help you to understand--the word death actually means separation. When a soul leaves the body, what do we say happens to that person? They have died. When two people who at one time loved each other but have grown apart and go their separate ways, we say their relationship has died. That relationship is dead, it's over. Why? Because the two have gone their separate ways. Death means separation. In the case of our text today, the follower of Christ has been separated from his sins. That's not morbid, that's not morose

No, the morose concept of death is your situation, dear friend. The Bible says this: You are dead in your trespasses and sins. Meaning that you are separated from God. You are eternally severed and separated and if you remain in this condition until you die you will experience the second death, which is infinite torment that I cannot describe. You will be eternally separated from God. Now that is a morbid topic.

Yet today I have said to you something quite happy and joyous if you will receive it. That does not have to be your prospect. That does not have to be your future or destiny. Christ has died and if you will put your faith in Him at this precise moment to follow Him forever, you can be set free.

There is no such thing as Christian perfection. What we are talking about is being in Christ so that His perfection is given to us because we have none of our own. If you will follow Him in faith this very moment, you can be free today--you can be a new person with a new future and your past buried in that dark tomb outside of Jerusalem, never to be visited again. That's not morbid. That's good news. May God make it real to you. Amen.

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