

The Baptismal Self in Relation to Sin & Grace

by Michael Flowers

The sermon explores the nature of sin, the cross and crucifixion, and the new identity in Christ, emphasizing the importance of faith in appropriating the new identity and struggling against sin.

Duration: 29:55

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36, Romans 6:11-12, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-6

Topics: "Baptism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that the belief that people are born a certain way and should give in to their sinful desires is a total lie according to the Scriptures. He warns the congregation that they will encounter lies about humanity and how to deal with societal issues when they leave the church. The preacher encourages the audience to fix their eyes on Jesus, the real thing, in order to become experts in discerning truth from falsehood. He also discusses the concept of human identity in the Scriptures, particularly focusing on Paul's letters and the cosmic transformation brought about by the mission of Christ. The sermon references Genesis 4, highlighting the personified power of sin lurking at the door of Cain's life and the need for him to master it.

Transcript

Over the summer and fall, we're considering the theme of human identity in the Scriptures. Specifically, Paul's letters have a lot to say about the human condition and how the mission of Christ brings a cosmic transformation. We'll see that in Romans 8, where all creation is groaning and on tiptoes, awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God, awaiting the manifestation of their redemption as well, new heavens and new earth.

And so that's why I use the word cosmic in that regard. It's a cosmic transformation, a healing within creation, leading right into the renewal of our inner being, our inner lives, our inner anthroposis, Paul uses the phrase. Our bodies, our social context, our values, our way and means of living, the power that animates us, all leading to our eternal destiny.

That's what Christ has done. It's comprehensive. Today's Old Testament passage, Genesis 4, regarding a personified power there in Cain.

He's given a clue there to what he's up against. This personified power sin is lurking or crouching almost like a lion, beast of prey, lurking at the door of his life. This is not just the sin he committed in disobeying

the Lord.

This is something far greater than he can control. This is something lurking at the door of his home and his life. It's been unleashed through Adam and Eve and it got unleashed into the cosmos, not just the garden.

It's affected all of us. It's affected all of creation. And this cosmic power called sin is lurking, it's crouching at the door and it has a desire.

Its desire is for you, it's coming to get you, but you must master it. You must master it. A little cosmic kung fu here, right? Tomorrow is the Feast of the Transfiguration.

We'll celebrate that in morning prayer, Eucharist. But I wanted to read it today because in light of Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8 and everything else, I think it has some encouraging significance for us. OK, as we as we ponder this thing called sin.

But this Feast of Transfiguration, this gospel reading this morning out of Luke 9, we get a glimpse of Christ's glory for sure before his disfigurement on the cross. We see his transfiguration in glory right before he's disfigured. We see him transfigured lest we lose heart, lest the disciples lose heart.

Watching him mauled and mangled and destroyed. We should understand this as a revelation of what it means, though, to be human. I want you to read the Transfiguration.

I want you to ponder it as a revelation to what it means to be human, not just to be the glorified Christ, because the glorified Christ is representative humanity. The glorified Christ is illustrating, as it were, our eternal destiny as glorified sons and daughters. Can you see that? Isn't that a beautiful thing? In light of sin crouching at the door and its desires for you, church.

The glorified Christ stands before his disfigurement and says, this is where you're going. This is who you are in Christ Jesus. In this crazy, present evil age where we struggle with sin and principalities and powers.

Remember this. Keep this as your icon, your image, because Christ is the image of God, the icon of God. Eastern Church, the church fathers have always viewed the Transfiguration as glorified humanity, because we share in that Christ, we share in that man.

He's the one new man of which we're all a part of. I keep saying man from the old King James translation, but it's really the one new human being, Anthropos, male and female. Now, the last time I spoke, I left this in Romans 6, 5. To summarize that, Paul is describing the cosmic transition of creation, once held in bondage under the reign of sin and death, the fruit of Adam's disobedience, and now liberated and reconciled through the reign of grace in Christ, the second Adam, the new humanity, restoring us to full communion with God.

The way of access to this grace is through faith. Now, backing up to that Romans 5, 17, I believe it is, is that we will reign in life through the abundance of grace and the gift, the free gift of righteousness. And so we're called into a dominion of sorts, the kingdom of God.

We're called out of the dominion of sin, which is so much bigger than your individual sins. That would be such a reduction of what sin is in its power that it would be silly to even conceive of sin as what you're struggling with right now. It's far bigger than that, brothers and sisters.

The whole cross and crucifixion of Jesus was putting that thing to death. He died to sin, not his sins, but representing humanity. But we're living in between two advents, right? The first and the second advent.

And now this life is described before the second coming as this present evil age where we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and with indwelling sin. And so the way of access into this grace, this reign of grace right now is through faith. One day it will be fully actualized and realized.

But right now it's through faith. The righteous will live by faith. That's the only option we have right now.

And it's a powerful option. That kind of faith just a little bit moves mountains out of your way, Jesus said. And so the way of access into this grace is through faith leading to water baptism.

Paul is saying that through the sacrament of baptism and the preface that we're using today and that I've been using during ordinary time is this. Through water and the Holy Spirit, you have made us a new people in Jesus Christ, our Lord, to show forth your glory in all of the world. There it is.

That's what baptism does for us. It's our exodus out of the power and dominion of this world into the power and dominion of Christ's kingdom. And so that is by means of water in the Holy Spirit, the response of faith is completed by a right symbolizing the death and resurrection of Christ.

But it's a symbol that fully actualizes what it symbolizes. It's not a symbol without grace. It's not a symbol without power.

It delivers what it symbolizes in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. Through faith, the spirit brings us into union. That is an organic term to be planted union with Christ.

It's Sempaitoi is the word it means to be grown together with Jesus, to be in union with Jesus. He is the vine. We are the branches.

We've been grafted in and we're that connected to him in union with a death and resurrection like his. And so we've been brought into union with Christ in a death and resurrection like his. Not the same death, in a sense.

He died that death, but he calls us to die daily. He calls us to take up our cross and live a cruciform life in him. And that's the way out of this age called the flesh, out of this present evil age, is to live from another source.

And it's a reality called in Christ. And with his sacramental right, one's very being or self is transformed. A regenerated new creation freed, freed from the bondage of sin and selfishness.

In Christ, we're freed from the bondage of sin and selfishness to live in newness of life, that is to live in a life that is a share in the Holy Spirit, not by the law, but by the indwelling spirit. Romans 8 is going to really, really just pump that up. And so let's begin with verse six, self in relation to sin.

It says, we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. That's good news, isn't it? Let's unpack that. Reckon or consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

That's what we must do in light of the indicative nature of what Christ has done for us. And then number two, here's the second imperative. Verse 12, don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies.

He gives us this sense of now you're going to participate with me. And this is a volitional transformation. Let not sin.

And this is that dominion of sin so much more than that sin that you might be struggling with this morning. It is that it's so much larger than that. Don't let sin, therefore, reign, have dominion in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

Your body has passions. Your body has cravings. It has desires.

It says, feed me all the time, right? And it wants to be fed more than food, brothers and sisters. So we need to get in touch with our bodies and its relation to mortality and sin and that power lurking over it, because we relate to sin through our bodies, an instrument of unrighteousness. Paul goes on to say, don't present your members, he says, parts of your body.

Don't present your members as instruments of unrighteousness, but present your bodies like Romans 12, present your bodies as instruments of righteousness, you know, without being in Jesus Christ and without reckoning ourselves dead to sin, without resisting that from that point of view, that's impossible. It is. It's impossible.

Paul is saying that there's something indicative in us is that as we participate in the death of Jesus Christ, we can put sin to death. It says your old self was crucified. Now, that's an identity right there, your old self.

He's not speaking to seniors when he says your old self was crucified. Yeah, sorry, that was corny, but here we go. Just bless your old self.

It's my bad self, isn't it? Yeah. The Greek word is Anthropos. That means human being and describes humanity, both male and female, your old Anthropos.

It's not just about guys. It's about all humanity and its representative humanity, its corporate humanity that Jesus dealt with on the cross. It's not just one individual sin by sin, by sin, by person, by person, by person.

He wraps it all up for the sins of the whole world. He wraps it all up. That old self is our archetypal Adamic self that's far bigger than my individual self.

But that individual self is included. That old self, that archetypal Adamic self rooted in Eden's curse. That's what went to the cross with Christ.

That's what we participate with, with Christ. We were crucified, co-crucified with Christ. We got to get this.

It takes meditation and contemplation to get this. The rest of your life, to live a cruciform life, you have to really get this inside of your church. We'll be like the Corinthians.

Are you not carnal? Are you not fleshly? Just popping off at each other and, you know, dominated by sin and fear and rejection and insecurity and ambition and all of these things that we can unleash and baptize it. You know, no, no, no, no. God has transfiguration for us.

The old Adamic self is the self you once were, the self you once were before you were walking in Jesus, before you were walking in grace, before you knew the forgiveness of sins, the self that belongs to the old eon or the old, this present evil age. It's that self that's stuck in that place and relates to that place, that

place of Eden's curse. The self dominated by sin and exposed to wrath is what that old self is.

The old Anthropos is not part of the new, but the old self ruled by sin and it's dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2 says. That self was crucified with Jesus.

Which is really the blew me away when I saw this, the only explicit reference to the cross in Romans. They'll figure, yeah, I know Bill's is going like, no, no, I can't believe this. Only one explicit reference to the cross in Romans.

Go figure it out. I mean, there it is. And as we consider ourselves as co-crucified, our inner being is drawn into the mystery of mysteries, the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Amen. So there is an identity that died along with Christ. Why? Why did that identity, that old thing? It's not sinful nature.

It's old humanity. The word nature is not really used in the original language. OK, that's NIV problems.

You're reading the NIV better. Just read it along with ESV and URSV. It'll help you.

And there's no perfect translation, but it's not simple nature. That old identity, which is an identity that we may relate to more than the new identity. That's tragic, but it can happen.

I want to go back to Egypt where the leeks and the garlic were so good. Remember the children of Israel in the wilderness? You know, Christians can do this. Yeah.

So that's an identity. Now there's this new identity that's coming on. But what has to happen before the new identity can take root in us? That the body of sin might be destroyed.

ESV. Maybe new RSV there. Verse six.

Our old Adamic self was crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed. He's talking about the body, the physical body. No, he's not.

It's the body of sin. That old humanity again. This is corporate language to be incorporated in Adam or to be incorporated in Christ.

Right. The body of sin, corpus, the body of sin might be destroyed for the purpose of liberating us from the enslavement of sin. And most of our education comes out of the enslavement of sin by people who are still in bondage of sin unless they've been set free in Jesus.

And they have their own ideas about what humanity is and should be. And can be. So right now, we're going back to the foundation stones of what the Bible says humanity is.

And then we'll talk about what the culture is saying humanity is later on. So what on earth is the body of sin? Some translations say sinful body. Bad translation.

As if the physical body as such were sinful. No, God calls it good, right? We know that. And we can't separate our bodies from our personality, our person, ourself.

We're body sold creatures. We're not split apart from our bodies. In fact, trauma, memory and all of these other things dwell in our bodies.

And so it is Paul's shorthand sinful body or body of sin, let's say. Paul's shorthand for the whole person defined by sin. See, it's the body of sin, the old anthropos that's defined and identified by the effect of sin.

It's even hard to calculate and identify. That's all from sin, man. That's all from the power of sin right there.

Controlled by it. The old self enslaved under the domain of sin and death by being co-crucified with Christ. This sinful self, this old self.

It's destroyed. It's destroyed so as to liberate from enslavement for the new self. So what is sin? Lots of misunderstanding about the nature of sin, and this is going to be very simplistic right now.

But as I've said, sin is a diabolical power trampling down and bringing death to every living species. Everything that's alive will die. Its power is demonstrated in all attempts to demythologize it.

It's ridiculous to try to demythologize it. It's not gone away, has it? To sterilize it, you can't sterilize sin by human means. You have to kill it.

You can't restore it or sort of let's put it in a program and see what it can do. You know, you can't ignore it and you can't dismiss it. Well, you can, but it's still there.

Those who acknowledge it often misdiagnose it as a wrong that one does, known as sins, plural, rather than a reality that wrongs the doer and the deed alike. It's often misdiagnosed as a wrong that one does, a struggle that you might have, rather than a reality that wrongs the doer and the deed alike. It's bigger than your individual struggles.

So how are we to respond? What has taken place in Christ must be actualized. It must be appropriated by faith. Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Verse 11 and then verse 12. These are the two imperatives. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions.

Mortal body. Verse 12, it's the physical body still mortal and yet to be glorified. We all have unglorified bodies, isn't that true? I realized that this morning when I got up and I was shaving.

I'm just sort of, oh man, this is just not the way it used to be right here. There's a lot of things that are not the way they used to be. Because we are infected with mortality.

And that's something we don't even like to think about. Death. Have you done your will? A lot of you haven't because you don't want to think about it.

Mortal body, the physical body still mortal yet to be glorified. Transfigured, it remains corruptible and prone to desires, some of which are harmful. Not all the body's desires are harmful.

I mean, there's a light there that says you're hungry and you better eat. Sometimes we don't know when to stop eating, but we need to eat. And the desire and the hunger for food is good.

It's just if we would just eat properly. See, if is the problem, though, because the if is the problem with humanity. If we would only think right, if we would only get our act together, if we would only just be aware

of other people, if if if Jesus died for those hips.

Because you will never live up to those hips. I mean, I hope I hope you're struggling. Struggling is good, right? What's the alternative? Freed from the law, a happy condition, sin as I please and still get remission.

The false gospel, it's lurking, it's crawling and it has a desire for you. And only Jesus can master it. And Jesus has mastered it, and that's why we have to be crucified with him, because if we don't and try to manage sin, you ever done sin management in your life? Self-help, it's not self-help, it's self-crucifixion.

That's the gospel. It's death to self. Yes, we can.

Yes, we can. Apart from Christ, no, you can't. No, you can't.

I mean, history bears this out. I mean, it's not an opinion. Obviously, just look at history or read the news as a species.

All of sin and fallen short of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, the whole planet is in disorder, you guys, and what we are talking about today is bringing our inner being back into order through crucifixion with Jesus Christ. And it is a struggle. Hebrews 12, 4 says, in your struggle against sin, that's the Christian life right there.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of death. Now, this is a positive thing if you see that you have the armor of light to do the struggle with. We're not fighting against people, flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers.

That's another aspect. That's not indwelling sin. But one feeds off the other, I think.

Paul is not suggesting sin management. Sin refuses to be managed, and that's why Christ put it to death. The power of sin is destroyed.

And the consummation of that, we'll get to watch the final destruction at the second coming. We're living in between this present evil age and the age to come until one participates in Christ's resurrection future. The resurrection of the mortal body.

The body is still subject to the inevitability of death and vulnerable to the power of its passions and desires. It's just so coming alive to me as I recontemplate these passages about getting in touch with the demands and the cravings of my own body. And of course, this is what fasting is meant to do, is to come against the passions of the body for a season of time to let it know that you are not having dominion over me, over my hunger, over my passions.

What matters for Paul is whether passions, which is called in Galatians, the lust of the flesh, whether that controls the self or not. One of the fruits of the spirit is self control. Self control through the power of the Holy Spirit, not through Tony Robbins videos.

It's like one being trained, you know, because of this message today, we're not called to fix our eyes on our sin and our struggles and our failures. That's a part of sin management. That's a part of the evaluation of what we're up against.

And boy, we're going to need to do this and this and this and this, because we're in a heap of trouble. This sin thing has really got me down. I'm just going to focus on whatever it is I'm struggling and I'm going to

say, get out of here, get out of here, get out of here.

Go, go, go. No, no, no, don't do that. Fix your eyes on Jesus.

In the midst of your struggle, you struggle fixing your eyes not on your opponent, as long as I'm doing this, I'm not punching the air, as Paul says, right? I'm fixing my eyes on Jesus. I'm in union with him and I'm I'm walking in communion with Jesus. My spirit is worshiping.

When we stop doing that. The dominion of sin can come back, it will come back and visit you. We know this.

We're experiencing this. This is not like theology. This is experience.

It's both. This is theological experience. We know it's true, right? I know it's true.

I know it's true in my own life. And so fix your eyes on Jesus. It's kind of like how do you become an expert in counterfeit money by studying counterfeits? No, by studying the real thing.

That's how you become an expert in counterfeit money. It's by studying real dollar bills instead of phony dollar bills. It's the same with fixing your eyes on Jesus, the real thing.

But in First Corinthians six, Paul is dealing with identity. Yeah, ranging from sexual sins to gluttony and affirms their transformation in the lines. You were all of these things.

And then he says, and such were some of you. Such were some of you until you went to the, you know, the self-help seminar and you got your act together. Yes, he says, such were some of you, not because you went through hours and hours of catechism, even in the church.

He says, such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the spirit of our God. It's all God's work. Who washed them? Not themselves.

Who sanctified them? Not their efforts. No, no, this is the beginning. Now, I'm not saying that there is not effort.

Do not let sin reign in your moral bodies. That's a volitional phrase. If you don't get this, you can't do that because he's just talked about baptism in Romans six.

And what happens in baptism? Washing, sanctification, justification in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans six, you guys, whatever you were, whatever you're struggling with, that's not your identity. And we write textbooks on this stuff in the secular world.

That is your identity. That's who you are. You were born that way.

You might as well give in to it. It is a total lie, according to the scriptures. Salvation, hope, eternal life, deliverance from bondage.

You walk out of these doors today and you're going to be hearing the lies again. You're going to turn it on. You're going to go, wow, wow, your favorite news organization.

You're going to be hearing a lot of lies about what humanity is and how to deal with the plight of humanity, how to deal with gun violence in the Irving Corps and how to deal with all the murders and how to deal with the infectious disease on the streets of San Francisco. I used to live there and it's a shame to see what just a city government is allowed to happen to a world class city. And that is the sum total of more than any one particular sin or finger pointing.

It is the cosmic domain of power that steals, kills and destroys. We don't live in that dominion.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/28/SID28649.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-flowers/the-baptismal-self-in-relation-to-sin-grace/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net