

## Alive in Christ: Alive by Baptism!

A sermon based on Romans 6:14.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

:You can never have too much of a good thing. Do you agree? You can't ever have enough of what's good for you. You know, growing up, your parents likely tried to instill that mindset in you. I mean, I don't know about you, but I don't recall my mom or dad ever saying no to me asking for another helping of veggies (not that I remember actually doing that). But it was, eat more fruits and veggies. Read another book. Spend more time outside. Fill up on the good stuff.

Of course, today, that kind of thinking is used as a huge marketing ploy. Pringles, their motto? "Once you pop, the fun don't stop." Lay's Chips upped the ante and threw down the gauntlet with their slogan, "Bet you can't eat just one!" Fred Meyer has even been playing off that "more is better" idea, with their buy "5, Save \$5" deals, where not only can you have more, but you can save money, too. McDonald's, other fast food chains have latched on, too, with their "Here's our value meal, but for just a dollar more, you can supersize it...make it an extra value meal - more fries, more to drink."

One other area where this "more is better" idea is huge...more energy. You see, one more good thing you can't ever have too much of...sleep. All you parents here...you know. Some of the sleepless nights you've had, especially when the kids were younger...you can never have enough sleep. But if you're like me, you're not getting as much as you should. And companies know that. So you have your energy drinks, your coffee huts, the soda giants...you can't ever have too much energy. I'm thinking that's why my first Sunday at the Seminary, the pastor's wife at the church I went to told me, "You don't drink coffee? You will by the time you're done here (which wasn't the case)." We could always use more energy.

You can never have too much of a good thing.

**"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."** We heard that good news last Sunday, didn't we...no matter how big our sin, no matter how bad, no matter how many times we fail God, his grace is bigger. His grace covers it all.

Well, this morning, with our verses following on the heels of that amazing truth, Paul's continuing this train of thought as he was writing to the Roman believers, and he reaches this logical conclusion...this hypothetical question, **"What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?"** Or, in other words, "God's grace is a good thing – we can't ever have enough of it, so can't we/shouldn't we sin our way in more grace...sin more so we can have more of God's grace?"

What do you think? Sounds ok. It makes sense. But what's Paul's quick retort? **"By no means!"** Literally, it's "May that never be so!" Absolutely not! That would be unthinkable!

And here's why, **"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"** Do you understand? Imagine you were searching through your kitchen cabinets looking for a bottle of ketchup, because of course, you can't have fries without ketchup. You're rummaging deep in one of the cabinets, your hand reaches what you think is that bottle, you grab it out, and...it's a bottle of rat poison.

Would you put it back, continuing the search for the ketchup, simply making a mental note (and hoping you'll remember) to throw it out later? Would you set it on the edge of the counter, next to all the other items you want to throw out, and then go to something else, leaving it where little curious fingers could get to it?

No, you'd take drastic measures –pour it down the sink, throw it in the garbage and take the whole garbage bag out to the garage with you. Maybe you'd even get in the car and take it to the hazardous waste pick-up, or at least the transfer site. You wouldn't leave even a chance for it could return to your house or for your family to be exposed to it!

That's what Paul's talking about when he says, ***"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer."*** Jesus, in his grace, already took care of it for us. We just finished the season of Lent focusing on the seriousness of sin, what it does to us....but also God's seriousness about our sin, sending Jesus to suffer and die for us. That's been done. Why go back?

God calls on us to get rid of sin! Have you? I certainly haven't. So often, we treat sin like it's not that big a deal. We keep pet sins around with the promise to ourselves we'll fix it later. We don't see our sins as the dangerous and deadly poison they are, even though, again, as I shared last week, the Bible says, ***"Whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."***

You know, I've conversations with people before that have been along the lines of "I'm a believer, but I don't go to church." "I'm a believer, but I don't feel the need to give offerings to God." "I'm a believer, but holding on to grudges, staying mad at someone, refusing to forgive them, not a big deal. I'm ok with that." "I'm a believer, so the coarse joking, the foul language, the disrespectful talk, it's fine. God knows it all in jest." "I'm a believer, but being kind and caring and compassionate, who cares if I'm being selective with whom I'm showing that to." "I'm a believer, and yes, I struggle with lying, but I can stop whenever I want."

My response is "What?!?! You call yourself a believer, a follower of Jesus, but you're not interested in following Jesus...at least what he says about this?" May it never be so! But I'm there, too.

Only an unrepentant mocker would portray the gospel – that news of God's grace – as an open invitation to immorality...a license to sin. Again, have you? Do you? Friends, instead of walking around in a newness of life (being dead to sin), we still walk around in death. We keep that rat poison of sin around, not realizing there's mortal peril there...that ***"the soul who sins is the one who will die,"*** as Scripture says. But that's us.

Yet you and I..."***we died to sin.***" There's nothing hypothetical about that. Friends, this is the truth Paul shares...we have died to sin. And he goes on, ***"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were THEREFORE buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."***

A lot of good news there, and it all centers on this...your baptism. That one event, where the pastor poured water over your head, speaking the words of Christ...is a means of grace. It's means by which we entered into a vital, intimate faith relationship with Jesus Christ. It's a means by which we were connected to God's grace, that undeserved love shown to us – won for us - through Jesus' perfect life, his innocent death, his glorious resurrection.

Friends, your baptism...it means something. It puts you in touch with Christ...it makes you a partner in Christ's death, his burial, his resurrection. Jesus did all the work. Make no mistake about that. That's what grace is...it's God doing all the work. It's Jesus coming down to earth, becoming a man, living with us, but not living like us...instead, being perfect and sinless in every way. Grace...it's Jesus taking that perfection all the way to the cross, where he exchanged it...willingly gave it up and gave it to us so he could take on our sins...be the sinner in our stead...suffer and die the punishment and death and hell we deserved...to take those sins away. Grace...it's Easter, Jesus being raised to life, victorious over the final enemy, death, opening the door to heaven – to eternal life – for every believer in him.

And every blessing there is ours through our baptism. By that water and the Word...by the Holy Spirit gifting us faith, we partnered with Jesus in all that work...not that we did anything, but we do reap the benefits. That phrase "into Christ Jesus" here...it beautifully expresses our new Christian life. The Christian lives and has their being literally "within the sphere" of Jesus Christ. They are always surrounded by Jesus' forgiveness and always enjoy Jesus' blessed fellowship, guidance and protection. Christ unites himself with every believer – with you and me, just as he promised.

And if that's the case...if Christ suffered and died and rose...and if we're united with him in that, if we're constantly "in the sphere of Christ," then suffice it to say here that when Paul writes, "**we died to sin,**" death implies a total separation. Just as a corpse is cut off from ongoing events among the living, so you and I, we are separated from sin. It's impossible for us to become involved in and controlled by sin. We are dead to sin and raised with Christ to live a new life.

That's what Christ's death and resurrection do. Beyond winning our complete salvation, his death and resurrection are the power enabling the baptized child of God to lead a new life. In this new life of faith, the believer is empowered to do what is pleasing to God. As such, it is a life of faithful obedience to God's will, not rebellion against his commandments by continuing to sin.

And that perfectly describes your life all the time now, doesn't it? Me neither. There are days where that deadness of sin looks good...times during the day when that pet sin comes calling or we're dragging along, feeling like we're barely hanging on, about to slip back into the darkness...trying to get back together with sin. What's the solution?

Well, you can't ever have enough of a good thing, right? When you're feeling sluggish, you need more energy. And the solution? An energy drink, right? Ever had one? They make you feel so alive, like you can do anything. Popular energy drink company Red Bull even used to claim Red Bull gives you wings...creating this impression that the drink gives people some sort of physical lift or enhancement.

Except it doesn't. In 2014, the company settled a class action lawsuit of more than \$13 million (so enough to give \$10/plaintiff) because Red Bull doesn't actually give you wings, not even in a figurative sense. In spite of marketing saying the drink could improve concentration and reaction speeds, there was no scientific support to back that up. Red Bull simply failed to live up to people's expectations.

When you're falling back into the death of sin...when you need more spiritual energy, go back to your baptism. Not be baptized again, but go back to your baptism. Remember it. Remember what it means. Martin Luther reminds us, "**Baptism means that the sinful nature in us should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.**"

Christ died for sin. Connected to him, we died to sin. We can't, we won't live in it any longer. We have been raised with Christ to live a new life. And the power to isn't in you...it doesn't come from you. It comes from your Jesus. It comes from your baptism.

Too much of a good thing? You can't ever have too many reminders of your baptism at the beginning of worship, opportunities for you to cross your head and your heart at the mention of the Triune God, taking you back to when the pastor did the same to you to mark you as a redeemed child of Christ. You can't overemphasize your baptism date, treating it like a second birthday (and I'm not only saying that because mine is this Saturday). You can't ever do what your baptism encourages you to do too many times – again, what Martin Luther reminds, **“Baptism means...the sinful nature [is] drowned with daily sorrow and repentance...and the new man [arises] to live.”**

Christ is alive. We are alive in Christ...truly alive by our baptismal grace. We will be energized by that. And we will live that new life to the glory of the Father. Amen.