

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin  
August 18, 2019

## Grace Wins When You Die

**Romans 6:1 – 7:6**

The entire text is printed here. If you are reading this message, please take the time to read the entire text to begin to follow Paul's line of reasoning. In the service, we will only read the text in the course of the message.

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.*

*<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

*<sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

*<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

*<sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. <sup>18</sup> You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

*<sup>19</sup> I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves to sin, you*

were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>7</sup> Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup> So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week we celebrated this truth: “Where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” The greater my debt of sin, the more I appreciate that Jesus took that debt of sin and death upon himself. This is the beauty of the great exchange.

One example I gave to picture this truth was the cancelling of all Chase credit card debt for every Canadian. The article noted:

Christine Langlois, of Montreal, told CBC she stopped making payments on her card five years ago. A 24-year-old university student, she said: "It's kind of like I'm being rewarded for my irresponsibility."

This is the very issue that the Apostle Paul took up next in his letter to the Romans. God’s forgiving grace seems to encourage irresponsibility!

### **Grace Wins When You Die in Your Baptism (6:1-11)**

*What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.*

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Prof. Siegbert Becker of our seminary attended many funerals as a child. His Lutheran school teacher was also the church organist. Every time there was a funeral, his class would be there. After the service they would go out to cemetery next to the church. They watched as the casket was lowered into the grave. When the pastor said, “Earth to earth,” the first spade of soil would be thrown on the coffin. Thump! “Ashes to ashes.” The second spadeful. Thump! “Dust to dust.” The third spadeful. Thump!

This was what he heard at every baptism. I hear it now too. “I baptize you in the name of the Father (I hear the soil thump on the casket) and of the Son (the second thump on the casket), and of the Holy Spirit (the third thump on the casket).

Grace wins when we go back to our baptisms and understand that in our baptisms we die. “Don’t you know that you were baptized into his death?”

In our baptisms, God unites us to Christ. When Jesus died, he was done with sin once for all. He never had to carry the burden of our sin again. He doesn’t ever have to die again. Now he lives to God’s glory.

So in our baptisms, we die to sin. We die to sin in the sense that sin and death can’t destroy us any more. In your baptisms you are “set free from sin” (Romans 6:7). Daily you can go back to your baptisms and know that your sins have been washed away. You may not always feel that marvelous forgiveness. You may not feel that freedom from sin and death. That’s why Jesus touches us in our baptism. “My grace reaches to you, whether you feel it or not.”

We died to sin in our baptisms in that we are forgiven. But we also die to sin because we don’t want to live in it any longer.

*<sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—<sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

*<sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.<sup>9</sup>For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.*

*<sup>11</sup>In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

“Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ.

How do we do that? Martin Luther in his Small Catechism explains this portion of Romans 6:

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition 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 (Fourthly of Baptism).

Daily we can go back to our baptisms and remember, “I died and was buried with Christ to sin.” Contrition is simply sorrow over my sin. Repentance includes not only the concept of understanding our sin, but also trusting that Jesus’ death has paid for our sin.

This is the beauty of an old habit that many of our churches had. During confession, a person would kneel. If you are able, I encourage you to do that right now. Let's do this physically as a reminder to do this spiritually, that daily we go back to our baptisms, we drown that old sinful nature by confessing our sins to God. Let's have a moment of silent confession.

Where have you failed someone in your role as a father or mother, son or daughter, student or teacher, employer or employee?

What sinful thoughts have gone through your mind? Sexual desires? Bitterness? Anger? Envy?

What words have you spoken that betrayed a confidence?

*Silent confession.*

You were united with Christ's death in your baptism. All those sins that you just confessed? You have already died for them because Jesus' death has become your own. Now please stand. You arise as from the dead, not to go back to that sin, but to live a new life. How do I know that? Because Jesus rose from the dead and the God who raised Jesus from the dead is working in you. That is God's promise to you in our baptism.

Grace wins when we daily die to sin in our baptisms to live a new life.

### **Grace Wins When You Die to Sin's Army**

Paul goes on to help us understand our calling in this new life.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

How shall we read that last sentence? Is it a command? "Sin shall no longer be your master!" Is Paul saying, "Buck up and fight harder?" For many years I heard it that way. Finally, I realized that Paul was reassuring me. "Pete, you are under grace. Grace releases you from your enlistment to sin."

Think about it! What makes sin so powerful? That escape is hopeless. You try hard to do the right thing and you fail. We are like the alcoholic who wakes up with a hangover and says, "I'll never do that again," but then we end up doing the same thing and realize, "What's the use. I'll never kick this addiction."

But grace breaks that pattern! I don't have to look back at yesterday as a failure. I look back at yesterday and stand in awe of God's amazing grace. The credit card bill was cancelled. The pile of manure (see the sermon from last week) has been pushed away. Rather than look back on

yesterday in shame, I look back on yesterday with relief. All of what I am ashamed of, all my guilt, has been removed. Yes, it is a relief! I am not under law but under grace!

With that in mind, Paul says, “Use the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness.” The Greek word for “instruments” is most often translated “weapons.” We are in a war. I don’t want my body used in the devil’s army to destroy others. I want my body used in God’s army to bring healing and help. If I’m going to war, I want to be on the “good” side, the side that will ultimately win. As God’s forgiven child, arise from the depths of the baptism grave to new life as part of God’s army.

### **Grace Wins When You Die to Sin’s Slavery**

Next, Paul uses slavery as an illustration. Slavery in ancient Rome was not a racial issue like it was in our American history. But it was familiar to all. It is estimated that 1/3 of the population of ancient Rome were slaves. Paul’s argument is that we are all slaves. The only question will be: Who is your master? And then consider carefully what the wages are for each slavery.

*<sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. <sup>18</sup> You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

*<sup>19</sup> I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Sin offers a false freedom. It seems like we are free when we sin. “I can do anything I want.” But sin enslaves us. Sin has an addictive power, that when we give in to some sinful action, whether it be sexual sin, or gossip, or use of alcohol, or pride, the power of that sin grows within us. As Paul says, “We become slaves to the one we obey” with “ever increasing wickedness.”

But what are the wages of this false freedom, this slavery to sin? It only results in death. Sin causes the same death experiences that we saw in Adam when he fell in the garden of Eden. Sin causes the death of any relationship with God. We become afraid of God. It causes the death of relationships with each other. And ultimately it causes our physical death, and even worse, the eternal death of hell, an eternal separation from any relationship with God and all the gifts that he could give.

But if we are slaves to righteousness, if we submit to this “slavery” and serve God, the wages are eternal life. But Paul uses a different word here. Not “wages” but “gift.” Even as we seek to serve God with our lives, doing his will, we recognize that we could never earn eternal life. In grace God gives us a gift that we do not deserve, an eternal, loving relationship with him that begins now and will last beyond the death of our bodies into eternity.

### **Grace Wins When You Die to the Law**

There is one more death that Paul takes up. We die to the Law of God.

*Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? <sup>2</sup> For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. <sup>3</sup> So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.*

*<sup>4</sup> So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. <sup>5</sup> For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup> But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (Romans 7:1-6).*

How have we died to the law? The law is all about compulsion. You must do this. Try harder. How much of our lives are lived under the law? When we are constantly uncertain if God is pleased with us or when we feel compelled to do something, we are under the law.

Grace wins when we see that the death the law pronounces on us has already happened. In Christ we died. In our baptisms, we were united with Christ into his death. We have been released from the compulsion, all the “must’s” and “have to’s” of the law. Grace wins when the “have to’s” are changed to “want to’s.”

This is what King David talks about in Psalm 51 when he asks God to create a clean heart and a willing spirit within him. This is what is promised to us in the New Covenant of the Lord’s Supper (Jeremiah 31:31-34) where God promises to write his law on our hearts.

Grace wins when your love for the Savior leads you to say “no” to sin. Grace wins when your love for the Savior causes you to make life changes and sacrifices. Grace wins when the Spirit is working powerfully in you!

Grace wins – every time. And yet, that doesn’t seem to be the case in my life. As often as I put to death that sinful nature within me by daily contrition and repentance, that sinful nature comes back. That’s what Paul will talk about in the next section. How can I still be so sinful and yet grace wins, every time? Let’s continue the discussion next week.

## **Baptism Confession of Faith from Luther's Small Catechism**

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition 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.

## **My Next Steps to Daily Death and Daily New Life**

- **Read Romans 6:1 – 7:6:** Read this text in several different translations and paraphrases to better understand Paul's line of thought.
- **Use the 10 Commandments:** Find them in Exodus 20 or in your Small Catechism. (Google "Luther's Small Catechism WELS" to find it on line.) Let God's law reveal the sin to which you are to die.
- **Claim the power of a new life in your baptism:** Use the passages mentioned in GroupWork to review promises God is giving to you in your baptism.

## GroupWork

1. Share a favorite “back to school” memory and begin with prayer for our children returning to school.
2. Read Romans 6:1 – 7:6 to review this week’s message. Share one or two thoughts from the message that you found helpful or that you would like to discuss.
3. Read Romans 6:1 – 7:6 using a different translation or a paraphrase translation. (Many are available on Bible Gateway or YouVersion.) What phrases helped you understand this chapter better or raised questions for you?
4. Look again at Romans 6:1-5. Although we rarely see baptism by immersion in the Lutheran church, what powerful symbolism does a baptism by immersion give?
5. Baptism is not just symbolism. God makes powerful promises in our baptisms.
  - a. Read Galatians 3:26-29. What blessings does baptism give? Look for at least two.
  - b. Read Acts 2:38-39. What blessings does baptism give? Look for at least two.
  - b. Read 1 Peter 3:21. Baptism gives you a pledge from God of a good conscience. When you have a good conscience toward someone, you can look them in the eye and not be afraid of any judgment. How could you use this passage to reassure someone who feels God’s forgiving grace really doesn’t apply to them?
6. Join together in a confession of our faith using the Baptism section of Luther’s Small Catechism. This confession is printed in all worship folders.
7. Close by breaking up into small groups of three or four. Let one person share a prayer concern, and another person pray about that concern.