

Under Satan's Control or a New Life in Christ?

Sermon for the 6th Sunday after Trinity

Sermon Text: Romans 6: 3-11



Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. ⁶ 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. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but

the life He lives He lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Another rocket struck again. Weeping family members once more stand before lifeless people. This has been repeated far too often these days in Ukraine. But not only there – in Afghanistan, in Yemen, and in other places around the world, the same thing is happening. Where blood flows, it always means the same thing. There was a perpetrator who now must pay. Wherever blood flows, voices for retaliation increase! The perpetrators should also experience what I just experienced. My relatives or my family members should be avenged. And that's why the cycle is always the same. The blood that was shed calls for more blood! More death! More suffering! From this alone, we realize that evil is more than just the sum of the many terrible things in the world. Evil is not just war. There is, in fact, something else behind it. Behind it is Satan who wants, with all his might, to separate us from God. Satan who, with all his might, wants to chain us to death. Satan who, with all his might, wants the cycle of hatred and bloodshed to continue to the bitter end.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul discusses all these things and sees humanity's greatest foes in sin, Satan, and eternal death. Here he talks about the root causes of this power, and it is summarized in sin which is all over and exists within all people. In Romans 3, Paul summarizes that without exception, all people are affected by this sin and that's why everyone, without exception, deserves death. Sin and death equally belong to the natural characteristics of people. It is important that we understand this because the normal human mind judges quite differently. The normal person thinks that he can rehabilitate and improve himself. The normal person doesn't recognize the power of sin and Satan and thinks that he can overcome sin through his own efforts. So the normal person thinks that sin can be overcome in such a way – by thinking about ourselves, by coming to our senses and from this, making decisions that change their whole life. We must then just strive to ward off evil and strive for what is good. Something like when someone decides to eat less meat or to go on a diet. Paul draws a red line through this thinking and says once and for all: No! We humans can't overcome death through better thinking or through any other corrections to ourselves! Because sin and death are powers that are beyond our capability. There must be another! God Himself must intervene! And then Paul starts to talk about Christ. The most important thing about Jesus Christ is that He died. The most important thing about Jesus Christ is that He died for us and for our sins. Everything else that the Bible says culminates in this sentence: Jesus died for us and for our sins! When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the exact opposite of sin bringing more and more sin happened. Through Jesus' death, a line is drawn through sin and God's power works against all the evil of the world. Sin is swallowed up in Jesus' death – so is hatred and the call for retribution. Just as the blood in many places of the world cries out for more blood, Jesus' blood sings a different song from Golgotha – it calls for forgiveness! It cries out for reconciliation! It calls for

fellowship between God and mankind. And Jesus' blood also brings reconciliation between and among people. All of this culminates in Jesus Christ and in His death. And Paul notes that when we Christians are baptized, we are united with this Jesus. That means that our sin is swallowed up in His death. Likewise, our death is swallowed up in His death. And that's why we become just like Jesus. We have died to sin and receive new life. Paul writes extensively and with great emphasis that all of this is only possible through Jesus and through His death. There is no other way. For some people who lived at that time, this was much too simple. They wrote a new doctrine and this new teaching said that Jesus and His death would not be enough to save us. That's why such people also wrote a long list of laws that the people at that time had to do so that they could be really sure that they were saved. Some added a few Jewish laws. Others thought that the Christian had to prove his salvation through other good works. Paul realized the work of Satan in this doctrine and he summarized: either we have all of Christ or we have no Christ at all. We can't be partially baptized and we also can't partially die. Whoever is baptized into Christ has completely died in Christ and will receive life from this very same Christ. Now some very smart adversaries of Christianity were there and asked the following question: "If all our sin is taken away only through Jesus and we don't have to do anything, and if everything depends only on this Jesus and His death, then it would be good that we Christians simply sin more because Christ's job is to forgive us and it is our job to sin." Such people made fun of Paul and even said: "Then it would be good to sin even more as a Christian so that Christ can forgive more." Paul writes against this exact false doctrine when he says: Whoever is baptized into Christ has died in Christ. That means that he also died in regard to sin and now can live a new life in Christ. The old self who cries out for revenge, hate, and bloodshed is crucified with Christ. He is no more. He is dead. The chains that connected us to sin are broken through Jesus and His death!

That doesn't mean that sin, death, and the devil no longer exist. It's all still there. And we can sense them in our own lives. We are also constantly threatened by these three things: sin, death, and the devil. The earth in which we live is in fact the battlefield where the devil fights with all possible resources against God. Even still today. When the world and our lives are in the midst of such a fight, it is even more important to ask the question: To whom do I belong? Whose side am I on – on Satan's side or God's side? Satan and sin are powerful forces. We can't just overcome them by deciding to do better from here on out. Yes, even if we improve a little bit, we are caught firmly in Satan's snares by our choices and our temptations and belong to Satan, not to God. And that's why Paul must always emphasize that only in Christ do we have the victory! Only in Christ do sin, death, and the devil no longer have anything to say. And all of that is determined in baptism. Can you still remember your baptism? The most important words at baptism were the following: "...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!" What matters in baptism is not the water nor even the words that you said nor the songs that were sung. Nothing else except for this – what you are baptized into. You are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. You are baptized into God! And that's why you now belong to Him and no one else! Amen.