

Third Sunday after Pentecost, Epistle, Year A

DYING IN SIN

Romans 6:1-11

Third Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Peter Keyel

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But 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 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.

DIAGNOSIS: Dying to Sin

Step 1 Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Freedom

Paul just finished explaining that where “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (5:20). Some might immediately suggest that this is a reason to sin more, not less. After all,

some of these so-called sins are “pleasures of the flesh,” with the emphasis on pleasure. Are they really even sins in the first place? And we might also argue that if we are truly free, we must be free to sin, and if Jesus took care of it all, what’s the worry?

Step 2 Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Living in Sin

The problem with this line of thinking is that it reveals that we are not truly free. We are continuing to live in sin, despite supposedly having died to it. Paul calls out this line of thinking immediately. There’s still a problem if we don’t consider ourselves dead to sin.

Step 3 Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): The Body of Sin Destroyed

Paul reminds his readers of the consequences of living in sin: death. The body of sin must be destroyed, as that is the only way to be finally freed from sin.

PROGNOSIS: Living in Christ

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Raised from the dead

However, Paul reminds his readers that God in Jesus also died to sin. Yet the consequences were not an eternity of hell, but resurrection from the dead. What’s more, we are promised that because of the cross and empty tomb death no longer holds dominion over us and that we will also live with Christ.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Alive to God in Christ Jesus

Paul describes receiving this promise as “walk[ing] in the newness of life” (v. 4). He encourages his readers to trust this promise, and proclaims that they are “dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11). Trusting this promise means we are no longer slaves to sin.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Freedom

If we are no longer slaves to sin, we are truly free. That freedom allows us to live not in sin, but to choose to live in Christ. This is then how grace abounds all the more: Now we are freed to go where sin is and bring Christ's saving grace to bear.