

“New Life from the Ruins”—Romans 6:11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “New Life from the Ruins”, is Romans 6:11 → *So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

The importance of ruins cannot be underestimated for archeologists and historians. Digging through the ruins of a city may reveal much about a culture’s practices, behaviors and even belief systems. Such ruins may provide clues to “fill in the gaps” of history as we constantly search to learn more about the past and people who lived before us and influenced our lives in many ways. Yet, while digging through the ruins one must know that for which you are searching. Otherwise, to the “untrained eye,” it all looks like dirt, clay, stones and rubble.

So . . . if someone started digging through the “ruins” of your life what would he find? It seems that it has become a national pastime for some to “dig up the dirt” in the “ruins” of some peoples’ lives in an effort to ruin their lives. However, some would call it revealing the truth and seeking justice. Would it be safe to say that most people would rather let the ruins of their lives remain undisturbed because they will always reveal some sin and shame? After all, Romans 3:23 does say that ***all*** have

sinned and fall short of the glory of God, let alone falling short of the expectations of men.

Our text deals with how we as disciples of Jesus display the new life we have in Christ in light of the “ruins” sin has made of our lives. In the context of speaking about our baptism connecting us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the whole purpose is to bring new life from the ruins of sin. *We were buried . . . with Jesus by baptism into death, in order that, just as He was raised from the dead . . . we too might walk in newness of life.* (cf. Romans 6:4) Throughout Romans 6 it is very clear that it is referring not only to new life in the resurrection of the body on the Last Day—that is, eternal life. It is also talking about the new life of good works which you live in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ **now**.

However, as much as people would like to leave the adverse experiences of their past behind them, the sad reality is that the sin in the midst of those ruins reveals itself far too easily in the present. Before you know it, you can find yourself saying and doing things which are sinful while interacting with others and even wonder why you’re behaving that way. Even delving into those ruins to explain current behavior may not prove all that helpful. It may explain why you’re reacting the way you are but it doesn’t guarantee better behavior. Sin, past and present, must always be dealt with properly in the Person & Work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:6-7 says: *We know that our old self was crucified with*

Jesus in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. The only way for sin, past and present, to be dealt with properly is when a death and resurrection takes place. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is your crucifixion and resurrection through your baptism. You have the victory over your sins which can ruin your life, both physically and spiritually, through faith in Jesus' victory over sin and the devil **for you!** Only Christ can bring new life from the ruins of your sin.

The struggle in life this side of heaven is that we can feel like we're still enslaved to the sin and its controlling affects on our lives. Reoccurring sins, addictive natures, uncontrollable sinful thoughts . . . they plague us daily in an effort to enslave us once again to sin. The devil is constantly placing temptations before us, many times "dug up" from the ruins, in an effort to make us doubt God's forgiving disposition toward us in Jesus. His purpose is not only to lead us into sin but into the ruins of hell. It is one thing to assent to being set free from the power of sin and the devil and quite another to live set free from the power of sin and the devil. Being set free from the power of sin, death and the devil but still having to deal with their presence is what caused Paul to say in Romans 7:24 → *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

Thus, while we're freed from the **power** of sin, death and the devil we still have to deal with their **presence**. Your sinful nature—your “ruins of sin” which our Confessions refer to the as “the old Adam in us”—is a master at “rationalizing” sinful actions so that they appear good and no longer sting your conscience with guilt and shame. Paul gave the example of using grace as an excuse to sin in Romans 6:1 with the question: *Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* In other words, “The more I sin, the more God forgives me, the better I feel?” This is satan’s most basic way of pulling us down into the “ruins of death and sin.” He tempts us to believe the delusions within which we do **not** recognize sin as sin.

Who will deliver us from this body of death? By faith we cling to Paul’s answer: *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!* (cf. Romans 7:25) We look to the accomplished work of Jesus for us and the means through which He gives us the benefits of that work by the power of the Holy Spirit—baptism. Notice I said we look—present tense. It is a daily looking by faith to Jesus in order to deal with the presence of sin in the present. Baptizing with water “indicates that the Old Adam in us should by **daily** contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should **daily** emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” (Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, © 1986 & 2017 Concordia Publishing House, p. 24)

Thus, you do not view baptism as a part of your “life in the ruins.” You don’t think of it as simply a “rite” you went through at some point in your past in order to go to heaven. Your baptism affects your living a new life in Christ **right now**. You can *consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus* (verse 11) as you live in the constant rhythm of confession and absolution, repentance and faith. You can confess with the words of Galatians 2:20 → *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Christ has brought you out of the ruins of sin, death and the devil by His death and resurrection and, being united with Him in baptism, you share in His death and new life! It is a new life with Christ reflected in a new attitude towards life, in the way you think, speak, judge and act, as you strive to count yourself *dead to sin and **alive to God in Christ Jesus***. You can offer yourself to be used by God, reflecting His new attitude, new words and new actions in every area of life.

Satan constantly attacks and assails you, striving to make you feel guilty over sins already forgiven and left in the ruins. He is tempting you to disobey God’s will and doubt His promises in an effort to drive you into ruin and despair. When you’re tempted to go back into the ruins of sin cling to Christ. When you were baptized into Christ Jesus you *put on*

*Christ and continue to live as sons of God through faith in Him. (cf. Galatians 3:26-27) Thus, 1 John 4:4 is **your** promise: *Little children, you are from God and have overcome those anti-Christian spirits, for He Who is in you (i.e. Jesus) is greater than he who is in the world (i.e. the devil).* So as you live each day simply being who you are in Christ in the various vocations you fulfill in life, you will display new life from the ruins of sin in your thoughts, actions, speech and attitudes. Amen.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.