

CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY AUGUST 30, 2026
ROMANS 6:1-14

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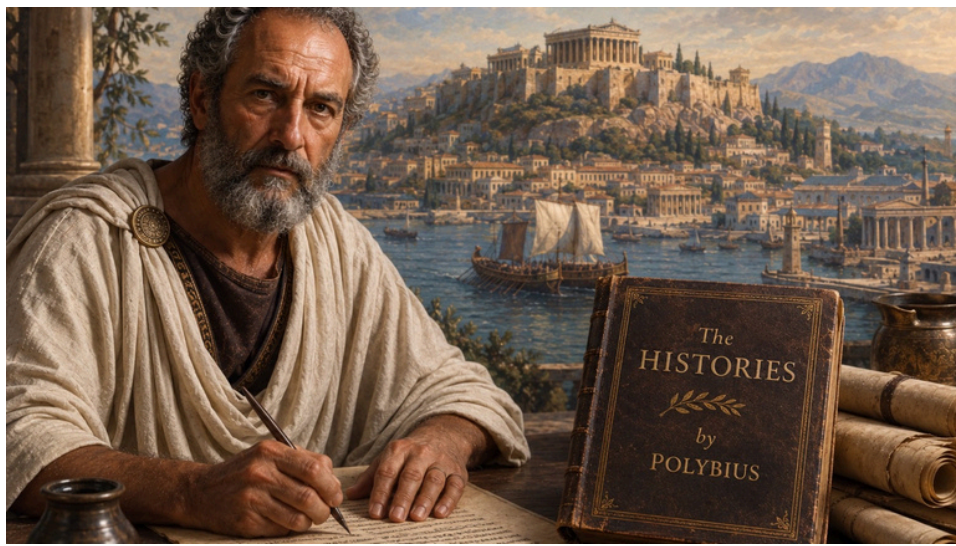
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Ship building and sea travel were an essential part of the Greek and Roman world. Ships carried cargo, passengers, grain, soldiers, and news across the Mediterranean. The sea connected the empire—and it's from the sea and shipping that we get a picture of what the word “baptized” means.

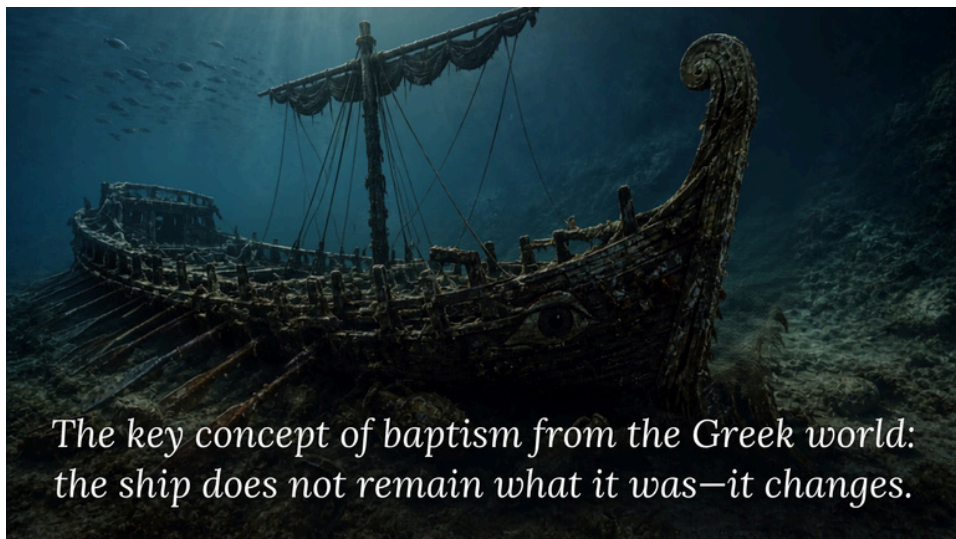


One of the clearest ancient examples of the Greek word “baptized” comes from an ancient writing called “The Histories” – written by Polybius. He was a Greek historian who wrote about Rome’s rise to power.



In describing naval warfare, Polybius used the verb baptizō of ships that were struck, overwhelmed by water, and then sunk. Modern Lexicons preserve that usage: the word baptize could mean “to dip,” “to plunge,” “to submerge,” and, in the case of ships, “to sink.”

Picture the scene from ancient naval warfare: ships clash at sea, hulls are damaged, water floods in, and a vessel sinks. Whether by battle damage, ramming, or disaster on the water, the point is the same—the ship does not remain what it was. It is overtaken by the sea. It is plunged beneath the surface. It is, in the language of the Greek world, “baptized.”

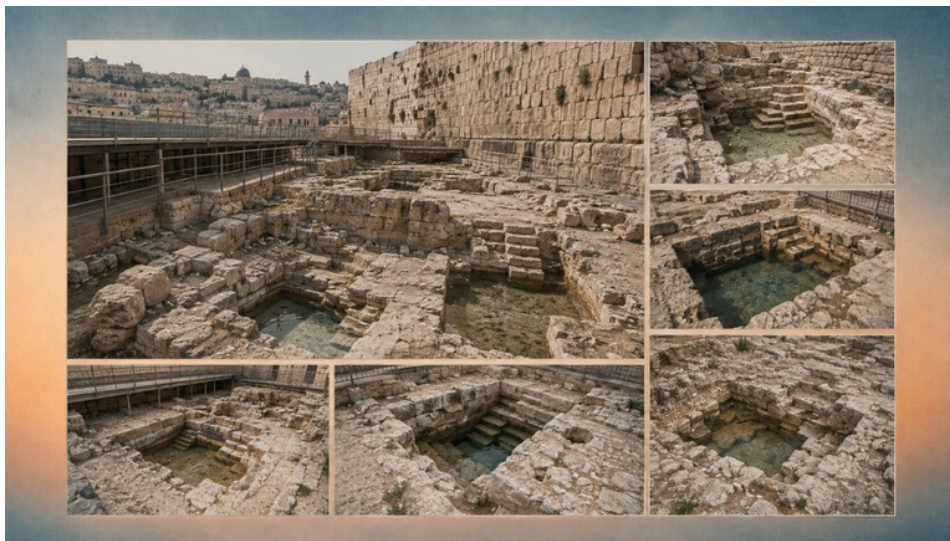


That’s the Greek understanding, but Paul is writing to the Jews as well, so let’s see how 1st Century Jewish people used the word “baptized”.

According to Craig Keener, for Jewish people baptism was the outward ceremonial act by which non-Jews converted to Judaism. Baptism was the final removal of gentile impurity. Through baptism one turned one’s back on a life of paganism and sin and vowed to follow God and his law. From a Jewish perspective a baptized convert was a “new person”.

Similar then to the Greek understanding, through baptism the convert to Judaism did not remain what they were, there was a change in condition, they were a “new person”.

Another Jewish use of “baptism” was ritual immersion for purification. Jewish law required immersion in a mikveh—a ritual bath—to remove various forms of ceremonial impurity. Archaeologists have uncovered hundreds of these mikva'ot surrounding the Temple Mount, used by worshippers and pilgrims to purify themselves before entering the Temple courts. The focus of this baptism for cleansing was the change of status from “ceremonially unclean” to “ceremonially clean”.



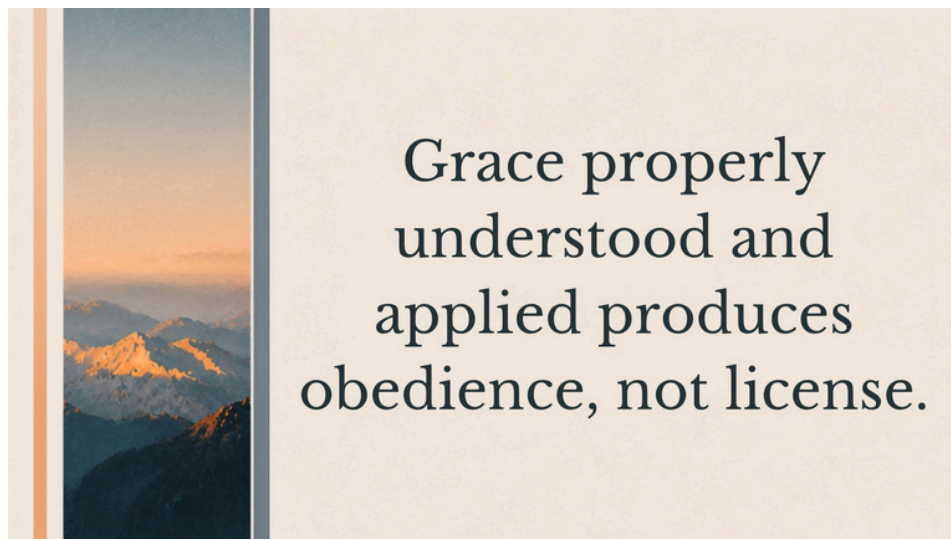
And likewise, the Jewish person baptized for ceremonial cleansing also had a change of condition from unclean to clean.

The key concept of both Jewish uses of the word “baptism” is then the same as the Greek, does not remain what it was, there is a change.

Here is why these understandings of baptism matter to us today. Baptism is the metaphor Paul uses to illustrate his answer to the question of **verse 1**. So, with this understanding of baptism let's read Paul's question.

Let me restate Paul's question: If righteousness comes by grace apart from law, and grace “increases” in response to sin, why not go on sinning? In essence, Why isn't grace a license to sin?

Paul's answer is that:



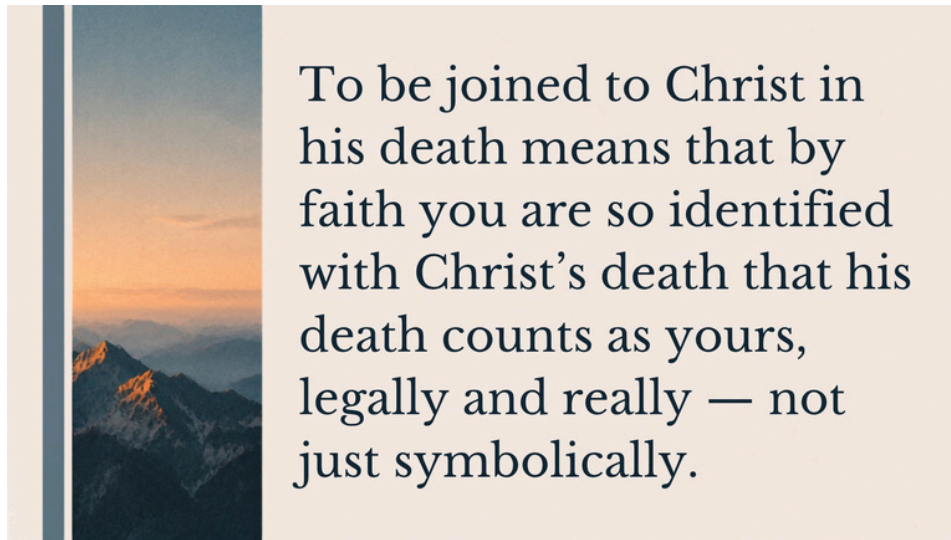
That's powerful! Let's look at how Paul gets that answer step by step. Paul says in the end of **verse 2** “since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live it?”

What does Paul mean that we “have died to sin”?

Think of “dying to sin” like a change of citizenship. When someone is naturalized into a new country, the old nation might still send notices, still try to summon them to serve, but legally it has no claim on them anymore—they belong to a new country now.

That's the picture here. Sin used to be the nation we lived under, with its laws and its demands on us. But when we were joined to Christ, our citizenship transferred. Sin may still call out to us, but it no longer has any legal claim on our obedience. We are no longer subject to its rule.

Paul reminds both Jewish and Gentile believers in Rome in **verse 3**, that when they were joined with Christ in baptism, they joined Christ in his death!



To be joined to Christ in his death means that by faith you are so identified with Christ's death that his death counts as yours, legally and really — not just symbolically.

Paul makes this same kind of argument back in **Romans 5**. Adam was the head of the human race—when he sinned, that wasn't just his own private failure; it was legally counted as belonging to everyone descended from him. One man's act became the whole race's verdict.

Christ works the same way, but in reverse. He is the head of a new humanity, and what happened to him—his death, burial, and resurrection—is credited to everyone joined to him by faith.

You didn't literally hang on that cross two thousand years ago, any more than you personally ate the fruit in the garden. But just as Adam's guilt became yours by headship, Christ's death becomes yours by that same kind of union—real, legal, and binding.

And likewise, then in v4 that since we were joined to Christ in his death, we also were joined with him in his burial.

But does the story of Jesus end with Jesus buried in the tomb?

No! That's only Friday – so what about Sunday? **Verse 4** says we were joined with Christ in his death, we were joined with Christ in his burial, and so we are also joined with Christ in his resurrection to new life.

The symbolic picture of water baptism really captures this. When a person is baptized, they go under the water, breaking the plane of the earth – that symbolizes their death and burial – the death and burial of the old self. When they are raised out of the water, that symbolizes their resurrection to new life in Christ. The main concept of baptism we learned earlier is that it pictures someone who does not remain what they were—they are changed. The water itself doesn't produce that change; it's the outward sign of a change that already happens by faith, when we are joined to Christ.



Your baptism isn't just a certificate and a nice photo of you coming up out of the water with your hands raised. It is a symbolic decisive identification. The old life has gone under. The believer has been joined to Christ in His death, buried with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. The believer has changed. And your baptism proclaims that change that happened at salvation to the world.

Now **verse 5** sounds like a repeat of **verse 4**, however **verse 5** is about the nature of the union.

The word translated as "united" is best understood in the context of grafting. When a branch of one type of fruit tree is properly grafted into the branch of another type of fruit tree, the two become united. The life of the main branch flows into the grafted branch through the union, and that new life produces new fruit.



The old branch could only produce the old fruit of sin and death, but when it was cut off from the old tree and was grafted into the new tree - Jesus Christ, it had new life and so it produced new fruit.

Paul explains this more in **verse 6**. A branch as long as it is still connected to the old tree has no hope of changing its fruit. Using Paul's language, that branch is a "slave" to the old tree's fruit. To change its fruit, it must be cut off, dead meaning no source of life, and then grafted into the new tree, new life, to produce new fruit.

Verse 7. When the branch was cut off from the old tree it was "set free" from producing the old fruit - sin that leads to death.

But in **verse 8** when the branch was united - or grafted into the new tree - Jesus - the branch produced new life. That's a picture of being united with Christ.



Verse 8 speaks to both my life now and my eternal life: being united with Christ in his resurrection means new life now free from the bondage of sin, and resurrection life after we die. Paul wants us to know that and be assured of it. **Verse 9**. Christ's resurrection is our assurance of resurrection.

Think of it like a bride marrying into a family of great wealth and standing. She didn't earn the estate, build the fortune, or achieve the title—she receives all of it simply because she is now united to the groom. What belongs to him becomes hers, not by her effort, but by the marriage itself.

Verse 9 says death no longer has dominion over Christ—that's his resurrection victory. And because we are united to him, that same freedom from death's rule becomes ours too. We didn't win that victory. We inherited it. And Paul wants us to be sure of this – death has no power over Jesus, and so death has no power over us. By faith then we have hope in our own resurrection.

But what does it mean for us now? If we are now no longer under the reign of sin and death, but rather have been raised to new life in Christ, what do we do now? What is our role, our purpose in this new life?

The answer to that lies in us being united to Christ. **Verse 10** says “But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God”. Christ was raised to new life for the glory of God, and because we are united with him, we also are raised to new life – for what? For the glory of God.

Think of the moon. Two days ago, was the full moon. It was bright and beautiful! The moon has no light of its own—every bit of its brightness is the sun's light reflected. At night when someone says “look how bright the moon is,” they're really seeing reflected light of the sun. That's our new life in Christ. It genuinely shines—but it isn't self-generated. It's his life, reflected through us. And because his life is for the Glory of God, then our new life in Christ is also for “the glory of God”.



So with all those benefits of being united to Christ – died to sin, buried with Christ, raised to new life, no longer slaves to sin, set free from the power of sin, know that we will live with him, live for the glory of God – Paul urges all the believers – both Jews and Gentiles, you and me, to see this one truth about themselves. He wants all the believers to “...consider yourself...” **verse 11**.

“Consider yourself dead to sin...”. Is that just grandiose or positive thinking? Like a teen-age boy who “considers himself” to be God's gift to women?
Or a mediocre soccer player who “considers himself” able to play competitively with the best players in the world?
Or a worker who “considers himself” better than all his peers?

“...Consider yourself dead to sin” really? C'mon... you and I both know ourselves, and we both know that we still sin... so how can I be “dead to sin”?

Paul is not telling the believers to be wrong in their estimation of themselves - better than what they are. Rather Paul wants the believers to acknowledge their legal change of status. The NIV says it this way **verse 11 NIV**. Paul intentionally uses the word “count”. This is the same word that Paul used back in **verse 4:3b** and ten more times in **chapter 4**.

The word “counted” is a legal verdict of God declaring Abraham righteous because of his faith. It is the verdict of righteousness by faith that has now stood for 4,000 years.

Paul then takes that same word “count”, which carries the strong legal verdict meaning, and says in **Romans 6:11** that we are to “count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”.

This is not just a whimsical estimation of ourselves based on grandiose or positive thinking. This is seeing ourselves in the light of the legal reality that what Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection- he set us free from the reign of sin and death, “and God is the judge”.

So friends, think this through. Though we live in bodies that still sin, though we live in bodies that will die physically, our legal status is no longer under the reign of sin and death we inherited from Adam. Rather, we are dead to sin and alive to God under the reign of Jesus Christ because we have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection when we accepted him by faith. This is a true change of status or condition.

Now, let's go back to baptism. We said earlier that baptism symbolically represented that one did not remain what they were, there was a change of status or condition. The sunken ship that was baptized did not remain what it was—it changed—new status, new condition. The convert to Judaism who was baptized did not remain who they were, they were changed - new status, new condition. The Jewish worshiper headed for the temple who was baptized in the mikveh did not remain ceremonially unclean, they were changed—new status, new condition.

Paul says in **verse 11** that those that are in Christ Jesus, have a new status, new condition, and that new status, is “dead to sin and alive to God”. Do you believe that about yourself? Do you accept that new status, new condition, by faith? Know this, it is legally true.

Colossians 1:13

And that freedom, the change of status and condition, is the reason why Paul then exhorts the believers in Rome - both Jews and Gentiles - “to live for God”.

Here is how they are to live for God, not sin and death. **Verse 12 -13b**. Note the words “control, give in, serve”. That is language of slavery to a force you cannot beat. Those words paint a picture of being under the reign of the “kingdom of darkness”.

But Paul says, because of your legal change of status-condition, “Do not let sin control the way you live.” Why shouldn't you let it? Because sin has no legal claim on you—your status is changed.

Paul says, “Do not give in to sinful desires”. Why? Because sin has no legal claim on you, your status is changed.

Paul says, “Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin”. Why? Because sin has no legal claim on you, your status is changed! Paul says later in **Romans 8:12**. “No Obligation”!

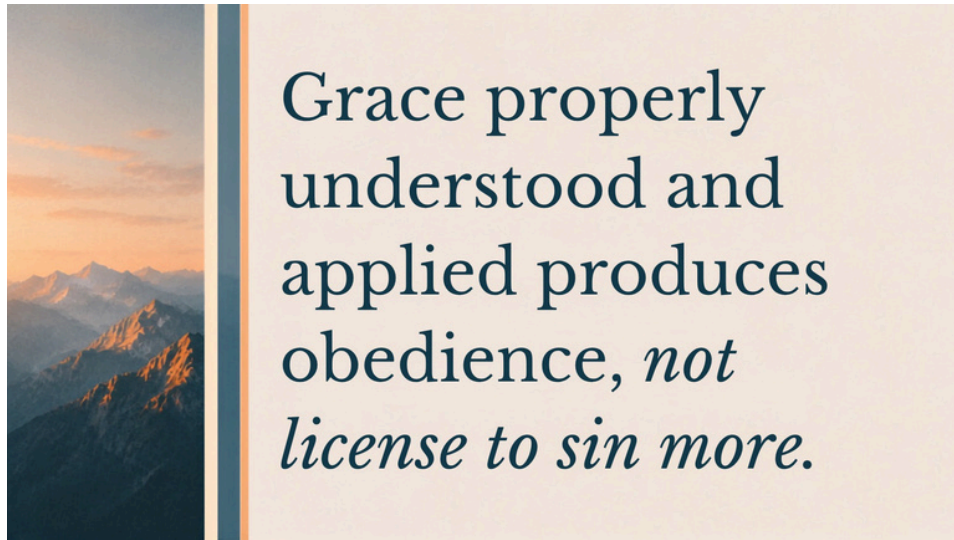
Then he says in the end of **verse 13b**.

Your whole body. Your mind to be used to do right for the kingdom of God, your eyes to do right for the kingdom of God, your hands, your feet, your words to do right for the kingdom of God.

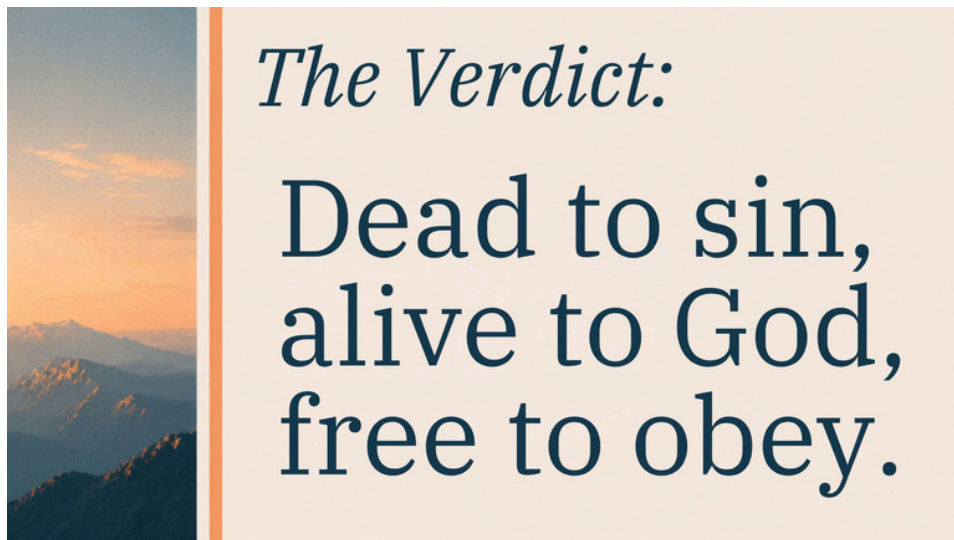
Verse 14 summarizes our entire passage.

And in that freedom from reign of sin and death, because by grace we truly have a change of status, because by grace we truly have been set free, we can live for God.

This is why grace is not a license to sin. Paul's answer to the questions of **verse 1**. Paul's answer is that:



That sunken ship never went back to what it was. Struck, overwhelmed, submerged. That's you. That's me. But for us we symbolically went under with Christ, and we came up – raised – on the other side of



Live like it's true. Because it is.
Live in God's grace for the glory of God. Amen?

BONUS

CONTENT:

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