

## **Death Has No Dominion**

### **Romans 6:1-11**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

God gave us ten commandments as they are enumerated in our Old Testament reading. Examining them, we quickly see that the first three have to do with our relationship to God. Our relationship to all our neighbors is addressed in the other seven commandments.

Immediately following the first commandment, God has a sort of excursus, a further explanation, about His attitude toward these 10 Commandments He gave to us.

“I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments.” (Ex. 20:5–6)

What does this mean?

Martin Luther, in his Small Catechism gives us a great answer. God threatens to punish all who break these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

God takes His commands to us very seriously. He is jealous of our love for Him. He will not tolerate other things coming in the way of our relationship with Him. He wants to be first in our lives! We are to have no other gods, whatever they might be; a supposed god who we think could answer our prayers; or putting our spouse, children, a sports team, or even a recreational activity before God.

We are not to take God’s name in vain. His name should not come out of our mouths for no reason, or in forms of profanity. In other words, we should not use God’s name for anything other than to call on Him in prayer, to offer Him praise or thanksgiving, or to proclaim His name and works to others.

And of course, it goes without saying that we are to keep the Sabbath holy, that is, a day each week devoted to God. Why? So that God might make us holy as we gather in His house. We gather so that He might make us holy to send us out with His name on our lips and in our hearts, so that we might bring glory to Him by loving, that is, serving our neighbor.

This commandment completes the first table of God’s Law, and it leads us directly into His second table. In the second table, God commands how we are to show our love for His by our service to our neighbor.

And if we do not keep these commandments, we can expect God’s punishment. He indeed threatens punishment, including death and eternal torment, to those who break these commandments.

These commandments are not easy, who can do them all? People try to talk their way out of them, “We live in a different world than they did back then, times have changed. We need to get with the program.” You know what, Jesus has a response to these 21<sup>st</sup> Century complaints in our Gospel lesson, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

Nothing in God’s Law has changed. Nothing is different in regard to God’s commands to His creatures, mankind, than when He first gave His Law. Nothing!

But if there was ever a time to change things up, then Jesus could have done so before He physically ascended into heaven. When we examine things, the teachings of Jesus really upset the apple cart in the church of His

day. He healed on the Sabbath, and said things that really riled up people. In fact, the church leaders finally killed Jesus because of His teachings. At least that is what they thought.

So, if some of the rules should have been changed, why didn't Jesus change them? In fact, if you look at what Jesus said about the 10 Commandments, especially what He said the ones mentioned in our Gospel lesson, He did further explain things. But Jesus did not make the commandments easier, He made them tighter. Jesus declared that not just taking someone's physical life was murder, but so was hatred or an unwillingness to forgive our neighbor. He also taught that adultery could be committed in the heart and mind without even touching someone who is not your spouse.

Dear friends, it would be easy to claim that the law is impossible for us to keep, so why try any longer. Only one person was ever able to keep it perfectly, Jesus Christ. That is why He, as true God, took on human flesh in the first place, to keep the law perfectly, that is, to fulfill it – for us – for you. He endured your punishment. He died in your place, suffering the pains of death, the shame of the cross, and the abandonment of His own Father – for you. That was/is God's plan from the very beginning.

That is exactly what Jesus proclaims in our Gospel lesson. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Christ kept them, and died for our failures to keep them. He put to death our sin. This is what Paul is teaching in our text. You are baptized into Christ's death – His death becomes your death, the wages for your sin, paid in full by Christ, so we do not die eternally.

If we have died to sin, what does that mean? Should we continue in sin? Of course not! If we have put something to death, is it still alive?

You are baptized into Christ, into His death – into His resurrection. Christ lives a new life – you live a new life. What is your new life like? It is like Christ's life, free from sin and free from death.

Christ lives in you! Christ lives through you! The Son lives in obedience to His heavenly Father, and as Christ lives in you, your will, as you are in Christ, is also to live in obedience to your heavenly Father.

I know, you think, "But I cannot stop sinning!" Christ has freed you from that slavery. In Christ, you are a new creature, not you will be. You are alive to God in Christ Jesus.

You could run around all day wondering about the law, worrying about it, "Did I keep it? What are the commandments? What am I not supposed to be doing? Have I done it well enough?"

Or, you can live your life in Christ, that is, you live in your baptism.

Death no longer has dominion over you, for you are baptized into Christ. He put sin to death, defeated it, overcame it for you and in you. I rest in Christ! As I rest in Christ, I am refreshed and renewed. I am the beloved of God. As the love of God, that is, Christ Jesus dwells in us, that love flows from us.

If you love your neighbor, you cannot hate them – and certainly cannot take their life. If you love your neighbor – you cannot speak ill of them, in fact, you will desire to speak well of them. If you love your neighbor – you will treat your spouse with kindness, doing all for them in your power to bring them joy.

You and I are free from sin, for sin has been put to death in Christ. Sin and death no longer have dominion over you. You are freed from sin. In daily contrition and repentance. Getting up each morning and recognizing who you are (a sinner) and whose you are (I am in Christ Jesus), you are daily living in your baptism.

You and I have been baptized into Christ, and therefore, we are united to His death. As we continue in the faith of our baptism, that old self is daily crucified in repentance, and that body of sin is made nothing.

The power of sin is death, and death has no dominion over Christ. As death has no dominion over Christ, it has no dominion over you – sin is no more, it has no dominion or power over those who are in Christ Jesus.

Dear friends in Christ, live in your baptism. Eat and drink of Christ that He may dwell in you, and His forgiveness is yours. You are dead to sin, for you are alive in Christ. You are forgiven and redeemed. You have a new life – live it – in Christ, for death has no dominion over you. Amen.