

You're not the person you used to be so you can never handle life like you used to handle it.

November 15, 2009 - Romans 6:1-14

What defines you?

Someone with the screen name "groovy" asked this on a Yahoo blog spot. She adds "and if you have a smart alec answer, don't bother."¹ – Sounds like she was serious! This question generated a variety of responses. Here are some of them.

Tigerpoh - Your background and environment in the early years are the beginnings of what will finally define you . This nurturing and exposure combined with your genetic make up inherited over thousands of years is what builds your character, develops your integrity and gives you that aura and personality. Character, integrity, aura and personality are all things that define a person.

Super critic answers "DNA and a complicated sequence of space-time points."

Platonic pursuit writes "I am composed of three parts. A body and all of its organs made of matter. Secondly, I participate in the

form of the human being. Third, I have a soul that tries to understand and do the good and condemn and avoid the bad.

Iwpoe writes "I, in shaping my own ends, define myself."

Threestud 101 answers "what defines you" with "what ever you want it to be."

Agent/ Y- Young; O- Optimistic; U- Understanding

Jaded - Everything i see, everythin i love and hate, everythin i feel, my past, my flaws, my mistakes, the lessons ive learned, the lessons ive yet to learn...things that im still figurin out..my dreams.... everythin thats in my mind, heart and in my life defines me.

No Real Help - You find the answer within, doing recapitulations and taking inventories of yourself, often. Discarding what is no longer needed.

What defines you? Well, the Bible provides a different answer to the ones we've heard from the blogs. Today, we're going to find out how God's Word clearly defines everyone in this room. When we know who we are, we can better live out what we are. This is important because I believe many people here today live with the

¹ <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061110012204AAK6k0T>

wrong definition of themselves. I think God's Word can correct that with life changing results. I believe God says to Christians here today **You're not the person you used to be; so you can never handle life like you used to handle it.**

Today's Bible passage unpacks this statement for us. It ties together our identity, talks about baptism and explains our part in living out this identity. Does that sound like a lot?

Well, it's normal fare for the New Testament letter of Romans. The Apostle Paul sent this meaty piece to Roman Christians in the first century. He starts by declaring he's not ashamed of the Gospel. Why? It is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. Then Paul explained the need for the Gospel. All humans are under sin, under God's wrath and accountable to Him. There was nothing we could do to cover over our offense and earn right standing before God.

But the Gospel brings good news because the Holy God put forward His own Son as a sacrifice. On the cross, God's poured out the wrath we deserved onto His Son. So anyone who puts their faith in Christ receives the Gospel. God justifies that person – He declares them not guilty forever because of their trust in what Christ did on the

cross. Then Paul went on to explain that this justification is only by faith. Romans 4 showed that God justified Abraham by faith before there was a law.

Then in Romans 5, Paul starts working out the results or impact of justification on our daily lives. In the first part, we learned that God assures us that we'll be okay when we die because we're at peace with God. We saw that God even uses our sufferings today to build endurance, character and hope that He will come through for us on the Last Day. In the second half of chapter 5, we saw Paul go back to the beginning of history to show how through Jesus, people are transferred from spiritual slum living to a sea side inheritance.

But now Paul addresses a huge issue. Hopefully some of you have been thinking about this. In fact, if some of you haven't asked it, then I haven't been teaching this very well. The question goes something like this: since Justification is all by grace why not sin more so God can show more grace. Paul's response to that question leads to this discussion about our identity, what defines us and how we embrace our identity.

In this response we will discover answers to these questions:

Why are we not the people we used to be? How would this identity change affect the way we handle life? What does baptism have to do with it? What's our part in embracing this identity?

Romans 6:1-14

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Paul poses the unspoken question in verse 1. “Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?” “If God shows His grace when we sin, then sinning is good because it gives God the opportunity to show more grace.” Now who would really ask a question like this? Well, some of Paul's readers might have asked it sarcastically. Maybe they believed that the only way to motivate people to live holy lives was by faith AND works. In other words, “yes, you're saved by grace. But you've got to keep God's law and live a holy life to maintain your salvation. But you're not saying that Paul. So why don't we just sin more then?”

But some could seriously be asking the question. Some lived like this concluding God's moral law was no longer a concern. One commentator points out a famous historical figure taught this. He was the Russian monk Gregory Rasputin, the evil genius of the Romanov family in the last years of power. He taught and lived out the doctrine of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He recognized that those who sin greatly require the most forgiveness. So he concluded that a sinner who continues to sin excessively enjoys, each time he repents, more of God's forgiving grace than the ordinary

sinner. Some opponents accused Paul of this. Some of his converts lived like this.

But Paul completely rejects this conclusion. “By no means!” (2) Then he provides the reason – “you shouldn’t sin because that’s what good Christians avoid!” Is that what he writes? No. “We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?” So he doesn’t say “you shouldn’t sin.” He says “you can’t continue in sin because that’s no longer your identity.”

So here’s the answer to the question “what defines you?” The Bible defines someone who is not Christian as **a person living under the reign and rule of sin**. A spiritual slum dweller with a harsh taskmaster, thinking they’re living the good life. But if you’re a Christian the Bible defines you as **joined to Christ**. You no longer live under sin’s reign. You live under Christ’s reign. True Christians wouldn’t dare look for ways to justify continuing to live under sin’s reign.

But how did this fundamental change in our identity take place. **“Why am I not the person I used to be so I can never handle life like I used to handle it?” (Romans 6:1-10) Through God’s call and**

our faith, repentance and baptism, we were joined to Christ. We’re under the reign of Christ.

This joining or union with Christ happened in several significant ways.

We were crucified with Christ. Verse 6 – For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with.

We died with Christ. Verse 3 – Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.

We were buried with Christ – Verse 4 – through baptism into death.

We were raised with Christ. End of verse 4 – Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

So if you’re a Christian here today, the moment you came to Christ in faith, you died to the reign of sin in your life. You came under the rule of Christ and were united to him in crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. You’re not the person you used to be. So you cannot handle life like we used to handle it.

How would this identity change affect the way we handle life?

By “handling life” I mean the way we respond *to* life and *in* life. This change in identity affects our view of money. Think how it might impact the way you spend. If you’re joined to Christ – wherever you go, you’re joined to Jesus. Do you take Jesus with you when you shop?

The fact that we’re joined to Christ affects our relationships. The focus shifts from “What am I getting out of this relationship?” Or “What must I do to maintain the façade of a healthy relationship” to “What would honor Christ in this relationship?”

Elementary, Junior and Senior High School students, the fact you’re joined to Christ and have died to sin should affect the way you handle school. A life under sin’s reign sees dodging, cheating, gossiping, slandering and bullying as acceptable school behavior. A life joined to Christ asks “how would I honor Christ in a class taught by a substitute teacher?” “What must I do to honestly achieve good grades?” What do I have to do with my time away from school to fully embrace the opportunity God has given me in school?

The fact that we’re joined to Christ and dead to sin should affect the way we work. When the boss or manager is away, we no

longer can slough off. We’re not just working for our manager or a pay check. We’re working for the Lord. If we disagree with a decision made by a manager or employee, we can no longer bad mouth behind their back. That wouldn’t honor Christ with whom we’re joined. Instead, we respectfully engage in discussion about the decision while honoring Christ in our thoughts and attitude the whole way through.

The fact we’re joined to Christ and died to sin affects our attitude toward our enemies. We love them and pray for them. The fact we’re joined to Christ should affect our attitude to the worship service. It’s not about me. It’s about what would honor Christ; a sensitive heart to what Christ might say.

It affects our view of death; under sin, death is something to be feared, avoided, never discussed, denied and disguised. Under Christ, death is a painful reality that must be faced squarely. Yet in Christ it is not the end; it is the passage to life eternal with Christ.

Union with Christ affects the way we drive when we’re mindful of Him. It can affect how we view other churches and Christians. I celebrate God’s amazing work of transformation in my

life; 20 years ago, I would never have agreed to have the names of other churches and pastors in our bulletin. I saw them as the competition. God worked in me to show me our competition is the devil. We need to pray for players on our side.

Union with Christ affects our future plans. It's no longer what I want to do with my life. We ask Jesus "what do you want me to do?" The fact we're joined to Christ affects our leisure time choices, DVD's rented and thought life. When we grasp that our union with Christ defines us, it can lead to change in all sorts of areas. But what's all this about baptism?

What does baptism have to do with it?

Verses 3 and 4 again. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

What does this mean and why is it here? It could mean that Paul is simply talking about the symbolic spiritual meaning of baptism. So this wouldn't be talking about actual water baptizing, but

some sort of spiritual baptism into Christ. But that would assume that the Roman Christians would be able to hear Paul's word and immediately conclude "he's not talking about water baptism. He's talking about what water baptism symbolizes." But that does not seem likely. In fact the noun he uses for baptism in verse 4 always refers to water baptism. So I believe he's referring to literal immersion water baptism here, not just some spiritual baptism.

What else could this mean? Well some would argue that this must then mean the act of baptism automatically connects you with Christ. So baptism is the means by which the participant is buried, died and resurrected to join with Christ. So, according to this view, you could not get that union without baptism. Then baptism would be necessary for at the very least, a deeper relationship with Christ and possibly even salvation. But that view would single baptism out as having some separate significance apart from faith. Then the whole argument of Romans would be undercut. Paul would have spent 5 chapters arguing you're justified by faith. Then in chapter 6 he'd say, "but, you have to be baptized to get completely justified."

The answer lies in between these two. Paul sees baptism as part of the entire coming-to-Christ phase of our lives. When we become Christians, several pieces make up that beginning phase: God's call; our faith; repentance; conversion; regeneration and baptism." Paul saw all of these as part of the beginning of the Christian life.

This was deeply personal to Paul because this all happened to him in 3 days. In Acts 9 Paul tells the story. He went from persecutor of the church to meeting Jesus, responding to Jesus' call, repenting of his sins, and baptism in 72 hours. Then he immediately began to proclaim Christ.

Paul ties baptism back into his answer to the question – Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase. Of course not! Through your conversion, repentance, faith and baptism, you died to sin and were joined to Christ.

This leads to a very important question for some of you sitting in this room and us collectively as a congregation. Church, we need to think carefully about our view of baptism. Somehow, we've gotten the notion that people have to be mature in their faith to get baptized.

No, they need to be beginners. If you are an unbaptized Christian here today, why haven't you been baptized? The New Testament does not have a category for an unbaptized Christian. Back then, if you accepted Christ, you were almost immediately baptized. What is holding you back?

I find that many Christians ask the question "why should I get baptized?" But this passage asks "why haven't you been baptized?" It is part of that whole initial process of joining with Christ. It's a command of Christ. It's not some man made rule or ceremonial institution of the church. It's part of the initial phase in becoming a Christian.

Haddon Robinson, my doctorate professor tells the story of his father's immigration to the United States from Ireland in 1911. New immigrants had to renounce their allegiance to the King and swear allegiance to the US. That happened in a half hour ceremony. Yet it changed everything for his father. Now he was a citizen of the US. He gave his allegiance to the government in Washington. In 1914, this man who had just become a citizen was drafted into the American army. He would fight, get wounded and end up in hospital. He didn't

completely lose his Irish way of thinking. He didn't lose his accent. But his fundamental allegiance changed. It happened through that ceremony.

For Christians, the swearing in ceremony to our new king is baptism. It may not seem like much. But it's the initial way you publicly swear allegiance to Christ. God's Gospel comes into us through faith, repentance, confession and baptism. It's the start of why we're not the people we used to be, so we can never handle life like we used to handle it. If you call yourself a Christian and you're not baptized, what's holding you back? If you have been baptized but have not been living for Christ – will you remember your baptism and renew your allegiance to Him today.

How to respond? What's our part in embracing our identity?

(6:11-14)

Paul says remember who you are. No true Christian would say "let's go on sinning so that grace may increase. If you are a true Christian, you've already died to sin. You will still stumble in sin. But you will not be a person who looks for a way to sin.

He shows us out how to live this out in the remainder of this passage.

Verse 11 - Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus. (11) Consider means to take time to ponder and think on that reality. This is no mental gymnastics or positive thinking in attempt to make ourselves be good. It is spending time contemplating the reality that we are dead to sin. Sin no longer rules over us; it no longer is the reigning champ in our lives. We never face a situation where the only way out is sin. Instead, we have the power of the Spirit and the resources of the Lord to say no to sin and yes to honoring Christ. So by faith, we embrace this new identity God has revealed to be true in His Word.

Verse 12 - Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you obey its evil desires. (12) But How? Verse 13 -Don't offer parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but to God as instruments of righteousness. (13) So we embrace our new identity by refusing to offer up our bodies or minds for sinful activity. Instead, we present all of ourselves to God as His for righteousness. We don't try to do this alone. We pray "Lord, give me strength to fight Sin's invitations

today. Lord, I've been holding back this area from you. I've cherished sin in that area. I need to stop. I offer it up to you and invite you to do your changing work. Lord, I haven't been baptized because I thought it was a stuffy church rule. But I realize now it is an integral part of my Christian life. I confess resisting that and will obey your call." We ask our Christian brothers and sisters to pray for us in our areas of struggle.

Christian - You're not enslaved to sin. You have died to it. You now have the Spirit and the resources of God to say no to sin and yes to Christ. Ask other believers to pray for you and hold you up in this.

So now its time to respond.

Respond.

If you don't know Christ, it's never too early to **Receive Christ**. You can receive this freedom from the reign of sin. By trusting Christ in faith, repenting and turning to Christ, you begin the Christian life because of God's Gospel.

If you hesitate because you think you're not good enough for God, remember, none of us was or are good enough. There are no perfect Christians in this room. The major difference between

Christians/Non-Christians is not that Christians have conquered sin and Non-Christians haven't. The mark of a true Christian is they are troubled by their own sin. People apart from Christ are comfortable with it or justify it.

If you receive Christ today, then you must **resolve to get baptized** as soon as possible. You will need to let us know so we can make that available to you. Fill out the response card in front of you.

If you're a Christian but have never been baptized, Christ commands you to be baptized. It's part of joining with Him and embracing your identity in Him. Fill out the response card as well.

Christians, if there is some area of our lives we've been holding back from Christ, maybe some part of our old self that we don't want to be crucified, we need to let that go.

What defines you? Who are you? Someone enslaved and ruled by sin? Or someone dead to sin and raised to new life in Christ?