

One of the things which police departments are often accused of using is “racial profiling.” According to the theory, people of certain racial backgrounds are more prone to certain types of crimes, so all people of that race are looked at with suspicion. Blacks often accuse the police department of stopping them as they are driving just because of the color of their skin. Muslims claim that since 9-11 they are searched more frequently at airports than those of other races. We have been taught not to judge a book by its cover, but there are times when prejudices do take over good, common sense. Obviously, racial profiling is wrong, and should not be done. Instead of looking only at outward appearances, the Lord would rather have us look at the actions of an individual to determine his character. Not what a person looks like, but what a person does is what is important. Jesus stated it in this way, “*By their fruit you will know them.*” In this same way of thinking, Paul speaks to us in the Word of God before us by reminding us that God’s children will just naturally avoid those things which God calls sin, and do those things which are pleasing to God. In other words, CHRISTIANS WILL LIVE A NEW LIFE. 1) We have died to sin, so 2) We are alive to God.

It is very much the truth that no matter how great the sins might be that we have fallen into, Jesus’ grace is even greater, for He died to wash away each and every sin. But this is not to be construed as a license to go out to sin even more. Listen to what Paul says, **Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!** (1) Because of Jesus’ love and forgiveness in saving us, we will never desire to go back to that old, sinful way of life. We are not to say farewell to sin as though we were saying goodbye to an old friend whom we are going to miss very much. That is why so many diets fail, isn’t it? We cannot lose weight because we cannot force ourselves to give up those fattening foods which we should not be eating, but which we truly love to eat.

All too often that is how we view those things which God calls sinful — we feel that we have to give them up because God is forcing us to do so. God forbids us to gossip. God forbids us to use foul language. God demands that we come to His house for worship, and so on. But if we truly understand what it is that Jesus has done for us, we will realize that we simply cannot live in those sins any longer, for they are truly killing our souls eternally. If our heart doctor were to tell us that if we keep eating certain foods, we will be dead in six months, it would be amazing how quickly we would make changes in our diet. What God reveals to us in His holy law works the same way with our souls — when we realize what sin is really doing to us, we will no longer want to do any of those things which God calls sin.

Paul tells us why Christians will live a new life: **We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** (3) Paul takes us all of the way back to our baptism. It was not just a ceremony that our parents did for us. It actually accomplished something in our hearts and souls. We were baptized into Jesus’ death. Our old, sinful self was crucified with Jesus, and died with Him. So now we are dead to sin. When we say that a person is “dead to the world,” we mean

that he is so sound asleep that nothing in this world controls or influences him. No sound is going to wake him up, he is oblivious to everything that is going on around him. That is exactly what happened to us in baptism. We are now dead to this sinful world so that it no longer controls us or influences our actions.

The fact that we died to sin can happen only after Jesus has redeemed us and washed away all of our sin. The desire to refrain from the evil deeds of the sinful nature could be imposed upon us by the law, but as soon as the threats of the law were removed, we would go back to those old, sinful deeds. Only when that sinful nature in us has been crucified with Christ will we have the real desire to do those things which God wants us to be doing. That shows that we are alive to God.

The reason that we have been received as God's children is not because of anything which we have done, but it is entirely because of what Jesus has done for us. His righteousness has been credited to our account. Only then are we fit for the kingdom of God. Listen to how Paul describes it: **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.** (4)

Since we are now dead to sin through Jesus, we have a new outlook on how to live our life, and that is to live without sin. With Jesus in our hearts, we will desire a life of faithful obedience to God's holy will. Jesus has done everything for us, dying for our sins, bringing us to faith, and making us fit for the kingdom of God. Now that all this has been done for us, we will live a new life in Him.

That does not mean that we are not going to be tempted to go back to that life of sin. As long as we remain in this world, those temptations will always be with us. But just being tempted to those old sins does not mean that we are going to give in to them. To be sure, there are going to be times when we do fall back into sin. But when that happens, we will repent, seek forgiveness for that sin, and then strive even harder to avoid that sin in the future.

Because Christians will live a new life in this world, they will be easy to spot. This is not like racial profiling where you look at outward attributes to find God's children. Rather, we shall be able to tell by looking for the words and actions that follow from the realization of all that Jesus has done for us. The amount of change is not going to be the same in every individual, but we will be able to see evidences that we have died to sin and are now alive to God. May each one of us live with that new life of faith within us shining forth for all to see.