

Dear Friends at FPC Merchantville,

Here is this week's Worship Guide. Happy July 4th weekend! We are looking again at Romans 6. We will be open this Sunday 7/5 at 10:00am, however, we urge those whose health is compromised, who are in a vulnerable population, who may have been exposed to Cov-id 19, who have symptoms of Cov-id !9, and/or who are concerned about public gatherings, to please stay home. We are all anxious to get back to normal, however, we are concerned for all of our members and will be taking precautions.

We will be following the guide for the next few Sundays until our transitional Pastor, Laura Donovan starts on July 19th. If you are coming to church, you must wear a mask, use hand sanitizer upon entering the building, and social distance. Bring your own Bible, as pew Bibles and hymnals will be moved. If you stay at home, suggestions for using this guide would be the following:

Gather Worship Materials –

- A Bible – (A study bible may be helpful if you have one)

- A Candle

- This Worship Guide

Optional Materials –

- A Cross or other representations of God's acts of salvation

- Flowers, shells, or other objects of nature

- Art supplies

If you have children

- Children may be permitted to bring a beloved stuffed animal or doll with the explanation that "it's always good to invite a friend to worship"

Decide on the space for your worship.

Prepare Your Heart.

- Set up your selected worship space

- Worship at 10:00am on Sunday morning as if we were in our church sanctuary

- Light your candle as a sign of the Lord's presence

I hope that this guide will help you to feel God's presence in this time of personal worship, and may the Lord continue to bless and keep you.

Please don't forget to mail in your offering, or go online at www.fpcmerchantville.org

In Christian Love and Service,

Kim Tomlin

July 5, 2020

Gathering Around the Word

“The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” John 4:23a

Prelude: Light your candle as a sign of the Lord’s presence. Think of your FPC family and sense the others in the congregation, especially those that you usually sit near. Remember that during this time, we are worshipping together.

Call To Worship

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever!

Song: God Bless America <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XD-aXtcUEOs>

Prayer of Confession:

(Sin and evil are real, and no one is without sin. Naming the evil robs it of power and frees us from the mistaken belief we should, or can, be sinless. Confession and forgiveness in Jesus Christ set us free from sin and guilt, and allow us to live joyfully dependent upon God’s grace. At the ellipsis (...) add your own confession.)

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Hear now and accept our personal confessions....

In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, dear Lord our Redeemer. Amen.

Scripture Readings:

Old Testament: Psalm 145: 8-19

New Testament: Romans 6: 1-7

[United with Christ in Death and Life, Part 3](#)

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- Resource by
John Piper

- Scripture: [Romans 6:1-7](#) Topic: [Baptism & Membership](#)

Relevance to Your Whole Life

Look at the end of verse 4. The meaning of baptism, Paul says, is that something profound has happened to us so that we walk "in newness of life." "Newness of life" – that's everything – not a part of life, all of life. Now verse 5 comes in to begin Paul's explanation of how this newness happens. What's the basis of it – the origin of it? This passage is about how we become a new kind of people in all of life.

Or you can see it again at the end of verse 6: "... so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." That's the goal of these verses. Freedom from sin in all of life. That is why I say that this text is tremendously relevant for everything you do. This is not about a little religious corner of your life. It is about *all* of your life. How you are involved in politics and how you vote. How you watch TV and use your leisure time. How you pursue your business and carry out your vocation. How you dress and eat and spend your money. How you treat your spouse and children and friends and neighbors and colleagues. How you engage in missions. What Paul does in these verses is serve our fight against sin. He wants to help us *not* continue in sin. You recall verses 1-2, "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be!" So he wants to help us *not* continue in sin. He believes that God will take the writing of this letter and make it a means of our triumph over sin – or, to put it positively, our walking in newness of life. He wants to help us be a new kind of people.

He began by showing us that the meaning of baptism is that it points to our death with Christ and our rising to walk in newness of life. It is a dramatic re-

enactment of our burial with Christ and rising with him by the working of God in our lives. You see this in verse 4: "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

Newness of Life

But now verse 5 takes us a step deeper. It explains how it is that we may think of ourselves as "buried with Christ" and how it is that Christ's resurrection guarantees our walking in newness of life. Verse 5 makes explicit the union with Christ that accounts for the way Paul talks about our dying and rising with Christ. He says, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection."

You might think at first that "likeness of his death" refers to baptism.¹ Our going under the water is "like" his being buried. But that idea won't work in the second half of the verse which refers to "the likeness of his resurrection." That would have to refer to baptism as well – as we come up out the water – but notice that this is future tense in verse 5. It hasn't happened yet. "If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, *certainly we shall also be* in the likeness of His resurrection." This is a reference to some future resurrection that is certain because of our union with Christ. So it can't be a reference to baptism, which is past. So the first half of the verse probably is not referring to baptism either – "We have become united with him in the likeness of his death."

So what Paul is saying is that our death with Christ and our future resurrection with Christ are not identical with Christ's death and resurrection, but very much like them. Christ died as a sinless sacrifice for us; our death with him is not

identical to that. And Christ rose as the death-destroying first fruits of a great harvest; our resurrection with him will not be identical to that. Rather our dying and rising are like his, but not identical (compare "likeness" in [Romans 8:3](#)). But the main point of verse 5 is that all of Paul's talk in this chapter about our dying and rising with Christ is owing to a *union with Christ*. Now this is tremendously important. If this is not a common part of your thinking about yourself and your relation to Christ, add this to your mental framework. Paul used this little phrase "in Christ" seventy-three times.² To be united to Christ – to be "in Christ" – is an all-important reality.

Union with Christ

It's so important that I want to give all my attention to it this morning. I long for us to understand and enjoy this great truth about our life and our relation to Christ. If we can grasp what union with Christ means, we will be a very happy and holy people.

Don't miss the utterly crucial words in verse 5: "We have become united with Him." United with him! Here is the great doctrine of union with Christ. Or better: the great reality of union with Christ. Let's linger here and soak our minds in this reality for the rest of our time this morning.

There are several other texts in Paul's writings that show the all-important place of our union with Christ. For example, [1 Corinthians 1:30](#); Paul says, "But by His [God's] doing you are in Christ Jesus [=united to Christ, have union with Christ], who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." God creates the union. "*By God's doing* you are in Christ Jesus."

Literally, "From him you are in Christ Jesus." He creates the union by his grace. We embrace it and experience it by faith ([Galatians 2:20](#)).

The Importance of This Union

But notice the importance of this union with Christ!

If you are in Christ, by God's doing, Christ becomes for you "*wisdom* from God, and *righteousness* and *sanctification*, and *redemption*." All that Christ is for you, he is for you because you are "in him." Because you are *united* to him. Because you have the union with him that Paul is talking about in [Romans 6:5](#).

§ In this union Christ becomes *wisdom* for you and this overcomes your blinding, deadening ignorance.

§ In this union Christ becomes *righteousness* for you and this overcomes your guilt and condemnation.

§ In this union Christ becomes *sanctification* for you and this overcomes your corruption and pollution.

§ In this union Christ becomes *redemption* for you and this overcomes in the end all the miseries and pain and futility that come from sin and guilt – like sickness and death (compare "redemption" in [Romans 8:23](#)).³

Do you want to be free from the blinding effects of spiritual ignorance? Do you want to have the righteousness of Christ credited to your account and be accepted and acquitted and justified by God? Do you want to have the sanctifying power of Christ in your life helping you overcome canceled sin? Do you want to be delivered in the end from misery and death? If so – and I pray that you do – then cherish your union with Christ. Love being united to him. Grow in your grasp of these things. Live in them. Savor them. Carry them with you through the

day. Make them your meditation day and night. Think often on what it means to be united to Christ. What it means that "by God's doing you are in Christ Jesus."

O how many other great texts ring the praises of this great union with Christ! We can go to [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), "[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*." Notice the all-important little phrase at the end of the verse: "in him." "So that we might become the righteousness of God *in Him*." This means that it is by virtue of our union with Christ – our being "in Christ" – that we *become righteous* in the same way Christ *became sin*. He was sinless and God put our sins to his account. We were sinful and God put Christ's righteousness to our account. And he did it because we were "in him."

That verse ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)) underlines the great truth that we have seen in Romans 3-5 – that our justification, our initial being put right with God, is owing to our union with Christ by faith. Paul loves to ascribe our righteous standing with God to our union with Christ. In [Galatians 2:17](#) he says that we "seek to be justified *in Christ*." In [Romans 8:1](#) he says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*." Justified *in Christ!* No condemnation *in Christ!* Nothing is more precious than hearing God say to us personally: No condemnation. Or hearing him pronounce the words over our guilty heads, Justified! If you cherish this verdict and this standing with God, then cherish your union with Christ. Make it part of what you value most in the world.

Key to Understanding Both Justification and Sanctification

But in Romans 6 we are moving from justification in Christ to sanctification in Christ (though we will see next week in verse 7 a very profound connection between the two). In other words, our union with Christ is not only the key to understanding justification – getting right with God by faith alone. Union with Christ is also the key to understanding sanctification – becoming a new kind of people, who don't continue in sin, who are no longer enslaved to sin, but who walk in newness of life.

Next week we will look in more detail at how our union with Christ really works to make us new people. Today I simply want you to see how utterly central this reality is both for getting right with God and becoming new people – for justification and sanctification.

Another place to see how central our union with Christ is for our becoming morally and spiritually new people is in [Ephesians 2:10](#), where Paul says, "For we are His workmanship, created *in Christ* Jesus for good works." This not justification. This is moral transformation. In union with Christ, God has created us as new people. This is another way of talking about dying with Christ and rising to walk in newness of life. In Christ we are new creatures, God's workmanship. And the aim of this reality in Christ is good works – "created in Christ Jesus *for good works*." That is for sanctification.

Paul says it yet another way in [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), "If anyone is *in Christ*, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Notice, there is no doubt about it. If you are in Christ, you ARE a new creature. God has created you as a new creature in your union with Christ Jesus. If you are a believer in Christ Jesus you are new. The old has passed away. New things have come. Which is the same as saying [Romans 6:6](#), "Our old self was crucified

with *Him* . . . so that we would no longer be slaves to sin" – but walk in newness of life. "Old has passed away" = "old self was crucified." "New things have come" = "newness of life."

This is who we are in Christ Jesus – in union with Christ. We are dead to sin. We "became united with Him in the likeness of His death" ([Romans 6:5](#)). Our old man has died. We have risen spiritually to walk in newness of life, and one day we "will be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection." The old has passed away. The new has come. And our vocation in all of life – not just a part of it – is to walk in newness of life. To reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. To *become* in experience what we *are* in Christ.

Believe God About Who He Is and Who You Are in Christ

Which most simply means: believe God when he says what has happened to you and who you are and who he is for you in Christ. Believe him. Trust him, for example, when he says through Paul, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory *in Christ Jesus*" ([Philippians 4:19](#)). Trust him when he says, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which *is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" ([Romans 8:38-39](#)).

To become who we are in Christ is to believe these things. Believe that because you are in Christ all your needs will be met. Believe that because you are in Christ you will never be separated from the unfailing love of God. Believing these things is to be satisfied with all that God is for you in Christ, and to become all that you are in him. Believe him

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Ellipses(...) in prayers indicate a pause for silent prayer.

Satisfy us with your love in the morning, and we will live this day in joy and praise.

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new. Especially we thank you for:

The beauty of your creation....

The new creation in Christ and all gifts of healing and forgiveness...

The sustaining love of family and friends....

The fellowship of faith in your church...

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. Especially we pray for:

Those who govern nations of the world...

The people in countries ravaged by poverty and warfare...

All who work for peace and international harmony...

All who strive to save the earth from destruction...

The church of Jesus Christ in every land...

Those who serve and protect us every day...

The Doctors and Nurses and all medical staff serving us during this pandemic...

Eternal God, your touch makes this world holy. Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendor of creation, and in the beauty of human life. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings, and to experience the joy of life in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord who taught us to pray by saying:

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Benediction: May the Lord bless you, and keep you, and cause His face to shine upon you, now and forever. Have a Blessed Week!