

Romans 6 - Dead to Sin, Alive to God our King

Main question of chapter 6 - "If justification is owing purely to God's grace. What would motivate people to be good? If we're under grace, why not just keep on sinning?"

Paul's answer:

1) Faith unites believers to Jesus in his death and resurrection. (v. 1-11)

Faith in Jesus Unites us to His Death

Faith in Jesus Unites us to His Resurrection

2) Jesus frees us from sin to serve God as King (vv.12-23)

Sin is an evil king who pays out shame and death

Jesus is mighty Savior whose gift is life in his eternal kingdom

Therefore, In Mercy of God's Mercy

1) Consider - "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v.11)

2) Present - "present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness" (v.13)

Romans 6 - Dead to Sin, Alive to God our King

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Hoffman and I'm one of the pastors here. It's a joy to be with you and to listen to the Word of God together. For the past 6 weeks we have been going through the Paul's letter to the church in Rome.

As we've seen, the Christian community there was made up of two main groups - Jewish Christians and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians - **and they were at odds with one another**. Based on their understanding of their Bible, what we call the Old Testament, Jewish Christians thought that the Gentile Christians must adhere to the law of Moses, in addition to their faith in Jesus. This included the Old Covenant regulations about circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance. In their view, Gentiles had to be **all-in** with full Jewishness, or else they would be **out** with God.

On the other side of the relationship, the Gentile Christians had their own issues. Romans saw themselves as the intellectual and cultural elites of the day. To them, Jews were not just second-class citizens; they were not citizens at all. For highborn Romans, following Jesus meant adoption into a family of imperial outcasts. Attending a Christian gathering would mean sitting down at table and sharing a meal with Jews, barbarians, and even slaves! It wasn't just socially awkward, it was scandalous.

Jews, on the other hand, though marginal in Rome's eyes, had their own social ladder. Identifying with Jesus and his new family (that now included unclean Gentiles and those arrogant Romans!) could precipitate their fall from grace within the Jewish community.

These were not merely internal, private matters between them as individuals and God alone. No, they were public and social matters. Following Jesus would cost them. Being "in" with Jesus could very well mean being "out" with the world. So Paul takes pains in this letter to help them sort it out with the gospel. **Their fellowship with one another and the glory of Jesus among the nations were at stake.**

In the first main section of the letter (chapters 1-4), Paul works his way through a detailed argument to show that **justification - God's declaration that a person is right with him - is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone**. This is true for both the Jew and the Gentile.

In second main section of the letter, chapters (5-8), Paul shows how the gospel creates a new covenant family in Jesus Christ. Whereas the words "Jew" and "Gentile" were prominent in chapters 1-4, neither of these are used in chapters 5-8. In light of the gospel, these distinctions and distortions fall away. **All who have been justified by faith are one family now in Christ.**

While we mainly think of the theological dimensions of justification by faith, Paul powerfully demonstrates the social and missional dimensions as well.

- **Socially**, Paul stressed that because *our* right standing with God is by faith alone, so is our brother's. If *I* have peace with God by faith, then so do *you*. Therefore, if God has so welcomed me, I must welcome you also? **Human pride erects barriers.** The gospel of grace brings them down. **Because of this Jew and Gentile had to learn to accept and honor one another as God had accepted and honored them in Jesus.**
- **Missionally**, Paul stressed that because justification is by faith *for all*, **then the gospel must go out to all.** The more we cherish the gospel of grace *for us*, the more we want the gospel of grace to be cherished *by all*. It produces a passion to see God's grace glorified among all peoples.

Having dealt with that big question, Paul now responds in chapter 6 to another big question that he often encountered from his critics. Imagine someone sitting in the back of the synagogue wrestling with Paul's gospel logic - **"Paul, you say that justification is owing purely to God's grace. If that is so, what would motivate people to be good? If we're under grace, why not just keep on sinning?"** This is the question of chapter 6.

As we're going to see today, Paul answers his critics by reframing the issue in two ways:

1. **Faith unites believers to Jesus in his death and resurrection. (vv. 1-11)**
2. **Jesus frees us from sin to serve God as King (vv.12-23)**

Let's take a look, beginning in chapter 6, verse 1-11.

Body

Faith unites believers to Jesus in his death and resurrection. (v. 1-11)

1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death? 4**We were buried therefore with him** by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5For if **we have been united with him** in a death like his, we shall certainly be **united with him** in a resurrection like his. 6We know that our old self^a was **crucified with him** in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

7For one who has died has been set free^b from sin. 8Now if we have **died with Christ**, we believe that we will also **live with him**. 9We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Contrary to the view that grace is **impotent against sin and powerless to motivate righteousness**, Paul demonstrates that **grace brings us into a power that has shaken both the heavens and the earth**. For faith brings the believer into **a living union with Jesus Christ himself**. **The power of that union deals a death blow to sin and raises the sinner to life**.

Notice the language of union. Twice in v. 5, Paul says: **we have been united with him**. In v.3, he uses the metaphor of baptism saying that we've **baptized into Christ Jesus**. In he says that we've been **crucified with him (v.6), died with with (v.8) buried with him, raised with him (v.4), and live with him (v.8)**.

Faith in Jesus Unites us to His Death

When Adam sinned, Satan seemed to get the upper hand and when he fell, all humanity fell with him. **There was a union of the human race with Adam in his fall into sin**. But Satan's seeming victory was only temporary, **because after Adam came another** - one who passed the test that Adam failed, one whose character was unblemished and whose motives undefiled, one obeyed all the way, in every thought, in every word, in every deed, in every moment, in every situation, every time, all the way to death, the death of the cross. That obedience unto the cross was for Satan a crushing defeat. **The cross of Jesus declares the victory of God!**

The cross, therefore, marks the end of the old age of Adam **dominated** by Satan, sin, and death. For Jesus Christ bore all the guilt, shame, punishment, and power of sin and took it right into the grave.

When someone turns from sin to Christ, they are brought **into union with his death, which is symbolized by going down into the waters of baptism.** Verse 3, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...” **By faith we are united to a death so final and complete that it need not and cannot be repeated.** “For the death he died he died to sin once for all” (v.10). Therefore, **baptism declares the reality faith lays hold of** - that the old Adam-style way of life **for the Christian is over:**

the life of deciding for ourselves what is good and evil, the life of autonomy from God, the life of lusting after self-glory, the life of chasing after things that cannot satisfy, the life of using others for our own benefit, the life of looking down on others and excluding those who don't belong in our social circles, the life of self-justification and blameshifting, the life of selfishness and pride, the life that refuses to admit wrong, the wasting of our life on frivolous worldly pleasures, the life of fear, insecurity, shame, guilt...

By going down into the waters of baptism, we declare that that life is now OVER. We are dead to it, as dead as Jesus lay dead in the tomb. Our faith has spiritually united us to Jesus in his death. *So, Paul responds in v. 2, come now, tell me, let us reason together, “how can we who died to sin still live in it?”*

Faith in Jesus Unites us to His Resurrection

Though this should be enough to silence his critics, it's only half of Paul's answer. He doesn't leave his argument in the grave. Faith in Jesus not only unites us to his death, but also to his resurrection.

V. 4 - **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

You see, together with the cross, the resurrection stands at the center of the Christian faith. There is no Christian faith without it. Without the resurrection, there is only death. There is no escape.

No kind of political system, no amount of economic prosperity, no number scientific breakthroughs, no degree of spirituality or moral uprightness, can deliver the world from its evils and misery. Even if we could marshal all that humanity has ever had or will have in knowledge, power, and goodness and aim it at the problem of sin, it would only be shame and folly.

In the former Soviet Union, a committed disciple of Communism once gave a speech to an enormous crowd. He mocked the Christian faith, saying that it was all fantasy. It was not Jesus, but the program of Marx and Lenin that was destined to bring history to its appointed purpose. He was eloquent and withering in his scorn for Christianity. When he finished, a Russian Orthodox priest asked if he could say just two words in reply. The priest shouted, "Khristos voskres!" "Christ is risen!" Having learned it from childhood, the crowd roared back the reply "He is risen indeed!"

The cry of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead! This is no mere life philosophy or spiritual therapy. Jesus has risen from the dead and lays claim to the allegiance of that nations. In the resurrection of Jesus, a new world has dawned. Whereas the cross marked **the end of the old age** dominated by sin and death, the resurrection **marks the beginning of the new**, the age of the life to come when God rules and restores the world by his Spirit. The night of evil is over. Jesus is the one who will bring history to its appointed end. The light of God will once again fill the whole earth.

By faith, **that light and power** has come into our hearts. We are no longer dead in sin, but are alive to God! This is not merely a state of mind or inspirational idea designed to motivate us - it is a fact, a fact as real as the cross and as permanent as the empty tomb. It may not feel like it at times. We may not act like it at times. *But make no mistake.* **Christians have been united by faith to the resurrected Lord Jesus himself!**

And this our spiritual resurrection was enacted by the Holy Spirit in power - the same power that raised Christ from the dead. The Spirit brings that kind of power - stone-rolling, death defeating, Satan crushing, darkness conquering power, the kind of power **that can say no to sin and yes to God has come into your life.**

Coming up out of the waters of baptism declares that we have risen to the newness of life in Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit. **Faith brings the believer into a real union with Jesus in his death and resurrection. Baptism proclaims this faith and this union.**

So, in response to his critics, Paul can say again, “Come now, tell me: Grace that unites us to a death so final and a resurrection so powerful, how could it possibly promote a life of sin?”

Jesus frees us from sin to serve God as King (vv.12-23)

Again, he could quit there, but Paul continues. He wants to put the nail in the coffin of cheap grace. He moves from baptism to kingship. **Jesus not only brings us from death to life, he frees us from sin to serve God as king.**

12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. **13**Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. **14**For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

15What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! **16**Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,⁶ you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

17But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become **obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, **18**and, having been set free from sin, have become **slaves of righteousness**. **19**I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as **slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness**, so now present your members as **slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**.

20For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness. **21**But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are **now ashamed? For the end of those things is death**. **22**But now that you have been set free from sin and have become **slaves of God**, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. **23**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin is an evil king who pays out shame and death

Notice the royal language - words like **reign, dominion, obedience**. In this passage, Paul portrays **sin as an evil king who pays out shame and death**.

Notice the nature of sin's reign. It is one of oppression & servitude - "make you obey passions" v.12. Condemnation - "under law" v.15. Slaves to Impurity & lawlessness v.19. Slaves of sin that leads to shame v.20-21. Wage of sin is death v.23.

Paul's allusion to Israel's exodus from Egypt would not have been lost on those familiar with Israel's story. Sin is like the ultimate Pharaoh - enslaving, oppressing, abusing, distorting, polluting, shaming, condemning, killing.

Can you image what it was like for the children of Israel? 400 years of slavery. 20 generations of increasing abuse, servitude, and misery. They must have wondered if their cries simply faded into the dark night of hopelessness. **Is God even there? If so, does he care?**

Jesus is mighty Savior whose gift is life in his eternal kingdom

If the sending of Moses was God's resounding yes at that time for Israel, how much more did the sending of Jesus declare to all nations that "God is there and oh how cares!" He has heard every cry, grieved every injustice, and with a flood of compassion sent forth his beloved Son.

What he did for Israel, he has now done for the whole world! Just as Pharaoh embodied the reign of sin, Moses pointed to the ultimate Deliverer to come. **Jesus is a mighty Savior whose gift is life in his eternal kingdom.** Just as Pharaoh's oppression sank to the bottom of the Red Sea, sin's tyranny over us sinks in the waters of baptism. We're now free to live with God and for God on the other side. What is life like on the other side? What is the nature of God's reign?

Look at Paul's vocabulary. Righteousness v.13. "under grace" v.15. "obedience from the heart" v.17. Slaves to Righteousness leading to sanctification v.19. Free gift of God eternal life v.23.

Slavery

Paul's language here was purposefully jarring for them - "slavery to God" and "slaves to righteousness." He meant to upend both the Jewish and Greco-Roman views of honor and shame. Worldly honor is shameful, but slavery to God is an honor, for he alone is the true king.

Paul's language here is jarring for us also, but in a different way. The Spirit uses it to upend our notions of freedom. Our culture more and more defines freedom as personal autonomy - we

are conditioned to think we are beholden to no one but ourselves, not even God. **But freedom from God is slavery to sin.** And as we have seen, sin is a cruel master. It pays out shame and death.

By contrast, slavery to God is true freedom and it leads to life and peace. How so? Obedience leads to righteousness, which leads to sanctification, which leads to eternal life. These are big words. What do they mean practically?

God is the King who rules by his love. His law is the law of love. **Obedience** is about obeying his royal law by loving others. **Righteousness** is about right relationships, with God and others. By obeying God's royal law of love, we participate with God in putting right what sin has put wrong in our relationships. **Sanctification** is about becoming more like Jesus, who displayed his love most clearly on the cross. So as we walk the road of obedience to God's law of love, we find that it is the way of the cross, the way of laying down our lives for others.

Eternal life

What happens when you fill a friendship, or a marriage, or a family, or a church, or a city, or an entire world with people who live like that? Heaven on earth! And this is the meaning of **eternal life**. It is the life of God's eternal kingdom. It is the end to which he is taking all of history. It is his vision of "the good life" when he restores all creation.

Christians do not belong to the yesterday of sin and death, but to the tomorrow of life under the loving reign of God. We are those who walk now in the newness and power of that life to come.

So one last time, Paul can say, "Come now, tell me, you who think grace is cheap and impotent - how can we who've been set free from sin's tyranny and who have tasted the joy of life with God as King, how could we ever go back?"

Conclusion: In Mercy of God's Mercy

Throughout this series in Romans, we have been using the phrase “*in view of God's mercy*” as not just an organizing theme, but a call for unequivocal response. **The gospel must not live only in our heads, but it must take over our hearts and motivate concrete action in our lives.**

So in view of God's mercy that

1. unites us to Jesus' death and resurrection
2. frees us from sin to serve God as King,

I want to leave us with the only two imperatives Paul gives in this passage: **consider & present.**

1) *Consider* - “*Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*” (v.11)

This word “consider” is the same word Paul uses when he says in 4:3, “*Abraham believed God, and it was considered/counted to him as righteousness.*” It means to reckon or count something as fact, even though it may not appear to be so.

Just as we must see Jesus with the eyes of faith, so must we view ourselves and our fellow Christians. **We must learn to trust not in what we may feel, but in what God has declared** - “You, my child, were dead in sin, but now are alive in Christ!” We have to count ourselves *and* one another the way that God counts us - dead to sin and alive to him.

We do not belong to the yesterday of sin and death, but to God's tomorrow of glory, power, and life. The dross of our sin is melting away, but the refined gold of our Christ-likeness will shine forever in the age to come. We have to see ourselves and our fellow Christians in this light.

So when sin comes calling, when we feel ourselves being lured away by temptation, when we've been wronged by another Christian, when suffering makes us long for the old country, we must learn to say, **“No! In Christ, I am dead to sin! Sin is no longer my master! Be gone!”**

2) *Present* - “present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness” (v.13)

To present means to offer ourselves to God and his service. It means to place **all that we have and all that we are in hands**, to fully consecrate ourselves to his will and service. It means to say, “O God, I am yours.”

In line with the main burden of Paul’s letter to the Romans, we are to present ourselves to God to promote the **unity and mission of the church. Unity and mission are not unrelated issues for Paul.** Divisions in the Christian community cast a shadow over the gospel in an already dark world. In stark contrast, Christian unity exalts the gospel and extends its witness to the ends of the earth.

So using whatever means God has placed in our disposal, we are to present ourselves to God so that he may use us build up the church and glorify his Son among all nations.

I want to close by reading a hymn by Frances Havergal who wrote this hymn in 1874. Entitled *Take My Life and Let it Be*, it captures the heartbeat of one who has been united to Jesus Christ. Why can we not not going on sinning? **Because the Spirit of Christ produces in our hearts songs like this one:**

Take my life and let it be	consecrated to Thee
Take my moments and my days,	let them flow in ceaseless praise
Take my hands and let them move	at the impulse of Thy love
Take my feet and let them be	swift and beautiful for Thee
Take my voice and let me sing	always, only for my King
Take my lips and let them be	filled with messages from Thee
Take my silver and my gold,	not a mite would I withhold
Take my intellect and use	every power as You choose
Take my will and make it Thine,	it shall be no longer mine
Take my heart, it is Thine own,	it shall be Thy royal throne
Take my love, my Lord I pour,	at Your feet, it's treasure store
Take myself and I will be	ever, only, all for Thee

Let us pray.