

Union with Christ and the Crucifixion of Sin: Part 2

Romans 6:5-11

Intro: A Hole in Our Holiness

Last time we were together in Romans, we started to answer the question Paul raises in **[v1]**.

He raises that question because, in ch5 he emphasized the absolute freeness of God's grace in Christ. "The more there is sin, the more God shows grace!" And so, naturally, we ask, "Shouldn't we then just continue in sin?" And the answer Paul gives is in **[v2a, "By no means"]** which is the strongest form of negation in the Greek language. He cannot say, "No!" any stronger.

Paul abhors the thought that a Christian is free to pursue sin simply because salvation is free. He abhors the notion that you don't have to obey God, since obeying God is not what gets you into heaven. He abhors the idea that holiness is optional, since we will not be judged on the basis of OUR holiness, but on the basis of our faith in Jesus' holiness.

This is an issue that the church has had to deal with from the time of Paul to the present day. In the 1980's there was a controversy called "The Lordship Salvation"

debate. Some argued that it didn't *ultimately* matter whether a person submitted his life to the LORDSHIP of Jesus, so long as that person trusted in Jesus as Savior. Like, "I'll trust that he died for my sins and secure a spot for me in heaven, but that's not gonna change the way I live!" Can you see why that's a problem? So many people living like the devil, think they're on their way to heaven because, by golly, they believe in Jesus! (And by belief, they mean they mentally assenting to some facts.)

And that same mindset still exists today, but it takes different forms. Today, in many circles, there seems to be an aversion the pursuit of holiness because people are reacting to the legalistic tendencies of previous generations. For example, there was a movement in the late 90's called the purity movement. It was a push for young people to commit to sexual purity until marriage... which is good!

The problem was that many of the leading voices in the movement implemented rules that went beyond what Scripture teaches that applied to EVERYONE—like, "You shouldn't kiss your significant other until your wedding day." What started off as perhaps a way of making a first kiss more meaningful, evolved and turned into law for all dating couples.

And so, what ended up happening (as is what often happens when people go beyond what Scripture teaches) is that, others reacted by taking things to the other extreme. And where we are today is at the slightest mentioned of the importance of obeying God and pursuing holiness and right living, many quickly cry “Legalism! To say that I don’t have the freedom to engage in this or that activity is LEGALISTIC!”

That’s a problem...BECAUSE the Bible *does* call us to obedience and pursuit of holiness, NOT because obeying God earns us right standing with him and entrance into heaven. Far from it! Rather, it’s because the person who has actually trusted in Jesus alone IS NOT THE SAME PERSON! They’ve changed! The gospel changes us! It doesn’t give us the freedom TO sin; it gives us the freedom NOT to sin.

That’s really important to take in, BECAUSE downplaying obedience and good works can be a danger for churches like us. Do you know why? When the emphasis of a church is on the centrality of the free gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, there is a danger that some might then conclude, “Ok, my good works don’t matter *in any sense*. So, pursuing holiness is optional.” Kevin DeYoung said, “There is a gap between our love for the

gospel and our love for godliness. This must change. It's not pietism, legalism, or fundamentalism to take holiness seriously. It's the way of all those who have been called to a holy calling by a holy God." (DeYoung, *Hole in Our Holiness*, 21)

In Romans 6:1-11, Paul destroys that non-Lordship, aversion-to-obedience mindset. And he destroys it WITH the gospel...BECAUSE the gospel doesn't give us freedom TO sin; the gospel frees us NOT to sin.

Believers in Jesus have been united to Jesus in his death and resurrection. Therefore, it is unthinkable that we would willingly and freely continue in sin. That is the unifying point of 6:1-11. Last time we were together, we considered 3 reasons why we should not continue in sin that grace may abound:

- Reason #1: We died to sin. **[v2]**
- Reason #2: We were united to Jesus' death. **[v3]**
- Reason #3: We were united to Jesus' resurrection. **[v4]**

In the rest of the passage, Paul provides 3 more reasons why we should NOT continue in sin so that grace may abound. And then he draws a conclusion that, if you implement it in your life, it will change your life.

Reason #4: We should not continue in sin because...
There's an unbreakable link between our union with Jesus in his death and our union in his resurrection. You cannot separate your union with Christ in his death FROM your union with him in his resurrection. [v5]

The way this sentence is structured is meant to draw out the ***certainty*** between these two realities. If you have been united with Jesus in his death, then you WILL BE untied with him in his resurrection.

Remember, Paul is elaborating upon this doctrine of our UNION with Christ. What happened to him physically applies to us spiritually. He died physically on the cross, and because we're connected to him (he represents us), we died with him spiritually. What does that mean? Let's wait until the next point to flesh out the concept of what it means that we died with him.

But in v5, we need to zero in on the driving point he's making. If you died with him, YOU WILL be raised with him. You can't separate the two. Now, what kind of *resurrection* does Paul have in mind in here? You WILL be raised with him! What's that mean?

He could be referring to the *future physical resurrection* we will experience when Christ returns. After we die, when Jesus returns, our bodies will be resurrected, and we will live forever with Jesus in the new creation. He could be talking about that.

OR he could be referring to the *spiritual resurrection* that happened when we became a Christian—when God made us alive in our hearts so that we now have the ability to walk in obedience to him. It could be referring to that.

Which do you think it is? Future physical or present spiritual? And I think the answer is: BOTH. In the theology of Paul, the future resurrection has broken into the present. What we experience now *spiritually*, we will experience later *physically* because what we will experience later *physically* has broken in now *spiritually*.

BUT I do think there's special emphasis on the *here and now*. Think about what Paul's been arguing: "Should we (NOW) continue in sin that grace may abound? Definitely not. Why? Because you're alive. You're a new person! And there is an inseparable link between your spiritual death with Christ and your spiritual resurrection with him."

If you died with him, then you were raised with him. No one can say, “Jesus died for me, I’m trusting in that, but now I’m gonna indulge myself in the same sinful lifestyle that I did before I was a Christian.” It doesn’t work like that! If you’ve died with him, then you’ve been raised with him. That’s reason #4.

Reason #5: We should not continue in sin because...

Our old, slave-to-sin self was crucified and now we’re

free. [v6] There is so much rich language here that, frankly, all week, I’ve struggled to figure out how to best convey it. I feel like my measly attempt at accurately get across just how glorious the words are in v6 and how impactful they should be on your life...is impossible. But we’re gonna try, and I pray the Spirit takes this inadequate attempt, and shows you the powerful treasure that’s here, and changes you radically.

Our old, slave to sin self was crucified and now we’re free.

Every phrase in that summary sentence is packed with glorious truth. Let’s unpack it, beginning with “our old self”—What’s that referring to? Do you see a footnote next to the word “self”? Trace it to the bottom and it says, “Greek, *man*.” “Our old MAN was crucified.” In light of what Paul has been arguing in all of ch5, what does

that term conjure up: “old man”? Remember, the comparison Paul has been making between two MEN—two representatives of humanity—Adam and Christ. Who’s the old man? ADAM. And Christ is the NEW MAN.

So when Paul says, “Our OLD MAN was crucified,” he’s talking about the person we used to be IN ADAM—who we were when we were represented by Adam...THAT person, that man/human WAS CRUCIFIED. That’s strong language.

Crucifixion was the most horrific kind of death imaginable in Paul’s day. He is using such graphic imagery on purpose. When you think about who you were before you were a Christian, you should picture that person nailed to a cross, DEAD. Why? Because that’s how Jesus died, and our old man died with him!

You ever wonder why Jesus had to die by crucifixion? Why didn’t he die by being shot with an arrow or being hanged? Why death by crucifixion as the payment for our sins? One reason is this: It reminds us, in a vivid way, what happened to our old self in Adam. That man died the most excruciating death, and therefore, that man is gone.

I think that's the point of the next phrase Paul uses in **[v6, "body of sin might be brought to nothing"]** "The body of sin" is kind of an odd term but it's apparent what it means: it's talking about who you were in Adam. The person/body that you were, was inhabited by sin. And that person was...WHAT? What's the language he uses? **[v6, "brought to nothing"]**

That could be translated "abolished" or "destroyed." It was crucified and destroyed. For what purpose? **[v6, "so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin"]**

Which implies, who you used to be WAS a slave to sin, right? Your old self was a slave, and your master was sin. But that old, slave-to-sin self, was crucified/ destroyed. And therefore, you are no longer a slave. Which means...what? And he we come to the freedom language in **[v7]**.

If you're not a slave, then your free. *Do you hear that, struggling Christian? Do you hear that, weary believer who still feels like sin has mastery over you? IT DOES NOT! YOU ARE FREE!*

Interestingly, the word for “set free” (in v7) is the same word in the original language for “justified”. So, it literally reads, “You were justified from sin.” To be justified is the word that means you are declared right with God. Why, then, is it translate it “set free”?

There’s a reason. V7 is connected to v6—your old self was crucified, the body of sin destroyed, so that you would no longer be *enslaved*. But how does that become a reality? BECAUSE those who have died with Christ have been *justified* from their sin. If you are united to Jesus in his death, you stand righteous before God, and by implication, you are free! To be justified before God necessarily entails freedom from sin because God has declared you not guilty. Therefore, if that’s his declaration of you, then the identity of slave no longer holds. You are not a slave...you are free!

And the whole point of the Christian life is to live out that freedom. Knowing, you’re not who you used to be! You’re not enslaved, you’re free. You’re not your old self—he experienced death by crucifixion—you’re new.

I remember when I was in college and a fight was about between two Christians. One guy flipped a lid. Something the other guy said just triggered a reaction and he went

off. People were trying to hold him back and no amount of yelling at him to calm down helped....UNTIL another Christian got in his face and said, "You're acting like your old self! This is not you! This is your old self!" That's when he started to calm down. He realized he was acting contrary to who he now is. Thankfully, the two brothers were reconciled.

This is key. The Christian life is simply living out the truth that *our old, slave-to-sin self was crucified and now we're free.*

Reason #6: We shouldn't continue in sin because... **We are *forever* alive to God. We will *never* go back to our old self.** There is a permanency that comes in our union with Christ, and it is a strong and compelling motivator to resist sin now. **[v8]**

That doesn't seem to say anything new. Paul's just reiterating what he's already said a bunch of times: we've been united to Jesus in his death and resurrection. But he reminds us of THAT reality because he goes onto say something new in light of that. He presses into another implication of our union with Christ. **[v9]**

What is that communicating? The resurrection of Christ broke the power that death had over him. And therefore, he cannot die again because death no longer has...

WHAT? *Dominion* over him. That's the verb form of MASTER. Death no longer has MASTERY over him... because HE MASTERED death when he rose from the dead. And therefore, he won't die again. Notice how he elaborates on the permanency of this reality. [v10]

He died "once for all." What does that phrase communicate? It's one word in the original language, and the Greek dictionary defines it like this: "taking place once and to the exclusion of any further occurrence." "Once for all." That communicates *finality, irreversibility*, a onetime event never to be repeated. Jesus is NOT gonna die again. He IS gonna remain alive forever.

And he is right now. *Do you know that? Do you know that about Jesus? He really is alive right now, in heaven, reigning and ruling. The one we worship is so very different than every other religious leader. They all died and stayed dead. Jesus died and rose from the dead, never to die again.*

Ok, that's great. What does that have to do with us? Why is Paul describing the irreversibility and finality and

once-for-all reality of the resurrection of Jesus? Here's why: WE have been UNITED to him in his death and resurrection. What's true of him is true of us. Our old self remains dead, and our new self remains alive forever. Christ will never die again, so neither will we.

Listen Christian...that means, you will NEVER go back to our old self. You will *forever* be alive to God. Do you get this? Your new self is not a temporary gig. Becoming a Christian is not a fleeting fad. You don't have to worry about whether you'll become *again* the person you used to be.

Now, no doubt, we can still act like that person who was crucified and destroyed and died with Christ. We act like that person every time we sin. And that's what makes sin so awful—we're acting in contradiction to who we now are!

This is why, when you feel tempted towards *anger* or *self-pity* or *anxiety* or *lust* or *discontentment* or *self-protection* or *self-exaltation* or *isolation* or *envy* or *jealousy*...when you feel yourself being drawn to such sins, you know that your old, slave-to-sin self is trying to come up out of the grave and act like he's still alive and in charge. And you need to put him in his place! "Hold up!

What are you doing here? You do not belong here! You're dead! You're destroyed! So go back to the grave where you belong." THAT is the fight against sin!

And that is how Paul concludes this passage. In light of these six reasons why we should not continue in sin so grace may abound, what must we conclude? **[v11]**

Conclusion: Know Who You Are!

What's he saying? We can summarize it like this: *Know who you are.* "Consider" who you are: Dead to sin and alive to God.

Do you know what that word "consider" is? It's the same word Paul uses to describe what God *does* when he justifies us. He RECKONS righteousness to us. That's what the word "consider" is in the original language: RECKON." Remember what Paul said in ch4, "...to the one who...believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is *counted/reckoned* as righteousness."

God "counts/reckons" (or we could say, he "considers") you righteous before him because of Jesus's righteousness imputed to you! Or, to use the language of Romans 6: God reckons/counts/considers you DEAD to

sin and ALIVE to him! That's how he considers/sees you now because of your connection to Jesus.

So, do you realize what Paul is commanding us in [6:11, **“consider yourselves”**]? In other words, “You need to take God's view of you. You *reckon yourself* dead to sin and alive to God BECAUSE God has already reckoned that of you! Take his view!” That's what you're supposed to DO. *Consider* this. That's what the command is!

I'm not sure if you know, but that command in v11 is the first command/imperative in the book of Romans. Paul hasn't yet once given an explicit command: “DO this” or “DO that.” The first six chapters have all been about what HAS been done and what IS. We ARE sinners deserving of the wrath of a just and holy God. But in his kindness, God HAS sent his Son who DID pay the penalty for sinners like us. And through faith in him, we ARE united to him, such that, what is true of him becomes true of us: WE DIED to sin, and we ARE alive to God.

Therefore, CONSIDER that! *Believe* that! The first command in the book of Romans is NOT a command to...

- Stop sinning.
- Try to be a better version of yourself.
- Turn over a new leaf.

- Put more effort into your fight against sin.

The first command in the book of Romans (that has taken six chapters to get to) is simply to CONSIDER ...consider who you now are. You are dead TO sin and you are alive TO God.

And listen, Christian, this is the command you need to obey in your ongoing fight against sin. The FIRST command you need to obey is NOT...

- Stop looking at porn.
- Stop yelling at your kids.
- Stop being lazy.
- Stop being so critical of people around you.
- Stop prioritizing TV over your Bible or engaging with your family.
- Stop consuming yourself in your career to the neglect of church involvement.
- Stop wallowing in self-pity and self-focus.
- Stop comparing yourself to others so much.

Now, I know you know every one of those things needs to stop! In no way am I minimizing the need to stop doing these things. God cares about your obedience! It is not optional!

The question is NOT *whether* we should obey God and pursue holiness. Rather, the question is HOW do I obey

God? Do I pull myself up by my own bootstraps? Do I just muster up enough will power and try really, really, really hard? Certainly, there is effort involved. Holiness is hard work.

BUT the FIRST thing you DO is *not* to WORK. The first thing you is to BELIEVE...who you are! That's where you'll get your strength from. If you don't know who you are, then you have no hope to fight sin.

*So many of us live the Christian life like we're slaves who work for a king, when in reality we're sons/daughters of the king. Imagine if a son of a king THINKS he is a slave of the king...how's he gonna live his life? Not in freedom. But in bondage. The problem is NOT that he ISN'T free. The problem is that he doesn't **know** he IS free.*

Oh Kinney...church whom I love very much...I'm telling you: Consider this. Believe this. And watch your life be radically changed.