

Romans 6:1-14: How Grace Promotes Godliness

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[0 : 0 0] found on page 917 of the red bibles provided for you in the pews and at this time all children up to age fifth grade are dismissed for their classes where teachers will meet them right there in the back once again our scripture reading is from romans chapter 6 verses 1 through 14 please stand for the reading of god's word what shall we say then are we to continue in sin that grace may abound by no means how can we who die to sin still live in it 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 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 we know that our old self 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 for one who has died has been set free from sin now if we have died with christ we believe that we also will live with him we know that christ being raised from the dead will never die again death no longer has dominion over him for the death he died he died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives to god so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to god in christ jesus let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions 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 for sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace this is the word of the lord you can be seated people who know me well know that i have a deep aversion for nearly anything animal in fact i have been known to distance myself intentionally from this part of god's created order somewhat i'm sure due to allergies but also by way of my natural internal temperament let me put it simply animals don't like me and i don't much like them and i suppose this strain can be applied to horses as well i will never forget the time that i was riding on one of those four cleated creatures in upstate wisconsin many years ago here i was perched atop riding trotting quite nicely through the wooded forest trail with its occasional branches hanging overhead nicely that is until that animal intellect something which i come to see and know quite well kicked in and the horse knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that i was both inexperienced and afraid and so it decided to cure me of all horse riding by speeding off at an uncontrollable gallop nearly hanging me on limbs like absalom long ago from personal experience i can tell you this oh city dweller reigning in a runaway horse is no easy task

in point of fact this need to reign something in is precisely how many people felt about the apostle paul and his newfound gospel of grace especially jewish leaders according to luke's account detractors began to emerge from the woods as soon as paul began to run with his gospel so by the time that the letter to the romans comes into play there are already scores of people surrounding the mediterranean rim who are taking issue with paul and in particular that super abounding grace we heard about last week in chapter 5 and verse 20 you might remember pastor jackson's words show me your sin i'll show you his grace show me more sin i'll show you more grace i said isn't that wonderful pastor jay you get the sermon on grace and abounding grace and super abounding grace and then comes chapter 6 where paul says well wait a minute that doesn't mean you can do whatever you want and that was the fear of those in paul's day you remember back in chapter 3 verse 8 we've caught our first glimpse of paul's opponents and he pointed them out to us with these words quote why not do evil that good may come as some people slanderously charge us with saying in other words they're making paul's gospel to sound as though grace abounds and people are able to live as they please these detractors raise their heads in other pauline text as well if you're familiar with the bible simply look at the galatian or corinthian correspondence and it will confirm that as fast as paul could spread his grace quote apart from law others were running equally hard on steeds of their own in an effort to suppress him in a nutshell they charged that preaching a gospel grounded in the all abounding grace of god apart from law would in practice create havoc in an increasingly ungovernable world paul's gospel of grace unchecked was sure to be an unbridled runaway carrying people headlong into licentiousness disorder and sin to put it differently they were convinced that christianity should not do away with the inherent predictability and the sense of protection that law affords to put it simply they felt that ethics without law to be an impossibility to put it bluntly some people flat out did not like paul and let's be clear he didn't care all that much for them either undoubtedly this charge arrives in rome long before paul's letter does and so even in writing his gospel of grace in an effort to engender their support in the knowledge

of his journeys which would go beyond them into Spain this issue within his gospel message would have to be addressed in a very clear in a very convincing way thus our text and it opens with Paul uh fiercely rejecting the runaway charge that's what he does in verses one and two what shall we say then are we to continue in sin that grace may abound by no means how can we who died to sin still live in it that's his opening he rejects the runaway charge his opponents if you look at those uh questions that were asked and we now by know in this letter that this uh this question and answer style much the way Shirley Jackson did today in her word on Stewardship is very Pauline and so when you read Paul's questions here you're actually hearing the voice of those who felt his gospel had gone a different way and so with those words they are in a sense pulling up hard in an attempt to rein in this affirmation that he listed in 5:20 namely that where sin increases grace abounds all the more and so the questions if you were to take them and paraphrase or to enlist them in regard to how they apply to your own life sound like this what do we say then can I continue to sin since I know that grace continues to move doesn't the gospel as Paul defines it a righteousness of God made manifest apart from the law mean that I don't need to concern myself with fulfilling ethical behavior if I don't get a right standing with God through how I live but rather it's a free gift that comes to me by faith alone well then perhaps I don't need to worry so much about the way I live in order to please God when I am alone is grace about if grace means that God accepts me for who I am unbecoming behavior and all then what need do I have to be living in a manner that law might find need to correct Paul responds to that charged slanderously leveled against his teaching in other words of saying this is the implication of your gospel Paul and he rest he responds as strongly as the Greek language will permit him without swearing this little phrase may it never be one who instructed me in Greek said realize when you're when you find something in the present tense you're in the world of reality when you find something in the subjunctive tense a mood you're beginning to move toward things that are one step away from reality things that may happen might happen when you find yourself in the optative which is what we have here you are so far away from reality there's no correspondence to what has just been said and so it really is as if he says no way in the strongest terms possible there is no way my gospel of grace carries people into a life of licentiousness

disorder ungodly passion or unethical comportment we who have died to sin no longer live in it paul rejecting the runaway charge verses one and two on what grounds though paul on two grounds first verses three and four on the grounds that baptism seals us for godliness in this present world now i gotta tell you something the argument that paul advances in verses three and four to support his claim are as original as they are important he's going to claim that an ethical life is the consequence of the christian gospel even without needing to replace or to reinsert law and he does it on the back of baptism christian baptism provides the sufficient grounds for ongoing godliness now let me make a couple of observations about verses three and four but let's read them first 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 in order that just as christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father we too might walk in the newness of life now there's no sense in trying to spiritualize this word away baptism as if it's somehow merely an allusion baptism here and with paul throughout is the signification of water baptism now what do we know about the way paul viewed baptism here verse three he connects baptism our baptism with christ's death now this connection was not made before paul in this way second if you were to turn over and you won't need to though to first corinthians 10 2 he uses baptism there to speak of the old testament community of faith when they passed through the red sea they had been baptized in the sea and in the cloud under mooses in other words in the old testament that event according to paul sealed their salvation which had come to them as a free gift received by faith through blood on the door at the evening of the passover lamb and when they walked through the red sea the waters those were indeed the waters of life that once and forever sealed them as his own from there on they're going to their new home paul connects baptism with that new exodus event the waters of life and as a presbyterian standing before you remember even the children and infants were carried through the waters unto life well i'll move on to the second observation for those of baptists among us the second observation comes from something said in verse 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 this is an amazing statement that you were buried with him by baptism into his death there's an unmistakable real efficacious and spiritual reality to the sacrament of baptism look at that little phrase there we were buried therefore with him it's the joining of two words in the greek you were grave sharers you were with him in your baptism it is as if you were stretched out on the cold slab in the tomb in the garden dead buried in the grave of another namely with jesus when in baptism what an extraordinary argument this idea of being buried together in the shared grave co-buried with christ the stone now rolled in front of you and if you are to come out if you're to come out at all you come out into the newness of life i was thinking this week in regard to the westminster confession of faith which of course is the constitutional backdrop for our own local communion here and it made me this week think of the power of the sacraments that according to paul this is what keeps me from leading a licentious life listen to what the divines wrote baptism is a sacrament of the new testament ordained by jesus christ not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church but also to be unto him a sign and a seal of the covenant of grace of his engrafting into christ of regeneration of remission of sin of his giving up unto god through jesus christ to walk in the newness of life further they say although it is a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance yet grace and salvation are not so inexpressibly i'm sorry are not so inseparably annexed unto it as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated but they go on the efficacy of baptism is not tied to the moment of time in which it is administered yet notwithstanding by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the holy spirit to such whether of age or infants as that grace belongs unto according to the counsel of god's own will in his appointed time this is paul's argument my gospel does not lead to a life of licentiousness because those who have come to faith have received the sign of baptism and in their baptism they shared a grave with christ when they went down and so that when they came up and out they walk in newness of life there is no other way for them to walk they are dead to sin now you begin to apply the logic of that text to your

[20 : 18] own life what a mockery we make of god's justice through the crucifixion death and burial of christ when we decide to walk forth from that grave into a life of continued sin do you see what you're doing when you consciously move outside of god's law the law the law of christ you me we mock this beloved blood cost and death there's no option to continue in sin that's the logic of this text and when we reflect on it baptism begins to be something that is to be cherished another observation then is that baptism is a sealing event baptism is spiritually efficacious and baptism is essential i don't mean essential for salvation but don't get it wrong it is essential for every follower of christ christ is christ paul cannot conceive of a christian life in any normative way without baptism it's the sealing event jesus himself could not conceive of his disciples making followers of him without baptism for he commissioned it and according to the text baptism is put forward to challenge the notion that one could accept paul's gospel of grace and yet keep on sinning think of the potency of your baptism parallel it with the potency of the celebration of the lord's supper where in first corinthians 11 it's not merely something you're doing to identify yourself with christ he says some of you who are taking this in an unworthy way going on in your life of sin for this reason you are sick and even some are dead how is it that they're sick and dead because it's efficacious it's real it's palpable it's spiritual it's the real meal and that's real water and if you've never been baptized yet you proclaim to be a follower of christ call us tomorrow you haven't walked through the initiatory public sign that buries that world and calls you forth in the newness of life if you were baptized as an infant or an adult let it be a nurturing grace to you a remembrance to you in temptation think back upon that day whether your parents held you in their arms and you were not cognizant of it they carried you through in faith that you would walk in newness of life perhaps you were kneeling at the age of a teenager and the waters came upon your head you had that palpable sense of the community of faith watching that baptism holds you toward godliness perhaps you were out here in lake michigan in one of our own immersion services where before we switched locations we wondered whether baptism really would be the death of the individual when the waves came rolling in too high and crashed upon the rocks but what a tumultuous true picture it was i'll always

remember meredith martinez i'm sorry julia martinez young girl preteen years lake michigan waves just cascading upon the rocks and i remember looking at the water and saying unto myself this is a picture of death and whether that's through sprinkling through immersion through being in a tank somewhere in some baptist church that you grew up in that was the day you died but it's also the day the music of life arrived and you walk out into the newness of life think of it baptism sealed you for good godliness we normally think of it as a one time event and that its significance was somehow limited to that one day what paul is arguing is that baptism is a one time event with everyday implications for those who are following in the way of grace so when you are tempted may your baptism come to mind for you can build as many firewalls as you want in this world to keep you from sin but the waters that you went under long ago have greater power than them all for this is the power of the holy spirit at work within you to conform you into the likeness of christ well he moves on although for those of you who like to read the larger catechism question 167 it'll show you the present day usefulness of baptism but he offers here a second argument or grounds why his gospel of grace does not actually promote a life of licentiousness and it's not necessarily the grounds of baptism it's on the grounds of our union with him as baptism seals you to godliness your union with christ through faith secures you from the power of sin and that unto the future take a look at verses 5 through 11 that's really where the gist of it is but i want you to notice a couple of things about it first is this union notice the emphasis on union verse 5 for if we have been united with him in a death like his that united with him is a word only used here in the new testament but again it's this with word joined with like grafted together with we'll see the idea later regarding jews and gentiles but not the word the word here though that you are in a sense built together with him you're attached to him what a great unity to think of that same word with occurs later of course when we saw it in verse five i just showed it to you in verse or we saw it earlier in four i showed it to you in five it also appears again in verse six the idea although a different joining we know that our old self was crucified with him you've been crucified with him he died you died your union with him means you no longer live to sin that's paul's argument secondly notice the change in tense in these verses it moves from the usefulness of baptism something done in your past for your life now in the present and it moves to the idea of union with christ in the present in regard to what it will do for

you in the future the future tense we'll be united with him in a resurrection like his in the future you're going toward that resurrection if we have died with christ we believe that we also will live with him you're moving to the future you're going to live with christ forever you're going to be in his presence you were united with him you were baptized in him sin has no ultimate pull on you anymore imagine when we get to heaven with him with him with him next time you're tempted think about that but i'm with him i already came to this dance with somebody i'm with him not going there anymore not walking there anymore not moving there anymore i'm with him i'm with him anyone with christ well he's already seated in the heavenlies and you're going to live with him what a great great truth look at verse six verse seven and eight i could go on a long time on these and i won't but but the logic is clear verse six we know something about him verses seven and eight for this reason and then you get verse nine we know and then it's supported by the four of verse ten what a wonderful thing when you begin to see the structure of that you begin to feel it we know verse six that our old self 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 for one who has died has been set free from sin what a wonderful liberating thing the sin was once totally overpowering us sin was what ruined our life sin was what wrecked us upon the rocks the waters of baptism and our unitedness in faith to him that frees us from things verse nine we know that christ being raised from dead will never die again death no longer has dominion over him for the death he died he died to sin once for all what a great thing one time he did it one time for all but the life he lives he lives to god this present continual life life that is true for christ and if you are with christ and you are a follower of christ you've been baptized in christ then you also verse 11 must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to god in christ jesus i don't know whether the term there is supposed to be an imperative consider yourself dead to sin or if or if it's just supposed to you know let us consider ourselves dead to sin but what i love about the term is the term was used previously in romans to speak of god who counted us as righteous he reckoned us righteous he declared us to be fine in his sight through the blood of christ and our apprehension of it by faith and just as god reckoned you right you reckon yourself dead to sin isn't that great i reckon you to life amazing i reckon

myself dead to sin the implication well it's clear not only does he reject this runaway charge on the grounds of baptism and on the grounds of being united to him but then the implication is clear having reckoned ourselves dead to sin look at the imperatives that follow in verse 12 to the end let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions that's the command that's the application that's the takeaway look don't do this anymore is what paul says don't let it rain don't you love that word rain we saw how grace reigns chapter 5 and now we are not to let sin reign it is not to be my master it is not to be my ruler it is no longer the one who carries me on its arm and takes me wherever it wants to go obeying its passions with my body all of these terms evoking the language of chapter one where our hearts went away and he turns us over to bodies that are given to dishonor and passion and now in Christ it's all been reversed hallelujah no longer will you let it reign kill it declare it gone let not sin therefore reign any longer second imperative in verse 13 and it moves to a positive implication command as well do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but here's another command present yourselves to

God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness i love the phrase here on instruments another translation would have just been the word weapons in other words your body is a weapon what you do with your body in a sense you're presenting yourself in war as a weapon and what he's actually indicating here is that you are no longer to present yourself as an instrument for the unrighteous world world but as a weapon of justice in God's world look when you could when you begin to consider your mind your heart your body what you do what you think what you read where you go as an instrument of justice or unrighteousness!

[35 : 10] And then you begin to really remember that you're in Christ and you're his and you were baptized and you're united to him and that you're going to live with him well it just means to become a Christian some things have to go they just have to go you can't play with it anymore it's not a game stuff eats you up gotta be gone I mean to do otherwise is to present yourself as a living instrument on the front lines of a war against God who already acquitted you for treason it's absurd I think that's Paul's point and once you realize it's absurd you get in the middle of your week and the pulls of the old man begin to emerge and you just look at yourself and say it's absurd I'm not a weapon on that front line anymore

I am living for Christ and so Paul concludes verse 14 for sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace here he is just triumphing grace again you notice what Paul he never does what evangelicals do he never after coming to Christ reinserts law as some way to actually get everyone to conform to holiness he's not hanging he's not hanging any ten commandments in any house he's not because he knows that they can no longer make anyone conform to righteous life they can only make one aware of that which they cannot do but for the Christian community he never brings law back in by way of legalism so that you can easily somehow mediate your relationship with Christ he never backs off the charge he says I'm not going back to law you're under grace grace holds you the

Holy Spirit dwells in you the Holy Spirit becomes the new generator of ethics in your life not law I mean he's he's adamantly opposed to his detractors and so we're done grace reigns verse 14 feels to me like Paul the general still atop his steed called grace and he's abounding in the field of battle for faith no retreat no regret no return grace not only stronger than all my sin but able to hold me in the likeness of

Christ grace reigns may it reign in our life this week our heavenly father we thank you for your word continue to strengthen us in it that we might love you well not merely try to serve you aright we pray in Christ's name amen■