

New Freedom - Dead to sin

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[0 : 0 0] our Bible reading today is taken from Romans the book of Romans chapter 6 we'll read from verse 1 to verse 14 but to put things into context I think I'll read from verse 20 of chapter 5 as well okay I'm so Romans chapter 5 verse 20 now the Lord came in to increase the trespass but we seen increase grace abounded all the more so that a sin reigned in death grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord what shall we say then are we to continue in seeing that grace may abound by no means how can we who do how can we who died 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 we came 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 you have been united with him in the death like he is we shall certainly be united with him in the resurrection like he is 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 for one who has died has been set free from sin now if we have died with Christ we believe that we will also 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 he lives to God so you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Christ Jesus that not seen therefore rain in your mortal body to make you obey his passions do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness for seeing will have no dominion over you since you're not under law but under grace well it's unlikely to happen but if ever I got around to writing my biography it would be called I'm not the person I used to be it would be in two volumes it would be sort of one life therefore in one in two massively different parts so volume one I suspect would probably highlight my childhood years in Northern Ireland and then relocating to Australia with my family at age 16 and that volume would have lots of really massive changes in there for me the second volume however would be the really crucial volume I think and by far the largest volume and it would begin with my getting married to Alison and a story therefore it's continuing thus far 42 years of really radically and positively life-changing years it's hard for me to think of a single area in my life that's not been massively impacted by being married to Alison for the good and it's such that I would never ever want to go back to being single now hopefully this picture of biography will help us move into Romans chapter 6 where Paul continues to spell out the result and the ongoing personal effect of the gospel in the life of every believer and I think his point is is this as we move into it that essentially God's gospel grace changes everything in the life of a believer those who are in Christ is the terminology that's been used through chapters 5 and 6 so a bit of revision as I normally do in in chapter 1 verse 16 and 17 he's already defined the gospel and then chapter 2 and 3 he's actually worked through why every single person needs the gospel and then in chapters 3 and 4 he's defined what the gospel is and chapters 5 then through into where we're working at the minute chapter 6

Paul starts to unpack the practical results of the gospel in the life of the believer and essentially what he's saying is look the gospel means a totally new legal and social or relational standing between God and his people for believers radically and totally new and in chapter 5 over the last two weeks we've seen Paul's list of the incredible blessings that we can be absolutely confident are ours forever why?

because we're now tied to Jesus as once we were tied to Adam Jesus is our representative head is what we saw last week he acts for all those who are associated with him every blessing won by Jesus and enjoyed by Jesus we as his people share in but there's more to be said as we move into chapter 6 because in chapter 6 Paul wants us to understand that the gospel also changes us or transforms us it's not just that the gospel changes our standing before God legally and socially the gospel actually changes us transforms us we have a personal experience of change it transforms how we live how we think how we act so here's the summary of chapter 6 flowing over from chapter 5 united with Christ or being in Christ united with Christ everything is different we're not the same people we were before we became believers volume 2 of our biography our spiritual biography has begun now the question as we move into chapter 6 it's a confronting question clearly

Paul has established that God's grace is really gracious really gracious but does that graciousness have unintended consequences Paul begins with two questions which link us back to his last statement in chapter 5 verse 20 and 21 and Leigh's obviously on the ball this morning because I should have got her to read that but she's taken the initiative and read it so it's excellent she's more prepared than I am for this so you don't want to swap do you Leigh come on up so the two questions link us back to chapter 5 verse 20 and 21 see the two questions what shall we say then so that links us back to chapter 5 the arguments are already going on and then the question flows out of that so let's have a look at those two verses in chapter 5 verse 20 and 21 now the law came in to increase the trespass but where sin increased grace abounded all the more the problem of sin was always huge for God right from the time of Adam but the introduction of God's law sharpened the focus on sin in the time of Moses and it showed even more clearly because there was a written code and you could evaluate it showed even more clearly how deeply ingrained sin was in God's people how extensive it reached it showed even more clearly the guilt of God's people and even provoked disobedience and rebellion and we know that don't we you see a sign on the side of the road speed limit 100 and you think

[9 : 37] I want to go at 110 or 120 or 130 so the rule actually provokes disobedience but God's grace was even bigger than all of that and God's grace was so big that it was seen in the death of Christ the death of Jesus and so Paul then anticipates the question that would follow from that so it goes something like this well given the graciousness of God's grace does it follow then that we who have been justified by grace alone should be comfortable sinning should be comfortable sinning more knowing that it would further demonstrate the extent the extent and generosity of God's grace or put it in slightly different words if my sin shows God's grace then surely the more I sin

I actually make God and God's grace look even better that's an outrageous question isn't it Paul's answer verse 2 is very sharp by no means or in modern lingo don't be ridiculous and it's what follows then how can we who died to sin still live in it so Paul's answer is don't be ridiculous Jesus died to deal with sin as people so how could we easily continue to live with it or put it in different words how could those who say they love Jesus continue to love the very thing that actually caused

Jesus to be killed cause the death of the one they love now again maybe an illustration would help here it's almost as Paul Paul's saying it would be as ridiculous as a hopelessly lost bushwalker rescued from certain death at huge cost to the helicopter rescue service but actually free to the idiot who got lost and then they said well how can I respond oh I know how I'll respond I'll go and get more lost and more regularly lost and get lost in more difficult terrain because these guys are super competent and the more lost I get and the more frequently I get lost then everybody will be able to see how competent they are at their jobs you see how ridiculous that is now if they really want to honour the rescue team if they really want they show appreciation for the rescue then the obvious thing to do is to make every effort not to stray away again rather than force these competent rescue people to repeatedly put their life in danger so there's Paul's short answer don't be ridiculous but then he expands it in verses 3 through to 11 and his first point

I think is that in Christ or united with Christ you are a new creation so at the heart of Paul's argument here is the phrase we who died to sin in fact it's repeated then in verse 7 and verse 11 so look at verse 7 for we one who has died and then verse 11 so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin so what does this phrase mean what is it it's described of believers what is it to be dead to sin well again hopefully an illustration might help suppose there's an old Christian guy John Jones and he's looking back over his life like a biography and he speaks of his life in two parts separated by his conversion by him becoming believer and as you listen to John Jones he speaks about the old sinful

John Jones characterised by disobedience by careless disregard for God by lack of awareness of his sin or his offence to God because the old John Jones was basically living an autonomous life living for himself then he speaks about the new John Jones still stumbling into sinful disobedience yes yet desiring now more than anything else to honour the Lord in every thought and action and so the new John Jones grieves over his sin every time he stumbles into it and wishes he could be free from it so what happened to John Jones when he became a believer that made such a radical change in his thinking and his outlook and his desires well his old life lived under the old man

[15 : 54] Adam as we saw last week was finished it came to an end volume one of the biography was written and complete John came to realise his sin he came to realise that he was actually compared to the righteousness of God he was actually unrighteous so unrighteous that his sin deserved death God's condemnation the full penalty of God's wrath and righteous judgement and John Jones then realising he couldn't bear the wrath of God in himself and had an alternative in Jesus took God at his word and turned to Jesus believing that as he was united with Jesus by God's grace in salvation then the death that Jesus died became his death and the benefits of Christ's death were transferred to him that's the force I think of verses 5 and 6 so read them through with me now follow through as I read them for if we have been united with him in a death like his a sacrificial death for sin 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 united with

Christ John John learned to view himself as if he himself had died for his sin thus his old life dominated by sin which left him guilty before God was brought to an end God's justice was satisfied in the death of Christ it was as if John Jones' life had been forfeited that's how God viewed it the immediate consequence of this for John Jones well verse seven one who has died has been set free in the Greek that is the one who has died has been justified that's the word it's a bit of a liberal translation there one who has died has been justified it is a freedom concept but it's a legal process to that freedom one who has died has been justified which in turn is free from the guilt of sin freedom from the guilt of sin death pays all the debt owed and when the debt is paid you're free to go the guilt of his sin and its power to accuse him of ongoing guilt is removed and in that sense he's set free now important caveat here it's not that John

John suddenly was perfect as if somehow or other he's free from any ongoing inclination to sin or any temptation to sin it's that the guilt and power of sin to accuse him and debilitate him has been removed why because he enjoys the benefit of Christ's death as if it was his own death that's what it is to be united with Christ but that's only half the story for John John as he becomes a believer united with Christ at his point of salvation it's also true that his new resurrection life lived under the new man old man was Adam the new man is Jesus his new resurrection life has also begun and that's the force of verses 8 through to 10 so follow again now if we have died with

Christ we believe that we shall also 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 and the idea there in the tense is a continuous life died to sin once to all lives continuously for God so satisfactory was Jesus death and meeting all the demands of God's wrath and justice in respect of sin that Jesus quite literally came back from the grave resurrected to new life as proof that never again would any penalty for the sin of John Jones be required by the

Lord so put it together what was God's salvation purpose or God's gospel purpose for John Jones well it was that John Jones would experience personally both the benefits of Christ's death and also the benefits of Christ's resurrection when he became a believer John Jones rose as it were a new man to live a new life to God lived under God's rule in thankfulness intimacy security obedience and life forever free from the guilt and penalty of sin all those things that we saw listed in chapter five now

[22 : 25] John Jones is every believer here this morning all these benefits both of the death of Christ and of the resurrection of Christ are ours in Christ because we are united with Christ just as we tumbled headlong into disobedience guilt and death with Adam our first representative head representative man so we've been rescued lifted up to a new life given a fresh start with new hearts shaped and filled by the love of God poured into us by the Holy Spirit as we saw two weeks ago in Romans 5 one life massively different in its parts the difference

God's salvation becoming believer and Paul then uses you might be wondering why I jumped over verses 3 and 4 well Paul just uses the symbol of baptism to help establishes point so if you look at chapter 3 verse 3 rather it says do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ and there's that interesting word there it's baptized into Christ who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized again emphasis into his death being being baptized into Christ pictures identification with or being united with Jesus we're baptized into him into his death now again note carefully it doesn't say that the baptism secures or establishes our union with Christ our baptism is a practical expression of that which has already been established by the death of Christ by God on our behalf so given sorry not giving going into the water symbolizes death and burial it's as if the old life of unrighteousness or sin in Adam is finished gone they're dead to sin in that sense then as they come up out of the water it symbolizes the start of a new resurrection life in Christ a fresh start in a life of righteousness and grateful obedience to God the pivot point in the life of a Christian the old

John Jones now the new John Jones so what do we do with this well verse 11 a very very simple application I believe having said that I'll probably try and make it complicated it's as if Paul's just saying act out who you are I think we often get tripped up as Christians and ask them the question what do we need to do we've got this sense that the gift isn't free but somehow or other we owe God and we want to pay God back we don't like to be indebted even if we think it's free so we're always asking the question well what is it that we need to do as Christians in response to God's graciousness well I think Paul says it here in very simple terms act out that's what you need to do in response to the gospel act out it's not very often we get encouraged to act out is it well act out be who you are now a question that's often raised by Christians

I've raised it and I'm going to raise it here and hopefully I won't get into trouble for it but anyway we'll see how it goes can I say as a Christian that I'm free to do whatever I like I can do whatever I want the answer is yes but I then quickly have to follow up and say well what is it that I know want to do in Christ and the answer is I want to honour him I want to serve him I want to be as far away from that which offends him as possible to be so act out who you are now Paul's not asking us here to pretend about something that's not in fact true he's asking us to realise and act accordingly in respect to something that is true look at verse 11 so you also must consider yourselves and that word consider is just to actually have a look and recognise this is how it is so if you can recognise this is how it is this is how you are in

Christ you're dead to sin and alive to God and start acting it out now again don't get it wrong it's not that my sinful nature has totally died out and totally removed from me that's something the Bible says won't happen until I go to be with Jesus in heaven rather it's my old self you know the volume one the volume two it's my old self guilty before the Lord that's the one that's gone I must realise that in Christ I have a new life to be lived for God and get on with doing that yes there will be daily sinful happenings and failures yes I will not be what I want to be and who I want to be but I am not who I used to be

[29 : 45] I am dead to sin in Christ I am raised to new life in Christ and I need to live accordingly not to do that not to be who I am is essentially to continue again illustratively to continue living the life of a hobo a down and out homeless purposeless miserable despairing person when in fact I've actually been taken into the richest royal family history has ever known and I have been given access to every single resource of that royal family it just doesn't make sense that I continue to act like a hobo and friends hopefully you will see now why

Paul is so sharp in his response in verse 2 don't be ridiculous as I said earlier if we love Jesus how could we continue to love the very thing which caused his death death now we'll still be part of the very thing that caused his death but that's very different from loving it in fact the longer we the more we love Jesus the more we'll hate the thing that caused his death and Paul's second point and you'll be glad mercifully it'll be a lot shorter Paul's second point is that in Christ's new creation Christ ought practically to be king and it's picking up verses 12 13 and 14 if you notice in the text there Paul uses imperatives or commands for the first time in his letter in

Romans let not sin therefore that's a direct command let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions do not present your members to sin as instruments of righteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness now it's a question of loyalty it's a question of identification put it in simple terms who will be king because it got the word here reign a monarch who will be king and what will be king in your life your new resurrection life verse 13 is a pretty strong military picture I think do not present your members to sin as instruments that word instruments has got the notion of weapons in the daily battlefield of life either we will surrender to sin and thereby declare war on God whose purpose in salvation was to deliver us from sin so either we'll surrender to sin and thereby declare war on God or we will rally around king

Jesus and war against sin thereby demonstrating your conviction that sin is an already defeated enemy and that the future is with loyalty and service of God and make no mistake it will be a battle sin is still a really powerful force using the language of verse 12 and 13 it's as if sin is like a deposed but angry king who remains determined to reign again to take back that which has been lost to him determined to reign again in our lives sin still occupies some territory but not the capital city and my desire to turn away from unrighteousness and serve

God as I rally around king Jesus will be the motivation the encouragement into the struggle the enemy I'm fighting against sin unrighteousness is already defeated I am on the side of king Jesus he has brought me near to him second point in these last verses is don't reduce God to rules pursue him in thankful relationship which is worship if you look at verse 13 it says don't present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life it's a relational statement present yourself pursue God come before

[35 : 41] God and say here I am what do you want me to do now historically Christians have shown a lack of understanding of justification by faith and this lack of understanding almost always reduces God to thinking to reduces thinking about God to rules sorry I got that mixed up almost always reduces thinking about God to rules so when you think well how do I live as a Christian rules well actually no the first one is sometimes Christians say there are no rules go back to chapter 6 verse 1 some people say well okay look I'm saved by grace my performance doesn't matter I can keep on sinning it's no big deal and we see Christians like that who have little concern to change to become more like

Christ others go to the other extreme have overlaid God's grace with holiness rules until freedom in Christ has been smothered with a long list of what Christians should and shouldn't do to prove that they're saved but true understanding of grace pushes us to relationship and worship presenting yourself to God or pursuing him as his beloved died for child determined to express your thankfulness and so our motivation in the Christian life is not fear of what God might do to us if we break the rules but love for what God has already done for us in Christ that's our motivation and in turn the sheer joy and goodness of God's purpose for us as children is best experienced by us when we actually struggle and actively struggle to say no to unrighteousness and yes to righteousness my friends we need to understand that

Christ is the way to life and Christ is the prize in life well just about finished bear with me in a couple of minutes the final thing I want to say is don't focus on your own efforts or success as you struggle but your new state of grace life is a biography written in two volumes it's been written by the Lord Jesus volume one is just tragic and not surprisingly so because it's the story of my autonomy it's the story of my condemnation God's condemnation on my unrighteousness but as a believer volume two is well underway and is full of hope and promise in the struggle because it's the story of what God has done for me and the story of what God continues to do in me

I'm united with Christ I have a spirit within me he pours his love into me daily that's going to shape the second volume so my friends this morning I say to you keep your focus on Jesus efforts and success on your behalf not on your own efforts and success remember this that God doesn't ask you for perfection or success in that which you cannot do and that is be sinless he asks for faithfulness as you struggle to be daily that which you are in Christ I just want to finish with the words of John Newton which I have already hinted at earlier in the sermon every believer can say this with confidence I'm not what I want to be

I'm not what I ought to be I'm not what God wants me to be I'm not what I will be one day but I'm certainly not what I used to be pray with me Lord help us to see this simple truth as we seek to take to ourselves justification by faith that both the benefits of your death and the benefits of your resurrection are applied to us and that we experience them personally on a day by day basis thank you Lord that every believer here is well into the second volume of the biography with hope and promise and certainty because we're united with you give us confidence therefore

[41 : 15] Lord and the simplicity of life to act out who we are in Jesus name Amen