

Union With Christ

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[0 : 00] Amen. Please turn again with me to the passage we read in Romans chapter 5. Romans chapter 5.

As I said in my introduction, Paul has been talking about justification, how we are made right before God, with God.

How our sins are dealt with. And he sums up his argument quite neatly there in chapter 5 verse 19, where he says, For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Adam, by his sin, brought sin into the world. Jesus, by his obedience, by his death, makes us righteous when we come to him in Christ.

So, we talk sometimes of the great exchange. Jesus took our sin on himself, and he gives us his righteousness.

[1 : 20] On the cross, he bore our sins in his body on the tree. And through his death, many are forgiven. Our sins are covered.

But we're not just, as it were, forgiven our sin. We're given Christ's righteousness. Many are made righteous. So, we've got this great exchange.

Great exchange. 2 Corinthians 5.21 says, For our sake he, that is Jesus, no, sorry, For our sake he, God, made him, Jesus, to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God made Jesus to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

So, we are justified, counted righteous by God, not by what we've done, but because of faith in what Jesus has done.

[2 : 25] The reformers used to talk about, through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone. We're saved through faith alone, by grace alone, and in Christ alone.

And Paul has been teaching that here. And teaching that God justifies the rebel and the sinner. Not because we've made ourselves better, or we've made ourselves nice in some way, but because of what Jesus has done, and we have come to him in faith.

That's what grace is, isn't it? Grace is God's undeserved favour to sinners. In verse 21, he said, or verse 21, the law came to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

Now, to some people, this seems like a scandal. How can sin abound, grace abound all the more? One example of this, in the recent past, has been a chap, known as Comrade Douche.

[3 : 46] I think that's how you say his name. Comrade Douche was one of Paul Potts' chief executioners in Cambodia. He organized and managed a couple of the concentration camps where thousands of people were put to death, tortured and put to death.

As far as I know, he's still alive, and he's in jail. He was given 40 years for what he did. But many thought it wasn't enough.

He was a cruel and evil man. But, you know, 20 years after he was murdering and torturing people in the prison camps, he was baptized as a Christian in Cambodia.

20 years afterwards, he was baptized as a Christian. Doesn't that seem like a scandal? That somebody like Comrade Douche should become my brother in Christ, forgiven by God?

And yet, that's true. That's what happened. And today, he's in jail, but he's our brother in Christ. The scandal of forgiveness, you might say.

[5 : 03] How can somebody like that be forgiven? And yet, he is forgiven because of what Jesus did on the cross. Where sin abounded, where sin increased, grace increased all the more, bringing

eternal life through Jesus Christ.

That's the wonder of the gospel. That's the wonder of the gospel. Is anything too awful that it cannot be forgiven by Jesus? Was his sacrifice not big enough for Comrade Douche?

It was. It is. Wonderful grace of Jesus, greater than all my sin. How shall my tongue describe it? Where shall its praise begin?

Taking away my burden, setting my spirit free, for the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.

Wonderful grace of Jesus reaching the most defiled by its transforming power, making him God's dear child, purchasing peace in heaven for all eternity.

and the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me, reached Comrade Douche too. Isn't that wonderful?

[6 : 19] Isn't that wonderful how great is our salvation? And isn't it wonderful how the gospel puts us all on the same level, debtors to his mercy alone?

Comrade Douche who had done awful things. And those of us here who perhaps grew up in Christian homes and became Christians as children, all on the same level because we're all saved by grace alone, debtors to God's mercy alone.

Now I want to read on now into chapter 6 because the question that arises from this is since we're not saved by what we do, why bother about doing anything good at all?

So I'm going to read in chapter 6 now from verse 1. 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 are 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.

[7 : 48] 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 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. For 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 body to make you obey its 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. Since God justifies my faith apart from my attempts to be good do I need to be good at all?

[9 : 25] That's what Paul says here. If I'm not saved by good or right living then why should I bother with righteousness or right living now?

Can I not simply go out and live a sinful life and God will continue to forgive me? Verse 1 of chapter 6 Why what shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. The old authorised version says God forbid God forbid that we should even think that way.

we have been changed. We cannot say we can go out that way.

People have believed this at times. In Jude chapter verse 4 Paul or the writer to Jude talks about those who change the grace of God into a license for immorality.

[10 : 30] God's grace is magnified when he forgives great sin. So let's sin that grace may be magnified.

God forbid. God forbid. We have died to sin. We have changed. You see something decisive has happened in the believer's life.

As well as being declared not guilty as well as being given the righteousness of Christ we are now also in union with Christ.

In union with Christ. This is one of the great themes of this chapter and indeed elsewhere in the Bible. You remember Jesus' parable of the vine and the branches.

He says I am the vine. Jesus said you are the branches. You are united with me. You become grafted into the vine. Part of the vine. Abide in me and let my word abide in you and you will bear much fruit.

[11 : 31] He got this teaching of union with Christ. And here we have it again. Here we have it again. Verses 3 and 4.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried there with him by baptism 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.

And then verse 5 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 have been baptized Paul says into union with him.

And since this is true since this is true we need to live like someone who has been united with Christ.

It's unthinkable unthinkable that a believer united with Christ should live a life of sin. It's unthinkable that Jesus would give us the free gift of justification without giving us a new life.

[12 : 51] God making us new creatures. It would be contrary to the whole plan of God in saving us. God's plan isn't simply to save us from hell although it is that.

But it is also to make us a people for his glory. Remember those verses in Ephesians 5 25 and 6 and 7 where Paul writes husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless.

You see there's the goal that we should be presented to him without stain or blemish and to bring us there to prepare us for that we have already been united with Jesus.

Faith that justifies brings us into union with Christ in his death and resurrection. And what this means is that everything that Jesus has done is ours in him.

Everything that Jesus has done is ours in him. All that Jesus achieved on the cross is ours when we are in him. We've been united with him.

[14 : 25] Verse 5 We've been united with him in his death. And that means we're dead to sin. We're dead to sin. Verse 2 How can we die to sin still live in it?

How may you ask are we dead to sin? Well Paul tells us that when we're baptized we're baptized into his death.

Jesus died to sin once for all and we're in him so we too have died to sin. Paul here is using the illustration he's assuming that all these believers in Rome had come to faith and professed their faith in baptism which would have been normal and he's using the illustration of going down into the water and dying with Christ and coming up again and rising with him again.

He says when you were baptized you identified with Jesus in his death and his resurrection. So you are in union with him.

Baptism doesn't say it but baptism reflects the reality which had already happened because they had been united with him in his death. His death you see becomes our death when we come to Jesus in faith and repentance and to be united with Jesus in his death means that all that Christ's death achieved has become ours.

[15 : 55] That death 2000 years ago when Jesus bore our iniquities and was wounded for our transgression that death is my death for sin.

Christian friend that death is your death for sin. Horatius Boner the great hymn writer in the free church put it in these words. He said mine is the sin but thine the righteousness mine is the guilt but thine the cleansing blood.

Here is my robe my refuge and my peace thy blood thy righteousness O Lord my God. It's as if we were there you see. Because he paid for our sin.

He fulfilled all righteousness and his righteousness is mine is yours. How glad I am that that's true because when I look at myself and my feelings and my sin how could I stand before a holy God but I'm glad that my righteousness is in heaven because it is Christ's righteousness and he is there and that righteousness is perfect impossible to approve impossible to add anything to it and that is my righteousness that is your righteousness Christian friends tonight.

Our righteousness is the righteousness of Christ because we have died with him and we have risen with him to newness of life. but in these verses Paul is also emphasizing that when we died with Christ we died to sin in him.

[17 : 40] Look at verses 6 and 7 again. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so we no longer be enslaved to sin for one who has

died has been set free from sin.

Think about the life of a slave. A slave has to obey his master. He can't say no. Slave owner can tell him to do what he wants to do and he has to obey.

There's only one way the only way for a slave to get free from his master in this life is to be redeemed to be bought free.

But the other way to get free from slavery is to die. Once a slave died he was free from his old master wasn't he? His master could shout all he liked at him but if he's dead he won't obey he can't obey his days of slavery are over.

By nature the devil is our master but when we have died with Christ we are freed from the old master he no longer has any power over us the old master slave relationship is gone it cannot survive death cannot survive death death clears all debts and cancels all obligations in this world recently we all heard of Harvey Weinstein who was accused of so many nasty things and he escaped the justice of this world by committing suicide the law of this world cannot pursue him anymore he's freed from the penalties of American law he's not freed from the judgment of God for he's appointed unto man once to die and after death the judgment so Harvey Weinstein must still face

[19 : 45] God's judgment but his death took him out of the reach of earthly justice and as we have died with Christ the tyranny and slavery to sin is gone sin our old master the devil our old master has no more claims over us and the debts are cleared but we've also been united with Christ in his resurrection we have risen with Christ verse 4 we are buried with him by baptism into death and just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father we too might walk in newness of life there's a new life to be lived because we have been risen we are raised with Christ and verse 11 we're told you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus we have risen with

Christ what's the effect of this we share in Jesus resurrection life now not only are we not only are we not slaves to sin but we are alive to God we have this newness of life now and one day we will be with him in heaven but already already we share in that resurrection life turn with me if you will in your bibles to Ephesians chapter 2 Ephesians chapter 2 I'm going to read verses 4 to 7 Ephesians 2 verse 4 but God but God being rich in mercy God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus we will read verse 8 as well for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God the point I wanted from these verses was verse 6 he has raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms the heavenly places in Christ Jesus already that's true you see already that is true Jesus is exalted Jesus is seated in glory at the right hand of God and we are united with him in union with him so we are there too with him in that spiritual realm we are seated there with Jesus you might say how can that be how can that be we're down here we struggle and fight against the world and the flesh and the devil what does it mean to say we're already seated in heavenly places well we are in Christ and he is there so our place is there too it's as if our chair is there with our name on it and in

God's eyes we who are in Christ already share everything he achieved on the cross so we share his exaltation and in the spiritual realm which is unseen before to our eyes but more real and more enduring than the physical realm in the spiritual world we are already seated with Jesus in heavenly places isn't that amazing it doesn't feel like it on a bad day does it but yet it's true it's true behold the amazing gift of love the father has bestowed on us the sinful sons of men to call us sons of God concealed as yet this on our lives by this dark world unknown a world that knew not when he came even God's eternal son this is true true for us and since it is true our new way of life then is to serve God and not to serve sin since this is true we must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus and we must live that newness of life what are the practical results of this practical results that flow from the first eleven verses Paul starts and describes them from verse twelve on he says let not sin reign in your bodies to obey its passions do not present your members to sin as instruments of righteousness we've already seen that it's unthinkable that we should deliberately live in sin we are made new but we still live in a sinful world sin is still there all around us and the root of sin is still within us we are freed from slavery to sin but the old slave master the devil battles

to retake control we're in

[25 : 40] Christ but the devil still attacks us he wants to separate us from Christ he wants to retake control he cannot do it Jesus has promised that he will never lose one of his sheep no one can take us out of his hands but the devil will tempt us to live the old life if we let him so in these verses we're introduced to the Christian warfare that we all engage in when we come to Jesus for the Christian set free in Christ is enlisted in Jesus in the king's army and committed to battle against the tyrant who formerly held us in his chains and the devil comes along and he wants to give us orders he wants to tempt us to live as we used to live but he cannot remember your new condition in Christ remember that you have died to sin and you do not live in it anymore someone has said we cannot stop the devil fighting a guerrilla war but we can stop him sitting on the throne of our lives so Paul says here don't offer your bodies to sin as instruments of righteousness don't put yourself in a position to sin but offer your bodies as instruments of righteousness you see we're not to be passive here we're in a battle and we're to be on the alert like soldiers in a war zone so we're to avoid situations where sin can get a grip on us think of some examples well don't watch pornography keep your thoughts clean you know a survey in the United

States which is hard to believe states that 7 out of 10 Christian men and even half of pastors view pornography regularly but also 11 to 17 year old boys reported being its greatest users you see we're in a battle here a battle for our minds a battle for the sexual purity of the church hard to believe but clearly there's a problem here this should not be so we are sin is not to have dominion over us we are not to present our members to sin but as instruments for righteousness for God so don't watch pornography don't go and sit with the gossip and get carried away in the gossiping don't go to a pub if you have a problem with drink set the alarm clock if you bother getting out of bed on a Sunday morning watch what you read be careful what you watch on the telly don't offer your bodies to sin you see because we are new in Christ because we have died with him and been raised with him we have to live a new life it all flows from what

Jesus has done don't offer your bodies to sin a Christian cannot live as a thief or as a habitual liar or as an adulterer yes once we lived among those things but we have died to these things in Christ and we cannot live as if we are still slaves to sin doesn't mean we never sin but we all sin and we know we have an advocate with the Father when we do Jesus Christ the righteous but we can't be habitual sinners we can't have a Christian association of thieves or a Christian adulterers group or a Christian association of habitual liars Christian association of non-church goers a Christian gossiping circle God forbid these things cannot be these things cannot be don't offer your bodies to sin and this also shows us that those who think they can live sinful lives and then just offer a quick prayer for forgiveness and then go back to the sinful life tomorrow they're not exercising true faith if that's your belief that isn't that isn't saving faith we're deluding ourselves if we think that way saving faith changes us unites us with Christ and we begin to live in that newness of life in him the justified man is a changed man united with Christ therefore if anyone is in

Christ he's a new creation the old has gone the new has come the new has come we're united with Christ and his goal is to make us like himself his goal is to one day present us to himself as a raging church without stain or wrinkle or any blemish but holy and blameless and he wants us to be moving along that road imperfectly yes but he wants us to be moving along that road here and now so don't offer don't offer your bodies don't offer our bodies to sin but offer ourselves to God and the parts of our bodies to him as instruments of righteousness an active offering of ourselves to God you cannot have your heart cleaned washed free from sin and then leave it empty needs to be filled needs to be filled with

God's word needs to be filled with loving him and following him and serving him that we might grow in him and if we're serious about offering ourselves to God we'll be here as you are of course tonight but we'll be here as often as we can under the sound of God's word to be built up in our walk with Jesus offer yourselves to God as instruments of righteousness now Paul isn't saying earn your salvation not at all we're saved by grace already died in Christ we've already been raised with Christ Paul is saying work out the salvation you already have continue to work out your salvation he said in Philippians 2 verse 12 with fear and trembling why because it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose so we rejoice we rejoice in our union with Jesus we rejoice that we united with him in his death and in his resurrection we want it to change our thinking let it change your thinking live it out live out the salvation that you have

[32 : 58] Christian friends tonight depend on Jesus for it is he who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose he who has begun a good work in you he who sent Jesus to die for us he who has who we are united with in death he who we are united with in our his resurrection he who has even taken us with him to the heavenly realms he is at work within us to will and to act according to his good purpose and he who has begun a good work in us will bring it to completion in Christ Jesus may God bless his word to all our hearts this evening let's pray loving father we do thank you for the wonder of your salvation we do thank you that we are united with our Lord Jesus united with him in his death in his resurrection and indeed in his exaltation father behold the amazing gift of love that you have bestowed upon us and we thank you for that

Lord we rejoice tonight in what you have given us in Jesus father if there's anyone here tonight who isn't sure who's still wondering father we pray that they might come come to him and find in him the salvation and the saviour that they need bless your word to all our hearts we pray father tonight write your word on our hearts we pray in Jesus name amen amen amen