

"Dead to Sin. Alive in Christ" Romans 6:1–14

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[0 : 0 0] And here we are, as we continue on in Romans, we see that Paul, after making such a fantastic! airtight case in chapter 1 to 3 about the sinfulness and unrighteousness of mankind, from the tail end of chapter 3 all the way to chapter 6, he makes this seem what seems to be like an over-the-top case for Christianity. He is describing it in the best, the highest, the most grandiose language. And I have to ask myself, if I'm being honest, and maybe you will as well, is Paul really, does he really believe what he's preaching? Is he over-promising only to under-deliver? Is Christianity too good to be true? You know, he is talking about Christianity being a free gift. God is giving us the very righteousness of Christ so that, not that we have to get into his presence, we don't have to work hard, we actually don't have to work at all, we just need to receive what he has given us. Is it that easy? Is this gift of grace so good and so powerful that we can just coast into eternity? And if that's the case, what's the point of dealing with sin? If sin, in fact, is the reason grace is given, why not continue to sin if it leads to even more grace? Is the gospel that Paul preaches a bit too good to be true? So, Paul actually answers, or he will pose this question as a questioner himself, and he will look to explain that that is actually not the case at all. So, in chapter 6, he's going to do this in two parts, 1 to 14 and 15 to the end of the chapter. We're just going to look at the first part, verses 1 to 14 this morning. And Paul will talk about how really, how it boils down to experience the gospel. Okay? He's explained why we need the gospel, he explains what the gospel is, and now he's going to explain how to experience the gospel, and especially how to experience it as people who live in this fallen world. So, we're going to break up the text into three points, and then there is quite a big application at the end, but this is how it's going to be broken down.

First, Paul's going to talk about how we are dead to sin, verses 2 to 7. Then he's going to talk about how we are alive in Christ, verses 8 to 11. And then finally, he's going to talk about how this reality infuses, infuses our life with incredible purpose. So, turn with me, Scripture Journal again, we are on page 26. Read with me, verses 1 and 2.

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? If the gospel is a free gift of grace, the concept, or sorry, free gift of grace that abounds all the more in the sinful human heart. How do we treat sin? Are we to treat it lightly? Should we presume upon the grace of God? Paul says, God forbid. In the Greek, there is no more of an intense way of him to push back against this. He is saying, like, God forbid, heaven forbid, it's like he is invoking the highest form of pushback to this objection that he is looking to counter. Paul is going to essentially tell us that such a line of questioning fails to grasp the concept of grace itself, and also the gravity of sin. Yes, what we have in salvation, the righteousness of God, it is a free gift of grace. Yes, the only way to enjoy it is to receive it by faith. Paul is not contradicting the previous chapters at all. Yes, it is far greater than sin and leads to God himself, but Paul is going to say next. But it means also, and most importantly, that we have to die.

You'll notice that verses two and four, Paul will use die, death, or dead four times. Look with me.

We'll read it briefly. Verse two, by no means. 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, 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. Okay, so four times in the three verses. For the rest of our section, he will use it, death, or dead, or died, an additional 11 times. It's a big deal in this section. Talking again about the experience of what it means to live out this gospel. Paul says, you have to die. All of a sudden, it's not exactly seeming like the best news ever, but let's pause really quickly.

[5 : 22] Because we're going to have to really get a handle on what he means by this death, or this being dead to sin, or dying to sin. And really, it boils down to this. To be dead to sin, or to die in sin, is to no longer be under the reign and rule of sin. Sin no longer is the master, the ruler, the tyrant that we are under. So what Paul is saying by implication is that there was a time that we were under the dominion of sin. We are under the rule of sin. We were subjects to sin and subject to sin.

Through the Bible, death and its connection to sin are often spoken of in almost a legal or transactional way. Those who are under the rule of sin are therefore both subject to death and subjects to death. Later in chapter 6, Paul will say that, in fact, death, there's a wage to pay for death. He will say that the wages of sin are death. That's how he'll end chapter 6. What he is saying is there's no getting around sin. There's no getting around death. In fact, it has dominion over us. Therefore, being dead to sin is this declaration that sin's reign has come to an end. It's really important, though, that we understand what Paul is not saying. Being dead to sin cannot mean that the Christian will never sin after conversion. Now, again, this is a letter. We're reading it in sections, but it would have been read in one sitting. There's no, in the original Greek, there's no chapter and verse. There's no page breaks. So in just a few paragraphs to come, chapter 7, Paul will make it very clear that sin continues after conversion. You'll make that very clear. We'll look at that in a couple of weeks.

But it's important that we do understand that what it does mean is that we are no longer under the tyrannical rule of sin. We are not bound to it by guilt. It's not our ultimate end. It's no longer our destiny. It does not have an absolute power over us where we cannot push back against it. Sin is, it is kneecapped. It is a defeated foe.

Paul says that this is our ultimate reality because we have been uncoupled from sin's rule over us. So a couple weeks ago, Matt preached last week on 1 Peter. The week before, we looked at chapter 5 where Paul talks about how we previously, before Christ, we were coupled to Adam. And that simply meant, I mean it's not simply, but simply meant for us this morning is that when we were coupled to Adam, we were subject to all of the results of sin and death that came through Adam because of what happened in the garden when he disobeyed God.

[8 : 21] Paul is saying is that we are no longer coupled to Adam and therefore no longer coupled to the power of sin that came through him. But now we are coupled to Christ. We are coupled to Christ.

Christ who broke sin's power on the cross when he died. How does this come about? So we read verses 3 and 4. We'll read them again and then we'll take a little bit of time in them to explain how this comes about.

Verses 3 and 4 again. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ 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. Paul is saying that we have been also crucified. He will say that later on in verses 5 and 6. But he is essentially saying, hold on a second.

You are actually dead. You cannot therefore live as if you are under the rule of sin. How do we know this? How does it come about? Through baptism. This is why baptism is indispensable to the Christian life.

[9 : 34] It is the means by which we identify with Christ in his death. We transfer our membership from sin to Christ. We uncouple from sin. We couple to Christ.

But it's not merely a symbol. Okay? Paul says that it is a burial. And what he doesn't say, he doesn't say baptism is like a burial.

He says it is a burial. Baptism is described in the New Testament as, it's used with many different kind of analogies and imagery.

But in all occasions, it is described as having power, having efficacy. And to be clear, what I'm not saying, and I would push back against anybody who would read Paul saying this as well, that baptism doesn't save.

Okay? It's not just that you get a child baptized, they're immediately going to heaven, or you're baptized, and therefore you are immediately going to heaven. However, through the waters of the baptism, we are buried with Christ.

[10 : 41] That's what Paul is saying. We are dying. We have died with him. We must be united to Christ by faith, which means we are united to him in his death as well.

And baptism is this picture of that death. Why is this important? Because it ultimately means that we are freed from slavery.

We are freed from this subjection to sin. And this will become much clearer in verses 5 to 7. Read with me. 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, this is the key bit, for one who has died has been set free from sin. How do we know that we are no longer subjects, we are no longer slaves to sin, and that we have been set free from its rule? [11:45] Is it that we no longer sin or that we will no longer struggle with our hang-ups, with our habits, with our habitual sin? That we will be nicer and kinder and more obedient to the will of God and to others?

That's not what Paul is saying here. And it's actually very important that he is not saying that. For if that were the case, our salvation would be strictly experiential. And we could go on for a time, but ultimately, when, not if, but when, we fall back into the cycle of sin, our entire edifice, our entire structure of salvation will come crashing down upon us.

Temptation and sin certainly have power. But what Paul is describing here is actually an objective reality that has happened to anybody who is in Christ. He is saying, again, in very clear terms, that sin is defeated.

It can no longer hold us as slaves any longer. We have been crucified with Christ. We are no longer subjects of sin. And therefore, in rebellious opposition to God, we have been given a new identity, a new purpose, a new life.

What does this resurrected life look like? And this will be a transition now to our second point. Being made alive in Christ. Look with me at verses 8 to 11.

[13:14] 8 to 11. 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 to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

See, the death that Christ died was a singular event. It occurred in history at a very specific time and place for a very specific and ultimate purpose.

Verse 10 says that the death he died was once for all. He did not die as an example of how we ought to die. And therefore, we follow his example. But ultimately, we have to die.

He's not some mere instructor that's demonstrating the process of salvation for us to then follow. Nor does he have to die continually for every person he wishes to save.

[14:14] As if he is some kind of tragic Greek figure who is subject to perpetual eternal agony. Over and over and over and over again. Paul says, no, he died once.

And he dies for all. He pays the wages of sin, thereby breaking its power. And so being raised from the dead, not merely resuscitated. There's examples in Scripture like Lazarus who is resuscitated but would have ultimately died again.

Christ is resurrected. There's a difference. He cannot die again. He's not subject to death again. So that when he rises, he lives to God.

His life is imperfect. Harmonious. Intimate. Love-filled. Love-sharing. Unbroken. Unbreakable. Eternally blessed connection with the Father.

And Paul says that if we are united to Christ in his death, we will be united to him in his resurrection. So that we will never die again. And so if Christ will enjoy a perfect, harmonious, intimate, love-filled, love-sharing, unbroken, unbreakable, eternally blessed connection with the Father, then we will too.

[15:31] That's what Paul is saying. That's what it means to be alive in Christ. Put another way, whatever is true of Christ, Paul says becomes true of us.

Why? Because we are united to him. In his death, but also in his resurrection. Listen, there is a good chance that...

Why is this a hopeful thing? Why is this a wonderful thing? By the end of 2026, there's a very good chance that we will, as a country, reach 100,000 deaths by legal assisted suicide.

It's heartbreaking. It's gone on for 10 years now. People who suffer, whether physically or mentally, whether death appears imminent or suffering is intolerable. People, understandably, understandably, and we should have compassion on people that struggle with this, understandably want the pain to stop.

There's real suffering, and it is a good thing to want pain to stop. They wish to no longer be subject to death and subjects of death. It's a remarkable thing that we get to witness that, in very real time, we see a segment of the population completely fed up with death and suffering and pain.

[16:54] The problem is, hope is absent. Because the only choice before them appears to be between life with suffering and death. But the offer in the gospel is infinitely more hopeful.

If the only way to break from the reign of sin is death, and we saw that in verse 7, right? Verse 7, what does Paul say? For one who has died has been set free from sin.

Then we must die to be free. But the problem with that is that when you die to be free from sin, then you're dead. And you can't live. Okay? So, you might be free from sin, but then you cease to live.

You cease to enjoy life. And ultimately, is that not what we want to do, is to enjoy life? But if we are united to Christ, Paul says, in his death, that means we are also united to him in his resurrection, which means that we can, in a very, very, very, very real way, again, we're baptized into the death of Christ.

We are freed from the slavery of sin, but then we don't stay dead. Because if Christ rose again, it means we get to rise with him.

[18:15] And therefore, we can be free from both slavery and the hopelessness of sin and the pain of suffering, and live forever, and enjoy life forever.

Friends, this, if we can grasp it, is an incredibly transformative reality. An incredibly transformative gift that we are offered.

It does not mean that there will be no suffering in this life, or that we will be fully free of sin. But it does mean that our life will be infused with eternal perspective and eternal purpose.

And it's directly connected to the God of righteousness himself. And this will lead us to our third and final point. Verses 12 to 14, that the gospel infuses us with a life of purpose.

Read with me verses 12 to 14. 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.

[19:15] 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.

Friends, if we have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection, coming under his godly rule and reign, we must be people that are actually serious about sin and obedience to the Lord.

We are told here not to allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies, in our hearts, our minds, in our affections, and in all the things we spend our time and treasures on.

We are called to be ruthless with evil and sin. Not to be saved, but because we are saved. We are not to present our bodies as vehicles or channels of sin any longer.

Instead, we are told to present our bodies to God as instruments of righteousness. And how can we do that? Because we have been brought by Christ from death to life. Sin no longer has dominion over us.

[20:21] Now we can be used by God, not for unrighteousness, but for righteousness. It means that God, the uncreated creator who is infinitely bigger, more majestic than we could ever wrap our minds around, he will use us to do his will, to accomplish his will, to extend his loving kindness and care to the world around us.

It's a remarkable thing to consider. Just consider what he is, the apostle is saying. We can be instruments either to death, so that we live selfishly and pridefully, and what will come about with this kind of living?

Pain and sorrow and maybe even death that we bring upon others and ourselves. It's a life of wickedness. Or we can live lives that are instruments to life.

And in service of Christ, we become the means by which his righteous rule is extended. We get to be used by the creator. But we also need to be real, okay?

Because like I opened up at the beginning, this world, this reality is a tension that we live in, right? On one hand, we have died to the dominion of sin.

[21 : 49] We have been raised with Christ. Where is Christ? He is at the right hand of God in intimate fellowship, unbreakable, unbroken, blessed connection with God the Father.

And yet, we experience something very different in this life, do we not? There's a civil war between our flesh and our soul, between unrighteousness and righteousness, life and death, sin and God. You know, there's this interesting bit, and I have it here, but for the sake of time, I won't read it. The second to last chapter in the return of the king, the ring is destroyed, the dark lord is defeated, and the hobbits go back to the shire, and the shire is under the rule and reign of the deposed Saruman. And there's this exchange at the very end where Frodo tells Saruman to leave, and Saruman says, like, not a chance, and the hobbits go to kill him.

And Saruman says, if you do that, I will curse you, and death will be upon you. And Frodo says, actually, don't listen to him. His words don't have weight anymore. And yet, the fact is, the reality of sin was very, in darkness, and evil was very present in the shire.

[23 : 06] So too is it like with us in this life. Although sin is defeated, we are no longer under the power and the reign and the rule of sin. The effects of sin come at us hard.

And this world is far from perfect, and we are far from perfect, and all of a sudden we realize that there is a civil war that we need to fight until kingdom come. Not by ourselves, by God's help, by the empowering of our Holy, by the Holy Spirit, which resides in us, but still it's a battle.

So then, how do we have victory when the tension between these forces is all too real? Even though sin is defeated, and it is defeated, it does not have dominion over us anymore, it can still seem so powerful, it's so overpowering, and it blasts these lies to us that say, defeating me is hopeless.

Good luck. How do we then have victory and walk in obedience to the Lord? I think there's a clue, and this is how we'll end. There's a clue in verses 3, 6, 8, 9, and 11.

See if you can pick it up. I'll read these verses. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ, and he continues on, we, verse 6, we know that our old self was crucified with him.

[24 : 29] Verse 8, Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. Verse 9, we know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.

Verse 11, so you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ in Christ Jesus. Did you catch it? Know, believe, consider.

Paul is telling us, listen, where is the battle? Ultimately, it's in our minds, it's in our hearts. And we must constantly remind ourselves and each other of our new reality in Christ.

We must feed on the truth that we are united with Christ, uncoupled from sin, coupled to Jesus, and we need to encourage each other to never make treaties with sin.

To encourage each other that sin is a defeated foe. To remind us of that. In the same way that Frodo, he reminded or told the shire that Sauron's a liar.

[25 : 29] His words hold no weight. We need to do that with one another. We need to do that with ourselves. Sin is a deposed tyrant. And at best, it's a guerrilla force.

Guerrilla forces can do a lot of damage. But in this case, they are the rebels. They can't overrun Christ.

Sin cannot overrun Christ. It can never regain the kingdom. We need to remind ourselves that we must abide in this wonderful delighting in Christ.

We need to help each other to cherish Jesus. Knowing and being excited by his grace and love. Learning to love the things he loves and hate the things that he hates.

And constantly asking him to use us as weak-willed as we are to exercise righteousness in the world that we are inhabiting. We ought to remind ourselves and to feast on the truth that we ought to love God's kingdom, but we need to love the king first.

[26 : 40] Paul sums this up in verse 11. So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to Christ in Christ Jesus. Paul is saying, listen, the gospel is the way by which we come into the faith, but we never leave it.

We never graduate from the gospel. We must know it and know it deeper. We must believe it, but believe it stronger. We must consider it and consider it in greater depths.

Act upon it. Embrace it. Friends, it's a life of faith. So returning to the opening question, is the gospel too good to be true? On the one hand, yes, it is.

It's way too good to be true. In fact, it's a bit of a scandal to think that we could, as unworthy, unrighteous, sinful human beings, be in the presence of the uncreated creator who is love, who is righteousness.

That is too good to be true. How can we truly grasp the grace of God that has been made available to us in Christ Jesus? And yet, it is not some fanciful or full of platitudes type of faith that we are called to.

[27 : 49] Why? Because it will cost us our lives. It's a call to death. But not just a call to death. It's a call to resurrected life.

Since we have died to Christ, we who are in him will be raised with him. Friends, in Christ you are a new creation. The old self with its sin is crucified.

The new self is alive. For what is true of Christ is true of us also. The new self is alive.