

## **Dead to Sin, alive in Christ**

### **Romans 6:1-14**

**Covenant Waterfall, 8 November 2020**

Read

Pray

#### **Introduction**

I was at a braai during the week, got chatting to a young guy there who began to open up to me about his walk with the Lord. Told me he received Christ as a teenager, but then has been living it up since. Knew he was sinning, but believed God would forgive him anyway, as God is a God of grace.

Common to hear things like this. I've wrestled with this in my own life, I'm sure we all have at some point.

King David must have gone through something similar in 2 Samuel 11, when he was relaxing on his roof one late afternoon, and there before him was the beautiful Bathsheba taking a bath. We know how the rest of the story unfolds – David commits adultery with her, gets her pregnant, has her husband killed in battle, and then marries her.

This is the same David which Scripture describes as having a heart after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), whom God chose as his anointed king to rule Israel, with whom God made a covenant, promising to make his name great, and establish his kingdom. God will be as a father to him, and David will be his son, and God will never take away his steadfast love from him (2 Sam 7:9-17).

God clearly showed David incredible grace and favour. Yet in spite of this, David still sinned grievously before God.

Can we, as a redeemed people – like David, as forgiven sinners, who have received God’s grace through Christ, continue in our sin because we know that we’ll be forgiven anyway?

It is this very question that Paul addresses in our passage in Romans 6.

I believe that the heart of this Scripture that we are going to look today answers this question in this way:

***Because we have died to sin in Christ, we cannot continue to be ruled by sin.***

3 points:

- Sin because of grace?
- No longer slaves!
- Put sin to death!

#### **A. Sin because of grace? (vv. 1-2)**

**“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!”**

We have entered right into the middle of Paul’s discussion about sin and grace. He has just spent the preceding verses in chapter 5 explaining that all of mankind has been corrupted by sin through Adam. As a result, everyone is deserving of God’s wrath. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, has taken on God’s wrath that was meant for us, and in return, our sins have been forgiven. We have been made right with God – we have been justified before him, restored in relationship to him through Christ, and receive eternal life. We have freely received God’s grace. Paul sums it up like this in Romans 5:19-20:

**“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more...”**

Grace has abounded to us even in face of the increase of our sin!

This is great news! It is too good – heart of the gospel – we are all sinners who are absolutely underserving of God’s abundantly generous grace to us in Christ.

Does this therefore mean that we can carry on in our sin because of the abundance of this grace? Paul's answer here is a resounding "NO!" (v. 2)

Why then is this so?

### **B. No longer slaves! (vv. 2-11)**

The rest of verse 2 says:

**"How can we who died to sin still live in it?"**

The immediate implication here is that it is impossible for us to live in sin if we are in Christ, because in Christ we are dead to sin.

So does this mean that if we are in Christ, we will never sin again? No, of course not – all of us still struggle with sin in this age. 1 Jn 1:10 says, **"If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."**

The truth is that we will only be perfect and sinless when we are with Christ in glory in the new heavens and the new earth. Until that time – we will continue to struggle against sin. The difference though, is that in Christ, we are not dominated and controlled by sin any more – as we were before we were born again. If we are not in Christ, we cannot help but be ruled by sin, as that is our very nature.

In Christ things are now radically different for us. Paul explains this in verse 4-5:

**"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."**

What Paul is saying here is that in Christ, we identify with him in two ways. Firstly, we identify with him in his death. And secondly, we identify with him in his resurrection. He draws a direct parallel between our death and resurrection, and Christ's death and resurrection. Let's have a look at how this is so:

## **Death –**

Paul associates baptism with death. He says in vv.3-4 that if we've been baptised into Christ, we've been baptised into his death. What does this mean?

Let's first look at Christ's baptism and death. In Jesus' baptism, he identified with sinful man even though he was sinless. His baptism was symbolic of the drowning of the sin in the waters of judgement and rising again in new resurrection life. Ultimately the power of sin was destroyed when Jesus was crucified – v.10, **“For the death he died, he died to sin, once for all...”**

Our baptism into Jesus' death occurred at the point of our conversion. Paul describes this in vv. 6-7:

**“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.”**

At that point, we were crucified with Christ. Our old self, or “old man” (Gk text) which was characterised by our sinful nature - died on the cross. As sin was destroyed on the cross with Christ, so was the power of sin destroyed in us when our old man was crucified. Because your old man has been crucified – *been killed, flogged, obliterated* – you are not enslaved by it any more. The glorious truth that Paul is declaring here is that if you've died – you have been set free from sin's power. The old man that was dominated by sin is no more – it was crucified on the cross with Christ.

## **Resurrection –**

We not only identify with Christ in his death, but also in his resurrection. His death was not the end – on the third day, he rose again, in an incorruptible body and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory, for all eternity. Verse 9 –

**“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.”**

It's the same for us who are in Christ – death is not the end. We are also raised up with Christ in new life here and now. Verse 4 says that just as Christ was raised from the dead, so in Christ, “**we too might walk in newness of life.**” Pointing to our regeneration – that having received Christ, we are born again through his Spirit (John 3). The Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead (Rom 8:11), also raises us from the dead and begins to renew us. Even when we die in this body, we will be raised up again in our new resurrection bodies, which will be like Christ's, in the new creation (1 Cor 15:49). Yet right now, those of us who are in Christ have been raised to life from our old sinful man as new creations. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

**“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”**

*If this is all true* – that our old man, dominated by sin has been put to death in Christ, and that we have now been raised to new life in Christ as a new creation – then it is surely impossible for us to still be ruled by sin – the very life of Christ is in us! It is therefore a blinding contradiction to continue in sin when we are in Christ. To do so shows that we have fundamentally misunderstood the gospel!

The reality is that many of us don't live as if this glorious work that Christ has done for us is true. For some of us, it is really hard to imagine a life without engaging in some sins that have become so habitual, they feel like they are so a part of our lives, a part of us, our identity. To stop them seems too daunting, perhaps even impossible...

It is said that after slavery ended in the American South, many black slaves who had been legally freed, continued to stay with their former slave masters and live as if nothing had changed. They were so used to their former life of slavery that they could think of living in no other way.

Perhaps you find yourself in a similar position. You have been freed from a life of sin, your old sinful man has been crucified with Christ, and you have been raised to new life in him, yet you still continue in your old ways.

Paul is reminding us here the truth what we have become in Christ in the face of our tendency to wander back to our old ways – we are dead to sin and alive in God! No longer a slave to sin, but set free from sin’s power in Christ!

### **C. Put sin to death (vv. 11-14)**

We’ve seen that Paul has spent the bulk of our passage in Romans 6 showing us what Christ has done for us in terms of releasing us from our old lives of sin. But he doesn’t end there. From verse 11 he shifts to speaking to us about what Christ has done (indicative), to the imperative – in other words, stuff we need to do: vv.11-12 -

**“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...”**

As new creations in Christ, we are now dead to sin and alive in Christ. Yet, by God’s grace and by the Spirit’s power, we must appropriate this truth and live it out – otherwise we will be like the slaves who were legally freed, but still living in slavery.

How? Paul gets practical in verse 13 - Do not use your body as an instrument of unrighteousness – don’t actively pursue sin – don’t go out of your way to do it – don’t put yourself in positions where you could get tempted to sin. Cut sin out of your life – actively do it, don’t be passive in this regard.

If you’re looking at porn, *stop it!*

If you are in a sexually immoral relationship, *break it off!*

If you are a slave to your job and serving money as your master, *get help!*

Don’t be passive! Don’t go back to the vomit! (2 Pe 2:22).

Puritans called this process of putting sin to death in our lives – mortification of sin – killing of sin. Good news - if we’re in Christ – not alone in our battles against sin – God has graciously given us his Spirit who empowers us to flee sin and obey the Lord.

Paul doesn't stop there. It's not enough to just stop sinning with your body. Instead present your body to God as an instrument of righteousness – actively pursue and serve God. Sin promises satisfaction, but never truly delivers. True satisfaction comes when we instead trust in God and give ourselves to serve him. WSC 1 – Chief end of man? Glorify God and enjoy him forever. True satisfaction in Christ alone!

### **Conclusion (v.14)**

V.14

**“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”**

This really sums it all up. We serve God and live lives of holiness, free from the domination of sin – not because we have to earn our salvation through law-keeping, but instead because we trust in Christ's perfect obedience on our behalf. Jesus is the One who lived the perfect life that we couldn't, and he died the death on the cross that was meant for us. Trusting in him, we receive by faith this gift of grace – that we are counted as righteous before our Father. It's only by receiving this gift of grace in Christ, that we can live lives that glorify God, in obedience to God as a response to his gospel. Jesus has destroyed the power of sin in us and raised us to new life in him – this is an act of pure grace given to us!

It is only as a result of God's grace in Christ that we can truly live in freedom from a life dominated by sin. In fact the Greek word for “dominion” in this verse is from the same root word as “lord”. In other words – “sin is no longer your lord” – instead Jesus is! We are no longer ruled by sin and oppressed by its lordship over us. Instead we are ruled by Jesus and are set free under his loving rule. What does his lordship over us look like? Hear how he describes it in Matthew 11:28-30 –

**“Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**

*So, coming in to land...*

Original question – Romans 6:1 – carry on sinning so God will forgive us anyway? Never! Carry on in sin – hardens our heart to Christ. Leads us away from him. If your life is still dominated and controlled by sin, need to ask yourself if you have really received Christ in the first place. 2 Cor 5:10, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”** Carried on pursuing your sins, in hardness of your heart – one day you will pay for them with your own life – penalty of sin is death. Eternal death in hell.

Doesn't have to be that way! Instead, receive Christ! In Christ - we have died to sin. Our old man has been crucified to Christ and we've been set free from sin's power.

And in Christ – we have been raised to this new, glorious and eternal life, full of his life and Spirit.

Going back to a life of sin in the light of these awesome things that God has done for us in Christ is just crazy!

Know Christ and his **“life that is truly life”** (1 Tim 6:19), and through his Spirit's power can live lives that glorify him because of his great grace given to us.

Amen