



Romans 6:1-14

Free at Last!

Dr. Gil Wagoner came into my office one day and said, "Wil, I have this lovely couple who have been my patients for quite some time. They have asked me to start a Bible study in their home, but with my schedule at the hospital and with the medical intern program I can't possibly start another ministry at the present time. Could you help me out?"

As part of my follow up on the patients at Hospital Vozandes I spent some time with this family. Francisco and I visited his neighbors and announced our intentions of having a Bible study in his home. On the very first night we had a living room full of neighbors and friends. I shared with them how to come to an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ. I emphasized that we have all gotten an "F" on our spiritual report cards, and that it was impossible for any of us to merit a right relationship with God on our own virtue and character. Then I shared that "while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." He died on our behalf. He died while we were still helpless, needy sinners. "God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6, 8). While I was still sharing these verses Francisco's eyes, face lit up and he interjected, "You mean He loves me, too." I said, "Yes, Francisco, He loves you this much. God never has to tell you again that He loves you. He demonstrated it at Calvary. God loves you so much He wants to give you a free gift of eternal life. You can't earn it. It is already paid for in full." I then turned to Romans 10:9-10 which says, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." Francisco said to the group, "I want this!" In the next few moments, he and others believed on Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. When I left his home that night Francisco and his friends had experienced peace with God.

The Apostle Paul told the Roman Christians that this is the experience of every believer. That deep inner peace comes from being "justified by faith." The moment you put your faith in Christ the LORD God declares you to be righteous in His eyes. He sees you trusting in the death of Christ and declares you acquitted.

As serious as that simple message of the good news of Jesus Christ is there is the tendency of some individuals to abuse this new found grace. Grace is never cheap. It is the most priceless gift God could give to mankind. The very thought that all of your sins are wiped away, cleansed, forgiven forever is immense. Sad to say, there will be some who will take advantage of it and abuse it.

THE PROBLEM OF PREACHING SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH (6:1-2)

The battle cry of the Reformation was "Salvation by grace through faith!" This was a return to the great truth the Apostle Paul preached to the Romans when he declared "a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."

We have been justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone (5:1, 20-21).

Paul summarizes his whole argument in the first four chapters of Romans with these words, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . ." (Romans 5:1).

He ended chapter five by reminding us the purpose of the law was to bring a sense of condemnation and an awareness of guilt. It points its finger to all of humanity and says you failed. You have sinned. You stand in the need of God's grace. "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). In Galatians, Paul says the Law was a tutor to take us by the hand and lead us to Christ so we could be saved by grace through faith in His death on the cross for us.

The message of grace is clear. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). We have received grace sufficient to cover every sin we will ever commit. Sin increased and grace super abounded. Where actual transgressions increased, grace was added to this super abundance of grace. The word means to "abound beyond measure," "abound over and above." This grace super abounded with more grace added to that. More grace was added to this super abundance of grace. You can't out sin grace. A. T. Robertson said, "The flood of grace surpassed the flood of sin, great as that was (and is)."

We have a new standing before God. He has pronounced us "Acquitted!" "Set Free!" "Forgiven!" Let us never forget it is because Jesus Christ died in our place on the cross as our substitute. The blood of Jesus cleanses us of every sin. Because of His death, you have been set free!

God takes us in our state of sin and by His sovereign act declares the believing sinner righteous in His sight. It is a judicial pronouncement God makes based on Christ's righteousness and His substitutionary death on our behalf. It is God's gift. It is absolutely free. Christ paid for it. All we can do is freely accept it as our own.

The problem defined

Now that we are justified in this marvelous grace, "shall we sin to our heart's content and see how far we can exploit the grace of God" (Philips paraphrase of 6:1)? Can we live an irresponsible lifestyle? "Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" The present tense indicates the practice of sin as a habit.

habit.

Some clown was teaching that since you are saved by grace and God has completely dealt with your sins you could continue to sin so that grace might be in more abundance. Sin it up! You are already forgiven. It really doesn't matter. God will forgive you anyway. Besides, it gives grace a chance to operate in your life. The more you sin the more grace you get. Grace will increase if we sin more. That is abusing grace. The individual should really question whether he has ever been saved by grace.

You can hear the legalist arguing with Paul: "Once saved always saved leads to lawlessness. You preachers of salvation by grace through faith weaken our sense of moral responsibility. You only encourage sinful behavior with that kind of teaching."

Let's face it that is always the risk of preaching salvation by grace.

Dr. D. M. Lloyd Jones a number of years ago made a candid observation. He said, "There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the New Testament gospel of salvation than this, that some people might misunderstand it and misinterpret it to mean that it really amounts to this, that because you are saved by grace alone it does not matter at all what you do; you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace."

Paul's answer to grace abusers (v. 2).

Shall we continue to practice sin as a habit? Paul's response is, "Heaven forbid!" Never! Individuals who actually think that God's pardon gives them liberty to sin without penalties are irresponsible.

He shouts out, "May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" The New International Version reads: "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

The freedom we have in Christ is not a freedom to do anything we want to do, but to be everything God wants us to be. We are free to live the Christian life.

Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians telling them they had been set free. "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery . . . For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:1, 13).

Paul says, remember you are dead men! "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Remember that you are legally dead! When we surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ and He became the Lord of our lives we were the very ones who died. It is past tense, a once and for all death. It is death in a judicial sense.

WE HAVE A NEW POSITION IN CHRIST (6:3-11)

"Know" your position in Christ (v. 3, 6, 9).

Our position in Christ is beautifully illustrated in baptism by immersion in water. Baptism is a symbol or ordinance. By its performance, we call to mind what Christ did for us. It helps us understand our new identification with Him.

identification with Him.

When a believer descends into the water and the water closes in over his head, it is like being buried when you die. When you come up out of the water, it is like rising from the grave. It is a picture of dying and rising again. The believer of the Lord Jesus Christ is saying he died to one kind of life and rose to another kind. He died to the old life of sin and rose to the new life in Christ.

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" (v. 3). Baptism is a public testimony or proclamation of a believer's new inward relationship to Christ. That inward union takes place before the act of baptism. Instead of "into Christ" it would be better to understand "were baptized unto Christ or in Christ." The translation "into" makes Paul say that the union with Christ was brought to pass by means of baptism, which is not his idea. The original word (eis) "into" denotes an inward union, participation or identification.

The word "baptize" primarily means identification. It is a word used to describe dipping a garment into dye and changing the identity of the cloth. If I dip this new white shirt in a bowl of red dye, it becomes identified as a red shirt. It is no longer white. You do not refer to it any longer as the white shirt. It now has a new identity.

Baptism points in two directions: back to Calvary to Christ's death, burial and resurrection; and forward to our death to sin, burial of the old life, and the new life in Christ (6:3 4, 5 7).

"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (v. 4).

The New Testament puts a strong emphasis on the fact that the believer "died in Christ." "All for whom Christ died also died in Christ. All who died in Christ rose again with Christ. This rising again with Christ is rising to newness of life after the likeness of Christ's resurrection. To die with Christ is, therefore, to die to sin and to rise with him to the life of new obedience, to live not to ourselves but to him who died for us and rose again. The inference is inevitable that those for whom Christ died are those and those only who die to sin and live to righteousness" (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, pp. 69 70).

Being buried in the waters of baptism points us backwards to Christ's death and burial and to our death to sin. It is a picture of His death and burial. Our identification with Christ is so vivid in Paul's mind that we have been buried together with Him. "We have been buried together with Him through baptism into death." Observe the closeness of the relationship. How can we possibly continue to choose to habitually sin? Baptism is a picture of death. Dead people are buried out of sight. Dead people have no life. The old life has ceased. Dead men don't sin. Moreover, baptism also looks back to Christ's resurrection from the dead. Christ rose from the dead. It also pictures our new life by the coming out of the watery grave to walk on the other side of the baptismal grave. We are raised to new life in Christ. We "walk about in newness of life." It implies a habitual conduct. A change has taken place in our lives. Baptism even pictures our own resurrection from the grave when Christ returns.

Our identity changed when we came to Christ. When we believed on Christ as our savior and received eternal life we were dipped into His death and resurrection. Our identity was changed. "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). His death to sin became our death to sin; His burial became our burial; His resurrection became our resurrection. We have a whole new identity.

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The baptism of the Holy Spirit does the work in our inner being and water symbolizes or pictures what is done. The symbol in the baptism is not the reality, but the picture of the reality.

Paul continues with his argument. "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin" (6:5-7).

Paul's assumption is true. Since we have become united with Christ in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. We have become permanently united with Christ. It is like being grown together when limbs of fruit trees are grafted together. It is an intimate progressive union. Therefore, how can a person who has been brought into this kind of an intimate love relationship with Christ habitually practice sin?

Paul is not advocating sinless perfection here. We will not become perfect in our practice until we see Jesus face to face in glory. But Paul does stress a new creation, a new relationship with God even though he is not yet perfect. It is a progressive sanctification, or progressive spiritual growth in the likeness of Christ. Paul still has to deal with sin because he is still a sinner.

Bear in mind sanctification and justification are not the same. However, you can not separate sanctification from justification. Sanctification springs from the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection and our identification with Christ. God has made more than enough provision to cover all our needs through the death of Christ and His resurrection.

Know that you are "dead to sin."

What was crucified with Christ? Literally, "the old man" was crucified and buried. The "old self was crucified with Him" (v. 6). We were crucified together. The old unrenewed self before our union with Christ was crucified. It did not take place when we were baptized. It took place when we died to sin. If we have died to sin how can we continue to be a slave to it? Slavery ends when the slave dies. Our "old self was crucified with Christ" (v. 3, 6-7). The body belonging to or ruled by sin was rendered inoperative. It was made inactive. The old man and the new man do not coexist together in the believer.

"To suppose that the old man has been crucified and still lives or has been raised again from this death is to contradict the obvious force of the import of crucifixion . . . Paul says 'our old man has been crucified,' and not 'our old man is in the process of being crucified'" (John Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, p. 212).

Sin is not the controlling factor in the believer because the old man has been crucified.

In verse ten Paul says, "the death Christ died, He died to sin, once for all . . ." What was that sin He died to? Christ never had a personal experience with sin. He knew no sin. How can Paul say "Christ died to sin once for all?" Whose sin? My sin! "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). He died my death. He paid the penalty for my sin (v. 7). He died for Wil Pounds.

Therefore, I am no longer guilty. Verse seven, says we are "freed," "acquitted" "justified." It is perfect passive indicative of *dikaiow* and means we stand justified, set free from. In this verse the word means to be declared free from sin or to be acquitted from sin. The dead person sins no more. Remember that we died with Christ. We are released from sin. We are legally dead, no guilt, no power. The believer stands justified.

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Charles Hodge well said, "The believer can not continue to serve sin for he who has died (with Christ) is justified, and therefore free from sin, free from its dominion. This is the great evangelical truth which underlies the apostle's whole doctrine of sanctification. The natural reason assumes that acceptance with a holy and just God must be founded on character, that men must be holy in order to be justified. The gospel reverses this, and teaches that God accepts the ungodly; that we must be justified in order to become holy."

Know that you are alive in Christ (v. 8-10).

We have been set free, and are no longer slaves to sin. We are free to live the Christian life. As far as God is concerned, we are already on the resurrection side of the grave!

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God" (vv. 8-10).

Paul builds on the idea in verse six and goes on to say in verse eight, "Since we have died once for all with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Him." Again, it is pictured in the waters of baptism. Christ died once and only once, not once upon a time. It was a definite act at a point and place and time in history. It never had to be repeated. He is alive, never to die again. Moreover, we are in Christ. This is our sanctified life. This is the only way to live the Christian life. Paul's whole argument revolves around our intimate living relationship with Christ.

In verse nine death is pictured as master and lord. Since Christ has been raised from the dead, and will never die again, death no longer is master over Him. Death has been conquered. Christ is the Lord over death.

We are under a new landlord. The old landlord no longer has any right to the property. There is a new owner. We no longer have any obligations to the old landlord. We can only obey the new landlord!

"Reckon" on your new position in Christ (v. 11).

Now what are we to do with these great truths we have just learned? The believer is to look upon himself in the light of this truth. He is to remind himself that he is freed from the penalty and dominion of sin. He is also to count upon the fact that he receives his spiritual life from Christ daily.

The word *logizomai* is translated "reckon" (KJV) "count on" (NIV) "consider" (NASB). Paul says reckon on your position in Christ (6:11). "Even so consider (reckon, count on) yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The present imperative could mean "do this continually," or "continue doing this." It is imperative that we have this new mind set.

The word "reckon" means to calculate, to take into account, to figure, to count on, consider the fact. Let your mind play on these truths. Meditate upon them, keep saying to yourselves, remind yourself of who you are in Christ. Be constantly counting upon the fact that you are dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. The secret to holy living is in the mind of Christ.

Baptism does not make one dead to sin and alive to God. That is a spiritual operation "in Christ Jesus" which is performed by the Holy Spirit. It is only pictured by baptism. Paul makes a plea by using the symbol to live up to the ideal of the baptized life.

Here are the facts Paul says. Christ paid your penalty; Christ set you free; live it up! Walk in the newness of life! You are dead to sin; you are alive to God; you are free to live. How can you blow it?

Leon Morris helps us grasp this great truth. ". . . Paul is arguing that his readers should come to see the truth of their situation. Christ's death and resurrection has altered their position, and they should live in accordance with the new reality. . . . The present tense points to a continuing process; this goes on throughout the Christian life. The believer is to take seriously his death with Christ (v. 8) and Christ's death to sin (v. 10). Since Christ died to sin and since the believer is dead with Christ, the believer is dead to sin and to recognize the fact of that death. This does not mean he is immune to sinning. Paul does not say that sin is dead but that the believer is to count himself as dead to it." The sin of the unbeliever is that of a slave to sin, whereas the believer has been set free. Morris continues, "Paul tells him that he is to recognize that where sin is concerned he is among the dead. He has been delivered from its dominion. And death is permanent. Once united to Christ he must count himself as dead to the reign of sin forever. He is to reckon also that he is alive to God. . . . God sees us not as we are 'in ourselves' but as we are 'in Christ'" (Leon Morris *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp. 256, 257).

I can hear someone saying. Yeah but I don't feel dead to sin! Feelings don't have anything to do with it. It is a judicial fact. Appropriate your victory by faith in Christ.

My alarm clock goes off at 6:00 A.M. every morning. I wake up one cold, dark dreary morning and I don't feel like it is 6 A.M. I can argue all I want to, but it is still 6 A.M. The fact won't change. The fact isn't affected by my feelings! Moreover, I can't change the truth about my relationship with Christ either.

WE HAVE THE POWER THROUGH OUR POSITION TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (6:12-14).

We can now walk in newness of life (v. 4, 9b, 12-14).

We have been raised up with Christ and set free to live Christ. He desires to live His risen life through us. He has taken up residence in us to empower us to live His life.

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness (vv. 12-13a).

Don't let sin be king of your body (v. 12, 13a).

"Let not sin continue to reign" as it did once (5:12). Don't "continue to sin" (v. 1). Sin does not have to be the king of your life. You do not have to obey it any longer. It is no longer your master. The reign of sin is over with you. Self-indulgence is inconsistent with trust in the vicarious atonement of Christ. Sin does not have the dominion over the person who is united to Christ.

Paul adds, "but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (v. 13b, 14).

The Apostle calls us to a wholehearted and total commitment to Christ. "Do not keep on presenting your members to sin . . . but once for all present yourselves to God."

Do not make the grace of God an excuse for sinning. Grace can never lead to license.

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Life under grace is a victorious life.

Make a once for all break with your old life and as a daily habit present yourself to God as one who has risen from the dead. You were dead; now you are alive.

It is not possible to live the Christian life without union with Christ. Every believer is in Christ. Live your life so close to Christ that it can be said you are in Him.

Have you come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you depending upon Him for your daily spiritual bread? Do you find in Him your water of life? Has He become the very air you breathe?

The person who has died to sin no longer lives there. It no longer dominates his thoughts, affections, will and actions. Christ and the new life in Christ dominate his thinking.

In this passage of Scripture it is crucial for us to bear in mind that we have been describing the Christian life. It begins with a spiritual birth. If you do not have this peace it may be because you have never been born again. That is where this kind of life begins. We are always ready to help you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Here is where you can find out how to trust in Christ as your Savior.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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