

## Sin Will Not Have Dominion Over You

Romans 6: 5–14<sup>1</sup>

### Are We to Continue in Sin?

Let's start right where we left off last Lord's Day. Paul had asked the question,

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Romans 6:1 ESV

And the answer, of course, is no; absolutely unequivocally no. By no means; may it never be; God forbid! In fact, in Romans chapter 2, Paul said of those who might be inclined to teach this sort of thing:

<sup>8</sup> ...Their condemnation...

(that is, the judgment that will inevitably fall upon them)

...is just. Romans 3:8 ESV

Anyone who would preach or teach such a thing deserves the condemnation of God. We must not attempt to continue in sin that grace may abound, nor may we teach others that such a thing is possible.

Grace that justifies the sin but not the sinner is what some have called cheap grace, but in reality it is no grace at all. As someone once said (and I've heard this attributed to different people on occasion, but it might have been Spurgeon), "The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul." Paul's second question makes it abundantly clear why this is so. He wrote:

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Romans 6:3 ESV

Furthermore,

<sup>4</sup> 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. Romans 6:4 ESV

But before we go on, note that Paul is clearly not speaking here of our physical death and resurrection. That would make no sense in the light of his first point. If this is about our physical death and the resurrection that takes place at the final return of Christ, then it has little or nothing to do with the question of whether or not we should continue in sin that grace may increase, but Paul offers it here as evidence of just that.

Shall we go on sinning, then, that grace may increase? Of course not. Don't you know that we have been crucified with Christ—we have been buried with Him through baptism into death—that just as he was raised through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

## Dead and Alive, All at Once.

So, there's a couple of things happening here that we need to be aware of. First, Paul's use of the idea of death to sin. It can be confusing because in Ephesians, chapter 2, he wrote:

<sup>1</sup> And you were dead **in the trespasses and sins** <sup>2</sup> **in which you once walked**, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— Ephesians 2:1–2 ESV

So, at that time, we were dead toward God, spiritually speaking, and living,

<sup>3</sup> ...in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:3 ESV

At that time, then, we were not only dead **in** sin, we were dead **to** righteousness.

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> **even when we were dead in our trespasses**, made us alive together with Christ...

proving, as Paul would go on to write, that it is

*by grace you have been saved...* Ephesians 2:4–5 ESV

This makes perfect sense, because we were not merely sick in our trespasses and sins, we were dead, so there was nothing at all that we could do about it. Extending the analogy a little bit, dead people don't even want to be made alive. That would go against their nature, so then, it is only by the intervention of the marvelous, sovereign, amazing grace of God that we have been saved. He stepped in, when we were helpless—even when we were His enemies—and, “at just the right time”<sup>2</sup> Christ died for the ungodly.

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8–9 ESV

But even as we were brought from death to life, spiritually speaking, we were “buried with Christ through baptism into death.” We died, in other words, to the spiritual death in which we once lived, so that we could be made alive in Christ by the glory of the Father, and then walk in newness of life.

So, to summarize, before salvation, we were alive to sin and dead to righteousness, but after salvation, we are now dead to sin, and alive to righteousness. This is the work of the sovereign God, and it was accomplished for us “in Christ”, when He was “delivered up for our trespasses,” on the cross, “and raised for our justification”<sup>3</sup> by the glory of the Father, as we saw back in Romans, chapter 4. We were alive, and yet dead, but now, having died to sin, we are alive to God in Christ Jesus, and we have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup> For if we have been united with him in a death like his... Romans 6:5 ESV ...

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Romans 5:6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Romans 5:24.

(and by the grace of God we have been), then

...we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. Romans 6:5 ESV

And, again, this is not speaking of the resurrection of the body. It's much more immediate, for

<sup>6</sup> 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. Romans 6:6 ESV

So, we who have died to sin, (and that's everyone who has

<sup>12</sup> ...believed in his name... John 1:12 ESV

—all those who have been born,

<sup>13</sup> ...not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:13 ESV)

we must not—we cannot—attempt to live in sin.

<sup>7</sup> For one who has died **has been set free from sin.** Romans 6:6–7 ESV

### Set Free from Sin.

This is simply the end result of having died with Christ. The one who has died to sin **has been** (past tense) set free from sin. This is the word of the Lord, so there should be no question, but in case we might be tempted to think that this is some sort of novel approach, the writers of the Heidelberg Catechism held this interpretation as well. True conversion, according to Lord's Day 33 (as we saw last Sunday), is two things,

...the dying away of the old self, and the coming-to-life of the new.<sup>4</sup>

More specifically, Lord's Day 1:

What is your only comfort in life and in death?<sup>5</sup>

Well, there's the part that many of us know pretty well.

That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

Good enough, but then there's the next part.

He...

(my faithful Savior Jesus Christ)

...has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood...

Again, that's amazing all on its own, but it's also not the end of the sentence. The authors of the Catechism went on:

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4 Christian Reformed Church, "The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33", in *Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* ed. CRCNA (Grand Rapids, MI: Faith Alive Publications, 1988), 54.

5 Christian Reformed Church, "The Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1", in *Ecumenical Creeds*, 13.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, **and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.**

Later on in Romans 6, we will learn that the wages of sin is death,<sup>6</sup> but we have been *set free* from that penalty, and not only the penalty of sin (as if that weren't enough), but also from the very power of sin. We have been set free from the tyranny of the devil himself.

I know I've told it before, but there's an old story about a little boy who was sent off to Sunday School and sternly instructed by his mother to come straight home without stopping to play by the creek. She added that if he were to be tempted, he should just turn and say, "Get thee behind me Satan," and all would be well.

Of course, as these things often go, when the boy arrived home it was abundantly clear that he had not only played by the creek, but he had actually played *in* the creek. Still, when his mom demanded an explanation, the boy, all sweetness and innocence, said, "Well...you see...when I felt tempted to go down by the creek I just turned to that old devil and said, 'Get thee behind me Satan,' just like you said. And it must have worked too, because no sooner had he got behind me, than he just pushed me right in."

But we've been set free from that sort of thing. The late Flip Wilson's old shtick, "The devil made me do it," just doesn't work for the people of God. Jesus has liberated us from sin. He has set us free from the tyranny of the devil. Romans 6, verses 6 – 10:

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. Romans 6:6–10 ESV

### **Let Not Sin Reign.**

So, the only question that remains is, "Do we believe it?" Do we understand and truly believe that we *have been set free* from sin? If we do, there are implications. First, verse 11.

<sup>11</sup> So...

(houtōs [οὕτως], "in this way", or "this same way"),

...**you also** must consider yourselves dead **to sin** and alive **to God** in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11 ESV

It is true, then. It is simply reality for those who know the Lord, and even so, as we find it in the American Standard Version,

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Romans 6:23.

<sup>11</sup> ...**reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:11 ASV7

And I love that word “reckon” in this context. It’s a math word; an accounting word; λογίζομαι [λογίζεσθε]; to count or to credit. Many people let the computer do all the math these days, but if you have anything to do with bookkeeping—even if it’s simply reconciling a cheque book—then you know that if you’re going to reckon something to be true, then it had better be true. It would be futile to write a cheque (or even to attempt an online transaction) for \$100 if there’s only a dollar in the account. It would also be foolish to fearfully refuse to make a transaction for which there is an adequate sum in the bank.

In this case, Paul is saying, “You **have died** with Christ (this is the truth); you have been crucified with Him so that the body of sin (that “old man” or “old nature”), might be done away with or “brought to nothing”. Even so, reckon it—consider it—to be true, **because it is**.

If you belong by faith to Jesus Christ, then you can no longer be a slave to sin. If you belong by faith to Jesus Christ, then you have been raised, by the grace of God, to live—to walk—in a new life, the life that you can live by faith in the Son of God who loved you and gave Himself for you.<sup>8</sup>

But what does this mean? What are we to do now that we reckon or consider ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus? Well, verse 12:

<sup>12</sup> **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.** Romans 6:12  
ESV

This, of course, is an imperative. It’s something that we are meant to do, or, in this case, not. **Do not let sin reign** in your physical body. Just don’t do it. You don’t have to. The devil can’t make you. No one can.

We who trust in Christ alone have been crucified with Him, and raised to walk in newness of life. We have died to sin, once for all, just as Christ did. We have been set free from sin. It is imperative then that we not behave as if these things are not so. It is imperative that we live and walk in the freedom and grace that Jesus purchased for us at the price of His own precious blood.

Then, verse 13, as well.

<sup>13</sup> **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.** Romans 6:13 ESV

This is the command of Scripture, but I wonder if we really understand that whenever we sin, this is what we are doing. Whenever we sin, we, who have been set free from sin, are voluntarily offering our members (the parts of our body) as instruments for unrighteousness. Whenever we sin, as we will (if the Lord is willing) explore more next week, we are selling

<sup>7</sup> American Standard Version (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Galatians 2:20.

ourselves back into slavery. We are willingly giving ourselves up as obedient slaves to sin, when God has called us instead to present our bodies as

<sup>1</sup> ...a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 12:1 NKJV9

And surely this **is** reasonable; this is logical; this simply makes sense in the light of all that God, in His infinite mercy and grace, has done for us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32 ESV

He who has shown

<sup>8</sup> ...his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 ESV

He who loved the world that He made, in this way

<sup>16</sup> ...He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 NKJV

See, the life that we are given by the resurrection of Jesus Christ is truly everlasting life, but we are called as God's people to enter into that abundant life even now, **and we can**. It is not an impossible dream. It is not a command that is beyond our reach in Christ Jesus. We have been brought from death to life, from the sinfulness of who we were to the righteousness of Christ Himself.

<sup>13</sup> He...

(the Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ)

**...has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,** <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:9-14 ESV

Next week, if the Lord is willing, we'll talk more about the practicalities of how to live this life, and we'll be talking about it through much of the rest of Romans, but if you just can't wait, don't hesitate to contact me during the week and we can discuss it sooner. This is the life we are called to live. This is the joy of knowing Jesus. This is the power of Christ in us.

<sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:14 ESV