

WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE
(SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2012)

Scripture Reading: 10 Words; Romans 6:1-7

R. B. Kuiper has made a powerful observation in a quote I have read before and now read again:

In all the Word of God there is no doctrine which, if properly applied, is more conducive to godly living than is the doctrine of salvation by grace, and by grace alone.¹

We know that grace is not simply God saying to you, “It’s ok, I love you just the way you are.” This we would say is a very simplistic understanding of God’s grace, but it would seem to many that grace is a poor motivator for truly holy living. Doesn’t the assurance of God’s love and forgiveness give you an excuse for your sin? If there is nothing you can do to earn God’s love and favor, then what is the motive for sincerely seeking to obey what God requires of you?

The question that Paul asks at the beginning of chapter 6 is answered with a very simple, direct answer along with a very rich explanation of our union with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Far from being an excuse or encouragement for sin, the grace of God in Jesus Christ brings about an entirely new condition for the believer. No longer are we in Adam but we are now in Jesus Christ. Because of the greatness of God’s grace and salvation, **you are called walked in newness of life.**

The opening section of Romans 6 extends to at least verse 11 or verse 14, but we will consider only the first seven verses in three parts: vv. 1-2, vv. 3-4, vv. 5-7.

You are called walked in newness of life.

1. SHOULD WE CONTINUE IN SIN THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND?, VV. 1-2

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

In Romans 3, Paul briefly mentioned the slander brought against him and his teaching.

Rom. 3:8 And *why* not say, “Let us do evil that good may come”?—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

¹ Taken from *The Complete Gathered Gold*.

The question at the start of chapter 6 isn't necessarily a question that was being asked by an opponent, but it may simply be a question that Paul raised in order to deal with objections.²

And doesn't the question of verse 1 confirm that Paul has been proclaiming a message of grace? If Paul's message was, although Jesus did most of the work, you still have to do a little bit of work to earn God's declaration of righteousness, there would be no reason to deal with this objection. But Paul's message has been one of God's sovereign and free grace.

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

The end of chapter 5 especially sets the context for the opening question of chapter 6.

Rom. 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, **grace abounded** much more, **21** so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The question that Paul raises in verse 1 is a very accurate summary of how the unregenerate mind thinks about God's work of salvation. The left-wing British poet W. H. Auden said:

I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged.³

The word sin is found 48 times in the book of Romans. Chapter 6 alone contains 16 references to sin. Romans 6 and 7 are together the key chapters dealing with sin and the believer.

The expression **continue in sin** means to persist in sin as a state or habit; the verb according to one commentator has the overtone of stubborn determination.⁴

The question of verse 1 does sadly have many examples. George Grant and Gregory Wilbur in their book, *A Christian Almanac*, recount briefly the story of the Russian mystic, Grigori Rasputin. He was part of a heretical sect that taught that communion with God came only after committing sin. Rasputin, whose name means "debauchee" spent his life engaging in both perversion and supposed penance.⁵

² Ben Witherington III, 155.

³ Cited by Moo, 356.

⁴ Dunn, 306.

⁵ Grant and Wilbur, *A Christian Almanac*, 760.

Can we also say that too many professed Christians live very much like the world because they also have a faulty view of God's grace? In no way does Paul or the NT teach a doctrine of sinless perfection, but have too many Christians become blind to sin because we don't properly understand and apply the teaching found in Romans 6 and throughout the NT?

If you are honest, you may well find even in your own experience, examples where you have in some sense justified sin because you reason, God will certainly forgive me, if I ask Him later to do so.

The answer of verse 2 to the question is a resounding negative! Certainly or absolutely not! By no means! Paul uses this same response three times in chapter 3.

But this, of course, is not the only response to the question of verse 1. The reason why it is ridiculous that we should sin so that grace may abound is answered throughout chapters 6-8. In these chapters we continue to see the gospel of grace presented, and we also see the difference between justification and sanctification.

The Westminster Larger Catechism in question 77 asks about the difference between justification and sanctification.

A. Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.

Another commentator has summarized the difference as justification by faith and sanctification by struggle.⁶

So why should we not continue in habitual sin so that God's grace will abound? The foundational answer is set forth in verse 2 in the form of a question. **How shall we do died to sin live any longer it it?**

You will observe that this chapter is filled with references to death. Verses 2-7 each have a reference to death. The other key themes in this chapter are slavery, mastery, and freedom.

In looking at Paul's answer, there are three main parts found in verses 2-10. The answer in a sense is presented in reverse order. The **key** reference to death is found in verses 8-10. Christ died to sin. Then in verses 3-7, the emphasis is on our union with Christ. We died with Him. Then in verse 2 we find the summary conclusion: **We died to sin.**⁷

⁶ Giffith Thomas, cited by Moo, 359.

⁷ Moo, 354, footnote 12.

What does this mean? It cannot mean that we are now sinless or that there is no longer any temptation for the Christian. This is not the testimony of God's Word nor is this what we see in our own experience. But something significant is now true for every believer. If you are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, then the controlling and dominating power of sin in your life has been broken. **You have died to the power of sin.**⁸

This is part of the good news of the gospel which Paul will further explain. And what an important truth this is that you seek to regularly remind yourself of in the midst of temptation. I have died to sin, so why should I live any longer in it?

It should be observed that sin's power does not mean that every person is as wicked as they potentially could be. You might have some very nice neighbors who are not Christians. How do you see the power of sin in people who appear to be very nice and kind? Well, isn't the greatest sin the refusal to acknowledge and worship the true God as He has revealed Himself? The greatest power of sin is that it keeps you from worshiping, serving, and trusting the one true God as He deserves. There are of course many other sins which flow from this, even in people who on the surface seem quite pleasant. Remember the human heart is deceitful above all things. Only God can know it!

Douglas Moo asks a good question concerning verse 2. Is living in sin a **possibility** to be avoided or an **impossibility** to be recognized?⁹

This is a very good question. The better answer would be that living in sin is a possibility that should and can be avoided. And yet we all must recognize our inconsistency in living in terms of the reality of who we are in Jesus Christ. This we will consider further, but even our inconsistency does not take away from the truth of verse 2. In Jesus Christ we have died to the power of sin! There is a firm foundation for seeking to live in obedience to God. **You have the ability to walk in newness of life!**

2. WE HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS, VV. 3-4

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

God's Word is perfectly clear, but there are many times when you might wish to be able to ask Paul or the other authors of Scripture questions about what they have written. I think this would be a place where we might wish for Paul to give added explanation on the nature of baptism and our union with Jesus Christ.

⁸ Moo, 357. Witherington, 156.

⁹ Moo, 358.

This is not really a passage about baptism even though baptism is mentioned 3 times in verses 3 and 4. This is a passage rather where baptism is used to strengthen Paul's argument that the believer has died to sin? How did we die to the power of sin? We died to sin through being united into the death and burial of Jesus Christ. And our union with Jesus Christ is signified and sealed in the sacrament of baptism.

The Westminster Confession of Faith reminds us that the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment in time wherein the sacrament is administered. But in God's perfect and appointed timing, the grace that is pictured is really communicated by the Holy Spirit according to the counsel of God's own will.

There is nothing here in Romans 6 that some how would speak of some mystical process. Sometimes Scripture speaks of the sacrament doing something because the sacrament is a sign of what God does and what He accomplishes through the working of the Holy Spirit through faith. It would extremely unwise to conclude from this that the sign is not important. Not at all. Those who believe in Jesus Christ for salvation are commanded by Jesus Christ to also be baptized. Who would dare hesitate to obey a command of Jesus Christ?

I should again speak to everyone present here, that if you have not been properly baptized and you are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation that you do not delay in seeking to be given the sign of baptism.

There is more that we could consider on the subject of baptism, but let us focus our attention to what Paul states here in verses 3-4.

The emphasis and main point that Paul makes here is that through baptism, that is through what it represents, we are baptized into Christ Jesus and more specifically into His death.

Paul in verse 3 speaks of this as something that the Roman Christians should have known. What Paul is teaching is not new. Rather he is encouraging them to think carefully on what is a basic part of the Christian faith.

The wonderful truth is that the believer through God's grace has an active involvement in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. This is why we have died to sin and why the power of sin over your life is broken.

The point is not that when you are baptized you die, are buried, and then are raised to new life. Some people want to see the actions of baptism as some how reliving what happened to Jesus. Some who practice baptism by immersion like to see a connection with burial in going under the water and then coming out of the water with His resurrection. This is not the place for a full discussion on the matter, but this is not what Paul is saying here.

Paul rather says that through baptism we were buried with Him into death. Baptism – that is the fullness of what baptism represents in terms of God’s Work and our response – is the means through which we are buried with Jesus Christ.¹⁰

There is a lot of theology packed into these verses, but don’t miss the central point. What Paul is emphasizing is not simply our union with Jesus Christ but the new life that you are now able to live and the new life you must be living because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

Paul in his prayer for the believers in Ephesus recorded in Ephesians 1 speaks in a similar way. Paul prayed that they would know among other things...

19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power **20** which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

Why should you not continue in a state of sin and rebellion? Because Jesus Christ was raised from the grave by the incredible power of God the Father, the glory of the Father, you have been united to Christ in His death and burial, and so you also now should walk in newness of life.

The word newness has the idea of something new and extraordinary. If you went to a funeral home and you saw a dead person come to life and step out of the coffin, would your response be, no big deal, I have seen that before?

And by the grace of God there should be something extraordinary that you see being accomplished through the power and working of God. Now, my illustration breaks down a bit, in that the newness of life might not always be so visible to others. It is not that the goal is that people will walk up to you and say, “Wow! I see in you a newness of life.” But in comparison to your life before you were transformed by the grace of God there should definitely be something extraordinary you see and hopefully others also see. And again the emphasis is not that you are impressing other people with your holiness but that you should have no business playing around with sin. There is no place for the Christian living as close as he or she can to a sinful life. No, you are to walk in newness of life!

3. THE OLD MAN HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED, VV. 5-7

Rom. 6:5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, **6** knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. **7** For he who has died has been freed from sin.

¹⁰ Moo, 364.

There are two main implications of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that are mentioned in verses 1-7. From verse 4 – the resurrection of Jesus Christ means that we now should walk in newness of life. From verse 5 – the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the assurance of the resurrection of your body from the grave. The assurance of verse 5 is based on being united together in the likeness of Christ's death.

There are some deep theological thoughts in these verses. One of them is the phrase you find in verse 5, the **likeness of His death**.

The word likeness is used three times in chapters 5, 6, and 8.

Rom. 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

The use of the word likeness here in chapter 6 along with the two others uses are an essential part of the history of salvation.

Adam's transgression, his disobedience, is then connected with Jesus coming in the likeness of sinful flesh and contrasted with His act of obedience in dying on the cross.

So what does it mean that we are united in the likeness of His death? It must mean that we share in the reality of what Jesus Christ did on the cross nearly 2000 years ago just as we suffer still the consequences of what Adam did 6000 years ago.

Verse 5 then speaks of the future and final victory over sin. We don't enjoy the final victory over sin yet just as we don't yet enjoy resurrection bodies. But we do enjoy union with Christ in His death which means that the power of sin has been broken. This is further described in verse 6.

Verse 6 makes three similar points adding to the description of having died to sin found in verse 2.

First, our old man was crucified with Christ.

There is some question of how exactly the term old man should be defined. The old man is not our sinful nature, but who we were in Adam, dominated and controlled by sin and death. John Stott here stated, "What was crucified with Christ was not part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted."¹¹

The glorious truth presented here is that because of the old man being crucified we no longer stand under the wrath of God. Romans 8:1 exclaims, "There is therefore now no

¹¹ Cited by Moo, 373-374.

condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

If you are in Christ Jesus, the old man is definitely gone, dead, but the temptation to live in Adam, unfortunately remains.¹²

Second, verse 6 says that the old man has been crucified so that the body of sin might be done away with.

Here we have another difficult expression – body of sin. This expression certainly doesn't mean that the physical body is the problem. The word body used here refers to the fact that we interact with the world through our physical body. We are of course both physical and spiritual bodies, but our minds, the spiritual part of who we are, have contact with the world through our physical bodies.

The NET Bible reads here, “so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us.” The way that you interact with the world no longer has to be under the control of sin. Rather you can do all things now for the glory of God – eating, drinking, and all other activities can be done for more than just selfish and sinful pleasures. **What an important truth is taught here.**

The third and final point of verse 6 is that we should no longer be slaves of sin. This point is very similar to the truth of verse 2, that we have died to sin, and so no longer do we have to be slaves of sin.

There are a number of commands that Paul makes in verses 11, 12, and 13, but here Paul is establishing the foundation and answering the question of why we should not remain in a state of sin. How foolish it would be to remain as a slave to sin when you have been set free from sin. Why would you go back to those deeds which you are now ashamed? Why live in a way that you know brings in the long run pain, shame, and judgment?

Verse 7 serves as a confirmation of the three points of verse 6. It is thought that Paul here is citing a common saying or maxim rather than giving a proof.

Death brings freedom from the control of sin. Cemeteries are the only places where people no longer sin, but believers enjoy true freedom also, though we are all inconsistent in the way we live.

John Calvin here stated:

“If thou art a Christian, there must appear in thee an evidence of a fellowship as to the death of Christ; the fruit of which is, that thy flesh is crucified together with all its lusts; but this fellowship is **not** to be considered as **not** existing, because you find that the relics of the flesh still live in thee; but its increase ought to be diligently labored for, until you arrive at the goal.”

¹² Moo, 375.

CONCLUSION:

There is glorious news in these verses as well as very sobering news. The glorious news is that there is true freedom from the power and bondage of sin. Sin no longer is your master. You have a glorious freedom to serve God in all that He created you to be. You are able to walk in newness of life.

The sobering news is that if you are a Christian, there is truly no excuse for sin. The unbeliever in this sense does have an excuse, though not one that is pleasant. But if you are truly trusting in Jesus Christ then there is nothing that you can say to justify sin. If you have been given freedom, then why are you still living in your former prison cell?

We know the reason for this of course. We suffer the consequences of our former union with Adam. But this is not an excuse.

But the sobering news brings us back to the grace of God in Christ Jesus that abounds far greater than your sin.

I trust that as you sincerely examine your own Christian life you see the evidence of true sanctification. There should be the evidence of greater maturity. There should be a great desire to please God and do what He commands. There should be a greater willingness to sacrifice for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

But never make the mistake of removing your focus from Jesus Christ. Though we must grow in our sanctification and holiness, we will never reach a point of sinlessness. There will always be the constant need to rejoice in the abundant grace of God which is far greater than our sin.

As together we celebrate the Lord's Supper we celebrate the victory of this passage.

Question 76. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His poured-out blood?

Answer. It means to accept with a believing heart the entire suffering and death of Christ and by believing to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. But it means more. Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us, we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body. And so, although He is in heaven and we are on earth, we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit, as members of our body are by one soul.

Prayer

Hymn – 365

BENEDICTION – HEBREW 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.