

**Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ**  
**Romans 6:1-4**

**Intro**

In Manhattan pastor Tim Keller's book *The Prodigal God* he recounts a story of a woman who approached him at the church he pastored and introduced herself. She explained that sadly, she had gone to church her whole life and had been taught that God accepts people who are morally good and ethical. Until she sat under Tim Keller's preaching, she had never heard the Gospel of grace - that we can be accepted by God by sheer grace through the work of Christ regardless of anything we do or have done. "She said, "That is a scary idea! Oh, it's good scary but still scary." I was intrigued (Keller writes) asked here what was so scary about unmerited free grace?

**She replied something like this: "If I was saved by my good works -- then there would be a limit to what God could ask of me or put me through. I would be like a taxpayer with rights. I would have done my duty and now I would deserve a certain quality of life. But if it is really true that I am a sinner saved by sheer grace -- at God's infinite cost -- then there's nothing he cannot ask of me." She could see immediately that the wonderful-beyond-belief teaching of salvation by sheer grace had two edges to it. On the one hand it cut away slavish fear. God loves us freely, despite our flaws and failures. Yet she also knew that if Jesus really had done this for her — she was not her own. She was bought with a price. (Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*)**

We enter the reign of grace - a new realm of existence - a world in which as the young woman at Tim Keller's church understood - we are not our own - we are bought with a price - we are sinners saved by sheer grace —at God's infinite cost — there is no limit what he can ask of us. Our gracious God calls us out of sin and into his will. Out of self and into sacrifice. Out of me-first to others-first. Out of hoarding resources to giving generously and serving others. Out of ease and comfort and to the nations. Not so we can earn his grace but because he has shown us such infinite grace. We live under the reign of God's grace.

Apostle Paul throughout this divinely inspired letter has been taking us on a journey through the glories of the gospel of grace which is the power of God for salvation for all who believe. Throughout the first half of this year in the first 5 chapters we have examined the tragic treason of humanity's universal sin problem. That in ourselves apart from Christ there is wrath but that God, full of grace and mercy, sent his willing Son to take our sin and wrath to rise and to extend to us justification - righteous standing with God - the perfect righteousness of Christ accounted as ours though we still sin - all through faith alone

Chapters 1-5 explain what God has accomplished for us in the gospel. Chapters 6-8 tell us what God will accomplish in us through the gospel. (Keller)

Paul unfolds what this life under the reign of grace looks like - what God will accomplish through us in the gospel. So let's look now to Romans 6 and prepare our hearts and minds to be addressed by God himself through his Word

Paul begins to unfold what God will in accomplish in us through the gospel under the reign of his grace - we find 2 dynamic realities about ourselves that God accomplishes in us through the gospel - through the gospel we are 1. Dead to Sin 2. Alive in Christ

Sounds simple but these things are deep, mysterious, sturdy theology - not just to study for interesting spiritual facts but theology to take into our minds and souls that we would live in the good of the grace of God.

### **I. We are Dead to Sin**

- A. v. 1 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" - don't give this questions short-shrift. Not just a cheeky jab at Paul's gospel - this is actually sort of an understandable question that a thoughtful person might well ask in light of Paul's proclamation of the gospel up to this point.

**[23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (Romans 3:23-24)**

**And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, (Romans 4:5)**

**[20] Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [21] so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21)**

1. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more - more sin = more grace = more glory for God as his grace is magnified as he reveals the overabundance of his grace in the face of the immensity of sin
2. So can this grace be understood as a loophole for worry free sinning - grace abounds right?

**Illustration:** Antinomians - anti-law - it undermines grace

**Illustration:** W.H. Auden poem - "I like committing crimes, God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged."

3. So if Christ obeyed God's law on my behalf (active obedience) - and died the death I deserved for my disobedience bearing the judgment I deserved for my sin (passive obedience) - and I am declared righteous before God with an alien righteousness imputed to me - WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT SIN? WHY NOT CONTINUE IN SIN THAT GRACE MAY ABOUND?

### **B. V. 2 BY NO MEANS! NO WAY JOSE! ABSOLUTELY NOT!**

1. Why by no means? Rhetorical question - How can we who died to sin still live in it?
  - a) Hmm...describing the Christian...we who died to in...the Christian has died to sin...what does he mean?
    - (1) Does he mean that there is no longer the corruption of sin within us?
      - (a) Any reasonable and self-aware Christian knows this isn't true for we are assaulted by temptation and experience much failure and weakness.
    - (2) Does he mean that if we sin we aren't a Christian?
      - (a) That would certainly conflict with his proclamation of the gospel that it is not sinlessness that makes us a Christian but Christ's righteousness received by faith on the grounds of grace

### **C. V. 3 Paul explains - Do you not know? GOTTA KNOW - "all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized in his death"**

1. Paul in helping us to understand how we have died to sin - directs us to the glorious and overarching doctrine of our Union with Christ that he began to unfold in Chapter 5 (GO BACK)
  - a) We are born "in Adam" - representative head - inheriting a corrupt and sinful nature - born with an internal bent away from God and towards the pursuit of our desires and passions apart from God. For our lives of rebellion we rightly stand, in ourselves, apart from Christ, under judgement.
  - b) Christ - the "second Adam" - has come - triumphing where Adam failed - incarnation - came as a man - took a human body - born of a woman - born of a virgin - no sin nature - obeying the will of God perfectly - and dying in our place - not only as our substitute but as our representative

**Illustration:** Like when a QB throws the winning TD - the whole team wins

- (1) Faith is taking hold of Christ with the empty hands of our souls - receiving him and in receiving him we are mysteriously but wonderfully united with him - we become - say with trembling - 2 Peter 1 - partakers in the divine nature
  - (a) His death that defeated the power and penalty of sin - we share in that death - his death to sin is our death to sin - in our conversion we find we are baptized into his death
    - i) Paul is not saying that baptism is the way we are saved - shorthand for the conversion experience - faith, spirit, baptism - all part of the package of conversion

**Illustration:** Essential and typical - Baptists - when did you walk the aisle?

- ii) We go down into the water even as Christ died and was buried v. 4 - we share in his death to sin

D. We died to sin is not exhortation to put sin to death (we'll get there in coming weeks) - it is the good news that in Christ's death that defeated the power and penalty of sin - we find our death to the power and penalty of sin!

1. If we died to sin - how can we live in it? How can our lives look like we are still under the power - the sway - the rule of sin - we have come under the reign of grace and out of sin's cruel tyranny through the death of Christ

E. Application

1. That's good news! v. 3 "do you not know?" - Gotta know - if you don't know let me inform you - it's my joy to inform you - if you have taken Christ with empty hands of faith you have died to sin in his death to sin! Died to the penalty and power of sin!
  - a) Paul's point is that people who have come out of sin's cruel tyrannical reign over their lives aren't looking for ways to go back to that lifestyle - we still sin - power broken - presence remains - not looking to continue in sin - THE EFFECT OF GRACE!
    - (1) Not looking to abuse grace by excusing sin - it's cool God will forgive - as our hearts our increasingly strengthened by God's grace to live in the good of our freedom from sin's power - presence remains - I don't want to sin - oh precious grace, I am zealous not to sin against the Savior - the Lord Jesus Christ to whom I'm united
    - (2) HOPEFUL REALITY in our fight and struggle with sin

**Having "died to sin" does not mean that sin is no longer within you, or that it has no more power and influence within you. It does. But sin no longer can dictate to you. Though you *may* obey it and though (the Bible predicts) you *will* obey it, the fact feminist that you no longer *have* to obey it. You have died to it; it can be dead to you. (Tim Keller, *Romans For You*, p. 140)**

- (3) DO YOU NOT KNOW - OH MY FRIEND KNOW! God wants you to know in order to strengthen you and encourage you in the fight - that sin...you have died to it; it can be dead to you - grounds upon which we fight  
 (a) Dead to sin - more - alive in Christ

## II. We are Alive in Christ

- A. v. 3-4 We are baptized into his death - baptism indeed does visually illustrate the reality of going down under the water - being buried - but we don't drown people when we baptize them - THEY COME UP! WE COME UP OUT OF THE WATER IMAGING FORTH THE GLORIOUS REALITY THAT EVEN AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD SO HAVE WE BEEN RAISED!
1. Again, Paul is not saying that baptism is what gives us spiritual life - it is Christ - baptism is an important and essential part of what it means to become a Christian - "believe and be baptized" - baptism doesn't save and impart life that would fly in the face of the last 5 chapters! It is important as part of Christ's command to make disciples - Christ saves us in union with him
- B. v. 4 Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father - we too might walk in newness of life
1. Our conversion is supernatural resurrection - united to Christ in his death to the power and penalty of sin - united to Christ in his victorious resurrection life

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3)**

Through, in, with

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)**

- C. Christ has been raised to new life and so have we! There is newness of life - out of Ephesians 2 - we were dead in trespasses and sins - and God made us alive in Christ!
1. By a work of divine grace - God - in the power of his Holy Spirit - lands upon our souls in resurrection power and declares LIVE! DRY BONES LIVE! AND WALK!

**Illustration:** Jesus with the paralytic - take up your bed and walk - spiritually paralyzed - RISE IN THE POWER OF MY SON'S RESURRECTION! BY MY GLORY FOR MY GLORY

**Since, following Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit was sent to bring us to spiritual life and indwell and renew us, our participation in Christ's death and resurrection is vitally dynamic and transformative. (Robert Letham, *Union With Christ*, p. 85)**

2. Ephesians 1 elected in Christ - when he died and was raised he had his elect in his heart
- D. A new life - out of the realm of sin and into the reign of grace - this reality and the awareness of this reality changes our attitude towards sin does it not?
- E. Raised to walk - moral implications of this word "walk"

**Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)**

**[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)**

**[5] but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: [6] whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (1 John 2:5-6)**

1. Justification in union with Christ = sanctification that follows = walking in newness of life

#### F. Application

1. How's your walk? Are you living in the good of being alive in Christ?
  - a) NOT NEWNESS - Walk - stumbling - moving forward - incremental - we get up - the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work in you
    - (1) Here's a vital key

**If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)**

- b) Newness of life - sensitivity to this Word
  - (1) WE NEED THEOLOGY - ROMANS 6 - NOT AUTOMATIC - Graciously instructs us and inspires us through his Word
- c) Cultivate sensitive and obedience to the Spirit's leading - don't harden your conscience by willful sin

**Illustration:** Friend considering living under the reign of grace - oh how his desire is provoked to all he can

- (1) Fresh conviction and hatred of sin - don't coddle sin - we who died to sin and raised by the glory of the Father in Christ - HOW CAN WE LIVE IN IT?
- (2) Oh beloved RISE UP AND WALK IN THE NEWNESS OF LIFE THAT IS YOURS IN CHRIST
  - (a) No more peace treaties with sin
  - (b) We need the insight of others in our walk - the importance of CG and having others know our lives
- d) Glory in your redeemer - glory in grace - dead to sin and alive in Christ - rejoice in the reign of God's grace over your life
- e) Our resurrection now is only a foretaste of resurrection life in eternity - we know in part - when we see him we will know if full - we will be like - death to sin perfected - resurrection life ours - what grace!

**The same Spirit of the Father who raised the Son from the dead, and will raise us also, actually lives within us now! We currently experience the resurrection life of Christ through the Holy Spirit, whom the Father has sent to indwell and saturate us. In turn, he produces assurance of our risen salvation, since he is the One who will raise us from the dead in the future, as the Author and Giver of life. At this point the whole universe should stop for half an hour in utter amazement and wonder. What more can we possibly say? (Robert Letham, *Union With Christ*, p. 136)**

#### Close

The Gospel of grace informs us that we have been bought with the costliest purchase price - the blood of Jesus Christ - in light of his limitless grace there is no limit to what God can ask of us.

Maybe that's a little scary but every soul in this room that has died to sin - every resurrected soul in this room hears the word of God's command and says "YES LORD!" By your grace - because of your grace - for the glory of your grace.

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