

ROMANS 6

Believers Are Dead to Sin and Are a New Creation in Christ

Throughout the first five chapters of Romans, Paul has been stressing the dire situation of mankind and the inevitable doom that people face because of their sin. Paul has been describing for us the rebellious nature of human beings against a holy God, their love of their own sinfulness, and their refusal to understand and recognize the God that has been clearly revealed to them both inwardly and outwardly.

Then, in response to this seemingly hopeless condition of human beings, Paul goes on to present to us the wonderful forgiving mercy and grace of God. The mercy and grace that reach down to these unworthy people and offer to them a full pardon and full acquittal through the perfect and finished work of Jesus Christ. The work of Christ in regard to humanity is so full, so thorough, so complete, so merciful, so gracious, so comprehensive, so abundant, and so magnanimous that it was summed up by Paul in the last two verses of chapter five, Romans 5:20,21:

*God's law was given so that **all people** could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, **God's wonderful kindness became more abundant.***

21 So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We see God's enormous love in verse 20. The greater the sin was, the greater the grace was to cover sin. Great is humankind's sinfulness, **but infinitely greater is God's forgiving grace.**

Now we've talked about the sin of humankind and we've talked about God's salvation. We're now going to talk about a believer's holiness. Now that the sinner has been taken from sin to salvation, what kind of a change takes place in that person? That will be the subject of chapters six through eight. Paul introduces the discussion by raising a question that inevitably comes up at this point. That inevitable question comes up in Romans 6:1:

Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness?

Isn't this just true to the nature of people, that they would think they've found a way to make God look good by continuing in their sin? The thinking goes something like this: *"If more sin generates more grace from God, should we just then continue on sinning now that we have been saved, and sin even more so God can be even more gracious*

seeing that He gets such a thrill out of grace?" To put it another way, someone might say: "Paul, your doctrine here provides a great deal of freedom. This idea that salvation is simply and only by grace through faith, without works, and that the greater the sin the greater the grace, leads to a viewpoint that provides too much freedom. In fact it sounds like a view of freedom gone bezerk. It leads to a person saying: 'Well, if the more the sin the more the grace, man I'm just going to sin like crazy day and night so God can get all kinds of glory by dispensing grace.'" This is the way Paul moves into the section on sanctification, which describes how a believer develops the qualities of holiness.

There was a group in Paul's day who happily embraced the misinterpretation of Paul's doctrine and they were called **Libertines**. If you wanted to meet a group of these people you would most probably have found them in the city of Corinth, in the church. Corinth could be considered the Las Vegas of Paul's day. They lived without any of the normal restraints of holiness that should control the children of God. They were characterized by continually suing one another, which is an indication of selfish greed. We do it all the time here in the United States, don't we? They were further characterized by sexual immorality, prostitution, paganism, and demonic activity, something else the people in the United States do all the time. And yes, that's something else we do far too often in this country. They even stood up in their assemblies and in the name of the Holy Spirit they cursed Jesus.

As we move into chapter 6, Paul is going to show us that the true Gospel of grace does not lead to Libertinism, to just sinning like mad because you're going to be alright anyway. I believe you'll soon come to realize this is a pretty sick way of interpreting the Gospel message. Paul will show us that if a person is truly saved, that salvation will lead to a holy life. People who are truly saved don't need to be controlled externally because there is planted within them a control principle by virtue of their new nature, the new life, which is under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Romans deal with how a person gets saved, the process called **justification**. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 deal with how you behave after you get saved, the process called **sanctification**. And we'll see that the two processes, **justification and sanctification**, are linked together. Holiness is as much a gift from God to the believer as is salvation.

When a person is saved, it's not simply a divine transaction but a divine miracle of **transformation**. God doesn't just say, "Now you're saved."

God actually transforms you. So there is an inseparable connection between a holy life and being saved.

That's why I believe for the most part the church in America is an unregenerate, unredeemed, Godless, Christless, Hell-bound Church, because you don't see any holiness displayed within much of it or the people that go there.

In verse 1 of chapter six, we find what might be classified as an antagonistic statement. Paul has been accused many times of preaching a gospel of grace that is **opposed to the**

Jewish laws. This was no little matter to the Jewish people. In fact, it might help to take a look at just how seriously they took it by reading from Acts 21:27-36:

The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him,

*28 yelling, “Men of Israel! Help! **This is the man who teaches against our people** and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He speaks against the Temple—and he even defiles it by bringing Gentiles in!”*

29 (For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

*30 The whole population of the city was rocked by these accusations, and a great riot followed. **Paul was dragged out of the Temple**, and immediately the gates were closed behind him.*

*31 As **they were trying to kill him**, word reached the commander of the Roman regiment that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.*

*32 He immediately called out his soldiers and officers and ran down among the crowd. When the mob saw the commander and the troops coming, **they stopped beating Paul**.*

33 The commander arrested him and ordered him bound with two chains. Then he asked the crowd who he was and what he had done.

34 Some shouted one thing and some another. He couldn’t find out the truth in all the uproar and confusion, so he ordered Paul to be taken to the fortress.

*35 As they reached the stairs, **the mob grew so violent** the soldiers had to lift Paul to their shoulders to protect him.*

*36 And the crowd followed behind shouting, “**Kill him, kill him!**”*

You see the doctrine of grace appeared to the Jews to be a Libertine teaching, one which encourages an undisciplined, immoral life.

Paul wants to show people that there is no need to impose law on people. The **Judaizers**, those who wanted others to know that people are saved only when they conform to Jewish laws and customs, wanted to do just that. When they heard this teaching about **being able to enter God’s kingdom by grace alone**, they couldn’t handle that. So they said, “No, you must be circumcised and you must keep all the laws that God gave Moses if you want to get into the kingdom.” They believed that if people thought they could be saved and get into Heaven by pure grace, they would sin till they dropped.

We still have this kind of thinking going on today. People think you have to have a list of different rules in order to be spiritual. It goes on in churches and in Christian schools, where people think they can force spirituality down the throats of others by expecting them to obey the rules that are going to force them into a certain Christian mold. That just simply isn’t the way one enters into the Kingdom of God. We believe this is a good time to turn to the book of Jude and read what Jude writes in Jude 1-25:

This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. I am writing to all who are called to live in the love of God the Father and the care of Jesus Christ.

2 May you receive more and more of God's mercy, peace, and love.

3 Dearly loved friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the truth of the Good News. God gave this unchanging truth once for all time to his holy people.

*4 I say this because **some godless people have wormed their way in among you, saying that God's forgiveness allows us to live immoral lives.** The fate of such people was determined long ago, for they have turned against our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

*5 I must remind you—and you know it well—that even though the Lord rescued the whole nation of Israel from Egypt, he later destroyed every one of those who **did not remain faithful.***

*6 And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. **God has kept them chained in prisons of darkness,** waiting for the day of judgment.*

*7 And don't forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with sexual immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and are **a warning of the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil.***

8 Yet these false teachers, who claim authority from their dreams, live immoral lives, defy authority, and scoff at the power of the glorious ones.

10 But these people mock and curse the things they do not understand. Like animals, they do whatever their instincts tell them, and they bring about their own destruction.

11 How terrible it will be for them! For they follow the evil example of Cain, who killed his brother. Like Balaam, they will do anything for money. And like Korah, they will perish because of their rebellion.

12 When these people join you in fellowship meals celebrating the love of the Lord, they are like dangerous reefs that can shipwreck you. They are shameless in the way they care only about themselves. They are like clouds blowing over dry land without giving rain, promising much but producing nothing. They are like trees without fruit at harvest time. They are not only dead but doubly dead, for they have been pulled out by the roots.

13 They are like wild waves of the sea, churning up the dirty foam of their shameful deeds. They are wandering stars, heading for everlasting gloom and darkness.

14 Now Enoch, who lived seven generations after Adam, prophesied about these people. He said, "Look, the Lord is coming with thousands of his

holy ones.

15 He will bring the people of the world to judgment. He will convict the ungodly of all the evil things they have done in rebellion and of all the insults that godless sinners have spoken against him.”

16 These people are grumblers and complainers, doing whatever evil they feel like. They are loudmouthed braggarts, and they flatter others to get favors in return.

17 But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ told you,

18 that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to enjoy themselves in every evil way imaginable.

19 Now they are here, and they are the ones who are creating divisions among you. They live by natural instinct because they do not have God’s Spirit living in them.

20 But you, dear friends, must continue to build your lives on the foundation of your holy faith. And continue to pray as you are directed by the Holy Spirit.

21 Live in such a way that God’s love can bless you as you wait for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy is going to give you.

22 Show mercy to those whose faith is wavering.

23 Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. There are still others to whom you need to show mercy, but be careful that you aren’t contaminated by their sins.

24 And now, all glory to God, who is able to keep you from stumbling, and who will bring you into his glorious presence innocent of sin and with great joy.

25 All glory to him, who alone is God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes, glory, majesty, power, and authority belong to him, in the beginning, now, and forevermore. Amen.

So Paul is facing a violent group of Jews who are telling him that he can’t teach this Gospel of grace because people will go wild and such teaching is direct opposition to God’s Law. Then, on the other hand, you have the Libertines who are saying, “*Teach it, Paul! We love every minute of it and believe that we should use God’s grace to sin all over the place, and in that way He’ll be able to display His grace more, and we’ll be the source of giving Him glory.*” Both groups give clear evidence that they themselves have never been saved.

What Romans 6:1 is saying is this: “*Shall we who have been saved by grace habitually sustain the same relationship to sin that we had before we were saved? Shall we go on with that same relationship where sin had full control and we yielded fully to it? Are we going to pursue that same life of sin? Can a person be saved and continue going on in the same life pattern they had before they were saved? Can there be justification without sanctification? Can a person be truly saved and not truly changed?*” Some in our

Christian community would say yes. They claim that if you have ever simply asked Jesus into your heart you will be saved no matter how you live your life. In other words **they're saying that justification can exist without sanctification**. I think Paul makes the answer to that pretty clear in Romans 6:2. In verse 1 Paul asks: "*Should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness?*" Then in Romans 6:2 Paul gives us the answer:

*Of course not! Since we have **DIED TO SIN**, how can we continue to live in it?*

Then very suggestion of such a thing is abhorrent to Paul. The suggestion that a Christian who has come to faith in Christ could willfully continue in sinful behavior is not only abhorrent, it's impossible. I like the comment that Dr. Donald Barnhouse made, and I quote: "*Holiness starts where justification finishes. And if holiness does not start, you have the right to suspect that justification (being saved) never started either.*" You cannot maintain the same relationship you had to sin before if you have truly accepted Christ as your Savior because the Holy spirit of God comes to live in you when you make that commitment. Also, when you make that commitment, we've learned that **you die to sin** (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Now death and life cannot be compatible, can they? You cannot be dead and alive at the same time, can you? Some of us can be alive and look dead, but that's a subject for another discussion. The simple fact is that you cannot be dead and alive at the same time. Can we all agree with that? So it is not possible for a Christian to be living in sin when they've died to it. If a person embraces and enjoys living in sin, it is simply not possible that they are a true Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ. John made this very clear in 1 John 1:5-7 and 2:1-6:

This is the message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.

6 So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness. We are not living in the truth.

7 But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.

1 My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely.

2 He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

3 And how can we be sure that we belong to him? By obeying his commandments.

4 If someone says, "I belong to God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth.

5 But those who obey God's word really do love him. That is the way to

know whether or not we live in him.

6 Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Christ did.

A believer, one who has received salvation through a saving faith in Jesus Christ, no longer lives in Sin City. They have moved, they have changed their address, because they can no longer live in that environment. Their new nature as a follower of Jesus creates within them **a desire to live a sinless life**. They won't always succeed, but the desire is there, a desire that wasn't there before they were saved. Living where they lived before would make them feel very guilty.

Now before we go any further and before someone jumps all over me, let me make it clear that **I am not suggesting that Christians never sin**. The point that is being made here is that true Christians have died to sin and no longer live with the desire to sin they once had. Listen to what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:14-17:

Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for everyone, we also believe that we have all died to the old life we used to live.

15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.

16 So we have stopped evaluating others by what the world thinks about them. Once I mistakenly thought of Christ that way, as though he were merely a human being. How differently I think about him now!

17 What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

We were once slaves to sin and then decided to become slaves to a new master, Jesus Christ. We therefore died to a life of sin and were reborn into a life of righteousness. We used to take pleasure in our sin, now we find our pleasure in righteousness and sin makes us very uncomfortable. You might be wondering, "What's the end result of all of this? What's in it for me?" Paul tells us in Colossians 3:1-5:

*Since you have been raised to **new life** with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power.*

*2 **Let heaven fill your thoughts.** Do not think only about things down here on earth.*

*3 **For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.***

*4 **And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.***

*5 **So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't***

be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry.

Romans 6:3 continues to expand on what we've heard in verses one and two. Paul continues:

Or have you forgotten that when we became Christians and were **baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, WE DIED WITH HIM?**

Do you know what a true Christian is? A Christian is not just merely a person who has been declared righteous and then chooses to do as they please. When one truly believes in Jesus, they are brought into a living, intimate union with Jesus Christ. Salvation does not occur when God deletes your record of sin from His computer and replaces it with a file entitled "SAVED." Salvation occurs when your life is fused with the life of Jesus. You are immersed, or as verse 3 says, **baptized** into Jesus Christ. That is true salvation. To be immersed or baptized into Jesus Christ means **we are involved in all that God is doing in the life of Jesus**. Paul is not talking about a baptism involving water here, but a spiritual baptism, an immersion, a fusing, a joining, a bonding with the very life of Jesus Christ. We further see in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that when we ourselves are immersed into the life of Christ, we are therefore immersed into the lives of all the other Christians and therefore become united together as one body, a body controlled by the Holy Spirit, who is Christ living within us. That one body of believers, guided by the Holy Spirit to be righteous and do good works, is what the Church was meant to be. It was never meant to be a religious social club, or a collection of people who use the church and the name of Christ to satisfy their own greedy and selfish desires. 1 Corinthians 12:13 reads:

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:17 reads:

But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

So when you become a Christian, you become one with Christ. When you are saved, Jesus Christ is poured into you and fills you up. It's as if you and Jesus are two glasses of liquid, and you are poured into Jesus' glass, He, therefore, fills every part of you, and you become an inseparable part of Him. Have you ever heard the phrase, "*The Holy Spirit is poured out?*" or, "*They were filled with the Holy Spirit?*" What an incredible concept, and if you don't quite understand it, take heart, no human being can understand it because it's too far above our capacity for understanding. But God understands it and as we've learned earlier, there are just some things we need to accept because we have faith and trust in Him. Paul writes in Colossians 2:8-14:

Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil

powers of this world, and not from Christ.

9 For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body,

10 and you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe.

*11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. It was a spiritual procedure—the **cutting away of your sinful nature.***

*12 **For you were buried with Christ** when you were (spiritually)¹ baptized. And with him you were raised to **a new life** because **you trusted** the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.*

*13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then **God made you alive with Christ.** He forgave all our sins.*

14 He canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ’s cross.

Then Paul gives us all a sense of the reality of our fusion with Christ when in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20:

*15 Don’t you realize that **your bodies are actually parts of Christ**? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never!*

16 And don’t you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.”

17 But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

*18 **RUN AWAY FROM SEXUAL SIN!** No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body.*

*19 Or **don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you** and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,*

20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

When a believer does something like what was just described, they are in effect joining Christ to the prostitute because, as we’ve learned, we are one with Christ and anything we do involves Christ. Now, just a few more passages to make sure we understand this bonding that we have with Jesus. First Ephesians 2:4-6, where Paul writes:

*God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much,
5 that even **while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s special favor that you have been saved!)*

6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated

¹ Parentheses added.

with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus.

Revelation 3:21

*I will invite **everyone who is victorious** to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.*

Titus 3:1-9:

Remind your people to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good.

2 They must not speak evil of anyone, and they must avoid quarreling.

Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.

*3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. **We were misled by others** and became slaves to many wicked desires and evil pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy. We hated others, and they hated us.*

4 But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love.

5 He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit.

6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did.

*7 He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now **we know that we will inherit eternal life.***

8 These things I have told you are all true. I want you to insist on them so that everyone who trusts in God will be careful to do good deeds all the time. These things are good and beneficial for everyone.

9 Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These kinds of things are useless and a waste of time.

Salvation leads you out of a life that is a slave to sin and makes available to you the power of the divine nature of Jesus. The first thing that happens to you when you are saved is that you attend your own funeral. That's where it all begins; you die to sin. So let's continue in Romans 6:4:

*Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so **we too might walk in newness of life.***

We are buried with Jesus in His death by **spiritual baptism** into death in order that we might be raised to walk in a new life. What exactly does that mean? When a person is saved, they say to Jesus, "I put my faith in you." Then by some divine process through the Holy Spirit of God, that person is placed into Jesus Christ, taken back 2000 years, and buried with Him. The person dies so that their old life could die and so that they could rise with Christ from the grave into a new life where they were free from slavery to sin. The person that comes out of the grave is very different from the one who went into the

grave, 2 Corinthians 5:17:

What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!

John Newton once said, “*I’m not what I ought to be, but I’m sure not what I was.*” The believer’s holy life follows as a direct result of their death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Their new life is one in which righteousness now becomes the norm for behavior. Whereas in the past, sin was the norm for behavior. Sin will still crop up now and then, however, and we’ll find out why when we get to chapter 7. Listen to the way this new life is described by various writers throughout the Bible:

- Ezekiel 18 calls it “*A new spirit.*”
- 2 Corinthians 5 calls it “*A new creation.*”
- Galatians 6 calls it, “*A new Creature.*”
- Ephesians 4 calls it, “*A new man/woman.*”
- Revelation 2:17 says, “*A new name.*”
- Psalm 40, “*A new song.*”

We walk in newness of life. The Greek word used for “*walk*” in Romans 6:4 means “*daily spiritual conduct.*” So we now have a new way of living each day, a way of living that is capable of goodness and joy; rather than selfishness and unhappiness.

Next week we’ll elaborate more on just how much blessing is provided us through this new life empowered by the Holy Spirit as we continue in Romans, chapter 6.