

The Preposterous Notion of Persistent Sin

By David Harrell

Romans 6:1-10

It is always an immense joy to be able to minister the Word of God to you. I would invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter six this morning. Our text is verses one through 10 of Romans six. Having been in this wonderful epistle now for many months, in the providence of God we come to this section of Scripture.

Let me read it to you. Before I do, may I say that I have entitled this discourse this morning, “The Preposterous Notion of Persistent Sin” and I trust by the power of the Spirit that will be come exceedingly obvious to you.

Let me read this text beginning in Romans six verse one.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. 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.¹

One of Satan’s most effective strategies has always been to come before us with some distortion of the Word of God, to challenge the authority of God, to have us doubt the goodness of God. And in so doing, he ensnares us in some form of sin.

We saw that all the way back in the garden. You might recall in Genesis chapter three and verse one we read, “Now the serpent,” referring to Satan here, “ was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”²

My friends, that was a distortion of what God said. The truth is in verse 16 of chapter two he said, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.”³

¹ Romans 6:1-10

² Genesis 3:1.

³ Genesis 2:16-17.

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So he began with a distortion of the Word of God, challenged the authority of God and he began to plant seeds of doubt in Eve's mind with respect to the goodness of God, that somehow such a restriction is unfair, that God is holding out. And in verse two and following we read:

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!"⁴

In other words, "Oh, come on. He doesn't really mean that. Surely you don't buy that, do you?"

Verse five he says, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁵

There, my friends, is a great lie, a great heresy. It is filled with some truth, but also an outright lie. Indeed, their eyes would be opened when they disobeyed God, open to the reality of guilt and shame and death, spiritual death, separation from God and one day even physical death.

You see, they already knew good. And when they disobeyed they knew evil. But they would not be like God. This is why Jesus has said in John 8:44 that Satan was a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

You see, Satan wants us to believe that somehow we have misunderstood the Word and that God isn't really saying what you think it means. It means something else and that God is holding out on us.

Who gave him authority to make all the rules anyway? Don't we have any say in the matter? And, by the way, it is not that big of a deal that you really obey him. Use some common sense here. Follow your heart.

In verse six we read, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."⁶

Do you see? Our flesh is predisposed to look at those things that God has forbidden and say, "My, that looks good. That looks delightful. That is desirable." And Satan loves to offer those things that are simply irresistible to us. You see, sin always promises more than it will deliver. It promises life, but it delivers death.

⁴ Genesis 3:2-4.

⁵ Genesis 3:5.

⁶ Genesis 3:6.

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“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”⁷

So he distorted the Word of God. He challenged the authority of God. He cast doubt on the goodness of God and he does this to us as well. And like Eve and like Adam we take of the forbidden fruit.

And in verse seven of that text we read:

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”⁸

My friends, these are the very same dynamics that were in play when Paul wrote this epistle. And, frankly, they have been in play ever since that day in the garden. They are in play right now in your life and in mine. You just name a topic, whether it be the doctrine of salvation, what God would have to say about marriage or worship or morality and you will find a thousand distortions of what God has said. You will find a thousand ways where people will challenge the authority of God and somehow cause us to doubt the goodness of God and what he says on every matter. And ultimately when we buy into those things we end up separating ourselves from God rather than being drawn into more intimate fellowship with him.

And in the first two sections of his letter here in Romans, he speaks of the doctrines of condemnation and justification as we have studied. We are all condemned in Adam, but when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are justified in Christ. He declares us to be righteous because of the imputed righteousness of Christ that becomes ours.

And in Romans chapter five you will recall in verses 12 through 21, Paul compares and he contrasts what he has described what are in his epistle with respect to the doctrines of condemnation and justification. He wants to establish a profound certainty in the lives of every believer that this salvation is ours and it is secure. He wants us to understand that the impact of Christ's one act of obedience is far superior and far exceeds the impact of Adam's one act of sin.

Ah, but as soon as anyone hears these great truths in Romans, what happens? The enemy comes along and challenges all this and he raises up the same kinds of heresies.

Do you really think that God justifies the ungodly solely upon his grace? Do you really think you don't have to do anything except believe? Just trust in Christ? That there is nothing that you should contribute to your salvation? Oh, whoa. My, if you believe that you have got a license to sin, sure enough. Do you really think that? What about the law? Is the law of now value? Do you really believe that there is no place for you to

⁷ Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

⁸ Genesis 3:7.

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help establish your own righteousness? Are you just going to place your faith in Christ alone? Come on.

See, I have got some of you doubting already, right?

Well, we sheepishly answer the antagonist and say, “Well, you know, God has said in Romans four beginning in verse five...”

Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.⁹

That is what it says.

Yeah, but come on. You know there is more to it than that.

Well, yeah, but he says in Romans five verses nine and 10:

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.¹⁰

Oh, all right, all right, fine. If that is what you want to believe, if you really believe that you are going to be declared righteous solely upon your faith in Christ, that salvation is entirely a gift of grace, good luck.

You have been deceived.

And do you know what? There is only one reason why anybody would want to believe something that foolish and that is because they want a license to sin. You want to believe in God’s grace so you can live like hell.

Beloved, this is precisely the kind of heresy that Paul deals with in chapters six and seven, which, you must understand, are basically a parentheses between chapter five and eight.

You will remember that he closed in chapter five with this astounding, glorious climax statement at the end of verse 20 and in verse 21, a text, by the way, which summarizes the magnificent blessings that belong to all who put their trust in the one act of the Son of God.

He says there at the end of verse 20, “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the

⁹ Romans 4:4-5.

¹⁰ Romans 5:9-10.

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more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹¹

Then verse one of chapter six, “What shall we say then?”¹²

And we ask, “Say about what? What shall we say about what?”

Well, about all that he has been saying about justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. How are we going to respond to that?

So in chapters six and seven Paul is going to answer the inevitable misunderstandings and distortions which most of the time are deliberate with respect to this great doctrine of justification, answers that also provide for us great insight into the issue of sin even in the life of a believer, truths that elaborate on not only the doctrine of justification, but the doctrine of sanctification which will always go hand in hand.

And then at the end of this parentheses, at the end of chapters six and seven, he will return to his original premise and he states in chapter eight verse one, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”¹³

This morning I wish to draw your attention to the first 10 verses that we have read and we are going to look at three things. We are going to look at the preposterous conclusion, the persuasive corollary and the precise clarification. And as we examine this text, I hope that you will not detach yourself from it.

You know, it is very easy for us, as believers, to set here very smugly after singing these wonderful hymns and think, “Boy, I am sure glad none of these things apply to my life. I am glad that I have kind of risen above these things.”

Well, friends, that is the wrong attitude. Let the light of these truths shine brightly in every aspect of your heart this morning, because we are all prone to fall off of two different sides when it comes to the doctrine of justification. There are two extremes and you will find yourself on one of the other extremes. The first extreme is to fall off on the side of Legalism. For the Christian Legalism is this idea of adding to the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to you.

You know, we have all got our little list, don't we? We have a creedal confession that says, “Oh, I believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.” And then we turn right around and add our own list or rules and regulations and ceremonies and rituals and codes of conduct that we think make us somehow more acceptable to God. And this is, of course, on a continuum from the blatantly extreme to the profoundly subtle. Sometimes our orthodoxy doesn't match our orthopraxy. Our

¹¹ Romans 5:20-21.

¹² Romans 6:1.

¹³ Romans 8:1.

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creed doesn't match our convictions. We subtly add our own works and our superior preferences and try to bolster our acceptability to God. And then if we are not careful we end up looking down our noses at people who don't agree with us. And so in a subtle way we say, you know, the righteousness of Christ is not really enough. I need to add my list. And that is Legalism.

The other extreme is Libertinism. This is the other side of the continuum and this is primarily for the false believer, those who think they know Christ but do not. These are the ones who might claim to be a Christian and yet they disregard all spiritual authority. They want nothing to do with the Church, with the Word of God. They do not submit their lives to that. They really have no moral or spiritual restraint because obviously the Spirit of God is not living within them. And they live a life of practical Atheism as if God doesn't even exist. This is also called Antinomianism. It is simply a big word that means against the law. These people are opposed to the authority of the Word of God. We see that in the church all the time, those who scoff at the idea of holy living. They think it is prudish to try to be separate from the world in anyway. These are the ones whose lifestyles really bear no distinction from the world that is utterly opposed to Christ. And these are the ones who will, therefore, use the gospel as a license to sin. False believers who, as John says in 1 John 2:15, love the world. They love the things in the world and, therefore, the love of the Father is not in them.

These are the ones who believe, for example, that we must become like the world in order to win the world and, therefore, they give no evidence in their life that God has imputed to them the righteousness of Christ nor has he imparted that righteousness to them.

So anticipating both of these extremes, the Legalist and the Libertine, the inspired apostle begins his argument with, number one, the preposterous conclusion. Notice verse one.

“What shall we say then?”¹⁴

Now who are the we? Well, it is the justified, the recipients of free grace, those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the beneficiaries of the imputed righteousness of Christ. And so he asks a rhetorical question.

He says, “Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?”¹⁵

Now, obviously there were those then as there are today that would draw this preposterous conclusion. It is interesting. The term continue, *epimenw* (ep-ee-men'-o) in the original language, it means to persevere or to persist, to remain. It carries the idea of continuing to exist in a particular place or taking up a permanent resident in a place.

So these people would argue, “Ok, hang on. If salvation is of no merit of our own and, as

¹⁴ Romans 6:1.

¹⁵ Ibid.

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you read here, if where sin increased grace abounds all the more, well, why not increase in sin so that God's grace will abound all the more? Why not give sin an opportunity for full expression by letting it take up permanent residence in our heart?

You see, that is the attitude of the Libertine or the Antinomian.

This is a preposterous conclusion.

William Barclay says this. Quote, "How despicable it would be for a son to consider himself free to sin simply because he knew that his father would forgive," end quote.

You see, my friends, this is a complete failure to understand grace. And I would submit that for the most part it is a deliberate distortion. You see, grace liberates us from sin. It does not shackle us to it as we are going to see. Before we come to Christ, before that glorious transformation of being born again, we are slaves to sin. We are under the tyranny of the rule and reign of sin.

In fact, Solomon declared in Ecclesiastes 9:3, "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives."¹⁶

And as we look at Scripture we learn that the unregenerate, the unsaved are spiritually blind. As we read earlier, they are dead in their trespasses and sins. In Romans 5:6 we learned that they are helpless. In Romans 6:6 we see they are slaves to sin. In verse 19 we see that they are slaves to impurity and to lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness and we learn that they are also under the dominion of, quote, the law of sin which can produce only sin and death in chapter seven verse five, verse 13.

But you must understand. When a man is justified he is no longer under the reign of sin, but he is now under the reign of grace, That is what Romans 5:21 tells us.

So when a man is truly born again, God makes him a completely new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. The old things pass away, the new things come. There is a radical transformation.

So Paul moves from this preposterous conclusion in verse one to, second, the persuasive corollary in verse two. Notice he says, "May it never be."¹⁷

In other words, he responds with a resounding no. A "certainly not." This is completely outrageous.

And then he says, "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"¹⁸

¹⁶ Ecclesiastes 9:3.

¹⁷ Romans 6:2.

¹⁸ Romans 6:2.

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Now in the original language “died” is in the aorist tense, meaning the past tense. And so therefore it speaks of something that has happened in the past, once and forever, an event that has taken place. Well, what has taken place? It says we died to sin. When did that happen? Well, when we ceased to exist in Adam and we became a live in Christ, we died to sin.

Now think about it. That which is dead is unable to respond or to react to any impulse or desire. And by extension to be dead to sin will have the implication of us being unable to really respond, at least as a slave to the impulse or desires of sin.

In fact, in 1 John 3:9 we read, “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”¹⁹

In other words, it is not that he cannot sin in the sense of he will never sin, but that will not be the pattern of his life as we are going to see.

You see, genuine believers are not just simply not wanting to sin anymore as a pattern of their life, but they are unable to live in the realm of sin because they died to sin. And so what we are going to see here is this incredible corollary. How can spiritual life and death coexist? It can't. You can't be alive and dead at the same time.

Well, yes, pastor, but we still sin.

Well, of course we do. Although we have died to sin meaning that we are freed from its tyranny over us, we are no longer its slave, we are not dead to sin. If we were dead to sin we would never respond to it and that is obviously not the case. The battle of sin continues to rage within us.

In Galatians 5:17 we read, “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”²⁰

Every Christian continues to battle the remaining effects of the law of sin in our inner man. And a way of thinking about it that the old man no longer reigns, but it still remains. It is still there. Like a defeated tyrant, he will continue to try to seduce, but his strength has been greatly depleted.

We all live in this battle, don't we?

Paul will go on to describe this in great detail in chapter seven. But I might point out that in verse 14 and following he acknowledges here how he has a love of the law which will be a conviction that is shared by every believer. We love the Word of God. We want to

¹⁹ 1 John 3:9.

²⁰ Galatians 5:17.

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be obedient to it. But yet he grieves in verse 14 that he is still, quote, “of the flesh, sold into bondage to sin.”²¹ That is to say, “I grieve because I am still fleshy.”

He does not say, “I am still controlled by the flesh.” He does not say, “I am still in the flesh like unbelievers,” who, by the way, according to Romans 8:8, quote, “Are in the flesh and cannot please God.”²²

No, that is not what he is saying. But rather he is saying, “I am of the flesh. I am still influenced by remaining sin, by my unredeemed humanness, by my physical body that will some day be done away with.”

He elaborates not his further when he said in verse 18 of chapter seven, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.”²³

And then, again, he mourns in verse 23, “For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man.”²⁴

Let me stop there. Believers don’t joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. They don’t share that sentiment. Non believers don’t share that sentiment. A believer does. So he says, “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of sin which is in my members.”²⁵

So, of course, the question arises: So if we have a new nature, what causes us to sin? Well, the answer is simply this. The sin principle, the law of sin that still remains in our body. Paul clarified this when he said in verse 17, “So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.”²⁶ And he will repeat this in verse 20 and 21 and 23 and so forth.

So remember the basic principle. Sin no longer reigns, but it still remains.

Perhaps an example would be helpful. I remember one woman, a young woman that came to me, probably in her mid 30s. And she was living in a very difficult situation with her husband. She told the story of how she had dated him for some time and he was always very domineering, very manipulative and he led her into all kinds of sin. He gave her nice things, but he would also demand her to do things that were nothing short of wicked and he also abused her in a variety ways. And, unfortunately, she would always acquiesce to these things.

²¹ Romans 7:14.

²² Romans 8:8.

²³ Romans 7:18.

²⁴ Romans 7:23.

²⁵ Romans 7:22-23.

²⁶ Romans 7:17.

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After she was married, things got a lot worse. She began to suffer many things from him. And it was fascinating to hear how he had such enormous influence and power over her. She was, shall we say, a slave to both his affection and his abuse. Like sin, he was the tyrant and she was the slave.

Over the course of time God was merciful to her and graciously convicted her of her sin and she came to Christ. And at that time she began to deal with these issues with great conviction, to deal with them biblically and so there was strong confrontation. There was accountability and she began to establish boundaries and she began to really trust in Christ.

Well, what was fascinating is that in the providence of God this man had a terrible accident and he became paralyzed. He became a quadriplegic in a wheelchair. And it was interesting that although he could no longer overpower her physically, he would still continue to try and overpower her psychologically, emotionally, very manipulative. He would continue to bark commands at her and insults at her.

Now think about it. Although she had confronted and even deposed the tyrant when she came to Christ, although she had broken away from his power and she was free, she was still predisposed to respond to some of his lies and obey some of his commands occasionally. But only temporarily, because there had been a breaking free. He was powerless to control her the way he once did.

My friends, this is how the flesh works with the deposed tyrant of sin. As we see here, we died to sin once for all. We are no longer subject to its rule. But we are still predisposed to yielding to its temptations. Why? Why do we do that? Because the sin principle is still there. We are still incarcerated in this unredeemed humanness.

But when we do respond, we never respond to the same extent we once did. It will be temporary because the bondage of sin and death has been broken.

Paul lamented over this remaining sin in Romans seven verse 23 saying, "The members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members."²⁷

That is the problem of remaining sin.

Now we will look at that more closely when we come to Romans seven, but back to Paul's argument here in Romans six. What he is saying is that because of the imputed righteousness of Christ we are united to him. We are alive in Christ. The law of sin no longer has dominion over us. We are now under the rule of grace. You see, we have been liberated by his death and resurrection which is also our death and resurrection.

²⁷ Romans 7:23.

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In Galatians two and verse 20 Paul says we have been crucified with Christ and Christ lives in us. And as a result of this we have died to the reigning power of the old sinful nature and now we experience the profound joy and freedom of living in obedience to Christ. And that is why, back to Romans six, verses six and seven, Paul tells us, “that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”²⁸

So, Paul moves away now from this very persuasive corollary between spiritual life and spiritual death and he concludes in verses three through 10 with a very precise clarification. That would be my third point to you this morning.

Beginning in verse three he says, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”²⁹

Here the word “baptized” is *baptizw* (bap-tid'-zo) in the original language which literally means to immerse. It has nothing to do necessarily with the ritual of water baptism. It is used here metaphorically to describe our immersion into Christ at salvation when we were mystically united to him by grace, when we were placed into him.

And, of course, the ritual of baptism does symbolize this. But, indeed, we have been permanently immersed into Christ.

As Colossians 2:10 says, we are complete in him.

Colossians 3:3 also says we are “hid with Christ in God.”³⁰

We see this same concept expressed in 1 Corinthians 6:17. There Paul said, “But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”³¹

And, likewise, in Galatians three verse 27 he says, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”³²

Now, friends, the practical implications of all of this are absolutely staggering. What he is saying is that our immersion into Christ included our immersion into his death. When he died in some inscrutable, unfathomable way, we also died. In fact, our spiritual baptism united us to Christ in his death, in his burial and his resurrection. At that time when we come... when we came to Christ the old man, the... of sin, that once defined our very nature, it is dead. He no longer remains. His dominion over us has ceased for ever.

Verse four.

²⁸ Romans 6:6-7.

²⁹ Romans 6:3.

³⁰ Colossians 3:3.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 6:17.

³² Galatians 3:27.

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Therefore Paul went on to say, “we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”³³

What an incredible statement. Newness, *kainothv* (kahee-not'-ace) in the original language, fascinating term. It speaks of newness in quality with the implication of something that is superior.

In other words, we now have a life that is utterly foreign to the way that we once lived. We have a new nature. Scripture says that we are a new creature in Christ, a new creation. We have been given a new heart, a new mind, a new song. We have no motives, emotions, hopes, passions, new joy, we have even got new possessions. We are joint heirs with Jesus. Everything is different. It is absolutely incredible.

In fact, the way I like to think about it when we come to Christ we all of the sudden realize that we are aliens in this world. Don't you feel like an alien? You know, I turn on the television and I think, man, I am living in a parallel universe. I don't belong here. I go to Walmart and I think, oh, my goodness. God, I don't belong here.

And, friends, it is not that I would look down upon these people as if I am superior, but, in fact, I look upon them and see a mirror and God says, “Son, if it were not for my grace that would be you. But you have died in me. I have raised you to walk in newness of life. Everything about you is different.”

So I am an alien.

You know, the closest thing to home for me is when we come here? When we come here to worship. Now that is not to say that God doesn't give us glimpse of his glory and all the joys of being with him. Certainly I have that with my family and other things, but, boy, when we come together and we worship the Lord our God and allow the doxologies of our hearts to come forth, all of the sudden I get a sense of being home. We are aliens here.

You think of all the gridlock that we see in politics today. I was thinking about that. You know, the things that separate the two sides is not really a separation of politics. My friends, it is a clash of natures. I am not saying that one side is necessarily more godly than the other, but you will see of the most part that the right is going to hold to truths that are much closer to the righteous principles that are delineated in the Word of God. And when the other side sees that, they react with enormous hostility, just a little sample of the fact that we live in different universes here.

³³ Romans 6:4.

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Paul says in 2 Corinthians six, “What partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”³⁴

The point is there is none. You see, we have... we now have a radically different disposition. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. That is Paul’s point here. We are different that the former self. Even as Christ’s resurrection proved that his death was an acceptable sacrifice to God, likewise the believer’s newness of life is what proves that the has truly died to sin in Christ. Do you understand that? They parallel each other.

Let me put it to you differently. Beloved, there is no such thing as justification without sanctification.

You don’t come along and become a new creation and be declared righteous and all of this and then not grow in Christ and not have any love for Christ as if there was no newness of life. That is just unbiblical. Said differently, any man who calls himself a Christian but lives in persistent sin has deceived himself. This is Paul’s whole point.

Look at verse five.

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him.”³⁵

Old, the term in the original language that means obsolete, inferior, worthless, the old self. It speaks of the worthless old man that we once were in Adam. You see, that was what was crucified with Christ.

So he says, verse six:

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him...”³⁶

Why? He goes on to say:

“...that our body of sin...”³⁷

In other words, our bodies here in which sin operates.

“...that our body of sin might be done away with...”³⁸

³⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:14.

³⁵ Romans 6:5-6.

³⁶ Romans 6:6.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

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katargew (kat-arg-eh'-o) is the Greek term which basically means to render something inactive, to make it powerless. Our body of sin might be rendered powerless “that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”³⁹

Verse seven, “for he who has died is freed from sin.”⁴⁰

I love that. Freed from sin. You are set free, free to go. You don't have to obey that anymore unless you choose to.

In fact, “freed” comes from the Greek term dikaiow (dik-ah-yo'-o). You might not remember that, but it was the same term that Paul has been using over and over again translated, “to justify,” to declare righteous. It is rooted in that same term, the term that he has used repeatedly throughout this epistle.

You see, we have been justified. We have been declared righteous. Therefore we have been freed from sin. And grammatically this is in what we would call the perfect passive indicative. It simply means this. It indicates that we are the recipients of an action in the past and we are now enjoying the results that will continue throughout the future. Isn't that a wonderful thought? Greek grammar is so precise, far more than the English grammar.

So here is the glorious truth. When we came to Christ with all of our sin, he transformed us and our old nature that was enslaved to the law of sin was suddenly slain. That old man is dead. There is a new man now. It was rendered powerless. We were freed from the bondage of sin. Our old nature was crucified with him, in other words, it died with him, verse six. And immediately when this occurred in some inscrutable way, we joined to the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and in his burial. Our old worthless self died. It was buried. It was done away with. But miraculously our new self was resurrected with him as he says here in verse six, so we, too, might walk in the newness of life. See, beloved, here is the great news. We are no longer slaves to the bondage of sin. We have been freed from all of that. We are ... we have a new nature. The old nature and the new nature are mutually exclusive. You cannot be dead and alive at the same time.

However, although the sinful self is dead, we remain incarcerated. We remain trapped at some level in this temporal flesh, this unredeemed humanness, until glory. And until the day that we are delivered completely from the presence of sin, we are going to battle sin in our flesh, but not without the power of victory, like we didn't have before.

Have you ever heard the line, “Well, you know, I just can't become a Christian because I know that I just can't stop sinning”? Have you ever heard that? I have heard that a hundred times. Surely you have heard that.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Romans 6:7.

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I can't become a Christian because I have to admit, I love my sin too... there is too many things that I know I just couldn't give up. You see, my friend, you have got it all wrong if you say that. You have got it all wrong. Don't think of sin as something you could never stop doing. But think of sin as something that you finally have the opportunity to stop doing, that you no longer are a slave to it. you are freed from that tyrant.

You see, breaking the pattern of sin and destruction in your life, is not something that you have to do, it is something you finally get to do. Do you see the difference? That is the glorious power of the gospel.

In verse eight he says, "Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."⁴¹

Verse nine, "knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him."⁴²

You see, this speaks not only of the death of sin, but also of the death of death. Think about it. Christ's resurrection has forever defeated the tyrant of death. We are no longer under that control. We have died with Christ and we are going to be raised with Christ in the future. But I want you to understand something that is very important. I don't think this is peaking solely to the issue of resurrection. I think that is secondary. I think the issue here is he is saying that we have been raised to walk in newness of life which, I believe, is the context here of this passage.

So much for this ridiculous nothing that you hear so often where people say, "Well, you know, you can trust Jesus as Savior, but you don't have to make him your Lord. Some people will do that later on, but you don't have to do that now. You don't have to really submit to him as Lord."

Really?

In other words, you can come to Jesus and still live an ungodly live until such a time as, you know, you become convicted or the Spirit does something to you and you decide to submit to the lordship of Christ.

My friends, that is just patently false. Notice, again, verse eight more closely.

He says, "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."⁴³

⁴¹ Romans 6:8.

⁴² Romans 6:9.

⁴³ Romans 6:8.

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Both in the Greek and in the English whenever the future tense is used it emphasizes the inevitability of a certain thing. And in this case the phrase “we shall also live with him” speaks to the inevitability, the absolute certainty that when a man dies with Christ in salvation he will inevitably, inescapably without a doubt live with him as opposed to living under the realm of Satan and sin. He has been raised to walk in newness of life. That is what happens when you come to Christ.

Verse 10 bears this out more fully. He says, “For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.”⁴⁴

Well, likewise, my friends, this will characterize the believer who has died to sin. The life that we live now we live to God. And this analogy is underscored even further in verse 11. He says, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”⁴⁵

So the context here is the certainty, the inevitability of holy living for all who have been immersed into Christ’s death and resurrection.

I might add, as a footnote, in verses 16 through 18 he goes on to speak of this context of holy living. He says:

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.⁴⁶

Beloved, this is the stuff of genuine saving faith. But notice something utterly fascinating here in verse 10. He says, “ For the death that He died, He died to sin.”⁴⁷

Oh, wait a minute. How can the sinless Son of God die to sin?

Well, you must understand that he did not die for his sins. He died for ours. And as a result, there are three glorious realities that come from that. Because of his death we have been delivered from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin and one day from the very presence of sin. Think of the penalty of sin.

1 John 2:2 says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins,”⁴⁸ meaning he is the one that satisfied the justice of God. he paid the penalty for the sins of all who would trust in him.

⁴⁴ Romans 6:10.

⁴⁵ Romans 6:11.

⁴⁶ Romans 6:16-18.

⁴⁷ Romans 6:10.

⁴⁸ 1 John 2:2.

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But his death not only satisfied the penalty of sin, it also broke the power of sin and that is what Paul is talking about here. For all who are united to him and one day we will be delivered from the presence of sin.

So, you see, sin can no longer condemn. It can no longer corrupt. But notice what else in verse 10.

“For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all.”⁴⁹

My, talk about security. The penalty has been paid. My friends, there is no need for your lists anymore. Ok? There is no need of the sacrifices. By the way, there is not enough lists in all the world to move us one iota closer to being reconciled to God than we were on our worst day. It is all of grace. It is all of Christ.

1 Pete 3:18 we read, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”⁵⁰

And then Paul closes this section by adding, “But the life that He lives, He lives to God.”⁵¹

Think about this. When Jesus left the realm of glory and he came to this earth, he lived in the realm of Satan and sin and death and became a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. But in that short span of history he lived a sinless life so that he could be the unblemished spotless Lamb of God to die for our sins. And then, as we see, he died to sin once for all. And as a result of all of that, the life that he lives, he lives to God.

Now think about this. Where is Jesus now? He is in the realm of heaven. He no longer lives in the realm of Satan and sin and death. All of that was forever vanquished at the cross. He lives in the realm of God and the splendor of eternal glory and the majesty of heaven. And, here is the point. Because we have been united to him in his death, in his burial and his resurrection not only will we also some day live in this same realm of glory in the eternal state, but right now we, too, like Christ live to God. We have been raised to walk in newness of life.

Think about it. Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Ephesians 2:6 Paul says that we also have been raised up with him “and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Romans 6:10.

⁵⁰ 1 Peter 3:18.

⁵¹ Romans 6:10.

⁵² Ephesians 2:6-7.

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Let me give it to you in another way. Right now Christ manifests the divine character, the unchanging revelation of the invisible God. And because we are united to him, we, too, can show forth the character of the one in whom we have been hid. We can manifest the glory of Christ in our life.

To put it another way, our Redeemer is in constant fellowship with God. He delights in the infinite perfections of sweet communion. So, too, because we are united to him we can enjoy this marvelous fellowship and even more so some day.

Beloved, don't miss the implications of this. We have been raised to walk in newness of life. This is the power of the gospel unto salvation.

So bear this in mind as we close this morning. When you share Christ with loved ones, most of which have no understanding of God, no understanding of their own sin, those people that are drowning in their own sin, when you share Christ with them know with absolute certainty that the truth of the gospel will set them free. It will not only deliver them from the penalty of sin, but from its power. And for all of you who are struggling with sin—by the way, if you are not, if you can't think of anything, may I encourage you to go before the Lord today, get on your face and cry out to him to show you those areas in your life where you are not bringing honor to him. And do you know what? He has never failed to answer that prayer in my life.

So whatever sin it is, or sins that you are dealing with, those things that you feel like somehow are masters over you, if you know Christ, please know that that tyrant has been deposed and you do not have to obey that. And, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you can have victory over that sin.

So examine yourselves. Beloved this is what animated the apostles' heart. And we will see later on at the end of this whole section in chapter 11, he is just going to absolutely... it is like he can't contain himself anymore. He is going to explode with a doxology and he is going to say, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"⁵³

Isn't that true? You think for one second that man wrote all of this, you absolutely know nothing of Scripture. This is absolutely astounding. So may these marvelous truths ignite each of our hearts to praise him and stir our affections to faith and obedience that we might live out by the power of the Spirit the wonderful truths of the gospel.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your Word. May it transform every life that is here today, especially, Lord for those who have never bowed the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ. Overwhelm them with conviction. Cause them to see the holiness of God and therefore

⁵³ Romans 11:33.

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see their sin for what it is. Cause them, Lord, to cry out to you for the mercy and the grace that you give to all who humble themselves in repentant faith. I pray all of this in the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to pastor, Bible teacher and author David Harrell. For more information or to order additional tapes or CDs of pastor Harrell's messages, please visit OliveTreeResources.org.

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