

Romans 6:1-10

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Date: 24 September 2023

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[0:00] Recall that I have told you that the overarching theme of Paul's writing is that a person is justified, or declared righteous by God, by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

The thesis statement of his letter is found in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, where he writes, I am not ashamed of the gospel, or you could insert I am proud of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

In the remainder of chapter 1 and in chapter 2, Paul then makes the case that everyone has sinned. The Gentiles, those without the law, and the Jews, those with the law.

Regardless of their status, all have sinned. And he hammers this point home in the first half of chapter 3. Chapter 3, verses 10 through 12.

[1:16] Say, none is righteous, no not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside together, they have become worthless.

No one does good, not even one. All of humanity has a righteousness problem.

We are guilty of transgressing God, are separated from communion with him, and are due his judgment and just punishment. We will not because we cannot earn our way to God.

And this is terrible news. Paul doesn't end there. In the rest of chapter 3, he speaks of the righteousness that is granted to us by grace through faith in Christ as our propitiator.

You have heard me say, Jesus lived the life I could not live, and died the death that I deserve, so that through faith in his completed work, I would be saved.

[2:24] This promise is sure for you if you have or if you will believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ. On a couple of occasions, I've read the following poem to you.

It is unanimous. Some of you have debated this with me. It is unanimous. But it goes like this. Oh, long and dark, the stairs I trod, with trembling feet to find my God.

Gaining a foothold bit by bit, then slipping back and losing it. Never progressing, striving still, with weakening grasp and faltering will, bleeding to climb to God while he serenely smiled, not noting me.

Then came a certain time when I loosened my hold and fell thereby, down to the lowest step my fall, as if I had not climbed at all. Now when I lay despairing there, listen, a footfall on the stair, on that same stair where I, afraid, faltered and fell and lay dismayed.

And lo, when hope had ceased to be, my God came down the stairs to me. In chapter 4, Paul then puts forth Abraham as an example of one saved, not by his works, but by his faith.

[3:55] No one has ever been saved by their works. Old Testament saints were saved through faith in the coming promise of a Messiah. New Testament saints, including us, are now saved through faith in the fulfilled promise of a Messiah.

See Hebrews chapter 11. In chapter 5, Paul explains how the first Adam, as a representative of all humanity, brought sin into the world, and how the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, can serve as our representative before God.

So we are justified, Paul argues, by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Now, at every step of Paul's writing, he is anticipating objections.

It feels sometimes like he's in a court of law against himself. He asks questions and he gives answers. Now likely he was familiar with the counter-arguments because he had already encountered them many times.

His missionary practice was to go to a new place and reason with the people from the scripture. Today's text brings us to another anticipated objection to justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

[5:22] We would do well to pay careful attention to the question and to Paul's answer for the instruction of our souls. So let me remind you before we read the text, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

It was written for his glory and for our good. So we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. Romans chapter 6, beginning in verse 1.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

[6:37] For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.

Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin, once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God.

Fairly simple outline for our study this morning. Number one, Paul asks a question. Number two, Paul answers the question.

And number three, Paul advances his answer. Alliteration, you're welcome. Asks, answers, advances. Number one, Paul asks a question.

He says, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? You may have asked this question or been asked this question.

[7:39] I tell you this morning that you have at least functionally asked this question in your behavior, although not likely in these terms. A simple restatement of the question could be, if Christ has paid the penalty for my sin and given me his perfection, then can't I live any way I want to?

John Bunyan, you guys know I'm a fan of, was a 17th century English Baptist, which I'm proud to tell you, who was in prison for 12 years because he preached without a license from the state.

You may know of Bunyan from his seminal work, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a work that I love and I read to you often. You may have noticed I brought a copy of it with me.

I have a plan to read from it briefly this morning. He wrote this allegory of the Christian life upon being placed in solitary confinement because he would preach from the courtyard of the prison and people would gather outside the prison walls to hear him expound upon the Bible.

During this time, some other Christ followers, also in prison for preaching without a license, but with very different theology from Bunyan, told him, Bunyan, if you continue to preach of God's love, the people will live however they want to.

[9:02] Does the objection sound familiar? If our righteousness depends solely on a God who saves, without any contribution on our part, then can't we live however we would like?

This is not an unimportant question, and we dare not be dismissive of it. Paul certainly isn't. In fact, much of his discourse for the next couple of chapters comes as a response to this objection.

I would argue about halfway through chapter 8 is really his response to this objection. So we ask an important question, but it gives us an answer to that question, an immediate and emphatic answer.

So number two, Paul answers the question. He says, By no means. How can we who die to sin still live in it? Paul follows his anticipated question with an emphatic answer, By no means.

The Greek phrase is *me genoito*, and it is very strong Greek language. It could be interpreted, No way, or absolutely not.

[10:19] And he follows this emphatic no with a question. How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul is going to go on to explain this phrase further, as are we, but herein is the simplicity of the matter. If you are justified by grace alone through faith alone and the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, then you have been changed, not in degree, but in type.

This is the doctrine of regeneration. We once were spiritually dead. Now we are spiritually alive. This doctrine is perhaps the most important to be recaptured for the sake of the church in our day. Oh, that we would know that we are no longer captives, but have been set free.

Oh, that we would live holy lives for the advancement of the gospel to the glory of our God. God. We are not saved by works. We are saved through faith, but it is a faith that works.

[11:46] Our very identity has been changed. And I'm not going to stand before you this morning and declare to you that having been set free from sin, we therefore no longer sin.

We do. We carry around the baggage of our flesh. We get to work in great deal with this at the end of chapter 7. However, we will begin the process of growing in holiness.

This is a tightrope for our understanding to balance upon. So to make it more clear, I want to show you the two ways that we could fall off this tightrope.

On the one side, you could fall off into legalism. You can give too much credit to your accomplishments or you can give too much credit to your failures.

I see Christians do this to themselves all the time. They take their focus off the accomplished work of Christ and they become hyper-analyzers of their lives.

[12:51] They often compare their current walk with their walk in the past or with the walk of another and become self-accusers or self-justifiers. They put themselves in the place of God.

I see Christians do this to others all the time, making judgments of faithfulness in terms of agreeance with their views or with their lifestyle.

The legalist says, look more like me. The person walking the tightrope helps others to look more like Christ. On the other side, you can fall off into antinomianism, which means without the law.

The possibility of this accusation seems to be the objection Paul is primarily concerned with in today's text. somebody saying, wait, wait, we can't just disregard God's moral commands for us.

Can we? This error takes sin lightly, either paying no attention to it at all or readily dismissing it. This error says, let's continue in sin that grace may abound.

[14:04] Let's show how forgiving our God is by going on and sinning. So we don't want to become legalists and we don't want to become antinomians.

Let us be careful to make neither error. We are not saved by works. We are saved through faith, but it is a faith that works.

It's a faith that is given evidence in the way that we live. The person restored to relationship with his or her God does not view God's commands as burdensome, but receives them as a gift.

If we become aware of God's great love for us by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, then we will gladly accept his ways for our good and his glory.

We will become increasingly less enamored with what this world has to offer us and increasingly more enamored with God's purpose and with God's way.

[15:11] It becomes the desire of our hearts that we would follow in God's good commands. This brings me to the pilgrim's progress.

I haven't read to you yet from the scene in Vanity Fair. At least I don't believe I have. There's a city that these pilgrims in this allegory happen across and it's for the testing of their faith and it is everything that the world has to offer in this one city.

And they find themselves in this city looking very strange to those who live there. And so I read, quote, the thing that most annoyed and puzzled the merchants was that these pilgrims put no value on the fair's goods.

They did not even enjoy looking at them and when the merchants called out to them to buy this or that, the pilgrims put their fingers in their ears and cried out, turn away mine eyes from beholding

vanity and looked upward signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven.

This is from Psalm 119 in verse 37. One merchant observing the strange conduct of the pilgrims mockingly said to them, What will you buy?

[16:29] But they, looking sternly at him, answered, We buy the truth. Which I just love from Proverbs 23 if my memory is serving me well.

Not enamored with the things of the world but enamored with the things of God. Do you remember the concern of Bunyan's fellow prisoners?

Bunyan, if you continue to preach of God's love the people will live however they want to. Well, Bunyan reportedly replied, No.

If I continue to tell God's people of God's love for them, then they will live however he wants them to. But Paul doesn't just leave us with the answer, by no means, how can we who died to sin still live in it?

and leave us to figure out how he goes on to answer the question. And as I said quite a bit into his letter but this morning we have an advance of his answer.

[17:37] So third point, Paul advances his answer. Helps us to understand what it means to die to sin and no longer live in it. And Paul answers the question in four points.

We're going to give each of them a brief look this morning as we work through the rest of the text and I just want to encourage you to consider these four points further than we have time for this morning.

Mold them over, think about them carefully, talk about them with a brother or sister at your dinner table. They are an absolute treasure trove for our souls.

This is all so good and sometimes I hate how little time we have together for them. First, Paul says, by grace alone through faith alone, we are baptized into Christ.

This is the beginning part of verse 3. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus?

[18:41] Now Paul here is not speaking of the symbolic ordinance of baptism. Some people want to make arguments from this text that we are justified through the act of baptism.

This is known as baptismal regeneration and it is a heresy. But Paul, as I've said here, is not speaking of the symbolic ordinance of baptism.

How do I know this? How can we know? Well, I know this because I've read the rest of the letter. because I haven't torn a tiny piece out of my Bible to make an erroneous argument.

Because I haven't forgotten that Paul is arguing for justification by grace alone through faith alone in the personal work of Jesus Christ alone. So he can't possibly be saying that we're saved, that we're made new through the physical act of baptism.

So, he must be speaking of the spiritual reality of what is true for all who believe in Christ. Now, as a side note, as a Baptist, one of the leaders of a Baptist church, we do believe in what's called credo or credo, you'll hear people say, baptism.

[20:00] We believe that water baptism is not the means of salvation but a demonstration of it. It shows what's already happened.

I heard a pastor one time compare it to another type of ceremony, a graduation ceremony. There's some college students here who are looking toward and longing for graduation.

Graduation ceremonies aren't entirely necessary to finish school. It's a little secret, but you don't have to walk. I got out of it and yet, I still graduated from the University of North Georgia.

You've already completed the work. It's been accomplished. You've checked all of the boxes, but it's showing that you've finished the work.

If you ask most people about their graduation, they'll take you to that ceremony as a sign of the thing that had already been completed. I think this is a pretty good analogy.

[21:01] theology. It's not the means of salvation. It's just a demonstration of it. I digress. Notice that the opening phrase of verse 3 is a qualifying statement.

Paul says, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus? For anything to be true of you in today's text, you must have been baptized into Christ Jesus.

How is this accomplished? If we're not talking about the physical baptism, it's accomplished by repentance and faith, by turning from your sin and turning to Christ for the justification of your soul. If you have, then you have been baptized into Christ Jesus. And again, as a Baptist, I would say, and therefore should be baptized by immersion as a sign of that reality.

That is, you have been immersed in Christ. That's why we immerse people in the symbolic ordinance of baptism.

[22:11] It's a picture of a spiritual reality. The symbolically baptized person declares, as the church declares with them, that they identify with Christ in his death, and in his resurrection.

Which brings us to our second point, which is an extension of the first. So second, Paul says, by grace alone through faith alone, we share in Christ's death and resurrection.

See this here, picking up in the last half of verse three. Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in the newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. The language of verse four may be familiar to you in considering the symbolic ordinance of baptism.

We say as we baptize people as a church buried with Christ in baptism raised to walk in the newness of life. This is an evidence that you are regenerate, that you belong to God in Christ Jesus, immersed in him.

[23:39] This is an explanation of the doctrine of regeneration. Those who have placed their faith in Christ have not physically died and resurrected but spiritually share in these realities.

Paul states it this way in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

If you are in Christ, then you are no longer who you once were pre-Christ. You are new. You are now post-Christ, although presently Christ.

Those who are in Christ have been born again. Where this phrase comes from is from John chapter 3, and I'm going to read verses 1 through 7.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs, speaking of his miracles, that you do unless God is with him.

[24:55] Jesus answered him, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

This is very common language to the American Christian. Imagine how strange it would have been for Nicodemus who responds, how can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh! And that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

So, tying in that we, and Paul's going to pick this up pretty heavily in chapter 8, we're given the spirit. This is how we become regenerate.

[25:57] This is how we're baptized into Christ, is that we are given the spirit who makes us new, causes us to believe, we're justified before God, and then we begin to walk in his ways by the power of that same spirit.

If we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. The old self put away, the new self put on.

Third, Paul says, by grace alone, through faith alone, we have been set free from sin. Verse 6 and 7, he says, we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin, that old self, might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

For one who has died has been set free from sin. This is so important please note it carefully.

If you are in Christ, then you have been set free from sin. Sin no longer has power over you.

[27:16] Beloved, we do not cope with our sin. We, by the power of the Spirit, overcome it. We're not copers, we're overcomers. sin nowhere in the Bible is sin justified due to a circumstance.

Your circumstances may provide temptation, but your circumstances do not justify your sin. If you are in Christ, you have been set free from it, and we would do well as a people to live in the reality of this truth.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 13. It begins, no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

And across my years of ministry, I've sat with many people who act as if they're experiencing a unique temptation, a temptation that they must give into because it's unique, and this is the text we go to.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. We as Christ followers deal with temptation. Paul goes on, God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

[28:44] God is faithful in the midst of our temptation to provide everything that we need to not sin. We have been set free from it. Will we sin?

Yes. But we need to stop acting like we have to. Fourth, Paul says, by grace alone, through faith alone, Christ's death was sufficient to set us free from sin.

This is verse 8 to the end of our text. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.

Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Christ will not die again, for he has no need to do so. his once for all sacrifice was entirely sufficient to set us free from sin.

[29:51] It accomplished the work. It's a completed work on our behalf. I think we could meditate for decades on Jesus' final word, it is finished.

What is the it that he is talking about there? It's at very least this. We have been set free from sin if we have believed in Christ.

So let's think about some application. One, repent and believe. If you have never placed your faith in Christ for your justification, your soul is in a desperate state, turn from your sin and flee by grace through faith to Christ.

Recognize your wickedness before the holy God. Turn from that and flee to Christ, his sufficient work on your behalf.

If you have already done so, when you sin, turn from it and flee by grace through faith to Christ.

Beloved, it is good that we take our sin seriously.

[31:10] I think we should feel it and I think we should feel it deeply when we sin against our God. Some have asked me, how long should I feel that way?

And my answer is always, only as long as it takes for you to repent and believe. Recognize the weight of your sin and turn from it. Run to the finished work of the cross.

So repent and believe. Second application, stop whining. Do not act like you are a victim of your sin.

You may be a victim of another sin. I don't mean to say that you are not. We are sinned against, to be sure. But you are never a victim of your own.

You willingly sin. When you sin, you willingly do it. If you are in Christ, you have been set free from your sin. When you sin, do not act as though Christ's death didn't atone for that sin.

[32:20] Some of you act as though Christ's work wasn't sufficient and that he needs to climb back onto the cross. He couldn't have possibly paid for this one. He must come back and die again.

remember the completed work of Christ on your behalf, the once-for-all sacrifice that he has made. Remember what he started and that he is sure to keep his promises.

Have the confidence that I have of God for you. I hope you have it of yourself that Paul states in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6 where he says, I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

He will bring us to that place where we get to put off the body of death and never have the baggage of our flesh any longer with us.

So repent and believe, stop whining, third, run. Press on, beloved, make war against your flesh.

[33:33] You should be greatly encouraged to do so by Romans 6 verses 1 through 10. Having been set free from it, we have all the reason in the world to run towards the ways of God.

Paul says in Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 12, not that I have already obtained this, he's talking about the final resurrection from the dead, or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.

I press, I press toward holiness, right? Why? Because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Run, press on in holiness for your good and for the glory of our God. You have been, if you're in Christ, if you've been baptized into him, you have been set free from the power of sin.

John Owen once said in closing, do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it whilst you live.

[35:04] Cease not a day from this work. Be killing sin, or it will be killing you. Let's pray together.