

Newness of Life – Part 1

Romans 6:1-7

Recall last week's text: *Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21, NKJV)*

There is a clarity that must be reached in the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel is for sinners. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be preached to those who are perishing. It is for the lost. To those who hate God. To murderers, to whoremongers, to adulterers, and to fornicators. The Gospel is to be preached to idolaters and atheists. The Gospel is for blasphemers. Jesus died to save liars and covetous people and thieves and all sorts of various kinds of sinners. And those are the types of sinners as are saved by the power of the Gospel. And this, in spite of these sinners' merits. So if you today are one of these types of sinners, hear the word of God....believe the Gospel, and you shall be saved! And if you are not one of these type of sinners, then there is no Gospel to preach to you. For Jesus came to save sinners....of whom I am chief.

So hear this, sinners! Here is freedom. Here is peace. Here is removal of the pangs of your conscience. You in whom sin abounds....hear this! Where sin abounds....GRACE ABOUND ALL THE MORE! The volume and magnitude of your sin is irrelevant. For grace trumps sin. You in whom sin reigns and rules.....through Jesus Christ our Lord, grace shall reign over you, in righteousness!

What is the cost? How can such sinners obtain this? It is a free gift (5:15). So come!

*"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have **no money**, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk **without money and without price**. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul **delight itself** in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David. (Isaiah 55:1-3, NKJV)*

Free? Without cost? No strings attached? There must be something wrong with that. It cannot be. I must earn, I must be worthy....and I must be more worthy than some. I must have stake in this in some way....so this Gospel you preach cannot be the Gospel that I believe. There is something that is wrong....if it sounds too good to be true, then it probably is.

Such is the mentality of most of us. And of every unregenerate person. Those who long for conscience to die.....say there must be something I can do. There must be a fix that works. It can't be that simple. This must be a scandal!

I said last time that the preaching of the Gospel, when preached in truth, must be scandalous. It must sound unfair. It must lead some people to charge us with the question that is asked here in our test this morning....."Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" I was happy when I read the commentary provided by Martyn Lloyd-Jones this week:

"The true preaching of the gospel of salvation by grace alone always leads to the possibility of [the charge that we may sin that grace may abound] being brought against it. That is a very good test of gospel preaching....

*"If my preaching and presentation of the gospel does not expose it to that misunderstanding, then it is not the gospel....If your preaching of salvation has **not** been misunderstood in this way, then you had better examine your sermons again, and you had better make sure that you are really preaching the salvation that is offered in the New Testament to the ungodly, to the sinner, to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, to those who are enemies of God."*

What we must understand this far into the epistle to the Romans is that salvation is all of grace, and none of works. It is granted simply based on the will and good pleasure of God, and always in spite of what those receiving it have done and who those people are. Salvation is of the Lord, and it is for the Lord. And hear this, and take it home with you. ALWAYS REMEMBER THIS. *You don't deserve salvation any **more** than a person who murdered someone deserves salvation. And the person who murdered someone does not deserve salvation any **less** than do you.* Now you remember that, for that is the rock of the teaching of the salvation of the New Testament.

So salvation is all of grace. Grace abounds where sin abounds....therefore, couldn't it be said, that the more we sin, the more God's grace can abound?

No. That is the teaching of this part of the epistle. But let us answer this question in the words of the Apostle Paul. Certainly not! Now, to make a note, KJV uses the term "God forbid". This is not the literal translation...it is a phrase chosen by the translators to communicate the force of the objection. The Greek reads, "may it not become" or, "may it never be." It is a strong admonition against the preceding words. May it never be! Certainly not! Forget that! It is not as the blasphemous "Message" paraphrase puts it...."I should hope not". This is a definite, expressive rejection of that notion that sin can continue that grace may abound. Certainly not! Impossible!

In the beginning of creation, God said, "Let there be..." and so it was. In the same way, here in Romans 6, God has said of the new creation, "Let there never be..." And so shall there never be! Never shall there be any new creation of God of whom this statement is true. No new man shall live a life of sin with the excuse that grace may abound. It is an impossibility.

Paul puts force and power into this expression, and the words following it are full of similar passion....."Certainly not! We....we have died to sin....how can a dead man live?" Literally the Greek reads, "who, we who died to sin, how still will we live in it?" It could be translated, "Who are we, who died to sin, to live any more in it?" ***The emphasis is on who we are, and what has happened to us***, in opposition to the idea that sin can abound in us.

Now this is a critically important sentence. Important in that if we miss this meaning, we will miss the meaning of the next two chapters. There is a stark contrast here....death, verses life. And in verse 3, burial, and resurrection. Verses 6 and 7....slavery, freedom. So let us look at verse 2 in that way, of stark contrasts. The sentence brings great attention to the first words, "**who...we**". It is making a statement about who we are. Who are we? Let us recall...

WE are those who inherited death in Adam, not of our own will, but of our union with Adam. WE are those who, not of our own will, but of our union with Christ, have been granted justification. WE are the MANY that are referred to in chapter 5, the many who have been redeemed of every tribe, tongue and nation. WE are the MANY who have been made righteous, by the blood and death of Another. We are unique in the world, for we are children of God. And what Paul is saying here, is that there is a difference. There is something that has happened to us, that has made a fundamental difference in the way we live our lives.

Now let's look at the text, and see if that is true. Have we indeed, had something happen to us in the past that is doing these things in the present, or are we people who are being changed gradually or progressively....some of us are here at this level, and some are at another? Are there those who have Jesus, but just don't live like it yet? Look at the verbs. "Died". This is the Active aorist indicative....it is continuing action that began at a definite point in the past.

Remember the context....as it is critical that we do here. We are talking about salvation, not sanctification. Sanctification is something that happens in a process as we grow in faith and holiness and love for God. But nowhere here is any talk about that. We are talking about salvation....justification. So this is how we interpret this....these lines are about justification.

We who died..... As opposed to something that is a work in progress. Dying to sin is not a work in progress that we are doing....it is a work that has been done in the past by God. He is talking about something that has actually happened to us, at a definite point in time. We died to sin. Now, death is an instantaneous thing. One moment, you are alive, and the very next split second, you are dead. It is an instantaneous change of state.

But still, there are some who take this passage to be all about sanctification. Of the "growing in faith". But this simply cannot be true. In other words, there are those who want to say that there are believers who are still much alive to sin, but over this process of sanctification, are made more and more dead to it. Again, this cannot be, because of the verb tense. The aorist tense looks back to a definite point, a thing that happened once, and has been concluded, with consequences that carry on to the present.

If it were a progressive thing, then there would be this great cloudiness of who is a Christian, and who is not. But this cannot be, because even our Lord Jesus tells us that there is no cloudiness. "My sheep hear My voice....and they follow Me." So this is talking to believers....and it is speaking to and of ALL believers.

If it were a progressive thing, then Paul would have used a different word to communicate his point. He would have used something like , "rejected," or "decided against," or "renounced" or something like that. And he would have used a different tense....not the aorist. So this being "dead to sin" is a present state that has been caused by something that has happened to us in the past. That is very important.

It's important because of what it says about all believers. Because it holds true of all believers. Who is the sentence talking to? Believers. Those who have been saved by the grace of God. Those sinners I spoke of in the message introduction. Those who, by many acts of disobedience and sin, on top of the one sin of Adam, were unrighteous, then made righteous, by the one act of obedience by the Man Jesus Christ. One act. Change of state. One moment, condemned. The next....forgiven. Reconciled. No condemnation. That is who he speaks of here.

It is also not talking about perfectionism. There are many who teach sinless perfection from these very verses. This is simply not the case, for as Lloyd-Jones says, if so, "Paul never would have written, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body'. You do not need to say that to a man who is completely dead to all of the power and influence and all the love of sin."

So what is this passage about, if it is not about these things? This passage, and the whole of chapter 6, is about this assertion of verse 2....**that there is a reality that is in each and every true Christian, in that he is a dead man.** He is **dead to the dominion of sin** in his life, **not because of what he has done of what he can do now or should do in the future....but because what has been done in him by God.** Sin that exists, that ruled and reigned over all who are in Adam, shall not rule and reign over any who are in Christ.

Now Paul begins his explanation. Notice verse 3. He uses a strange comparison. Baptism. And contrary to popular belief, this passage is not teaching about the act of baptism, the proper mode or type of baptism, or even the ordinance of baptism. It is simply using a word that aptly describes what has happened to the one who is in Christ. And that word is *baptizo*, or *immerse*. It is used to give a visual picture of what has actually happened. We who are "in Christ" are completely in. All the way under. The word is used in Greek literature of the act of "pickling" vegetables, by placing them under vinegar. You don't make a dill pickle by putting it half way in vinegar and half way out of it. Else you will have half a pickle, and half a cucumber. No, when you want to make a pickle, you fill a jar with vinegar, and out in the cucumber, and close the lid. It is fully under the liquid, and thus a complete transformation takes place. To baptize is to separate completely from the air, cutting off its influence on the object. The influence of air on a cucumber is rot. Decay. But when cut off from the air, the influence is preservation.

Let me put it another way, and another use of the Greek *baptizo*. It was used of the sinking of a ship. When a ship is in good working order, it has a complete hull that displaces the water so that the mass of the ship is less dense than the

mass of water that surrounds it. So it floats. But when something happens to the hull, like a crack or a hole in it, the hull can no longer do what it had done before, which was to isolate the empty space inside the hull from the water. So when the water comes in through the wound in the hull, the ship sinks....it goes all the way under. It is no longer under the influence of the hull. What has happened to believers, is that we were afloat on the sea, the hull of our sinful nature keeping us isolated from the penetrating influence of the washing of water by the word. No one puts a hole in his own ship....it just happens from the outside. Christ has blown a hole in the hull of our sinful nature, in that the nature still exists, but cannot be the influence that prevails. It ceases to do what it did before. It is completely under the influence of the waters of everlasting life.....all the way under!

Such is what has happened here....those who are in Christ, are fully in Him. They have been cut off from the influencing power of satan. So much so, that we are fully united with Him in His death, and what it accomplished.

What did the death of Christ accomplish? It crushed the head of Satan. The death of the Son of God thwarted Satan's rule over God's people. It is exactly contextually complete with what has been said already. In Adam, we died. Satan wielded the power that God gave him, and used it to inflict a mortal wound. But God made a promise, directly concerning this...that the seed of the woman would come. Perfect, sinless Man; infinite, holy God in human flesh would live and die and be raised again conquering death. That the death of Christ, being just a bruise on His heel, would crush the head of Satan. Satan, who tempted and drew mankind into sin, who rules and reigns as the god of this world, has been dealt a fatal blow to the head, in that he cannot rule and reign over those who are in Christ. His throne has been debunked.

Now again, I do not wish to make this statement sound incredulous, or otherwise hard to believe, but I do want it to be said in the sense and in the power of argument in which the Apostle makes it. In the same way that the free gift of grace sounds too good to be true to the unbeliever, so as much that it sounds scandalous, we find here the same sort of scandalous teaching of Paul....in that sin can no longer rule over believers! Now let me say this about this statement, which has been said of the statement in verse 1.... *"....If your preaching of salvation has **not** been misunderstood in this way, then you had better examine your sermons again, and you had better make sure that you are really preaching the salvation that is offered in the New Testament"*

Folks, it is wrong to use the pulpit as a place of condolence to shallowness. No, it is a place to say the incredible things that the Bible says, and to let them rest on your minds and hearts as incredible. I won't say what is too often said, "...Well, we are all sinners, so we can't help what we do." God forbid! We who are in Christ are not sinners, in the sense that sin is the controlling influence on us! I shall by no means shallow-up these deep waters so to make you think you can wade in them. Because if you come in expecting to wade, you will drown. Brothers and sisters, I shall not do any such thing, but I desire to show you how deep the water is, and then teach you how to swim in it, adoring its depth!