

## **“DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO CHRIST.”**

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### **Scripture Texts: Romans 6:1-7**

#### **Introduction.**

Last week I outlined and summarized the first five chapters of this great letter to the church in Rome. I said Paul has been hammering home the righteousness of God and our unrighteousness, how God in His abounding grace, mercy and love has made a way for us sinners to be justly reconciled to a righteous God. The righteous Savior laid down His life for us unrighteous sinners. The godly for the ungodly.

Up to now Paul has been preaching grace, grace, grace. The Gentiles are saved by grace, the Jews are saved by grace, Abraham was saved by grace through faith. We all sin, and the free gift of God is justification by grace.

Paul had just finished saying in Romans 5:20-21.

**Romans 5:20-21** Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I emphasize this one more time so I can make clear the problem the Apostle Paul addresses in chapter six, which it turns out is a very pivotal chapter in this letter.

It is said among pastors and preachers that the Gospel has not been faithfully preached if at some point someone doesn't ask, so can I sin that grace may abound?

Every pastor who preaches that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone and not by works knows some people will start thinking we can sin all we want.

Every time grace, mercy, forgiveness, faith and justification are preached our sinful minds and hearts are tempted to misunderstand or worse yet, abuse these precious gifts from God.

You can tell Paul has been faithfully preaching the Gospel when we read in chapter 3 that some are slanderously accusing him of saying, “Why not do evil that good may come?” And now again, the question comes up, “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”

This superabounding grace of God freely given to us, freely received by faith alone, through no works or efforts or merits of us, creates a serious spiritual danger of being abused and misused.

A pastor was visiting with a parishioner and asked, "How's your relationship with God?" The parishioner said, "There's not much to tell. I like sinning. God likes forgiving. We get along just fine."

Paul sees it coming and addresses it in verse one, he heads it off at the pass.

Vs. 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

*If the greater the sin, the greater the grace*, then why not deep dive into the depths of sin, even more frequent sin, and every kind of new sin, so we can experience to greater depths the abounding grace of God.

Paul responds in the strongest way possible. ***By no means!*** God forbid (KJV)! Heaven forbid! Certainly not! Far from it (NASB)! May it never be so, never said, never even thought!

To say such a thing is a great offense and a great slander against the holy doctrines of God's grace. The great doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone has a companion doctrine, you can't have one without the other, and that doctrine is sanctification.

That is the focus of the next three chapters of Romans. The life that is promised to us who are righteous by faith, is a life that is characterized by sanctification, by righteousness, by godly living, by love for God shown by our love for His Word, His will, His ways.

God's gifts are all free and generously given, but they come with obligations, with implications, with moral imperatives. It is faith alone that justifies us, but that faith is never alone, it doesn't stand alone. It calls us to prove itself, to show it is real, not fake or hypocritical.

We are called to seek righteousness, to lay ahold of the righteousness we have already received from Christ; to strive for holiness, to be holy as God is holy. So Paul declares, by no means, don't you know what dead to sin means? Oh, wait, I guess since you asked why not sin so grace abounds, you clearly don't know what dead to sin means.

Well let me explain it to you.

Vs. 3 Don't you know what baptism means?

The way the word baptized is used here, it is not referring to water baptism. It is used here to refer to an identification with Christ, as the words being united with Christ show.

When we believe in Christ we are identify with Him, we are baptized into Him. An example of this is seen in

**I Corinthians 10:1-2** I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Their baptism into Moses didn't refer to water baptism but to their being identified with Moses and united to him as they submitted to his leadership and authority, as he led them out of the land of their slavery and bondage.

The point here is once we have made our identification with Christ, there is to be no going back, we are not to go back to identifying with Adam.

Paul uses the phrase united with Christ. Baptism means being so identified with Christ you are grafted into Him. Some of you have done grafting of branches from one kind of tree into another kind of tree.

We know how grafting works. What is grafted into the tree has the same life or death as the tree itself. So if we are grafted into Christ, we share in the same death and in the same life.

If you were baptized into Christ, then you were baptized into Christ's death. We don't think about death being the beginning of our Christian life. You don't hear that in the famous Four Spiritual Laws. You know, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. God loves you and the first thing you need to do is die. Becoming a Christian begins with a death.

**Mark 8:34-35** Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

We all just want to be saved and then go on living our wonderful life. We don't want to take up a cross and deny ourselves and die to ourselves and lose our life. Do you want to follow Jesus, do you want to be a Jesus follower, then it comes with a cross. Every day I am dying, every day I am taking up a cross and dying to myself and what I want.

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**Galatians 6:14** Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Baptism means being killed and buried. But that isn't the end of it. The whole point of dying is so that we might participate in Christ's resurrection as well so that we can walk in newness of life.

There is a great line in a famous movie, "Get busy living or get busy dying." Christianity reverses that. Get busy dying first to sin, so you can get busy living for Christ.

Vs. 5 "If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like His, by the glory of the Father."

The glory of the Father is seen in the power God displayed in the resurrection. The same power that raised Jesus, is the same power that raises us from the dead and gives us new life.

**Ephesians 1:19-20** ... that you may know ... what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Why do we need this power that is outside of us, this power from the Holy Spirit to die sin rather than live in it?

Because we all know full well how much we all struggle with sin. We sin, we repent, we ask for forgiveness, then we sin again and repent again and ask for forgiveness. How many of us want to get free from our sin, from selfishness, anger, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, lack of faith, pride, lying, pornography, adultery, temper, impatience, and on and on and on.

Sanctification is hard work, it is painful, it is pruning, it is cutting away of sin. Sanctification is dying and dying is hard work. It is the hard work given to us by God to do. But it is the kind of hard work that gives us the most satisfaction, because it frees us from the bondage and burden of sin. Confession and repentance bring glory to God and joy to our souls. God created us for good works and this is some of the best work we can do.

We prove ourselves to be in Christ, to be Christ followers, when His power is evident in us. It is by the power of His Holy Spirit that we mortify the flesh, kill sin, resist evil, flee from temptation.

***Augustine illustration:***

Before his conversion to Christ, the great fifth century theologian, Aurelio Augustine lived a very sexually promiscuous, self-indulgent life. He lived with a mistress for several years. After he came to faith in Christ, his former mistress saw him on the street.

She called out to him, “Aurelio, Aurelio.”

But he continued walking, paying no attention to her, ignoring her calls.

She ran to him, grabbed him, and said: “Aurelio, what is the matter? It is I.

Augustine replied: “The matter, dear lady, is that it is not I.”

Was it Augustine? In one sense, yes. She recognized him. But in another sense, no. He was a new man. The old man, the old Augustine who had been enslaved by sin and had lived under its dominion and rule, had died. By faith he had become one with Jesus. By faith he had been raised with Christ. The new Augustine was alive to God.

Augustine could not go on living the life he used to live, because he was no longer the person he used to be! The “body of sin” that was “enslaved” to immoral lusts and behavior had been “brought to nothing” (v. 6).

What Paul means is that we no longer have to sin. We are not under compulsion to sin. We are not enslaved to it, but now are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve a new master, Jesus.

***John Stott illustration:***

John Stott illustrates it this way in his commentary:

“Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, [the story] of me before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, [the story] of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute [Christ Jesus] with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun” (49).

**Implications and application.**

When Paul hears, “Sin that grace may abound, he is saying what in the world are you doing that for? You’re baptized.” The logic is the same as a man rebuking a married

friend “You can’t go to singles bars or flirt with the girls or go to dating websites, you’re married now.”

That’s what our baptismal identification with Christ means. As Christians if we are living in sin, doing sinful things, a Christian friend should say, what in the world are you doing, what are you thinking, you are baptized. You belong to Christ, you are supposed to be dying to sin, killing sin, not living with it, not being cozy with it, not pretending like it’s OK.

We need real friends who grab us by our baptism and say in a loud voice, “God forbid! What are you doing? You are dead to those sin, not alive to them. You belong to Jesus. Remember your baptism and be at work improving your baptism. Work at it, study it, submit to the Word, pray to the Holy Spirit.

Don’t just drift or coast or go along or be lukewarm. Don’t be complacent with sin. Get real, get serious. What has you in chains, in bondage, in slavery? Break those chains, fight for the freedom Christ won for you on the cross and rose again to give you the same power and victory.

Do you have godly people in your life calling you out of sin? Do you have friends who love you enough to speak the truth to you, to be iron sharpening iron, who are saying to you, “What are you doing? You are baptized, you are identified with Christ.”

Let this week as we prepare to come to the table of our Lord, be a week when we humble ourselves before God, when we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us gain the victory over sin that Jesus has already gained for us on the cross. Ask God to do it and He surely will.

**Philippians 3:12** Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

The wonderful truth of the Gospel is we are united to Christ, our identity is in Him, and our sin has no dominion over us.