

Romans 6:1-5, The Resurrected Life, 9/13/20

Paul has built a rock-solid argument in the first 5 chapters that the salvation of sinners can only happen by grace (it's a gift) through faith (trust) in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We are all equal under the cross because both the rebels and religious have the same problem of sin and access God the very same way. Now Paul makes another transition in chapter 6-8. The same gospel that justifies also sanctifies- makes us more like Christ. Or another way to put it- the same gospel that removes the penalty of sin gives us power over sin. Do you know that God's goal for you is not merely to give you a get out of hell free card? He wants us to experience a transformed life- to overcome our hurts, habits and hang-ups. To grow in love and character and maturity and ultimately, to use us to reach the world as salt and light for Christ. That's why our mission is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and help them follow Him. We do that through the process of Know, Grow and Go. This is God's goal with each Christian and every church community. And as we will see, this power to overcome sin and grow in our faith has everything to do with the resurrection of Jesus. [Title Slide]

I don't want to assume that everyone watching believes in the resurrection of Jesus as a real, historical, bodily event like the Bible claims. But deciding what you believe about the resurrection is the single most important decision you will ever make in your life. Infinitely more important than what college to go to, what career to choose, who to marry or house to buy. All these decisions stay here when you die at some point over the next 50 years, give or take. Now I don't have time today to go into all the reasons why it isn't crazy to believe Jesus actually, physically rose from the dead. I believe it is the most reasonable explanation based on all the evidence. I addressed that concisely in a sermon from a few Easter's ago called "What if it's True?" (<https://brandywine.church/messages/what-if-its-true/>) I would encourage you to watch that. But I can't resist just sharing one compelling piece of evidence. The eye-witness accounts of the apostles and followers. These men and women saw Jesus alive. They saw him crucified and buried. They witnessed him alive again and ascend to heaven. Now maybe you say- "What if they made it up, maybe it was a hoax to get attention." People perpetuate a hoax only if it benefits them- money, power, preserves their life in some way. But the eye-witnesses got none of those things. We know from history that every single one of them died in poverty, some were exiled, they were tortured and went to a martyr's death within the next several decades and not one of them ever recanted their testimony. And the idea that they were willing to die and to watch their friends and loved ones die for something they knew to be false, or at least weren't sure was true, is absurd.

The late Chuck Colson was special counsel to President Nixon, and one of Nixon's inner circle. When the Watergate scandal broke, he and about 10 other men met secretly, came up with a story, and swore to maintain it. These were some of the toughest and most powerful men in the world. He said within 3 weeks everyone caved. One of the reasons Chuck came to believe in the resurrection was the testimony of the martyrs. He writes in his book How Now Shall We

Live: *"You're telling me a dozen uneducated, untrained fishermen could maintain a lie under duress and torture for 40 years without a single one of them caving? Absolutely impossible."*¹

They saw the resurrection of Jesus and they were willing to stake their lives on it, and it doing so became so compelling that people had to believe it. So before I go any further- what do you say about Jesus and the resurrection? A hoax or history? If you aren't sure. Press pause on this sermon and go listen to that message, and then return.

With all this said about the historical event of the resurrection, let talk about it's implications in our lives here in Romans 6. Paul starts with a rhetorical question as he has been known to do throughout this book. v.1 *What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*

This might be a natural question the reader of Romans would have at this point, because for 5 chapters Paul has been arguing that salvation as a free gift that comes to all who will receive it. Every other religion in the world operates on the premise, "I obey, therefore God accepts me." The gospel says- Jesus obeyed, therefore God accepts me." God has accepted me by a free act of grace. All I have to do--all I can do--is receive it, like a gift. On top of that, Paul said- *Romans 5:20 But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.* So one might conclude- do I have spiritual visa card with an unlimited sin balance?² One of the dangers of preaching salvation by grace alone is that it can be interpreted as a license to do whatever one wishes. Paul knew that some would take that and run with the logic.

Maybe some of you subtly accepted this logic. "I've said the prayer, I've been baptized, I believe- maybe I can live my life however I want, give in to my temptations, quietly nurture my addictions and habits- because God forgives, so why not? Isn't that the whole point?"

Well Paul answers that question emphatically. *By no means!* That is Greek for "Heck No!" If you believe that sin doesn't matter and you can stay in it, you have a half-baked understanding of the Gospel and the character of God. Here in chapter 6 Paul will give three arguments for why the gospel does not teach license to sin, but teaches power over sin. Today we will just look at the first and then next week we will look at the other two. The first is because of *our Union with Jesus*. Let's take a look.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Time out. You say, "What does that mean that I have died to sin...past tense?" I don't know about you- I don't feel like sin is dead in me. Some days and in some ways I feel like it the urge to sin is so strong it is almost overwhelming. My guess is you can relate? So is Paul just so spiritual he never feels the urge to sin anymore? Well this can't be what Paul means because in

¹ Chuck Colson, *How Now Shall We Live*.

² Helpful illustration, idea from J.D. Greear.

the very next chapter Paul describes his own struggle with the desires of sin. So it can't mean we are dead to the urge to sin or that we can achieve a state of sinlessness. Not only does that defy Scripture, it defies the Christian experience. So what does it mean? Well, it's amazing how if you just keep reading the text explains itself.

Romans 6:3-5

³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Paul is saying that because of our union with Jesus, we have died to sin in the sense that it is no longer our identity. Let me explain. Before we come to Jesus, every one of us are united to sin. In just a couple verses Paul will say we were slaves to sin. In other words- we couldn't help but sin because everything- even good things were tainted with self-centeredness, self-justification. Sin had it's hooks in us, a power over us, it was part of our identity because it was in our very nature (remember we were in Adam?). But in the moment of our salvation, Paul says verse 5 with are now united with Jesus Christ- both in his death and his resurrection. United in the Greek is a horticultural term- It's a Longwood Gardens term- **It means to be grafted into the root.** In grafting you take the branch of one tree and you splice and embed it into the root of another so that it can be sustained or fruitful. Here is a grafted mango tree. Get the imagery- In the same way, our lives are now grafted into the root of Jesus Christ. We have been cut from our old life and embedded into the life of Jesus.

He uses a second image to describe this new union: **[Romans 6:3-5] baptism.** Baptism in water was an ancient symbol of identity. In the Bible, baptism is a way of identifying yourself with Jesus Christ. You are immersed into the water to show you have immersed yourself fully into Jesus. In fact, we are celebrating **baptism live next Sunday September 20th at the 11am service.** Now, I don't want you to miss out on this opportunity. If you have never been baptized as a follower of Christ and you want to identify yourself publicly with Jesus in obedience to His commands, reach out to me nate.keeler@brandywine.church by tomorrow. Paul says here that your physical baptism is a symbol of your spiritual baptism. When you place your faith in Christ, you are spiritually baptized, you are immersed, identified with Jesus.

Here's Paul's point. **[Slide]** How can we any longer act as if sin is our identity when that identity died with Jesus? We are now identified and united with Jesus. We are no longer identified by our sin nature, we are now identified with Jesus' nature. When Jesus died, we died with him. When he rose again to life, we rose to life with him. It means that his past is now our past and his future is now our future. We can live a resurrected life in Jesus Christ. Let me take this theological concept that may seem a bit mystical and make it really practical for us. One thing to Renounce and One thing to Reclaim

Renounce your Past.

-Some of us live in terrible guilt because of our past. We have enormous regrets. We blame ourselves for broken relationships or that our kids didn't turn out a certain way. Or we have made foolish decisions that have affected the rest of our lives, addictions that plagued our lives. And many of us carry all of that around with us, and it enslaves us, it dominates our lives, even subconsciously tainting your perception of others, yourself and your decisions. Maybe you have even said or thought, "God might forgive me but I can't forgive myself."

-Some us live with an identity that is deeply engrained in our past. We still see ourselves as the party girl or guy, or the addict, or the over-achiever, the person who so desperately needs attention anyway we can get it. Or we identify with the things that others have done to us- being used, abused, abandoned.

Friend- you are still living in union, in identity with your past sin. Paul is saying to you- Don't you know that when Jesus died, he took all your past with him to that cross? It's done. It's over. It's forgiven and if God has forgiven you, how can you not forgive yourself? **1 John 3:19-20 ¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts.**

Lay down that burden of guilt over your past. Lay down that old identity that keeps your trapped in the cycle of sin and sitting on the sidelines of life. You will never live a life of power over sin if you are stuck in the past. And when Satan tries to tempt you to despair and live in your past you say, "Nope. Jesus died for that. It's crucified. That's not my identity anymore, I renounce that old identity." **Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me.**

Reclaim your Future.

⁴just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

We have been raised to a newness of life in Christ. That's who I am. I am Loved, accepted, cherished, forgiven Son or Daughter of my heavenly Father who has an incredibly bright future for me now and in eternity. That means injustice doesn't get the win. The wrong things done to you don't win. The addictions don't win. Regret and sorrow doesn't win. We have a new future in Christ.

St. Augustine was probably one of the most influential theologians and pastors in church history. Before he became a Christian he lived a pretty wild, rebellious life- drunkenness, promiscuity, thievery. After his conversion to Christianity his life radically changed. There is a story about Augustine that he was walking down the street and a prostitute who he had often visited tried to get his attention, Augustine kept walking. In frustration, she came running after

him and she said, Augustine it is I. To which Augustine replied, "Yes but it is no longer I." Your glory days aren't in your past, they are in your future!

What sin stronghold, regret, or memory is keeping you stuck in the past?

"Father, today I renounce _____. That is no longer me. I reclaim my identity in Jesus. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ. You took my burden with you on the cross and crucifying it there. Thank you for loving, forgiving and accepting me. Help me to live in newness of life today."