

Breaking the Power of Cancelled Sin Shall We Continue to Live Under Sin's Dominion?

Romans Series
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Text: Romans 6:1-14

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*² *By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

³ ***Do you not know** that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴ *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.* ⁵ *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.*

⁶ ***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.*** ⁷ *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* ⁸ *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

⁹ ***We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again;** death no longer has dominion over him.* ¹⁰ *For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.*

¹¹ ***So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.***

¹² ***Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*** ¹³ *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*

¹⁴ ***For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.***

Introduction:

As we come to the first segment of these three chapters, where Paul teaches us how to break the power of canceled sin, we immediately observe two things built into the structure of this section (6:1 – 7:6).

God wants us to walk in the newness of life (καινότητι ζωῆς) He granted to us through Christ – an extraordinary kind of life, lived out in a radically different way from how we used to live. (6:4).

How did we operate in the past? Psalm 1:1 gives us a clue.

- *By the counsel of the ungodly (who deny God)*
- *According to the way of life of sinners (who disobey God)*
- *Aligned with the value of scorners (who defy God)*

How does God want us to operate now? Romans 12:1-2 gives us a clue.

- *As people who have presented their lives to God*
- *As living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable to God*
- *No longer conformed to this world but transformed by a renewed way of thinking*
- *That seeks to discern and do the good, acceptable, and complete will of God in all things.*

God wants us to serve him in a completely new kind of way from the one we formerly served, and has enabled us to do this by a new kind of power we did not possess before that comes from the Holy Spirit (καινότητι πνεύματος) (7:6).

These two statements frame up a section for us in Romans that is designed to get us to ask and answer three important questions:

1. Are we to continue to live under sin in our old way of life? (6:1-14)
2. Are we allowed to make a quiet peace with certain sins that are so deeply entrenched in us that we can't seem to overcome them no matter how hard we try? (6:15-23)
3. Why can't I look to the Law for help in this struggle? (7:1-6)

I. The Question Paul Answers (6:1-2)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

This question arises out of something Paul has said in 5:20-21 – “*where sin increased, grace increased even more.*”

- So, if that is true, Paul – why go through the immense trouble and pay the incredible price that will be demanded of me to totally change my life, reorient my loyalties, and readjust my priorities in life? ***Can I continue living in my old way of life? Since grace has abounded over all my past sinning, won't it continue to abound if I keep on in that same way of life?***
- NOTE: The answer to this question is not as obvious or as easy as you might initially think – but Paul's answer is emphatically clear – “May it never be!” or in modern-day language, “Absolutely not!”
- You have come to a very wrong conclusion about a very precious and valuable premise – where sin abounds, grace abounds more – and that conclusion has led you to an unthinkable position.
- ***Question – What Christian would actually ask a question like this?***

Illustration: Here is a real-life modern example that might help us understand the implicit impact of this question.

- On Feb 15, 2015, 21 Coptic Christians were marched out to a beach in Libya and made to kneel in the sand, where they were executed by ISIS. The last words they uttered, almost to a man, were “Jesus is my Lord!” The world watched this in stunned silence.
- Imagine that you grew up in a country dominated by ISIS and joined them as a young person and now you find yourself standing behind one of these Coptic Christians pictured on the screen.
- Up until now you have gladly served the leadership of ISIS and given yourself entirely to carrying out their objectives – including what you are about to do on this beach.
- Months pass. And somehow you can't get the last words these men uttered one after the other as they met their death – “*Jesus is my*

Lord.” Those words wake you up in the middle of the night. Your conscience has been hounding you with them since that day.

- And one day, something unthinkable happens – your eyes are open, and for the very first time, you see and believe what those men were saying about Jesus. It is like a light blazed over you from heaven, and for the first time, you see the beauty of Christ, the truth of His message, and the power of His gospel – and you fall on your knees before him in repentance and faith! And you become a Christian.
- You change masters. You change sides. You believe!
- But now you have a big problem that isn’t easily resolved: “Now that you are a Christian, what do you do with regard to your obligations and role in ISIS? You find yourself thankful for grace yet fearful of its consequences.”
- Your security and physical safety, as well as that of your wife and family, are bound up in your ongoing loyalty to ISIS and its leaders.
- If you leave them for any reason, the consequences for you and your family will be disastrous! And if they ever found out that you had become a Christian, it would not be long before you yourself would be kneeling on the beach.
- If you tried to escape or run away, the leadership of that group would turn all its resources and efforts to discredit your testimony, ruthlessly persecute you, and hunt you down and kill you.
- And so you have a question for Paul: “Is there a way I can continue to live as a member of this group (maybe I can remove myself from the execution squad)? Is it possible that God’s grace would continue to abound to allow this?” (*cherished sins we excuse or hold on to*)

Paul’s answer – Absolutely not! How can someone who has died (past tense) to that way of life (*sin*) continue to live and operate in the sinful mindset and in the manifestations of that old life? ***And he speaks from personal experience because he himself used to be a rising leader in a group that persecuted faithful Christians!***

II. The Reasons Paul Gives (6:3-10)

Paul now explains why this is impossible for the believer and offensive to God – by pointing out three things that every believer instinctively knows but must fully understand.

A. We know we have an entirely new identity in Christ (6:3-5)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

1. Our new identity **happened** when we were permanently united and organically joined to Christ (baptized into Christ).
 - This does not refer primarily to our water baptism that took place after we were saved, though our water baptism is in view.
 - This is the Baptism that Paul told the Corinthians had happened (past tense) to them (and to us) when the Holy Spirit permanently placed them into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).
 - When this happened to us, we were permanently united and inseparably joined to Christ. **Baptism is a naming ceremony!**
 - The phrase Paul uses in vs 5, “united with Christ,” (σύμφυτοι) means “planted or grafted together” and comes from the illustration Jesus used to describe the organic nature of this new union, when he identified himself as the vine and us as the branches permanently grafted into him (Jn 15:1-11).
2. The result of that new identity is a decisive (*aorist*) new way of life that is **stunningly different** from our old one (*καινότητι ζωῆς*) (vs 4).

Illustration: Let me show you what this kind of “baptism” and the “new way of life” it is intended to produce looked like among the people God redeemed and rescued in the OT – Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14; 1 Corinthians 10:1-5).

Paul reminds us *that “Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (1 Cor 10:1-2)*

So what happened to these people at the Red Sea?

- They stood on one side of the sea, having come from a land where they had been slaves of Pharaoh and under his authority – they belonged to him and had been slaving for him (Ex 1-2).
- God redeemed, rescued, and delivered them by the hand of Moses, and now they are at the Red Sea (Ex 3-13)!
- The Army of Pharaoh, in full strength, is behind them – a parted sea and Moses are before them – who would they choose to identify with? Moses or Pharaoh?
- The choice they made that day would be permanent – either they would go back to Pharaoh and live out the rest of their lives in the old bondage, OR they would join themselves to Moses and follow him through the sea to a new way of life (to God) under a different authority (Moses) in a new land (the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants).
- And when they passed through the Red Sea, they were permanently united and joined to a new leader – Moses. This new leader brought a very different kind of Law from the harsh laws they had endured as slaves in Egypt – a Law designed to bring life and peace to those who lived under it! And they were to live in a land so blessed by God that it flowed with abundance (milk and honey) just like Eden did before the Fall.
- Their new status and their new way of life was stunningly different from their old life under bondage in Egypt!
- And that is what Paul says happened to us when we were saved – we were permanently united to Christ. Just as those OT people were called to live in entirely new ways in their new land under their new leader, we are to live entirely different

kinds of lives under our new leader (Christ) as citizens of a new and better kingdom (the Kingdom of God/Christ).

- But we are called to live out this new life in this new realm under our new Lord . . . in our old bodies that still have to get up and go to work in the old land/realm.

And that is why we need the second thing Paul says we know that will help us:

B. We know that Christ has dealt with sin decisively for us at the Cross by nullifying its power over us (6:6-8)

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.⁷ For one who has died has been set free [justified] from sin.⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

- What happened to me when I was baptized in that way into Christ? My Old Self (all of it – its desires, its orientation, its values, its priorities, and its guilt and condemnation) – died. It was put to death when I was “co-crucified” with Christ (Gal 2:20).
- This death accomplished three important things:
 - ◇ So that the power of sin over our body might be nullified (v. 6).
 - ◇ So that we would be loosed from our former slavery to sin (v. 6).
 - ◇ So that we would be declared free (justified) from sin (6:7).

Illustration: If, as a prisoner or a slave, I attempt to escape, the minute I am caught, I am returned to the prison or to my master – the Law demands this. **But** if my penalty has been paid or my freedom has been purchased and I have been legally cleared of all charges, when I walk out of that prison house or the slave yard of my former master, no one can force me to go back and live as a prisoner or slave!

- ◇ Sin has lost its rights over me!
- ◇ Death has lost its claim on me!
- ◇ Satan has lost his power over me!

And the point of all of this is that since sin has been stripped of its authority over me and its power has been nullified in me, it is totally incompatible for me to continue living in its prison and “slaving” under its bondage!

Which leads to the third thing Paul says we know . . .

C. We know that Christ has raised us to live for a new purpose in life – the pleasure and purposes of a new Master (6:9-10)

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

- When Paul talks about me dying, it is always in conjunction with the death I died ***with Christ when he died***. That, by the way, is why it is hard for me to understand, because I didn’t physically experience that death. But I participated in it positionally and judicially, which is why Paul says we were “co-crucified” with Christ (6:6), and ***I continue to experience its ultimate benefit***.
- ***Illustration:*** In 1775, American colonists rose up and secured their freedom from Great Britain. That freedom was hard won – purchased with the blood of men and women who suffered and died. Although you and I were not physically present at those battles, 250 years later, we are still ***enjoying and experiencing*** the freedom that was hard won by those colonists.
- We participated in that struggle as Americans, not as individual citizens who fought battles long before we were born. We can say, “We won our freedom from the British in 1775,” even though none of us were there, and no one in this room suffered any discomfort or participated in any battle in the winning of that freedom. **But** we fully enjoy that freedom to this very day – no one would ever subject themselves to paying taxes or living under the rule of Parliament or the King of England.

- When Paul says we died with Christ, there is a real sense in which you and I were co-crucified with Christ, even though it happened 2000 years ago. The effects of our co-crucifixion continue to be experienced by us 2000 years later. As a result, we no longer live to serve our old master. ***Instead, we are alive to God – and we are to live for His pleasure and for His purposes! (Rom 12:1-2)***
- ***So – why do we keep living under the old regime, answering to our old master, and in bondage to our old way of life?***

III. The Verdict Paul Demands (6:11)

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- Note the ***Urgency*** of this verdict . . . you must
- Note the ***nature*** of this verdict. What does it mean to ***consider*** (*reckon, render a decisive verdict*)? This is more than understanding and thinking the right things about God, salvation, justification, and the implications of being born again. ***It means believing them enough to ground your whole life in them.***

Illustration: Understanding the facts about how the stock market works, listening to the explanation of a trusted financial advisor, and deciding to take your money and put it under your mattress. And someone comes and asks you:

- Did you understand what that advisor told you? Oh yes, perfectly.
- Do you trust that advisor? Absolutely – without hesitation!
- Do you see what that advisor has produced? Completely – it is amazing what he/she has done with their savings!
- ***So why do you have your money under your mattress?***
- The reason is not a lack of “knowing” but rather a failure to believe enough to change how you use your money. At some point, you took all this knowledge and rendered a verdict on it – “it is great for others, but it won’t work for me.”

- And often, that is what happens to us spiritually with a paragraph like the one before us here in Romans 6. We refuse to act decisively!
- ***This is why Paul is commanding us to render a verdict!***
- This is the first command in the entire book thus far!
- It isn't enough to know and understand these spiritual realities.
- It isn't enough to be impressed by the beauty of what these realities have produced in others.
- ***At some point, you must render a personal verdict on whether you are convinced to the point that you will entrust the shaping of your life to these truths.***
- So what does that look like when we get up on Monday morning in our old body and head out to our old job in the old world that is still very much under the sway and control of sin?

IV. The Response Paul Commands (6:12-13)

A. ***What are we to do?*** (Take a definitive step: Stop allowing something that is going on)

¹²*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.*

- Stop what is happening in you right now... stop letting sin rule over the use of your mortal body. Sin rules in this way by demanding that your body fulfill the same lusts that drove you before you were justified. Your old way of life has not fundamentally changed!

Examples:

- Your approach to conflict and hurt hasn't changed
 - Your approach to lust has not changed
 - Your approach to money has not changed
 - Your approach to how you treat your mate hasn't changed
 - Your approach to sexual temptation has not changed
- Sin continues to have dominion over your body in these areas, even though it has been deposed and its authority stripped away – just as Pharaoh's authority over Israel was nullified and his power to force Israel to obey was brought to nothing at the Red Sea!

B. **How are we to do it?** (Make a fundamental change in your approach to your body – your mind, emotions, and will)

1. Stop presenting it (formal term) to Sin for unrighteousness.

¹³ *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,*

2. Dedicate yourself entirely to God (a formal, intentional dedication, cf. 12:1-2) and determine to use your body as an instrument of righteousness for Him.

but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

V. **The Assurance Paul Gives (6:14)**

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace

- Let's say you invest your little life into this great endeavor based on these truths – and the next thing you know, the stock market of your life takes a hit, and it looks like you may have made a bad call.
- Quietly, you start wondering if it is too late to change your mind and go back to hiding your life under your spiritual mattress (Jesus warned us not to hide our light under a bushel).
- Think about how the Israelites in Moses' day must have felt at times when they got to the other side of the Red Sea. "Moses, we did follow you! We took our little lives and put them under your authority when we took the decisive step to follow you through the waters of the Red Sea – we were "baptized" unto you by that act!"
- "But now we are on the other side, and it sure looks like we may have made a mistake – Jericho looks very intimidating. And the demands of this new life under you and the Law God gave you are surprisingly difficult and costly."
- And that is what many of us sometimes wonder when the new life we have in Christ doesn't turn out the way we expected.
- So how do we know we made the right decision to leave the apparent comfort and temporary security of the life we knew?
 - I didn't know it would cost me my job.
 - I didn't know it would result in ridicule; I thought my friends would be proud that I finally stopped my destructive behavior.

- o I didn't know it would be this hard internally or that I would face such intense pressure externally! I am not sure I can do this!

Here is God's promise to you if you will render this decisive verdict and act on it: Sin will not rule over you! Grace will! (6:14)

- Grace is more than the unmerited favor God extends to you.
- Grace is more than a realm you now occupy.
- Grace is power and enablement!

And the power and enablement to serve God in this totally new way, out of this completely new life, ***is the Holy Spirit*** (Rom 7:6)!

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Conclusion

- Have you obeyed what Paul commands in 6:13 when he said, "*Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members as instruments of righteousness?*"
- Have you come to the point in your life when you have looked at your body (your entire life) and decided that from this moment on it will never be used for the things you used to live for – but instead – from this day forward, you are going to use your life and your body in ways that please God and accomplish His purposes for your life?
- If you do so, God's promise to you is that sin will not reign over you! (6:14)

Wonderful news, Paul! This is a great promise from God!

And when I look at my life as a whole, I can see this! My entire outlook on life has changed! Many areas of my life have been totally transformed. But . . . what am I supposed to do now about a big problem happening in some areas of my life – the problem of certain sins that have a strong hold over my life and have been part of my old life for years – try as I might, I can't seem to overcome them? And that is what we will turn to next week!