

# **Romans: The Good News of God**

## **Dead to Sin and Alive to God**

*Romans 6:1-14*

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# Dead to Sin and Alive to God

## Scripture

Let us read Romans 6:1-14:

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:1-14)

## Introduction

One of the dangers of preaching salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is that it can be interpreted (or

rather, misinterpreted!) as license to do whatever one wishes.

The apostle Paul was well aware of this tendency, since he mentioned in Romans 3:8 that some were slanderously reporting that he was saying, “And why not do evil that good may come?” Because of this type of misrepresentation, Paul was always on guard when he made a strong statement about the grace of God.

So when he said in Romans 5:20b, “but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” he knew that the worst would be made of it by some. He knew that a perverted logic would be applied: “Well, if sin brings more grace, let’s sin!”

He also knew such thinking was not only logical to some minds, it was also natural because sin *is* enjoyable “for a short time” (Hebrews 11:25, *NIV*). He knew, too, that sinning could even be twisted into a religious duty, because it provides an opportunity for God to give his grace and love, and thus glorify himself. Even people who have claimed to be Christians have thought this!

The Corinthian Church had this problem, for when Paul insisted that an incestuous couple be excommunicated, there were some who saw nothing wrong with the incest, thinking it was an excellent display of Christian liberty (cf. 1 Corinthians 5).

A famous historical instance of such thought comes from the Russian monk Rasputin, who dominated the Romanov family in their final years. Rasputin taught that salvation came through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He argued that because those who sin more require more forgiveness, those who sin greatly will experience greater joy as they repent. Therefore, he said, it is the Christian’s duty to sin.

Today this thinking is very common among those who wish to justify their sexual lifestyles. Some have actually seriously presented such rationalizations as if they were biblical.

So when Paul said in Romans 5:20, “but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” he could sense the inevitable question coming, and so he went ahead and voiced it himself in Romans 6:1, **“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”**

His answer was an emphatic, **“By no means!”**(6:2).

Paul had no use for even the slightest hint that grace encourages sin. In fact, he finishes verse 2 with a question to the contrary: **“How can we who died to sin still live in it?”**

The remainder of Romans 6 goes on to support his position.

## Lesson

In today’s lesson, Romans 6:3-14 answers the question, “How do those of us who have been saved by the grace of God live without being characterized by sin? How are we to live obediently in light of God’s grace?”

Paul answers logically:

1. By understanding the nature of our union with Christ (6:3-10),
2. By accepting our union with Christ as true (6:11), and
3. By submitting to the Christ to whom we are so wonderfully united (6:12-13).

### I. The Nature of Our Union with Christ (6:3-10)

First, Paul talks about the nature of our union with Christ.

For Paul, what a Christian understands is extremely important. Paul was convinced that Christian *learning* results in Christian *living*, that *doctrine* leads to *duty*. Therefore, it is natural that he attempts to increase our knowledge.

The key word in verses 3 through 10 is **“know,”** which occurs three times:

- Verse 3: **“Do you not know. . . .”**
- Verse 6: **“We know. . . .”**
- Verse 9: **“We know. . . .”**

Above all else, Paul wants us to **know**, or understand, the nature of our union with Christ.

To help us **know** the nature of our union with Christ, Paul employs the powerful metaphor of Christian baptism. For Paul, baptism symbolized wonderful realities.

Ron Ritchie, a pastor on the West Coast, experienced a beautiful illustration of this when he was conducting a baptism service in the Pacific Ocean. Pastor Ray Stedman wrote of the incident:

A woman came up to [Ron] and asked him to baptize her 9-year-old daughter. Ron was reluctant to do so without finding out whether the girl really understood what was happening, so he began to question her and teach her about the reality behind water baptism. He was gesturing as he talked to her, and noticed the shadow of his hand as it fell on the sand.

So he said to the little girl, “Do you see the shadow of my hand on the sand? Now that is just the shadow; the hand is the real thing. And when you came to Jesus, when you believed in Jesus, that was the real baptism. You were joined to him and what happened to him happened to you. Jesus was alive; then he died, was buried, and then he arose from the dead. And that is what happened to you when you believed in him.”

He pointed to the shadow on the sand and said, “When you go down in the water and are raised up again, that is a picture of what has already happened.”

The girl immediately caught on and said, “Yes, that is that I want to do because Jesus has come into my life.”

Baptism symbolizes what happens to us when we are united to Jesus Christ by faith.

Keeping that in mind, let us read verses 3-5:

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

**<sup>5</sup> 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 overall emphasis of these verses is on our profound identity with Christ. Baptism bears with it the idea of *union*, especially when it is linked to a person's name.

For instance, 1 Corinthians 10:2 tells us that the Israelites were all “baptized into Moses,” a reference not to water baptism, but to the fact that they became united with him as never before as they recognized his leadership and dependence on him.

So it is with Christ. When we were baptized into Christ (Matthew 28:19), we entered into a profound union with him.

Our text emphasizes this union in verse 5 which uses a botanical term in saying that we have become **“united with him.”** The word **“united”** (Greek, *symphytoi*, “grown together”) pictures a branch bound to one another—they are grafted together. That describes our union with Christ. The Scriptures boldly affirms this in a number of places.

For example, Galatians 3:27 says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” So close is our union with Christ that we are, so to speak, clothed with him.

1 Corinthians 12:13 adds, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”—the body of Christ. There could not be a more profound union than that.

To state our union concisely, one commentator puts it this way:

Our spiritual history began at the cross. We were there in the sense that in God's sight we were joined to him who actually suffered on it. The time element should not disturb us, because if we sinned in Adam, it is equally possible to have died to sin with Christ.

This is our position. We do not have to be conscious of it any more than of our conscious participation in Adam's sin. It is a fact: we are united with Christ.

The specific emphasis of verses 3-5 is that we are so profoundly united with Christ in his death and resurrection that we ac-

tually did die with him and truly were raised with him, so that we now share in his resurrection life.

The Scriptures attest to this. For example, Galatians 2:20a says, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

Further, Colossians 3:1 says, “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

We need to **know** this if we are to walk in obedience to Christ.

What this means practically is this: Christ did not serve sin, and so, neither must we. We must walk in the newness of life that we have in Christ. We are no longer slaves to sin, but now we are slaves to righteousness.

Verses 6-7 go on:

**<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been set free from sin.**

The **old self** is the kind of person we were before our union with Christ. That self was crucified with Christ. **The body of sin**—the body as it was, a vehicle of sin—has been rendered inoperative. The power of sin was and is broken!

Paul concludes this explanation of our union with Christ in verses 8-10:

**<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.**

Paul emphasizes that when Christ died, he died **once for all**. This is a technical term used repeatedly in the book of Hebrews to

emphasize the finality of Christ's work. Paul made this emphasis because the Christian must have full confidence that the Captain of his salvation will never again come under the power of sin and death.

When I began today's message I emphasized that in dealing with the problem of those who turn grace into license to sin Paul insists that the place to begin is our knowledge. We must **know** two things.

First, we must know something of our profound union with Christ. Though we cannot fully understand it, we died with Christ and were resurrected with him in the historical events.

And second, this shared death and resurrection means that the dominance of sin has been broken and we are freed from the power of sin in our lives.

The argument that we should continue in sin because we are under grace is absolutely false! In fact, the reverse is true. It is impossible to continue living unchanged when we become Christians.

Let me put it even stronger: those who argue that grace allows a buffer for sin—that their sin will ultimately glorify God anyway—are revealing they are not under grace! They are not Christians, no matter how much they argue otherwise.

When you enter into union with Christ, your lifestyle is affected, just as it was by your union with Adam. If your life has not changed and if there is no impulse for further change toward Christ, you are probably not yet a Christian.

## **II. The Reality of Our Union with Christ (6:11)**

Second, let's consider the reality of our union with Christ.

We have considered the truth of Paul's argument in verses 3-10 about our union with Christ. But, how does this work?

Now we come to the practical application of everything that I have just said, and it has to do with the second key word of our text, the word "**consider**" in verse 11, in which Paul teaches us about the reality of our union with Christ.



Paul says in verse 11: **“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”** The word **“consider”** or “reckon” (*KJV, NKJV*) or “count” (*NIV*) is one of the most important words in Romans. Paul uses it twelve times in this letter, and if you do not know what it means you will not understand Romans.

The word **“consider”** is a commercial term which means “to reckon to one’s account.” The idea is that we are to reflect on our position in Christ. Then we are to set two things to our account: (1) we are **dead to sin**, and (2) we are **alive to God in Christ Jesus**.

Have you ever taken the time consider the fact that you participated in the events of the cross, that you died and that you were resurrected with Christ? If not, you should. This is *prevention* theology.

So much of our time is spent in *corrective* theology—what to do when we sin, as for example in 1 John 1:9 (“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”). That is good and necessary.

But reflecting upon your union with Christ is even better. Why? Because it curbs sin. To **consider yourselves dead to sin** is something you are to do constantly, as the present tense of the verb indicates.

And by the way, this is the first command we find in Paul’s letter to the Romans. He says in effect: “Keep on considering yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

### **III. The Response to Our Union with Christ (6:12-14)**

And finally, note the response to our union with Christ.

So far Paul has told us what we must know about our union with Christ. Then he explained the necessity of considering. Now he tells us we must act. Theory must produce action in the response to our union with Christ. The key word here is **“present.”**

Verse 12 also commands: **“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”** Exactly what

does this mean?

Paul is very precise and clear, and his answer falls into two corresponding halves. The first is *negative* (in verse 13a), **“Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. . . .”** That is, do not keep on making the parts of your body (your tongue, your hands, your feet) available as tools of unrighteousness. Be on constant guard against doing this.

And while you are doing this, take *positive* action (in verse 13b), **“. . . but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.”** The tense here demands a decisive once-and-for-all act. You must present everything to God for righteousness.

This does not rule out subsequent commitments as well, but this initial time of surrender must come to all of us. You must say to God something like this:

God, here I am—alive from the dead! I have died with Christ and have been resurrected with Christ. Thank you for your gift of grace. Now here is my body (my arms, my voice, my eyes). Take them all, that they might be instruments of righteousness and not of sin.

Have you done this? Perhaps you have done the *negative*—refusing to submit your body to the service of sin. That is good, but it is not enough.

There must also be the *positive*—“Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

The logic of this passage is compelling in its three key words: “know. . . consider. . . present.”

Do you know something of your amazing union with Christ—that you actually participated in his death and resurrection?

You may not completely understand it, but do you at least understand that the Scriptures claim this union for you?

Then, have you consciously considered yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus?

Finally, have you presented your entire life to him?

If so, then you know the answer to those who argue that grace encourages sin. As Paul says in verse 14, **“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”** God has delivered us from sin.

### Conclusion

When as a young teenager Stuart Briscoe was drafted into the Royal Marines during the Korean War, he came under the control of a particularly imposing regimental sergeant major who strode around the barracks leaving a train of tough men quaking in their boots. Briscoe did not realize how dominant this man had become in his life until the day he was released from the Marines. Clutching his papers in one hand, he was enjoying his newfound freedom to the extent of putting his hands in his pocket, slouching a little, and whistling—sins so heinous that if they had been observed by the sergeant major, they would have landed him in big trouble!

Then Briscoe saw the sergeant major striding toward him. On an impulse he sprang into the posture of a Marine until he realized that he had “died” to the sergeant major. He was not dead, and neither was the sergeant major. But as far as the sergeant major’s domination of his life was concerned, it was all a matter of history.

So Briscoe did some considering, decided not to yield to the man’s tyranny, and demonstrated that fact by refusing to swing his arms high and march as if on parade and keep his back at ramrod stiffness. Instead he presented his feet, hands, and back to his newfound freedom as a *former* marine—and the sergeant major could not do a thing about it!

In the same way, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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**PRAAYER:**

Oh Lord, thank you for our union with Jesus Christ.

I thank you that in Jesus we have died to sin.

Sin's penalty has been paid by Jesus' death, and therefore the power of sin has been broken in our lives.

Help us to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to you in Christ Jesus.

And all of this I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.