

The Power of God in Romans 6: Made dead to sin, alive to God (Rom 6:1-14)

There are many things in nature and in the spiritual realm we would not know about were it not for the word of God telling us. We know about the creation, the after-life, and eternity. Those of us who are Christians are supernatural creatures, born of the Spirit of God. Our Bible is supernaturally from God through His prophets (Rev 19:10). The faith He has granted us is of God, not men.

This faith gives us access to supernatural power we must live by. Christians struggle against sin, that we be not overpowered by it. We're going to look at this today, how God has given us decisive victory over the power of sin: "and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Not that we will never sin again in this life – for Scripture tells us in 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." What the Lord has provided for us in Christ is to be freed from the *dominion* of sin over us, freed from its ability to *dominate* us as a strong master over a helpless slave.

We have fierce adversaries in this life, which we basically know as "the world, the flesh, and the devil"; today we will mostly look at the flesh, and how we may escape being under the tyrannical power of it. Any Christian who has ever tried to stop sins of many years standing – be it untrusting fear, rage, ungodly relationships, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, sex, or the destructive need for *anything*, even things normally good but now become uncontrollable desires, do know their power – any of which may destroy lives, and bring dishonor to the name of our God.

I'm going to read the passage I wish to open up, and have asked God to bring its teaching into our understanding, and into our actual experience. **Rom 6:1-14:**

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know you not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried, with him, *by baptism into death*: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God.

11 Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.

In the previous chapters of Romans Paul has presented the work of Christ that justified us – gave us a righteousness in God’s eyes apart from our works – and because Paul foresaw this would provoke an ungodly response from some, he determined to address it at the start. For some had said, “Let us do evil, that good may come”, to scoff at righteousness by grace instead of law (Rom 3:8). But first, a quick look at the history of our justification:

Some four thousand years ago God had made a promise to Abraham that he would father a child through Sarah, from whom would come kings and nations (Genesis chapters 15 and 17), despite their both being far too old to have children; but Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Rom 4:3). Paul writes of this, how that Abraham

staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for *us also*, to whom it shall be imputed, *if we believe* on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:20-25)

So *Abraham* fully believed and embraced God’s promise that he should not only have a child, but one of great glory, bringing the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life to God’s people in all the families of the earth, and this faith God counted as righteousness to Abraham. Now *for us* in the NT age the promise is different but the dynamic the same: in our case the promise is that Jesus the Saviour of the world would die for our sins – bearing them Himself and receiving the punishment

due them in our place – and that He would be raised from the dead for our justification in God’s sight. Romans 10 puts this *very foundation of our faith* like this,

9 That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. 10 For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture says, Whoever believes on him shall not be ashamed. 13 ... whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The words “believes unto righteousness” are significant! We see how Abraham was justified – declared righteous before God – and also how *we* are: by, in *our* case, believing Christ died for the sins of all His people, and that God’s raising Him from the dead showed God *accepted* His atoning sacrifice in our behalf. But God did even more than lay this sure foundation: He also united us with Christ so that we might in Him share in His death and resurrection, and the benefits bestowed on us in this. What these benefits are is what we shall closely look at today, for in them lie spiritual realities that give us power over sin in a new kind of life we had not known before.

In Romans verses 1 and 2 we read,

- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

The moralists, who have use for laws but are offended by grace, say, “Well, if you take the rules of the law away, and say that men are made righteous by God’s grace, that is, His unearned favor, what’s to prevent them from continuing to sin since they are now declared innocent apart from obeying the law?” Moralists do not trust grace to make men good; only laws, they say, can force them to do that, if only outwardly.

And Paul proceeds to mount his defense against this lie by declaring the truth of God’s unexpected way of saving us. “Know you not,” he says in v 3, “that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Here we enter into the depths of what God has done in baptism, both the *spiritual* baptism when God’s Spirit regenerates the soul and brings it into union with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 2:4-6), and the physical *water* baptism of God’s covenant sign and seal upon His promise to keep and bless His newborn child. Please note, in the Romans passage water baptism is *also* being spoken of, as the two aspects of baptism stand together. We are not left *only* to inward spiritual truths, however powerful, but God has given us the *water of baptism* – His own token and seal of authentic covenant inclusion! – to *confirm* us in these truths.

This is important, for the struggling saint needs to know he or she is not dealing only with inward realities but with God’s own sealed promise concerning them (Ps 89:30-36; Jer 31:33-34). Thus, with regard to Romans 6:3 and 4, the objective and subjective aspects of baptism are not to be

separated – for there is “One Lord, one faith, *one baptism...*” (Eph 4:5). An outward sign of an inward reality.

Returning to the *spiritual* baptism of regeneration in Romans 6:3, which has brought the brand new believer into the two realities of what God has done for him in Christ: Death in Christ, and new life in Christ. **First**, He has given Christ over to death – actual death – and to burial – actual burial – with the corpse of His physical body laid to rest in the hollowed-out stone tomb of Nicodemus. The body of Jesus of Nazareth – and all His human nature – is dead. And what is the significance of His death? Romans 8:3 says it very clearly:

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for sin*, condemned sin in the flesh...

In His own flesh our sin was condemned and punished. His death was *for sin*. The same could be said of His life – all His 33 years among us – God sent Him into the world to condemn sin in His flesh, as Paul says elsewhere, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21). It was for sin He came. It was for sin He suffered. For sin He bore our eternal punishment. It was for sin, to destroy the power of it, and the guilt of it, to remove it entirely from us – we who are His – and then, having received the full penalty of God’s wrath upon it, for all the sin of all God’s elect people, He said those words that signaled His completed mission: “It is finished!” He then died. Legally confirmed to Pilate by the centurion. And was buried.

Paul, speaking by the inspiration and power of God, says that when we are baptized into Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God in regeneration we are baptized into Christ’s death (Rom 6:3). This is a reality that God has established, and that He has brought us into. The entire church of Jesus Christ was buried when He was buried. And so were each of us as individuals. This has immense significance as regards the power of sin – which we shall look at in a moment.

We come now to the **second** spiritual reality God has created in Christ. Besides a legal reality, His death is as well an actual *spiritual* reality; and yet there is more. Paul, who loves to dwell on these remarkable things, says in Col 2:12,

Buried with him in baptism, wherein *also* you are risen with him through faith in the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.

We see here the working of resurrection power bringing Jesus’ body back to life, and not only back to life, but resurrection life, a new life raised up by the glory of God, that glory which is God’s infinite majesty and power! Christ no longer lives for sin, to take away sin, but He lives unto God in newness of life, His *human nature* now glorified in celestial splendor. When He first appeared to His disciples it hit them as a shock – **He is alive!** they said – a shock the power of which destroyed death, the resurrection power that inaugurated the new creation, with Christ as its King and Head. And *we* are the beginning – the ground floor, if you will – of the new creation, its inhabitants.

In Romans 6:4, Paul writes,

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: *that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Please understand this: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the infinite majesty and power of the Father, even so *we also* are now alive to God and walk in the newness of life Jesus walks in. *We who are born again are alive to the God of Heaven.* Yes, we are not yet bodily in the heavenly glory as He is, yet in spirit – inwardly – God has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). And Col 3:1-3 affirms, “If you then be risen with Christ... you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God... Christ, who is our life”.

So we have moved – in our doctrine – from death in and with Christ, to being raised up in and with Him. Into the existence of a new life. Mind you, we are only talking doctrine at this point – doctrine, which is God teaching us of the realities brimming with power He has established through uniting us with Christ His Son. We are to note well that dying with Christ is not all that happened *to us*:

...if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you (Rom 8:11).

In our regeneration we are “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). We are raised with Christ by the same power that raised *Him*. These are the new realities of our inward lives. We are not the creatures we once were, for Paul says,

... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor 5:17).

We do not know these things by self-observation; we know them by looking at what God has said is true of Christ, and of us in Him – we know them by faith, which is taking God at His word. In verses 10 and 11 of Romans 6 Paul goes on:

10 For in that he [Christ] died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God.

And take especial note of verse 11,

Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is reckoning that what **God** said about your death and new life in Christ *is* your present reality. We “have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom 8:15) – we are alive unto God!

Now, when the strong desire to indulge in – or even entertain – a sin begins radiating its inflammatory power, the new creature we are may rightly say, “I am dead to this – this infernal

power is nothing to me now, I am buried and dead to it in Christ, and now alive to God. This power of sin is ineffective against me.” And the new creature saint is not alone in such reckoning and resistant attitude, for the Spirit of Christ indwelling us –the Almighty Spirit of God – is the power of our new life, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). And He gives us heartfelt desires that mightily oppose the workings of sin in the flesh (Gal 5:17). Remember also Jesus’ words, “My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

This is a remarkable new resource for godliness. How does it work? Rom 8:13 says, “For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do mortify – put to death – the deeds of the body, you shall live.” How do we do this through the Spirit? We stand in the death of Christ to sin – ourselves dead to it – and ask, “Lord, grant Your strength to be made manifest in my weakness!” We are alive to Him and His power!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his Romans 6 commentary gets into the very small details of the necessary vigilance involved in this matter. Small, faint thoughts like fiery darts arise casting a favorable light on sins. Visual scenes are foisted upon our imaginations regarding the beauty and pleasures of sin. The prospects of sin’s pleasures are projected toward our emotions, promising the wonderful *feelings* to be had if sin is heeded. And what is our response? We who used to love sin and its pleasures?

We are no longer chained slaves to our former love of sin, for we have a new master now, our love for Whom has displaced those vile and killing lusts, as He has shined the infinite majesty and glory of His presence into our hearts, He whose lovingkindness toward us is better even than life!

And though dead to sin we are alive, “yet not us, but Christ lives in us, and the life we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us” (Gal 2:20).

In the three verses near the beginning of 2nd Peter, he also refers to these things:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you *through the knowledge* of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power has given unto us *all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge* of him that has called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet 1:2-4).

You will note that in both verses 2 and 3 it is through the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus that by grace we are given what is necessary to life and godliness – these the very things we are considering in this sermon! Another aspect of this grace given are the “exceeding great and precious promises” whereby we work with the Holy Spirit (Col 1:29) and have escaped the corruptions that are in ourselves and in the world.

And it can be seen how that a growing knowledge of the Scripture opens an array of resources to enable us to deal effectively in things that pertain to our lives and growth in godliness. And this matter of who we are in our spiritual identities being united with Christ is crucial, for the Gospel “is the *power* of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), not mere religious or moral teachings, but a “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4) enabling us to overcome the world and *its* powers.

Our identities are transformed by what God has done in us by His Spirit. We are now robust and strong from our being cut off from the guilt and power of sin by the blood of Christ, and likewise strong in affirming our new creaturehood as sons and daughters of God and siblings of Christ Jesus. We may say with the whole heart, “Sin, I am deadened to you by the operation of God, and my Saviour and Husband’s love is now my delight and glory. For I am ‘His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that I should walk in them’ ” (Eph 2:10).

It must be kept in mind that we’re not talking “formulas” here, as in “Do this or that, and you will automatically triumph”, for this is a living and very personal way, by which I mean that the Lord Jesus Himself is our strength. It is Jesus walking with us in our lives, sustaining us, by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15) who mediates His power and presence into our lives. Here are some of the precious promises we have to this effect, such as,

I am with you always, even unto the end of the age [or world] (Matt 28:20)

I will never leave you, nor forsake you (Heb 13:5)

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (Isa 41:10)

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Joshua 1:9)

Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee (Isa 43:1, 2)

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee (Jer 31:3)

One may actually go through the Scriptures in one’s regular reading, and harvest such gems for one’s future or present spiritual needs. Like jewels scattered on the streets of heaven, *these* jewels are scattered for us in God’s precious Book to pick up and store as treasure for our pilgrimage on earth!

So let us take inventory of what we have received so far: Jesus died in His dealing with sin in our behalf; having paid its penalty – the wrath of God’s curse – resulting in the death of His human nature, and He was buried. As He said regarding His dealing with sin, “It is finished!” When God raised His human nature and united it once more with His divine nature, He had a new status: dead to His sufferings and labors for sin, alive now bodily to God in endless, eternal glory and joy. This is doctrine, the New Testament doctrine of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and subsequent resurrection from the dead, yet doctrine which may be taken into the heart and *lived!*

Further: God, by the agency of His creative word and the operation of His Spirit, incorporated the elect into Jesus Christ’s heart and body so that we are united with Him in His death and resurrection, sometimes known as “the mystical body of Christ, the church, His bride”.

Let’s review what the practical – the experiential – effects of these doctrines are inasmuch as they change our lives. In a nutshell, we are entirely new creatures, made dead to sin by union with Christ, and likewise – in this same union – alive to God, with no cloud of a darkened conscience between us and His loving Fatherly presence. We no longer walk in the living death of slavery to sin, its tormented lover, its eternally damned prisoner under God’s wrath, but instead walk as dead to it, and transformed by God’s miraculous operation now alive to Him in union with Christ who lives in the Father’s glory. In Christ, we enjoy God’s glory.

We are commanded in Romans 6:11 to “reckon” or to “account” ourselves as is written of us – dead to our old lives and alive to our new life. It is perfectly legitimate to turn to our Saviour and ask Him for help in this. If we tell Him that we are weak in this reckoning at times, as sin pounds and rages at the door of our souls and bodies, demanding entrance, we may hear Him tell us, “My grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). He says, I am “[y]our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa 46:1).

Remember the word of truth, friends, “...whoever is born of God overcomes the world: and ***this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith***” (1 John 5:4).

We the justified live by faith in God’s words as to what our reality is (Heb 10:38; Rom 1:17). For instance, we believe, “That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom 10:9, 10).

This is what separates us from the world, that we have faith in the testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This, friends, is the entrance to walking in “newness of life”. Two more things related to this:

When Scripture says, “sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace” (v 14), it is important to know the ***power*** that is in grace. Consider an example of this power:

Say you have sinned against your friend in a serious way, causing her harm and introducing difficulties into her life. But you are grieved for what you have done, and you go to her asking for

forgiveness. To your surprise she not only grants it immediately, but hugs you and tells you how glad and delighted she is to have you back as a beloved friend. You perceive from her manner that, if anything, she is closer to you now than before. You are taken aback by her graciousness – the sincere display of undeserved favor shown to you – and this quality in her makes her *more* precious to you, and instills in you a strong desire never to trespass against her again. Graciousness has a power over your heart to instill love and loyalty toward the giver of it. This is very similar to what Paul is saying when he speaks of the goodness – the kindness – of God toward you that leads you to repentance (Rom 2:4). But how much greater is God’s graciousness than man’s? It is the power of God’s longsuffering forbearance and love that melts and wins your heart. This is what we are “under” being “under grace” – His undeserved favor! The love of the Almighty! The tender care of our Shepherd God. We love Him for this!

We now keep His sayings as the will and the desire our Beloved has for us to grow in holiness, that we may be a pure Bride in His sight. These are not imposed on us from without, as was the old law which gave us no strength to keep it, but “from the heart” we now obey God’s will, that is, willingly, gladly, as in love to our Saviour and God we seek to please Him, keeping His moral law as a guide to godly and wholesome living, not a moral code we are under obligation to for salvation.

I have had occasion to prove this reality in my own life. I had been smoking cigarettes since my teens, and struggled for years to stop. At a certain point, while reading Jerry Bridges’ book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, I saw that there was a provision for me that could lift me into a new realm of faith and life. A chapter of the book discussed the implications of Romans 6:4,

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The Holy Spirit made those last five words alive to me – **walk in newness of life!** I could see it! I knew I could do it simply by faith – by trust in the Lord quickening me in accord with His word.

And so I did. The first day passed... and I did not fail! And the second, third, then a week! Then two, then three, and soon it was months! I was free of cigarettes! Still tempted, still vigilant, still drawing near to Him whose presence was my strength.

I recall another time anger was in my heart, fierce like a pack of wolves, and I was tempted in the weakness of that moment to go buy another pack of cigarettes (even after He had delivered me), but I was tired of the filth of tobacco – and of sin! – and pleaded with the Lord to deliver me from my own heart. I went to sleep that night, and the next morning awoke and the rage was gone. The deciding thing was that I with my whole heart wanted no more sin – and this was the Holy Spirit’s work in me (Ezek 36:25-27). He makes us fully **want** to cease from sin.

Go now, and live out what you have been given at great cost to the Giver.

To those here that are unsaved: every minute many enter eternity without the love and care of God, and have commenced their eternity of anguish. What had often been concealed from others was

their secret hatred toward God. For some so despise God and His truth, and prefer an eternity in hell to repenting of their evil way, which they love. If this is your heart ask Him for mercy (yes, we can pray against our own hearts!), ask Him for the grace of repentance and faith. If anyone listens to the devil's whispers to their mind that there is no God and the universe but a grand accident, the Scripture speaks the truth when it says, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that men [who deny Him] are without excuse" (Rom 1:20). In Christ's name, I plead with you, be reconciled to God, for He put the sins of all who will believe upon Christ the sinbearer, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor 5:20-21). For "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

In Acts 17 when Paul – once a fierce God-hater himself – was preaching to the Athenians, and spoke of the lack of knowledge men had of God, he then said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (vv 30, 31). This Man, Jesus of Nazareth, has also spoken, saying, "All whom the Father gives to me shall come to me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." If you have been drawn to Christ this morning, seek me out after the service, and let's talk.