

“Shall We Continue in Sin?”  
Romans 6:1-3  
(Preached at Trinity, June 22, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the last half of the previous chapter Paul described the terrible fall of man.  
**Romans 5:12** – “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”
  - A. All have fallen under the guilt and condemnation of Adam’s sin. This is seen clearly in the universality of death.
  - B. What’s worse, the Law came along side this original sin and sin increased.  
**Romans 5:20** – “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.”
  - C. Sin has abounded upon the earth and with it God’s wrath has abounded. We have all heaped up the full measure of God’s condemnation  
**Romans 2:5-6** – “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; <sup>6</sup> Who will render to every man according to his deeds:”
2. But then Paul makes a startling statement:  
**Romans 5:20** – “. . . But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:”
  - A. Although sin is abundant upon the earth, grace is much more abundant. Sin is terrible and has a powerful grip upon the hearts of men, but grace is abundantly greater and more powerful.
  - B. God has blessed us with His amazing grace.
3. By God’s grace Christ came and suffered God’s wrath in our stead. By God’s grace Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to us. By God’s grace we have been united with Christ becoming one with Him – we are now sons of God.
4. As we begin **Chapter 6** we find Paul anticipating an inevitable question.  
**Romans 6:1** – “What shall we say then?”
5. It isn’t completely clear whether the statement in **Verse 1** is an objection to grace because it might lead to sin or a statement expressing pleasure at the apparent license to sin.
6. Here’s the objection  
If salvation comes by God’s rich grace completely apart from our works won’t this lead to an increase in sin?
  - A. This might appear like a reasonable conclusion. If we are saved by grace apart from the Law then our works really have no meaning at all. In fact if our sin makes grace powerful and abundant why not sin all the more that grace might appear even more abundant.  
“Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”
  - B. This is the very objection I once received from a Muslim man. He said it is ridiculous to believe that all we have to do is believe. If this were true then we could simply believe and then live any way we please.
    1. His charge was that grace would inevitably lead to an increase in sin.

2. This was also the charge of the Jews.  
This was the stumbling block that kept them from Christ.  
It reveals a total and complete ignorance of grace.
7. Others might be pleased with Paul's teaching seeing it as a license to sin.  
These are the antinomians.
  - A. In **Chapter 5** Paul introduced grace as rich and abundant, far greater than our sin. This being the case, why not sin all the more so that grace might appear all the more glorious. And the more a person sins the more grace he will receive. If a man is blessed with the abundance of grace why not sin more that he might be blessed more?
  - B. And if we are saved by grace alone, it really doesn't matter whether or not we keep the Law.
  - C. This was and still is a common perversion of grace – that you can be a believer without bearing the marks of holiness and a transformed life.  
**Jude 1:4** – “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”
8. Paul's answer to any idea that grace might lead to sin is direct and clear.  
μὴ γένοιτο – “may it never be!” This is a frequent expression for Paul. It is a strong expression of revulsion and horror—“Perish the thought!” “God forbid!” “Absolutely not!” “inconceivable”
9. For the Christian, continuing in sin is impossible.  
Paul gives the reason why in **Verse 2**  
**Romans 6:2** – “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”
10. Why is it inconceivable that a Christian could continue in sin? In fact why is it impossible that a Christian can continue in sin?
  - I. Because it fails to recognize God's purpose in salvation
    - A. Christians are saved unto holiness
      1. When human beings fell from holiness they fell into sin's dominion. Sin has a grip upon humanity – sin has continued to increase upon the earth. Men are infatuated by this world of darkness and they love their sin
      2. Had God left men in their sin they would have continued in their corruption and then die and go to hell.
      3. God's purpose in election is to actually deliver us from the grip of sin and restore us to Himself  
**Ephesians 1:3-4** – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: <sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”  
**Romans 6:14** – “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

- B. What is the purpose of grace?
1. God's purpose in grace is that sin might be put to death  
It is to deliver us from the reign of sin and the reign of death  
**Romans 5:21** – “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”
  2. God's purpose in grace is that we would be holy
    - a. By God's grace He chose us from eternity
    - b. By God's grace He sent forth Christ to redeem us from our sin.
    - c. By God's grace Christ accomplished our redemption
  3. How can we come face to face with grace and continue in sin  
To continue in sin is an assault upon God's sovereign purpose.  
To continue in sin is to make a mockery of Christ's death  
**Hebrews 10:26-29** – “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,  
<sup>27</sup> But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. <sup>28</sup> He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: <sup>29</sup> Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”
  4. Could such grace lead us to continue in sin?  
Paul says, “God forbid”

II. Because it fails to recognize God's power in salvation

- A. The lost man is “dead” in sin
1. He has no spiritual understanding
  2. He has no spiritual appetites
  3. His life is a pursuit of carnal things  
**Ephesians 2:1-3** – “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; <sup>2</sup> Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: <sup>3</sup> Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”
  4. The lost man is truly helpless to do anything about his sin.
    - a. He is accountable – God will hold him accountable for his actions
    - b. But he is completely unable to escape the grip of sin.
  5. Only an almighty power could deliver us from such a bondage  
**John 6:44** – “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”  
ἔλκω – “To draw ships down into the sea, to draw a sword”  
**John 6:65** – “And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”  
**2 Corinthians 4:6** – “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

- B. God's grace is a transforming grace  
**Ephesians 2:4-10** – “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: <sup>7</sup> That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
1. This is referring to the new birth – is God not able to do such a work in us.
  2. The believer has received God's transforming grace
  3. We are now alive in Christ and dead to sin  
**Romans 6:2** – “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”
  4. Paul uses the aorist tense which signifies something done once and for all time in the past. This is the way most of the newer translations render it.  
NAS “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”
  5. If you died to sin how shall you live in sin?

III. Because it fails to recognize the position of the believer

- A. God has chosen us particularly as His vessels of mercy  
**Romans 9:21-24** – “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? <sup>22</sup> *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: <sup>23</sup> And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, <sup>24</sup> Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”
1. God has set us apart as His vessels of mercy
  2. Now look carefully at **Verse 2**  
“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”
  3. Paul is speaking of a particular people, vessels of mercy—those who have received God's abundant grace.
- B. Part of the problem of Christians is they don't know who they are, what their position is.
1. I agree with Martyn Lloyd-Jones that this is referring to our “position.” Paul is describing something that happened to us – we died to sin. There was a moment when we ceased to be in Adam and began to be in Christ. We died to sin.
  2. This means more than that we died to the penalty or guilt of sin. It means this but it means more than this. Paul is saying that we died to the power of sin. This is the whole thrust of this chapter.
  3. Sin no longer reigns over us. We have died to the rule of sin.  
**Romans 5:21** – “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”
  4. How can someone who has died to the reign of sin continue to live in sin?

- C. If we are dead to sin, how come we still sin?
1. We fail to recognize what we are – We fail to understand our new kingdom and our new King.  
**Colossians 1:13** – “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”  
 “translated” - transferred  
**Ephesians 2:19** – “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;”
  2. This is the work of salvation.  
 Listen to the words of Christ to Paul at this conversion:  
**Acts 26:16-18** – “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; <sup>17</sup> Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, <sup>18</sup> To open their eyes, *and* to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”
  3. God has taken us out of the realm and dominion of sin and is now progressively stripping from us every last remnant until we are at last purified.  
**Ephesians 5:27** – “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
  4. We are either in Adam or we are in Christ. If we are in Christ we have been captivated by Him. We are under the reign of grace. We are the bride of Christ. We must be what we are. How can we who have died to sin continue to live in sin.
  5. Paul frequently admonishes us to be what we are!  
**Ephesians 5:8** – “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”
  6. Paul is saying in **Verse 2**, how can we who died to sin continue to live in sin? We must be what we are.

#### Conclusion:

1. One of the aspects of the holy life is knowledge—what we know—the knowledge of what Christ has accomplished and what we are in Christ.  
**Verse 3** confirms this – “Don’t ye know. . .”
2. Are you in Christ? Do you realize your position as His bride? Then what place does sin have in your life? Paul is saying that the Christian is under the reign of grace.
3. When we were under the reign of sin our life was characterized by sin but now we have been delivered from sin.  
 This is what John says in his First Epistle  
**1 John 3:9** – “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”  
 The believer does not abide in sin – he doesn’t continue to practice sin.
4. Under grace our lives must be characterized by grace unto righteousness.