

XXXIX. Romans in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel of God
“Paul’s Instructional Response to Gospel Heresy”
Romans 6:1–4
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
August 7, 2022 • Sunday Morning Sermon

This is the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, for the people of God and to the glory of God. Romans 6:1-14 says *[1] What shall we (believers) say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! (God forbid) 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.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is crucial. United to Christ – union with Christ. We can grasp this for this is the soil, the epicenter of the Christian life. This is the fixed point for the growing Christian life and it’s right here in this Romans 6 text. One of the blessings of being a pastor is not only the privilege to preach God’s Word but also to receive questions from God’s people. Those two things tend to go together very rapidly. Questions generally start in the lobby right after I have finished preaching the sermon. Some of those questions are motivated with an agenda, for more information, to gain insight, out of curiosity, but I love hearing them. I even use those questions every so often when I do a time of Ask-the-Pastor but they are wonderful and after the last study was no exception.

As we have begun this section covering Romans 6 through 8, I said this in the last study but we are in the key section of Scripture with Biblical distillation of truth that is absolutely essential to your living the Christian the life. Romans 6 give us foundational truths – foundations for the Christian life in and for Christ. Romans 7 tells us what to do with remaining sin in our life, particularly those embedded and entangling sins and how to handle that. Romans 8 tells us how to walk in the Spirit for Christ and in the triumph of Christ in this life. The foundational text is Romans 6:1-14 and they are not easy. They are challenging. You have to take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5) to understand this

foundational text. We are not going to be Christians who refuse to think. We are going to be Christians who love the Lord with heart and soul and also with mind. This text calls us to focus, think and put our Spirit enabled grasp upon Biblical truth to understand it.

I tried to illustrate this from the life of who I think is the greatest expositional preacher of the 20th century and that was Martyn Lloyd Jones. I have his commentaries he did on Romans but of the cancer he faced he was unable to finish it but he dove into it and it was many years he preached on it. He never started his study on Romans until he understood Romans 6:1-14 and then he took a deep dive into it. Did he understand it perfectly? Probably not because none of us have but he did understand it accurately and intentionally and that is evident because he then goes into a multivolume commentary series, we have from his sermons over many years of preaching on it. Martyn Lloyd Jones preached one hour plus sermons. Interestingly, in Romans 6:1-14 which we are only doing three studies on Martyn Lloyd Jones took four months to cover – 16 Sundays. Then he bemoaned the fact that he just couldn't finish it.

This is such a crucial text of Scripture. It is crucial for understanding the Gospel driven saturated, Holy Spirit empowered, Christ exalting, God glorifying Christian life that is lived out of joy to Christ the Savior. We don't live our Christian life to be saved for we live our Christian life for the One who saved us – for our Savior. I want to look at one verse in particular from Romans 6:14 and that is verse 5 for a moment.

Romans 6:5 says [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.* Romans 6:14 says [14] ***For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*** The superlative power of God's grace in the Christian life and our call to holiness is not to be right with God but our pursuit of holiness is because we're right with God and God is right within us. That's why this is such a powerful statement to our lives.

When we started this study in Romans, we saw that Paul was unashamed and eager to preach the Gospel of God and then he gave two earmarks of the Gospel. One is the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and secondly, he said in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. What would Paul say these two things are Good News? The reason for this is because all of us in Adam sinned and we are born with a sin nature, which means we are born spiritually dead, headed to the judgment of God. We are also sinfully indicted as sinners under God's judgment. We have a heart problem and a record problem. We're helpless, hopeless, unwilling and unable and rightly under the judgment of God. There are none who seek Him and none who understand. All have turned aside, none are righteous.

Then comes Christ, with the power and righteousness of God to resurrect us from the boneyard of sin and we receive that wonderful word in Romans 6:23 which says [23] *For the wages of sin is death, **but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*** Through Christ we are born again. Not only is sin canceled but righteousness is granted to us through Him. Our sin was imputed to Him – His righteousness is imputed to us. His Spirit brings us from death unto life to Christ who takes away our sin with His atoning death as He gives us His perfect righteousness so that we have everlasting life in Christ. In Adam we also had a bad life as sinners before God. Now in the second Adam – Christ – He takes our sin from us, gives us a new heart, with a new record and we have a new life.

How do we live that new life for Christ? I know I'm not adequate to give this to you but I want you to grasp this so badly. I have prayed for you to understand this for this changed everything for me when I understood this in my fledgling Christian life years ago as I took the deep dive into John Murray's commentary in the passage of Romans 6. This is a crucial life

changing text – I am in Christ, Christ is in me – this is the hope of glory, the epicenter of the changed life in Christ as it flows from understanding this. God’s grace didn’t come back to get us on a level playing field with sin and God’s grace isn’t comparative to sin, for God’s grace is the superlative – where sin abounds grace does much more abound.

Paul is fully aware that whenever salvation is preached as Romans describes it in Romans 5 where salvation by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone that grace is never alone for it has evidences. Faith is never alone for it has evidences. Christ is never alone for He brings things into our life and things change in our life, but our salvation is rooted in Christ alone. I had the opportunity to walk through this with three people this last week, and their push back was thinking that faith was manifested by works and it is but our works never navigate to our salvation – they are the evidence of it. Grace brings a changed life but it’s not our changed life that saves us; it’s the changed life that reveals our salvation. It all comes from you being in Christ and Christ being in you. At the cross, you were in Christ. At the tomb, you were in Christ. Ascended into heaven, you were in Christ. Now, Jesus from the heavens has poured forth His Spirit and Christ is in you. This what you must understand because it’s at the very foundation.

Whenever you preach this, the fact is, that there will be people who twist it with two Gospel heresies. One Gospel heresy is legalism and the other is antinomianism. Legalism is the notion that God can’t save me without me doing something for God in obedience to His law. In other words, my obedience to His law is what allows God to save me, enables God to save me and adds to what God does to save me. You are not under the law. Is there a lawful use of the law? We will cover this in Romans 7 but the law has no power to save you nor do you have the power to use it to save yourself. Legalism is a ditch on one side of the glorious road of salvation that you must say ‘no’ to. Our obedience doesn’t create the ground of our salvation, it evidences it for it comes from our love to Christ. Jesus says in John 14:15, *[15] If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.* We don’t keep His commandments to be loved but we keep them because we’re loved.

The other Gospel heresy and the one that is so prevalent, is antinomianism. This is when one says that sin is when you transgress God’s law, grace is greater than sin so I don’t need to concern myself with the right use of God’s law, the Gospel use of God’s law. In fact, I need to transgress God’s law for if I have a bucket of sin then I get two buckets of grace because there is more grace than sin – sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Paul was directly accused of antinomianism and now we know why Paul starts Romans 6 the way he does, because he knows these heresies are there. This is why Paul starts out the way he does in Romans 6.

Romans 6:1-2 says *[1] What shall we (believers) say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? [2] By no means! (God forbid) How can we who died to sin still live in it?* If we are not vulnerable to the charge of antinomianism then we have not preached the Gospel of saving grace in Christ with integrity. I didn’t say guilty to the charge, but vulnerable. Paul was charged with this and we see it by what he says in Romans 3:8 which says *[8] And why not do evil (sin) that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.* And if we have not answered the charge of antinomianism with passion then we have not preached the Gospel with clarity and fidelity.

Paul is charged and Paul answers in Romans 6:1-14. Paul answers three ways. Paul gives an emotional response in Romans 6:1-2. He gives an instructional response which we will look closer at in this study, in Romans 6:3-11. Then he gives a directional response in Romans 6:12-14.

In Romans 6 through 8 Paul does something radically new that he did not do in Romans 1 through 5. In a few studies from now we'll find this together but, in the meantime, see if you can find it right here in Romans 6:1-14. Right now, I want to remind you of Paul's emotional response. Whenever the Gospel is misrepresented, blasphemed or assaulted and the Christian comes to the defense, not only with precision and accuracy but with passion, Paul reveals this as he answers the charge of antinomianism in Romans 6:1 with a malediction, a passionate declaration in Romans 6:2 – God forbid! This is the response given in the New American Standard version that gets the sense as well as the grammar as well as in the King James version which gives it as an anathema – God forbid this! That this be true! We would never say that and we do not say that. They were twisting what Paul was saying to say what they did. When you know truth, truth evokes emotion.

Paul does not have a theological cool detachment from Biblical truth in general and the Gospel in particular. When Paul preaches the Gospel, he is eager to preach it (Romans 1:15). When Paul defends the Gospel, he is passionate and declarative and we see this when he says 'God forbid this heresy and error that leads men and women to the judgment of perdition.' He is not detached or a spectator. There are some of us who have a desire to be accurate theologically and if we are being accurate and grasping what the Word is saying, then we ought to be the most passionate and emotional – yes, under the leash of the Holy Spirit with self-control, but fully engaged in the heart as well as the mind.

Now Paul goes to the theological underpinnings and gives an instructional response to the mind and then later will give directional response to the will. He gives the doctrinal, theological foundations that his life is built upon and wants your life built upon – united to Christ, in union with Christ. To teach us this he goes to the God ordained designed new sacrament, sign and seal of the New Covenant – baptism which is replacing circumcision from the Old Testament that is fulfilled in Christ. Paul is not giving mode or efficacy as baptismal regeneration, but he is going to the theology of baptism. What is the theology of the sign and seal of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ in the covenant of grace and what is it declaring to you? Paul gives us what it is declaring. Notice the bold in the following verses for Paul is giving instructions of true theology so that our life, while emotional is not built on our emotions – it's built on truth. He is giving the truth to the mind that fills the heart with passion.

Romans 6:3-11 says [3] **Do you not know** that all of us (believers) 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 (its power, guilt and shame) 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.

Paul starts by looking at baptism itself. The baptismal formula – in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – that we are united to Christ as we were baptized into His death. In other words, according to this passage, in Christ's death we died with Him. In Christ's life, resurrection, we live with Him. Furthermore, when Christ ascended, we ascended with Him,

united to Him. Christ not only died, was raised and ascended for us but we died, were raised and ascended with Him. He nailed our sin and its dominion to the cross – He canceled the power of sin. He died for our sins, we died with Him to our sins. When He was raised for our life, we were raised with Him. You can now live for Jesus because sin no longer has dominion over your life. When He died for your sins, He died to set you free and you died with Him to sins. He emancipates us from the dominion of sin's guilt, shame and power.

Before original sin in Adam, Adam and Eve had to be talked into sinning. After Adam, no one can talk us out of sinning. In Christ, I don't have to sin. Its dominion and power have been broken. Its guilt has been banished and its shame eradicated. Sin is not dead to me, but I am dead to sin. Sin still has that principle of an old man living in us and we'll deal with how to handle that in Romans 7, but foundationally you're in Christ. Christ has delivered you from sin's dominion. It's not your free from its guilt, shame and power if you do good. Because of His death that He died and we died with Him, that is why we have been set free in Christ.

A sign means its there to teach something and Paul is teaching us from the sign of baptism the foundational doctrine of the Gospel. One day your body will be raised to a perfect life in Christ. We are not only justified and forgiven but we are born again. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. You not only die with Him but you live with Him. Away with the notion that we are going to re-crucify Christ as we take the Lord's Supper, no! The atoning death of Christ that happened over 2,000 years ago happened once and for all and His resurrection declare His victory. Sin's dominion is no more because of Him, not because of us.

I love the quote from R.C. Sproul that we live to God under the eye of God. We don't live for salvation. We live for the God who saves us and who has saved us.

I am not trying to pick on the English Standard version but when it comes to Romans 6:11 I prefer the NAS and the King James. *[11] Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (NAS). [11] Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (KJV).* Reckon means something you have to deal with but it also means how you set a journey and a trajectory. When you fly or sail somewhere the pilot or the captain of the ship has to set the reckonings to where you are headed. Every day you and I need to come back to union with Christ – dead to sin, alive to God in Christ who is in us and establish the reckonings. This is the foundation, the epicenter of the Christian life.

Here's the takeaway. An authentic Christian has died to sin and live to God. Now the world, the flesh and the devil don't want us to live for God, but we start with the reckoning. The reckoning is Christ in me. I have died to sin, I live to God because of the grace secured union with Christ on the cross, from the tomb, into the heavens. Here is what the world tells you about the death of Christ – it's unthinkable and impossible and we say to them 'the atoning death of Christ is not unthinkable, it is unstoppable. He will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. You are right in that it is impossible but you have the wrong impossibility for it was not impossible for Christ to rise from the dead. It was impossible for death to keep Him from rising and the grave to hold Him down. It is impossible for you to stop God's grace from changing my life for this Savior who died and was raised for me and who is now at work within me.'

His grace is greater than our sin and we are united to Him by His grace. His ascension is not wish fulfilment for His ascension is the assurance that I'm with Him and He's with me and one day I'll be with Him, like Him and I will reign with Him because I'm in Him and He's in me. Because Christ has died for you, it means you have died to sin with Him. Christ is resurrected to life for the glory of God. You have been raised up with Him to live to the praise

of His glorious grace. Christ is ascended to heaven, you are ascended in Him and assured on that Great Day you will be with Him, like Him and reigning with Him. Our daily life is a reckoning. I've got a new heart, a new family, a new home, a new record and now I have a growing new life and even start with your baptism.

Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant. Covenant ceremonies are naming ceremonies. Yesterday I did a covenant of marriage ceremony and as the two people walked out, I said 'I introduce to you Mr. and Mrs.' and a name was changed. That was a glorious truth. As children are baptized into the covenant of families of believing parents, they name their child by the direction of God's Word. I have names from creation and providence. In God's providence I'm Harry Reeder. I'm a man by creation. I'm an American in God's providence. I have identities and names in terms of God's creation and in terms of God's providence, but when I am baptized, I am baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. There is the name above every name. I am no longer an American – I'm a Christian American. I'm not an American Christian. The adjective controls the noun. I am a Christian husband now. I am a Christian father. I am a Christian citizen. Christ names me and I am named by Him. All other names in creation and providence are now modified by the supremacy and preeminence of Christ. I am His and He is mine. I am named by Him because of His grace and for His glory.

Those things that used to name me as a sinner are things, I don't want named among us and I don't want them to name me. I am not a promiscuous Christian. I'm not a gay Christian. I'm not an alcoholic Christian. I'm not a thieving Christian. I am a Christian and I may have indwelling sins to deal with but those things don't name me. Christ names me. I'm His and He is mine and that's why we pursue holiness – because we're His and we love Him who gloriously loved us.

I was married almost 53 years ago, almost 54. We had a three day honeymoon and I don't know how we were able to afford that. When we came back and pulled into Charlotte we went to Sears & Roebuck where my wife had worked for my mother and that's where I met her. My mother was there so we stopped off and said 'hello' to her. Some of my mom's friends were there and said to me 'Ike, I heard something important has happened to you.' I said 'Oh yes and here is my wife, Cindy Miller.' You would not believe how quickly the frost came to the room and I felt eyes upon me that weren't loving but glaring. She looked at me and said 'Reeder.' I wished I could tell you that was the only time I made that mistake, but I needed to do some reckoning.

One of the things I do, is I made a commitment that this wedding ring I wear will never come off my finger. It came off one time when I had open heart surgery but I told them that as soon as they pulled the tube, I wanted them to put the ring back on. I display it. I need to reckon using that public sign and seal. Baptism unwashed is the filth, dirt and grim of sin taken away – baptism is a ritual washing. Anytime you're filthy and you get washed clean, something else got dirty. When Jesus washed you, He took the filth, shame and dirt of our sin on Himself and I need to reckon myself dead to that sin in Christ and because of Christ.

I recently read some things about Alexander the Great who died in despair in his youth. One day he was asked 'why are you so successful, so dominating?' He remembered a certain event and it affected him his whole life. His dad caught him doing something wrong and said to him 'Alexander, change your behavior or change your name.'

I have Good News for you today. Jesus says 'I'm changing your name' and that's what changed our behavior. We're His and He is ours. He died for us and we died with Him. He was raised and we are raised with Him. Come to Him and go serve Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments in Your Word. Holy Spirit, I would ask that You speak to hearts that are reading this right now, as only You can speak. For those who think it's something we do instead of what He did for us, give them eyes to see and ears to hear, for now we do what we do for Him, not to be saved. Father, help us everyday to reckon and to sense the name changing power of Christ's redemption that we're His and we died with Him, the One who died for us – we are raised with Him, the One who was raised for us, now we walk with Him and for Him to the glory of God because we love Him who has saved us. We are in Him and He is in us and that is the hope of glory. O God fill us that our passion, while directed by the Holy Spirit, would be propelled in life because we know we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, His death and resurrection, in Jesus' Name, Amen.