

## Romans 6:1-23

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[ 0 : 00 ] So if salvation, if being a Christian is 100% from God and 0% from us, doesn't this mean we can live as we want?

If by God's grace, his undeserved kindness, through faith in Christ, depending upon him, you've already got your ticket to heaven, what is the motivation to live differently?

Well Romans 1-5 has been explaining the good news, that we don't get right with God, you do not get right with God by anything that you do, but only through Jesus Christ alone.

So if we trust in Christ's death, we can know for certain this afternoon, this lunchtime, that we are loved by God, and that on the judgment day that is still to come we have nothing to fear.

So perhaps maybe you thought the essence of the Christian message was do good and you'll get to heaven, but to our surprise we discover it is all about what God has done for us through Christ Jesus.

[ 1 : 06 ] And we just need to accept that forgiveness as a free gift. But you may now be thinking, well, how can I live? How can I live? I can live as I want, can't I?

I can do what I want, because in the end I know God will forgive me later. What is it that motivates Christian people to live a godly life instead of a sinful life?

And we know we are saved by grace and not by works. So why bother with works? And in the Apostle Paul's day there were many people who opposed this teaching.

They didn't like that salvation is 100% from God and 0% from us. And as far as they could see, it would produce loose living. Yesterday was the anniversary of Reformation Day, wasn't it?

The 31st of October. And that is Roman Catholicism's great criticism of Protestants. That they say, isn't it, if salvation is 100% from God, if the only way we can get right with God is by faith in Christ alone, well, what is the motivation for living?

[ 2 : 18 ] If you're saved by your good works, that's a really powerful incentive, isn't it, to do good works. But if you're saved by grace through faith, why bother?

The opponents of Paul went further. They said, didn't they, that it left the door open. Well, not only left the door open to sinful living, but it actually promoted sinful living. So look at verse 1 on your sheets.

What should we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? That particular argument is, I'm picking up from chapter 5 and verse 20 that we saw last week, where it says, now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more. So think about this, every time you commit a sin, it appears like a light on your credit card statement before God.

And God has promised in the gospel that he will pay off your bill and your debt completely. How generous of God. But surely the bigger the debt that we've racked up, well, surely God will be more generous, won't he?

[ 3 : 33 ] How much more God would be seen to be generous if he was to pay off a debt of a million pounds instead of 500 pounds? His grace would be seen to be so wonderful.

So why don't we just go on sinning? What's Paul's response to this too? By no means. That is the sense of perish the thought. You've got to be kidding. Why?

How can we who die to sin still living it? If we are Christians, do you see what it says? It says we have died to sin. How can we live that way anymore? And the teaching of Romans chapter 6 is foundational for the Christian life.

There's four statements on your outline that follow the logic of the argument. It's this fact that verse 2, we have died to sin. And that is the reason why you and I as Christian people are to live differently.

And it's vital we understand what this phrase means. So what does it mean? Well, there's a big clue in the passage. Look at verse 2. It says, you have died to sin. How can we who died to sin? [ 4 : 35 ] Now you look at verse 10. It talks about Christ. For the death that Jesus died, he died to sin. So whatever the phrase means, died to sin, it is true both of the Christian and of the Lord Jesus.

We died to sin. So let's start with a historical event. Christ died to sin. Christ died to sin and was raised to live to God. So look with me at verses 9 and 10. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again.

Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. So what we read there is we read that when Christ died on the cross, he dies to sin once for all.

Now, we're very familiar, aren't we, with the fact that Christ died for our sins. I think as Christians we are aware of that.

But that's not what it says, is it? It says that Jesus died to sin. Not for sins, but to sin. Not for sins, plural, but for sin, singular.

[ 5 : 42 ] Now what does that mean? Well, it clearly can't mean that he died in order to sin. That would be complete nonsense. So we don't need to think about that. To understand this, we need to think of sin as a power, as a ruler.

So last week in chapter 5, we were introduced to the idea that ever since sin and death entered our world, it came through the first man. Sin and death have reigned, they rule.

So chapter 5 and verse 21, sin reigned in death. So sin and death, they were like dictators ruling over some African republic.

And when Jesus died, he died to sin in the sense that he met all of its demands. And as a result, sin and death could no longer rule over him.

His resurrection proved that the reign of sin and death was broken. Jesus has overthrown the tyrants. Now, I know it's quite a difficult concept. So I have thought of an illustration which I thought was helpful.

[ 6 : 48 ] And on the bus here, thinking about it, I'm not so sure it is so helpful. But we'll see, okay? I wanted to imagine an institution called sin prison. Sin prison is ruled over with a rod of iron by two nasty prison wardens.

They are prison wardens sin and prison wardens death. And they operate a brutal regime. That is sin prison. The first person to ever have been admitted into that prison, to sin prison, was, as an inmate, was a guy called Adam.

He was the first man. And so when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, he broke God's law. And he was sent to sin prison. And because he was the first man, all his descendants ever since have been born inside sin prison.

So we are born inmates of sin. We are born inmates of sin prison inside the walls. We are ruled over by those nasty prison walls of sin and death.

And sin prison is a maximum security prison. And we are all lifers. We all have a life sentence. That doesn't mean you save ten years and get off on parole.

[ 8 : 02 ] It means that it is life. Well, it means life. And life means life forever. So it's not just 70 years or 80 years inside, but eternity inside. And the penalty for sin is eternal separation from the love of God.

Well, then Jesus came. Jesus came as the sinless son of God. And Jesus is the only person to be born outside the prison.

Throughout his life, he was obedient to God. The Lord Jesus, he was not under the rule of sin and death. Jesus lived his life as a free man. Outside the prison walls.

But on the cross, in accordance with the plan of God our Father. Because Jesus bore our sins. Jesus himself was condemned like us. To an eternal life sentence in sin prison.

So Jesus, like us, was locked up in sin prison. Like we are. He's a condemned man. He became a prisoner, like us, under the rule of sin and death.

[ 9 : 08 ] Now here is where things get even more mind-blowing. Jesus served his sentence. And he served his sentence in full. And so he had to be released. Jesus served his sentence in full so that he had to be released.

And you might be thinking, well, how is that possible? Didn't you just say a minute ago that the sentence was an eternal one? Well, when Jesus died on the cross, in some way that you and I will probably never, ever fully understand.

Jesus served that eternal sentence. Somehow that eternal sentence, under the reign of sin and death, was compressed down. So that on the cross, in his death, Jesus did the time.

Think of it this way. There's a danger in that I'm illustrating an illustration, which is never a good thing. But when you've got a big file on your computer. And you want to send it in an email. The file may get zipped up and compressed down.

Like a minute. You've seen that when you send a file. It gets compressed and zipped down. And so it becomes something much smaller for storage. I have not the foggiest idea how that happens. But in some way, the eternal sentence for Jesus was zipped up and compressed down.

[10:23] So that on the cross, Jesus served his sentence eternally. Perhaps the closest somebody has ever come to explain it was the early church theologian, Athanasius, who said, The value of Christ's sacrifice lay in the infinite worth of his person.

Because Jesus served the sentence in full, he had to be released. The prison wardens sin and death. They no longer had any claim over him. And so on that first Easter morning, the prison gates are opened.

And for the very first time, somebody walks out of that prison. Out of sin prison. Jesus walked out a free man to live for God.

Well, that is what it means. Jesus died to sin. It is saying that he served his sentence in full. So he broke out from under the rule of sin and death.

And you might be thinking, well, that's really nice for him. But what on earth is that going to do with the rest of us? Because we are all still in the prison, aren't we? Staring out of the bars. Still locked up inside. Well, no, that isn't the case.

[11:33] Because secondly, a new union. A Christian is united to Christ in his death and resurrection. So last week we saw how the obedience of the first man, Adam, do you remember?

It affected us all. Because God sees Adam as our representative. God sees Adam as the head of the human race. We are united with him.

And as a result last week, do you remember? We share his guilt and his corruption. But the Christian enjoys a new union. A union with Christ. The last Adam.

The head of a new race. Look with me at verses 3 to 5. Do you not know that all of us, who have been baptised into Christ Jesus, were baptised into his death.

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. 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.

[12:37] So if you are a Christian this afternoon, you've been united with Christ in his death and resurrection. And when he died to sin, serving his sentence fully, you died to sin in him.

And when he was raised to new life for God, you were raised for new life for God. So what Christ did in serving his sentence in sin prison and in being set free did not just benefit him.

It has benefited all those who are united to him. So in chapter 16 and verse 7, Paul gives greetings to the people who are in Rome.

And he describes the various people. And at the end of the verse in Romans 16 and verse 7, he doesn't say at the end of the verse, they were Christians before me. No, what does he say? He says they were in Christ before me.

It's the most common way the New Testament describes Christian people as people who are in Christ. We are united with Christ. We were in Adam. But now if we are Christians, we are in Christ.

[13:46] 1 Corinthians 15, 22 says, In Adam all die. So also in Christ all should be made alive. Union with Christ is the key to Christian living.

How do we get this union with him? Well, the passage back in chapter 6 verse 3 spoke, didn't it? Can you see that? About being baptised into Christ Jesus. And verse 4 spoke about being buried with him by baptism into his death.

We were united to Adam by nature, by birth. But we are united to Christ by what? It's very interesting, what would you put in that blank?

We would say, wouldn't we, we are united to Christ by faith. But it actually says by baptism. In the Testament Colossians 2 verse 12 speaks of being buried with Christ through baptism, by which you

were also raised with him through faith.

Baptism and faith go together. Baptism calls for faith. And so this union with Christ happens at the beginning of the Christian life.

[14:59] Now can you just see with me just how important Paul is saying baptism is. Your baptism publicly, verse 3 and verse 4, unites you to Christ.

That's quite shocking, isn't it? I think it's a helpful illustration here that the Lord Jesus gives us, isn't it? So Jesus talks about union with Christ in John's Gospel.

And he speaks about how we are united to Christ. And he gives an illustration of the vine with the branches. And your baptism, so to speak, connects you to the vine.

But the branches that do not bear fruit in keeping with that baptism will be cut off. You were baptized into Christ. And so have faith in him.

That is what baptism says to everyone who is baptized. It tells them, put your faith in Christ. Put your faith in Christ.

[16:00] If you don't, well according to the picture that Jesus gives us, the branches that we cut off. What difference does this union with Christ make? It makes a new allegiance.

The Christian no longer belongs to sin. But you belong to God. Look at verse 11. So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. If we are united to Christ in his death, we have died to sin.

And we are now dead to sin. Remember all that meant to Christ. He served his sentence. So the prison authorities, remember them? The warden's sin and death. They now have no claim on him whatsoever.

Now if we serve our sentence ourselves, we remain in that position for all eternity. But if we are united to Christ, in him we have served the sentence. Already his death to sin becomes our death to sin.

We have done our time. We have paid our dues. The prison warden's sin and death, they have lost their authority to rule over us. Just to give you a slightly different illustration.

[17:04] If you are a tenant in a flat, your landlord has got quite a lot of power over you, hasn't he? You are under a contract. You have to make your monthly payments and so forth.

But once you've fulfilled the terms of your contract, the landlord has got no legal power over you anymore. You are released from your obligations to him. Well in Christ we have fulfilled all the terms of that contract.

The contract said we would live in that house forever. Under those nasty landlords. But Christ died. And he took that punishment on the cross.

And so in him we are released from any obligation to sin prison. To those landlords sin and death. Verse 6 speaks, doesn't it, of our old self being crucified with Christ.

So that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. Verse 7 says, for one who has died has been set free from sin. We've served our tenth sentence.

[18:01] We've done our time. It's not that you've escaped from the prison in the middle of the night. You've tanneled underground. No, you've been released. The warden's sin and death, they no longer reign over you.

So the Christian is now living life on the outside of that prison. But what does life on the outside look like? I don't know if you've seen Shawshank Redemption.

It's a great film. And you might remember that there's an old convict in it called Brooks. He was the prison librarian at the Shawshank State Prison for 40 years.

And when Brooks is released from prison, tragically he ends up committing suicide. Because he couldn't cope with life outside the strict prison regime. It's not a problem when you're released from sin prison.

What is life like outside of sin prison's walls? Notice verse 10. The prisoner is not just dead to sin, but alive to God.

[19:03] So as of Christ after his resurrection, he now lives to God. The same is true in verse 11. So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We've been raised to a new life.

We belong to God. We've been released from the rule of sin and death. But so that we might come under the rule of God. And that means that life outside the prison walls is not just living unto ourselves and being a law unto ourselves.

We belong now to God. There's a new allegiance. The old allegiance is gone and a new allegiance is coming to being. So the Christian has died. To sin.

The old allegiance is gone and he now belongs to God. So what? Well, fourthly, there's a new obligation. The Christian should live for God and not for sin. The new reality brings with it new obligations.

Can you see verse 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. [20:08] We live a new life. What does that involve? First thing, it's really just three practical things to finish. It's really remember who you are.

This new lifestyle begins in the mind. Look at verse 11. So you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God.

You reckon yourself dead to sin but alive to Christ Jesus. That is saying, if I am to live as I should, I need to get my head straight about who I am now.

Verse 3. Do you not know? Verse 6. We know. Verse 9. We know that. We've got to get our head straight. And getting our thinking clear is going to be vital if we're going to live lives that are different.

So when I get up every morning, I need to do a reality check. And I need to remind myself, I've died to sin and death. I'm not under the prison wardens anymore. I've been raised to new life under God. [21:09] And at moments when we feel tempted, we remind ourselves who we are. We play mind games. Why do we need to play these mind games?

One reason is sin will try to deceive us. Sin will try to deceive you that it's got authority over you when in fact it hasn't. Sin is like a former lover who's obsessive and can't let go.

And the former lover just will not accept that the relationship's over. She constantly calls or she constantly texts you. He said, I want to meet up. He stalks you. And you've got to be ruthless.

So you show him your wedding ring and you say, it's over. I've got a new allegiance. I'm not going to do what you want me to do. It's finished. The equivalent, according to Romans 6, is that we get our baptism certificate.

And we waive it at sin. That's what Luther did, didn't he? Martin Luther. He said, when he was faced with temptation, I am a baptised man. We remind him of our new obligations.

[22:17] Another reason why we need to constantly get our thinking straight is our sinful nature comes naturally to us, doesn't it? It's instinctive. So to live in newness of life, we need to constantly be reprogramming our minds, thinking, not just doing what comes naturally.

In Shawshank Redemption, again, when Red gets released from prison, he's served 40 years inside. He gets a job in a supermarket packing bags, if you've seen the film.

And whenever he wants to go to the bathroom, he instinctively puts up his hand to ask his supervisor. And his supervisor gets really hacked off with this fully grown man, putting up his hand all the time to ask whether he can go to the bathroom.

But he'd been indoctrinated into it, hadn't he? For 40 years, that's what he had to do. Those habits were ingrained and instinctive. And it's the same with us. Living in sin comes naturally to each one of us, because of our sinful nature.

But also because of the habits of many years of living that way, they're so often ingrained, don't they? And so we need to remind ourselves of this constant new reality.

[23:25] Remember who you are. Then a negative and a positive. Verse 12. Let not sin, therefore reign in your body. To make your base passions, do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness.

It's saying that sin does not reign over you, so don't allow sins to reign over you. You're not in prison anymore. That's the old prison in life.

You've had a change of allegiance. It's very important that you understand Romans 6. It's not saying that sin is impossible. Sin is possible for the Christian, but it's not appropriate.

In marriage, you're married to somebody. It's very inappropriate, isn't it, to be going out for candlelit dinners with an old boyfriend or girlfriend. It's possible you could do it, but inappropriate.

You move departments in your company, and your old boss rings you up, and he gives you work. It's possible for you to do that work, but it's inappropriate.

[24:32] You no longer work for him. A football player transfers from Swansea City to Stoke City. And last night, he started hearing the manager of Swansea City, his old team, giving instructions.

And so he starts playing again for Swansea City, and he starts scoring own goals for Stoke. It's possible, but it's inappropriate. And sinning is possible, but it's completely inappropriate for the Christian.

Don't live for sin. Do live for God. The second half of verse 13. Present yourselves to God. As those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Present yourself to God each day to serve him. Present your members, that is your body. Eyes, which used to look lustfully, are to be used to behold the glory of God and read his word.

Feet, that went to places that they should never have done, now take you to meet and praise him with the people of God. Ears, that's heard awful things, now hear his voice.

[ 25 : 46 ] Mouths, that used to speak cursings, now sing praise. This idea of presenting your body to God. Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee.

Let's pray.