

Romans 6:1-11

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[0 : 00] I am. I wonder how you would finish off that sentence this morning. I am. There's been some famous answers, hasn't there? Muhammad Ali says, I am the greatest. Einstein apparently said, I am passionately curious.

! Skawild apparently said, I'm so clever that sometimes I don't even understand a single word I'm saying. And there's so many answers, isn't there, that we could give to that question. We could say, I'm happy. I'm sad. I'm tall. I'm confused. I'm worried.

And very often, how we are affects what we do, doesn't it? So if I'm hungry, I'll find some food to eat. If I'm bored, I'll look for something to occupy my time.

Well, the passage that we read, and do turn back to it if you close, it's Romans 6 on page 942 of these black Bibles. The passage we just read is written by a guy called Paul.

Paul says that a right understanding of who I am is vital for the Christian. It's vital if we're to live lives as God intended it. And it's vital if we're to answer the question that Paul poses in verse 1.

[1 : 33] So he says, doesn't he, in verse 1, look down a bit, what should we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

To paraphrase slightly, he says, does it matter if I sin? Does it matter if I sin? So in chapter 5 of Romans, the bit before this passage we're looking at, Paul has explained that Jesus has shown us grace.

He's explained that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us in verse 8 of chapter 5. He died to take the punishment that we deserved. He died so that we could be forgiven.

He died so that sin wouldn't separate us from God anymore. It's wonderful news. So, someone could say, sin doesn't matter.

If we trust Jesus, we're not going to pay the punishment for our sin. Jesus' righteousness, his righteous death has overcome our sin. So it doesn't matter what we do with our lives.

[2 : 46] Actually, we could go one step further. So Paul points out in verse 20 of chapter 5, he says, where the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, so sin increased because people became more aware of the law, more aware of what they were doing wrong.

As sin increased, grace abounded all the more. So actually, we could say, well, sin is a good thing. The more we sin, the more grace we see, the more we're forgiven, the better Jesus' death on the cross looks.

Sin makes Jesus look even more amazing, right? Well, probably we wouldn't go that far, but have we ever caught ourselves making light of our failures in the knowledge that God will forgive?

Maybe we say, well, it doesn't matter if I visit that website too much, because I know God's going to forgive me. Or it doesn't matter if I join in that conversation, I know God doesn't really improve, but God forgives, tomorrow's a new day.

And that's the kind of thing that Paul picks up on at the beginning of chapter 6. Shall we go on sinning, he says, that grace may increase.

[4 : 06] Sin doesn't matter, right? Well, wrong, says Paul. And he states his main voice, main point in verse 2.

He says, by no means. We've died to sin. How can we live in it any longer? Paul says, if you are a Christian, if you're following Jesus, then your status with regard to sin is dead.

So notice it's not saying, I don't like sin. It's not saying, at some point in the future, I'm going to be without sin. What he's saying here is that, past tense, I am dead to sin.

Now, just about the harshest thing, the cruelest thing you can say to someone, isn't it, is to say that you're dead to them. So we see it in films or dramas on TV, when there's normally been some kind of terrible betrayal between two people.

And one of them turns coldly to the other one, looks them in the eye, and says, you are dead to me. But Paul says, for the Christian, that's where we stand with regard to sin.

[5 : 22] Sin is dead to us. And so Paul says, his argument is, well, how can he even think about carrying on sinning? Sin is dead to us. But I guess that raises a few more questions, actually, than it answers.

Not least, I don't feel dead to sin. I feel the urge to sin. I still do sin.

Sometimes I even sin, knowing that I'm sinning, and I still do it. How can we say that we are dead to sin?

And that's really what Paul goes on to explain in these verses. We're going to look at three sections this morning. He gives us a truth to grasp. First of all, in verses 3 to 10, a truth to grasp.

Then a mindset to adopt in verse 11. And finally, we'll look at verses 12 to 14, where he gives us a lifestyle to follow. Truth to grasp, a mindset to adopt, and a lifestyle to follow.

[6 : 27] So the truth to grasp. How is it that we can say we're dead to sin? It's because we're united with Christ. We're united with Christ in his death.

So look at verse 3. It says, Or don't you know that all of us who are baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?

We don't have time this morning to go into all the details about what baptism does and doesn't symbolise. But let's be clear on what the passage does say. What the passage does say. Baptism symbolises union with Jesus.

I'm baptised into Christ Jesus. For the follower of Jesus, we can think back to our baptism. To that visible picture of becoming a part of God's people.

And we can remember it, not as a picture just of becoming a part of the church, but actually of becoming a part of Christ. We're baptised into him. Paul really is saying to the believer here, Remember when you are converted.

[7 : 34] Remember that when you are converted, you are united with Christ. He says to the Christian, Remember what your baptism points to. Followers of Jesus are united with Christ.

I think sometimes we get a little bit confused about this. About what this means. So if I was Nick, Nick is going to come up and help me illustrate this. Nick around. There it is.

So I think sometimes we think of our conversion a little bit like this. So we think it's like a gift.

Is it our forgiveness? Thank you very much. And I think, that's nice. I can walk away with that. I can go and live my life. But actually, the Bible says that conversion is a little bit more like this.

He says, I'm united with Jesus. I've become a part of Jesus. And so he says, when God looks at me, now, he sees Jesus.

[8 : 41] He says, what happens to Jesus is reckoned to what happens to me. So. And look at how that plays out in the passage.

So he says, we were baptised, verse 3, into his death. We were buried with him. In order that we might be raised with him.

Or as verse 4 says, 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.

So the gift of grace that Paul talks about, that he talks about in chapter 5, it's not a gift that we take and we walk away with. But grace is the wonderful gift of being united with Jesus, becoming a part of him.

And so the last four says, we walk in newness of life. And it's not because we're, we're given a new pair of legs, but because we are united with Jesus.

[9 : 51] He has risen and we're united with him. We often talk, don't we, about being in a relationship with Christ. And that means, not just that we can talk to him now, that we can listen to him today, in his word.

We can do those things, it does mean that. But it also means that we've been united with him in what has happened to him. When he died, when he rose again, it was reckoned to have happened to us.

So let's look in a bit more detail about what this means, that we're united to Christ. First notice that Christ died to sin. Sin is what death, sorry, death is what sin deserves.

So I wonder if you can remember handwriting a really important letter or filling in an important form. It's not something we do so often now with email and the internet, but I wonder if you've done that and you make a mistake.

You have to screw it up, throw it away, get a new blank piece of paper, a new form, and start again. I wonder if you've done that and you keep making mistakes, you keep doing it, you have to start again and again and again, multiple times.

[11 : 05] Well, that's how we deserve to be treated by God because of our sin. God has made us, but we've messed up. And it's not that we've messed up just in one or two little things, but actually the whole nature, the whole direction of our life by nature is towards ourselves rather than towards him.

And so we deserve death, not just physical death, but a full separation from God. We deserve for God to screw us up and start again.

See, death, death is sin's great weapon. At death, sin says, aha, says I've won. I've finally and fully separated you from God.

But Jesus had no sin. So why did he die? Well, the passage is clear that he died for our sin. Look at verse 6.

Our old self was crucified with him. So when he died, he took the sin of all who had trusted him in the past, all who would trust him by his full knowledge, by his foresight in the future, and he felt the full force of it.

[12 : 28] With us united, if you like, with us on his back, he brought all of our sin on the cross, the whole ammunition that sin had to offer. Bullet after bullet, round after round, until all that sin had to give had been dealt with.

Since full weaponry was unloaded on Jesus on the cross, until the ammunition was spent, until on the cross he cried, it is finished, and his body lay lifeless.

And so, verse 6 tells us that the body of sin was brought to nothing. Sin had nothing left to give. But had sin won?

As Jesus lay there dead on the cross, was all our sin too great a price for him to pay? Well, no, we know that, because Jesus rose. He rose.

He faced the punishment for all of our sin, but it couldn't defeat him. So, verse 9, we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again.

[13 : 44] Death no longer has dominion over him. The barrel of sin's gun is empty. It can't do anything more to Jesus. And so, verse 10 summarises this.

It says, for death he died, he died to sin. Not his sin, but our sin on him. Once for all, for all the sin of all the people who will ever trust him.

sin. But the life he lives, having risen from the dead, that's ten times. He lives to God. And grace, wonderfully, is being united with him in that.

It means we are united with him. And in effect, all of our sin, past, present, future, has been dealt with once, finally, on the cross. God's foreknowledge and his planning is as if when Christ died, our sinful selves died.

And so we're set free from sin. Sin cannot harm us anymore, because it has harmed Christ instead. So don't be wrong, I'm not saying that we're no longer going to sin, that we are now made perfect, but I am saying that if we are united with Jesus, that sin has already been paid for.

[15 : 07] Sin cannot win anymore. Verse 7, for one who has died, one who has died with Christ, has been set free from sin.

But when does that leave us now? When does that leave us now? Well, that's the key to answering the question that Paul started with. Does sin matter? Well, reading from the end of verse 4, he says, we too are walking 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.

Or verse 8, now if we died with Christ, we would believe that we will also live with him. See, united with Christ, we have died.

We have died with Christ. Sin is dead to us, and so now we have new life. We are reborn as we look forward to our resurrection with Jesus.

We are free now from the power of sin. And so Paul can say, how can we who died to sin, still live in it?

[16 : 16] Sin doesn't have power anymore. When sin tempts us, it's the power of blood. It's the power of blood. It's pretense. sin looks powerful, but it cannot have power over us, because it has been defeated on the cross.

So, truth to understand, I am united with Christ. I am united with Christ in his death, and so I am dead to sin, and I have a new, free life in him, as we wait for the resurrection that we will one day receive.

That is the marvellous gift of God's grace to us. And all of this leads to a new mindset to adopt in verse 11.

Verse 11, let's read it together. So you also must consider yourselves then to sin and a lie to God in Christ Jesus.

We're five and a half chapters at this point into Romans. Almost 150 verses. And you know, this is the first time that Paul tells them to do, anything.

[17:26] It's the first time in Romans he tells them to do anything. And he starts with the mind. He says, consider yourselves, think about yourselves as dead to sin and a lie in Christ.

You've seen, he says to them, this wonderful truth that united with Jesus, that you're dead to sin, you've seen that it doesn't have any power over you, you've seen that you're free to live a new life, now think like it.

He says, he says, let what is objectively true, because it's happened to Jesus, let it become subjectively true in your mind. He says, think like it, consider yourself dead to sin and a lie to God in Christ.

And so let me ask you, is that how you think? that's what challenged me as I read this for the first time. Do we think of ourselves day to day as people who are dead to sin?

So I don't know about you, I find it easier, or I find it easier to think that I was a sinner. I was a sinner and Jesus died. I can grasp that, that I needed his death because I was a sinner.

[18:40] I can grasp that in the future, that in the new creation, that I will be remade, that with Christ, in the new creation, I will be remade perfect.

But what about today? What about today? Do I consider that I am dead to sin today? Do I consider that sin no longer has power over me today?

Do I consider that sin has died? My old self died, its career has ended. I think often it's easier to think about myself actually as someone who is still a bit controlled by sin.

That excuses how I act, doesn't it? Actually, I think it almost has an appearance of piety, of humility to say that. But Paul says no.

He says that isn't who you are in Christ so don't think like it. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

[19:48] In fact, it's stronger than that, isn't it? It's stronger than that. It says you must, you also must consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

When I sin, I should not say to myself, well, I'm a sinner. I should look at myself and I should say, why should I do that? That isn't who I am.

We'll react like Paul does in chapter 7, verse 15, he's saying, I don't understand my actions. So I'm told that John Owen said that there are only two pastoral problems in the church.

Two problems for which everything else is there. Problem one is persuading those who are under the rule of sin that they are under the rule of sin. I'm persuading those who don't trust Jesus that they need to trust Jesus to deal with their sin.

It's the problem of evangelism. But the second problem, according to John Owen, is persuading those who are no longer under the rule of sin that they are no longer under the rule of sin.

[20:58] I'm persuading them. That in Christ they are free to live new lives for him. I think sometimes we think of the Christian life as a case of trying to be a bit less bad.

So we know that our salvation is not by words but it's by grace. We know that in our heads. But then day to day we think well, life is about knowing that and then trying to be a little bit less bad.

But Paul is saying every day in our minds, every day put grace first. Put our union with Christ first.

Remember who we are in him first. At the forefront of our minds have that we are dead to sin in Christ. Christ. So there is an ongoing process of sanctification of becoming more holy, more set apart, more like Christ for the Christian.

But I don't think we should think of it as a case of being less and less bad. But more a case of becoming more and more who we are, who we already are, in Christ.

[22:11] I'd have put it like this. Christian life is not a case of gritting our teeth. You know, when you try really hard and you grit your teeth to do it. It's not a case of gritting our teeth and trying not to sin.

But rather it's a case of opening our eyes, of realising that we don't need to sin because we die to sin in Christ. And that leads us on to our final point.

With our new mindset to adopt, it will lead us to have a new lifestyle to follow. With an understanding of who we truly are in Jesus.

Verses 12 to 14 say, live like it. Be who you are. Think it, now act like it. And they start with a therefore, verse 12, let not sin therefore.

Given that we've received this glorious grace, this gift of union with Christ, of being a part of him, of dying with him, of raising with him, let not sin therefore, reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions.

[23 : 23] It starts with a therefore, and so we mustn't separate verses 12 to 14 from the rest of chapter 6, or indeed from the rest of Romans that's been building to this first command. We remember our union with Christ.

We set our minds on the fact that we have died and risen with Christ, and so we don't need to obey sin. And so, only remembering that, it says to us in verse 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.

What's going to us to think, what are we going to do with our members? What are we going to do with ourselves? Now that we know in our heads this truth, what are we going to do about it? Stuart Olley, he illustrates this passage, I think quite helpfully, as follows.

I think it helps us to apply what it says to us. He says, imagine a poor slave who's kept as prisoner in a castle, in the castle of his cruel master, and he had to do all that his master commands him to do.

And his master exploits him. He subjects him to terrible toil, and in his distress, and in his despair, the poor slave fears that his whole life is going to be spent in this misery.

[25 : 01] All you can think of is escape, and sometimes he tries, sometimes he gets a ladder to the wall of the castle, and he begins to climb up, rung by rung, but after only a couple of rungs up the ladder, the master comes, he takes the ladder away, and he beats the slave.

But nearby, there lives a great king, who loves the slave, and the king devises a plan to free him. So the king finds a way into the castle, and he kills the slave.

He kills him. And the old master finds the slave dead, and he's annoyed. He can't make any more demands of the slave now.

None of the rights that he previously exercised over the slave exists anymore. The master-slave relationship has ended now that the slave has died. But once the slave has been buried, the great king comes and raises him from the dead.

It's a new life. Well, how do you think the slave feels? Well, he's overjoyed. He no longer needs to serve the old master. That relationship has ended.

[26 : 15] And now, he has this sincere love and affection for the new king, a real desire, a resolve to serve him joyfully, with all his heart, for the rest of his life.

As we've already seen, if you're a Christian, if you're trusting Jesus, then you need to understand that your old master, sin, is dead to you. So that our old master, our old master no longer has control over us.

And with this shift in mindset, we're set free to live a new life, to serve a new master. Look at the two masters in verses 12 to 14. So sin, verse 12, it says, will try and reign in our mortal bodies. We know that, don't we? We know the temptation to sin, to live for ourselves, to follow whatever our passions desire. But notice, verse 14, sin doesn't have dominion over us because as we saw earlier, Jesus has already paid the price.

But instead of serving sin, we're free to serve God, the second master, the good king, who wants life for us. Instead of serving a master whose goal is ultimately death for us, we're free now to serve a better master whose goal is life.

[27 : 43] We're free to serve him because God has disarmed sin through death on the cross. So imagine that slave, who through the great power of the great king, has been risen to new life.

Imagine one day he's walking in the marketplace and he sees that his old master. And we all see that master, don't we? We all see him day to day.

Maybe in what we watch on TV, in the books or the magazines we read, in the friends we're close to in the everyday situations that we find ourselves in, at work, at home.

And as a slave sees that old master, all his old beings come back, come rushing back to him. And the master begins to make demands of him, he begins to say, do this, do that. And so what's the slave to do? Well first you must remember who he is, who he is, not who he was, but who he is.

[28 : 54] As we saw earlier, he must shift his mindset. The old relationship is dead. And he no longer needs to serve it. The threats of the old master are nothing more than that, than threats.

And so in that knowledge, he can say no to each of the demands that the old master makes. And so this week, verse 12 says, verse 12, let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.

We can't say, can we? We can't say, I'm never going to sin again. But in each moment we can say, I don't have to sin now. I'm free in Christ, united with him, not to sin.

I'm free in each moment, in each decision to serve my new gracious king instead. And so practically there's a few things we can take from this, I think.

firstly, we avoid the old master where we can. There will be times and places, won't there, for each of us where the old master shouts the loudest.

[30 : 03] And so we should ask, do I need to be there? Do I need to put myself in that place? What's wise for one person will probably be different to what's wise for another and we can't avoid the old master completely.

But we can avoid him where possible and where necessary. to second me, consider, given that I have a new king, how can I best serve him with all that I do?

Actually, this comes out very clearly in a passage, so notice in verse 13, he uses the same language twice. So he says there's two options for you. You either present your members as instruments for unrighteousness to sin, or you present your members as instruments for righteousness to God.

We'll say we're going to present our members as instruments to something, and so he pleads with us that as people who are dead in sin, dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus, he pleads to us to use our members as instruments of righteousness.

For him, put another way, the opposite of sin isn't doing nothing. The opposite of sinning is working for God, is serving him.

[31 : 29] So we should consider now that I'm united with Christ, how can I serve him? How can I serve him in all that I do? In Christ I have the joyful pleasure of being able to please God, being united with him.

So when we do our job, we consider what can we do, what can we save that will please God, that will please our new master. When we're with our friends, how can we live as someone who has died to sin but is alive to God in Christ Jesus?

And rejoice that we're able to do this. It's such a wonderful thing that as people united with Christ, we're able to serve the God of the universe, we're able to live for him.

So our lives, they don't become a case of saying, well I mustn't do this, and I mustn't do that, but actually they become a case of saying, well I don't need to do that, I don't need to sin because I've got something better.

Verse 14 puts it, sin will have no dominion over you. We don't need to serve it, since we're not under grace, we're not under law, sorry, we're not under law, but we are under grace.

[32 : 52] So back to our original question, I am, who am I? Well Paul says here, I must understand that I am united with Christ if I'm a Christian.

And so if I trust him, I am free from the power of sin because he has died to sin. And I must train myself to think like that. And then knowing that in my mind, I shall rejoice in who I am in him.

I shall be who I am. Let's pray.