

Romans 6:1-12

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[0 : 00] Do you be seated and turn, if you will, if you've got a Bible, to Romans chapter 6. Again, if you've not got a Bible, there's ones on the table or the greetings will get you! Romans chapter 6. And while you're turning there, just let me say it's a prayer meeting on Wednesday. There's loads to give thanks for, isn't there? Lots to give thanks for, lots to pray for as activities start up again. So we'll meet here at the church at 8 o'clock on Wednesday.

One of the things that I love when people begin to grasp the message of the Bible or they begin to understand what Christianity is all about, is that they begin to understand that becoming a Christian, entering into the kingdom of God, salvation, for want of a better term, is 100% of God and 0% from us. That is, that God has done everything and you bring nothing to the table apart from your own sin. 100% from God, but 0% from us. And when you begin to understand that, there's a question that comes to your mind. And the question that I'm often asked is, doesn't this mean if God does everything and I do nothing, that I can live however I want? If entering into the kingdom, if becoming a Christian, if salvation is all by God's grace through faith, and you've got your ticket to heaven, what is the motivation to live differently? If you're given salvation as a gift, what's the motivation? salvation. Romans chapter 1 to 5 has been explaining the good news, the gospel, that we don't get right with God by anything that we do. There's nothing that you can do. But it is only through faith in Jesus Christ alone. So if this morning you trust in Christ's death, you can know for certain that you are loved by God. And that on judgment day, that we read about earlier, you can have nothing to fear that that verdict, which will be publicly declared, is brought into the present and we can enjoy it today. And perhaps you thought that the essence of the Christian message was, well, do good, and if you do good, you'll get to heaven. And to your great surprise, you've discovered that it's all about what God has done through Jesus Christ. And actually, all you need to do is to accept, accept what Jesus Christ has done, and accept forgiveness from him as a free gift.

But you may be thinking, well, I can live as I want, because I know that God will forgive me later. We know that we're saved by grace, by God's undeserved kindness, and not by our works, what we do.

So why bother with any works? And in the Apostle Paul's day, there were many people who opposed this teaching. This teaching that salvation was 100% from God and 0% from us. As far as they could see, it would produce kind of loose living. It would reduce people just doing what they want and thinking they've got to kind of get out of hell free card. Because if you think that you're saved by your good works, that's a really powerful incentive, isn't it, to live a good life.

[3 : 32] If you think that on the day of judgment, God will weigh up your good and your bad, well, then you'll live as good as you can. But if you're saved by faith in what someone else has done, well, why bother?

And those opponents of Paul, they went further. They said it not only left the door open to kind of sinful living, it actually produced and it promoted sinful living. People will want to sin more, won't they? Look at verse 1. What should we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? It's picking up on the argument from chapter 5 and verse 20, which said, now the law of God came in to increase the trespass. It showed where you were sinning. But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. So think of it like this. Imagine every time you committed a sin, it appears like a line on your credit card statement before God. And God promises in his gospel, in his message, to pay off your bill and your debt completely. It's wonderfully generous of God, isn't it? But surely the bigger the debt that God has got to clear, then the more generous God would seem to be. So if God has got to pay a million instead of a thousand, well, God is even more generous, isn't it? His grace would be seen to be so wonderful. So why not rack up a massive bill and then God seems to be more generous? That's the logic. So what's Paul's response? Look at verse 2.

He says, by no means. It's got the sense of perish the thought. Absolutely no chance. You've got to be kidding. Why then? Look at what he says in verse 2. He says, how can we who died to sin still live in it?

And so he's saying something so incredibly important to you and I. He's saying that if you are a Christian, you have died to sin. And if you've died to sin, how can you live in it any more?

And so the teaching in Romans chapter 6 verses 1 to 14 is absolutely foundational to living the Christian life. There's four statements that I think follow the logic of the argument. So if you look in verse 2, we have died to sin. Because we've died to sin, that is the reason that we are to live differently. It's vital for you and I to understand what does it mean that we've died to sin.

[6 : 23] The big clue is in the passage. Verse 2, it says, if we are Christians, look, it says we have died to sin. But look at verse 10. It says Christ has died for sin, to sin. So whatever it means that you've died to sin, it's true of both Jesus Christ and us. We died to sin. So let's start with Christ. First of all, there's an historical event. First of all, there's an historical event. Christ died to sin and was raised to live to God. Please look with me in verses 9 and 10. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer rules over him, 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 we read here that when Jesus

Christ died on the cross, he died to sin, once for all. Now I think we're really familiar, if you've been church for a little while, we're really familiar that Christ died for sin, aren't we?

He died for sin once and for all. And we may be really familiar with that idea that Christ died for our sins on the cross. He paid the penalty that our sins deserve. But this is saying something different. It's saying that Jesus died to sin. So not for sins, but to sin. And not for sins plural, but sin singular. Well, what does that mean? Well, clearly it can't mean, can it? He died in order to sin. It's ridiculous. It'd be complete nonsense. To understand this, we need to think of sin as a power, as a ruler. So before the summer, in chapter 5, we were introduced to this idea that ever since sin and death, sin and death, it entered into our world, our world is like it is because sin entered into our world through the first man, Adam. Sin and death, they've reigned, they rule.

So look at chapter 5, verse 21. It says that sin reigned in death. So sin and death were a bit like dictators. Dictators ruling over some 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. When Jesus rises from the dead, he overthrows those two tyrants of sin and death.

[9 : 21] Now, this is mind-changing, but it's also quite a difficult concept. So I want you to imagine with me an institution called Sin Prison, all right?

We're going to imagine a prison called Sin Prison. And Sin Prison is ruled over with a rod of iron by two nasty prison wardens. One is called Sin and one is called Death. And prison wardens Sin and Death, they operate a brutal regime in Sin Prison. The first person who was ever admitted into Sin Prison was an inmate. He was a guy called Adam. He was the first man. And so when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, when he broke God's law, he was sent into Sin Prison. And because he was the first man, all his descendants ever since have been born inside Sin Prison. So we're born as inmates of Sin Prison, inside the walls, ruled over by these nasty prison wardens, Sin and Death. And Sin Prison is a maximum security prison. No one's going out. All the inmates in Sin Prison are serving a life sentence. And by life, I don't mean that you just serve 10 years and then you're out on parole. Life means life. Indeed, life means life forever. And so not just 70 years inside Sin Prison, but eternity. Because the penalty for sin is eternal separation from God.

And the wonder of the good news of the gospel of the Lord Jesus is that Jesus came, didn't he, as the sinless Son of God. Jesus is the only person who is born outside of Sin Prison. And throughout his life, he was obedient to God. He wasn't under the rule of sin and death. Jesus lived his life as a free man, outside the prison walls. But on the cross, when he dies, in accordance with the plan of God, our Father, Jesus bears our sin. He takes his people's sin upon himself. And Jesus himself was condemned, like us, to an eternal life sentence in Sin Prison. And so Jesus himself is locked up in Sin Prison. And so, he is a condemned man, like we are a condemned man. He becomes a prisoner like we are a prisoner. He is under the rule of sin and death. And here's where things get really mind-blowing. Jesus serves his sentence in full.

And so, Jesus has to be released. Jesus serves his sentence in full. And so, he has to be released.

[12:18] And you might be thinking, well, how is this possible? Wasn't I saying just a minute ago that the sentence was an eternal one? You see, when Jesus died on the cross, and in some ways, none of us will ever fully understand this. Jesus served on the cross, that eternal sentence. Somehow, the eternal sentence of sin and death is compressed down, so that on the cross, in his death, Jesus did the time.

Think of it this way. Yesterday, I received an email on my computer, and it said that there was an attachment, and the attachment was a zipped file. You know what that's like? You know a zipped file? And you open up the zipped file, don't you? And it kind of balloons open, and there's hundreds of files in there. There's loads of files in there. It's been compressed, isn't it? It's been compressed down into something much smaller for storage. And I don't fully understand it. But on the cross, the eternal sentence of death and condemnation for Jesus was zipped down and compressed on the cross.

Jesus served his sentence. Perhaps the closest anyone has ever come to understanding this or explaining how it could be was the kind of early church theologian, Athanasius. He said, the value of Christ's sacrifice lay in the infinite worth of his person. The value of Christ's sacrifice lay in the infinite worth of his person.

And because Jesus served the sentence in full, the prison gates had to be opened, and he had to be released. And so the warden's sin and death, they no longer have any claim over Jesus because the price is paid, the sentence has been paid.

And so on that first Easter morning, the gates are opened, and for the very first time in history, somebody walks out of sin prison. And Jesus walked out a free man to live for God.

[14:34] Well, that is what it means that Jesus died to sin. It is saying that Jesus served the sentence in full, so he broke out from the rule of sin and death. And you might be thinking, well, that's a really nice story. It's nice for him.

But what about the rest of us? What about the rest of us who are still staring at the bars, locked up inside sin prison? And so the first point was a historical event. The second point is a new union. A new union. Because a Christian, the Bible tells us, is united to Christ in his death and resurrection. Before the summer, we saw how the disobedience of the first man, Adam, has affected all of us.

Because God sees Adam as our representative, the head of the human race. We are united with him, and as a result, we inherit his guilt and his corruption. But the person who puts their faith in Jesus Christ enjoys a new union.

A union with the last Adam. The Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the new race. Just look with me at verses 3 to 5. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

[15:54] 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. And so here's this amazing truth, that if you are a Christian this morning, and you've put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been united to Christ in his death and his resurrection.

And so when he died, you died. When he died to sin, serving his sentence in full, you died to sin.

And when he was raised to new life for God, you were raised to new life for God.

So what Christ did in serving his sentence in sin prison and being set free does not just benefit him. It has benefited all of those who are united to him.

In chapter 16 of Romans, in verse 7, Paul gives greetings to the church in Rome. Let me read to you what he says, how he describes the people. Listen to what he says in chapter 16 in verse 7. He says, greet Andronicus, that's a guy, and junior, my kinsmen, my fellow prisoners, they're well known to the apostles, and this is what it says, and they were in Christ before me.

[17:16] Notice what he says, he doesn't say, they were Christians before me, they became Christians before me. What does he say? He says, they were in Christ before me. And so a Christian is somebody who is in Christ.

United with Christ. We were in Adam. But if we are Christians this morning, we are in Christ. If you're taking notes, 1 Corinthians 15, 22 says, In Adam all die.

So also in Christ shall all be made alive. And union with Christ is key. But how do we get this union with him? Well, the passage in chapter 6 in verse 3 spoke about being baptized into Christ Jesus.

Verse 4 spoke about being buried with him by baptism into death. And so we were united to Adam by nature, weren't we? But we're united to Christ by what, according to Romans 6?

You've gone through Romans 1 to 5 with me. What would you expect it to say? What would you expect it to say? We are united to Christ by... You don't have to shout out.

[18 : 33] You can write it down. We would expect it to say faith, wouldn't we? But what does it say? It actually says baptism. In the New Testament, Paul talks in Colossians about being buried with Christ through baptism.

By which you were also raised with him through faith. So baptism and faith go together. What does baptism call for? Children, your baptism, what does your baptism call for?

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

And it's symbolized in baptism. Can you see how important Paul is saying baptism is? Your baptism publicly unites you to Christ.

It's a picture of that reality. I think it's helpful to use the illustration that Christ gives of a vine with branches. Your baptism connects you to the vine.

[19 : 42] But the branches that do not bear fruit, they will be cut off. And you were baptized into Christ and so have faith in him. What difference does this union with Christ make?

Look at point three. It makes a new allegiance. So the Christian no longer belongs to sin but belongs to God. Look at verse 11. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

And so we've seen if you've been united to Christ in his death. We've died to sin. We're now dead to sin. Remember what that meant for the Lord Jesus.

He'd served his sentence. The prison authorities, sin and death, they've now got no claim on him. And so if we try to serve that sentence ourselves, we remain in prison for all eternity.

But if we are in Jesus Christ, in him we've served our sentence already. His death to sin becomes our death to sin.

[20 : 49] We've done our time. The prison wardens, sin and death, they've lost their authority to rule over us. So just to give you a slightly different illustration, if you are a tenant in a flat, your landlord has got quite a lot of power over you.

You're under a contract, aren't you? You have to make monthly payments and so forth. But once you've fulfilled the terms of your contract, he's 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 did that on the cross. And so in him, we are released from any obligation to those landlords, sin and death. So verse 6 speaks of our old self being crucified with Christ.

So we'd no longer be enslaved to sin. Verse 7 says, For one who has died has been set free from sin. We've served our sentence. We've done our time.

[21 : 58] So we've been set free. It's not as if you've escaped from prison by tunneling out. No, you've been released. And the warden's sin and death, they no longer have any reign over you.

So the Christian person lives their life outside of the prison. But what does the outside life look like? Have you seen the film Shawshank Redemption?

It's a really great film. You might remember that in that film, there's an old convict called Brooks. And Brooks, in that film Shawshank Redemption, was the prison librarian.

He was the librarian at Shawshank State Prison. And when Brooks is released, he tragically commits suicide. Because he couldn't cope with life outside of the strict prison regime.

It's a problem when you're released from sin prison. What is life like outside the prison walls? But notice, the prisoner isn't just dead to sin, but alive to God.

[23 : 09] So look at verse 10. Look at what it says. It says, for the death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he 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. So if you've put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you've been born again by his spirit, you've been raised to a new life, and you belong to God.

And you've been released from the rule of sin and death. So that you might come under the rule of the loving God. And so that means, doesn't it, that life outside sin prison is not just living unto ourselves.

It's not doing what we want, whenever we want. It's not being a law unto ourselves. We belong now to God. There's a new allegiance. The old allegiance is gone.

And there's a new allegiance that's coming to being. So the Christian has died to sin. The old allegiance is gone and now belongs to God. So what?

[24 : 17] What's the big deal? And the last thing is, number four, a new obligation. Because the Christian should live to God and not to sin.

And the new reality brings with it new obligations. Look at the end of verse four. 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.

What does that involve? What is this obligation that we as Christians have to God? Well, it involves a number of things. Firstly, it remembers who you are. You remember who you are.

And so the new lifestyle begins in the mind. Look at verse 11. Let not sin therefore reign in your body to make you obey its sinful passions.

He says, doesn't he, a number of times, you need to get your head straight. Look at verse three.

Just like where it begins. It says, do you not know? Look at verse six. It's telling us we know.

[25 : 31] Look at verse nine. We know. And so he's saying, as a Christian, part of being a Christian is you get your head straight. It's going to be vital if you're going to live lives which are different.

So when I get up in the morning, I need a reality check. I remind myself, I'm not in sin prison anymore. I've died to sin. I've died to sin and death.

I'm not under the prison wardens anymore. I've been raised to new life under God. And the moment when we get tempted, we remind ourselves who we are. One reason sin will try to deceive us is that it will tell us that it still has an authority over us when in fact it doesn't.

What is sin like? Sin is a bit like a kind of former lover who's obsessive and cannot let go. It's a bit like the man or the woman who will not accept that the relationship is over.

And they're constantly calling and they're texting. And they're saying they want to meet up. Stalk you. You've got to be ruthless, haven't you? You show them the wedding ring.

[26 : 44] And you say times have changed. It's over. I've got a new allegiance. I'm not going to do what you want me to do. It's finished. We're done. The equivalent would be to get your baptism certificate.

And you wave it. That's what Martin Luther did, isn't it? The great reformer. When the devil came tempting him and when sin was so attractive, he would say, I'm a baptized man.

We remind them of our obligations that we have. And another reason why mind games are so important is our old sinful nature comes naturally to us.

It's instinctive to us. So we need to reprogram our minds, not doing just what comes naturally. And so in that film, Shawshank Redemption, when Red gets released from prison, 40 years inside, Red gets a job in a supermarket, packing bags.

And whenever he wants to go to the bathroom, do you remember what he does in that workplace? He puts up his hand to ask for permission to go to the toilet. And the supervisor gets really, really hacked off with this.

[27 : 59] And he says, you don't have to keep putting up your hand. But for 40 years, he's been asking permission to go to the loo when he was in prison. And those habits become ingrained and instinctive.

And so living in sin comes really naturally to you and I. Because of our sinful nature, but also because of our habits. So we need to remind ourselves constantly that we live in a new reality. Remember who you are. Get your thinking straight. So one negative and one positive as we close. Negative is verse 12. It's don't live for sin anymore.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. It's saying to you, sin doesn't reign over you.

Sin doesn't reign, so don't allow sin to reign. You're not in the prison regime anymore. Sin is possible, isn't it?

[29 : 09] But it's not appropriate. Let's think about that. If you're married, it's inappropriate, isn't it? If you're married, to be going out for candlelit dinners with your old boyfriend or ex-girlfriend.

It is possible for you to do that, but it's really inappropriate. If you're playing a football game and you've joined one club from another club, it's inappropriate to be taking instructions on how to play from your former manager.

It's possible, isn't it? But it's completely inappropriate. Because you now have a new allegiance. Sinning is possible, but according to Romans 6, it's completely inappropriate. So don't live for sin. Lastly, do live for God. Look at verse 13. Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life. And your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

[30 : 23] Each day, you present yourself to God. You present your body, the members of your body, to serve him. I love this story about John Stott, who was a great preacher of the last century, who wrote this.

He said, almost the first thing I do when I awake in the morning when my alarm clock goes off is to swing my legs out of bed and sit on the side of my bed and present my body to God. And I sometimes go from limb to limb, the hand, the lips, the ears, the eyes, the feet. And present my body to God afresh for that day of spiritual worship. Because you see, here was somebody that understood they didn't live in sin prison anymore. They were dead to sin and alive to God. It's life changing. It's utterly life changing. Let's pray.