Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Dead to Sin; Alive to God
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 80-86

One of the great joys of my life and I know yours is the large number of new Christians that have been joining our church. We continue to be so blessed by God as Sunday night after Sunday night we hear the testimony of those being baptized. It really shows the fruit of your prayers and your efforts and your faithful evangelism.

Our church continues, then, to be populated with new young Christians and many people are asking basic questions about the Christian life, spiritual life, the meaning of salvation, it's implications. Our "Fundamentals of the Faith" classes have been populated to overflowing as people are coming in to learn the basics of the Christian faith. It was along that line that I'm sure the Lord prompted my own heart to go back in time and go back and study to the Book of Romans. Twice in the 22 years I've been here we've gone through the Book of Romans from beginning to end, the first time in a rather brief fashion, the second time in a somewhat prolonged way.

But we finished our series in 1 Thessalonians and we're about to embark upon a series in 2 Thessalonians in the fall, but in this little sort of bridge during the final weeks of summer, I've been prompted in my heart to go back to the Book of Romans and hit some of the mountain peak texts that help us to understand the meaning of salvation. And so we've looked at chapter 3 and we've looked at chapter 5. This morning I want to drawn your attention to chapter 6.

Just another perspective, another enrichment of our understanding of the significance of our salvation. Paul introduces this chapter and its discussion with some very interesting words. What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be. And that might force you to ask the question why would he ever say anything like that? Why would he ever assume that we would want to continue in sin in order that grace might abound?

Well, do you remember that in the first three chapters of Romans, through chapter 3 verse 20, Paul was very careful to delineate the utter sinfulness of man? And he showed how sinful all the human race is. And then most startingly in chapter 3, verse 21 onto the end of chapter 5, he said that God had made a provision for man's sin and that that provision was by grace. Not based upon anything a man or a woman does, not based upon their good deeds, their religious activities, not based upon their good intentions or their lofty motives. No, in fact, there is nothing that anyone can do to have their sins forgiven and to be made right with God. Quite on the other hand, God has done it all, and God by grace because of His great love will forgive a sinner who puts his faith in Jesus Christ.

In fact, it doesn't matter how far-reaching your sin is, it doesn't matter how vast your sin is, it doesn't matter how consummate your sin is, it doesn't matter the degree to which your sin has gone or the frequency of it or the heinousness of it, no matter what the level/amount of your sin might be, His grace is enough. And where sin abounds, grace much more has abounded. And so does the Apostle Paul speak of salvation by grace.

In fact, in verse 20 of chapter 5, he says that where sin increases, grace abounded all the more; that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord. And Paul has said that our salvation, that is all of grace, God, unmoved and unmotivated by anything outside Himself, determined in eternity to redeem fallen sinners purely on the basis of His own love and benevolence, and made a plan by which that redemption could happen apart from any work that any man or woman would ever do, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ accomplished it all and offers it as a gift to be received by faith.

And no matter how extensive the sin, grace covers it. At this particular point, we are now beginning to understand why he asks this question in chapter 6, verse 1. Someone is bound to say oh, I see, more sin means more grace. Now if that's true, Paul, then let's really sin so God can really be gracious. This sounds to me like the Jewish Senate who is sarcastically mocking salvation by grace through faith. It doesn't sound to me like an honest question of an honest person. It certainly isn't the question of a Christian who is saying are we supposed to continue in sin that grace might increase? Because any Christian who is truly regenerate and has a new life doesn't have the desire to do that and has the obvious teaching of the spirit of God toward holiness.

It's got to be the question of a Senate who says, all right, if we're supposed to buy into your salvation by grace through faith apart from works concept, and we're supposed to believe that the more sin, the more grace, and that no one has sinned so much there's not sufficient grace to cover it, then what you're really saying is God is giving grace where there's sin, so in order for God to be happy about giving grace we ought to sin as much as we can? That's cynical. No pun intended.

What does Paul say in response to this? He launches off in a discussion of sin in the life of one who's been saved. It's a very important discussion, an absolutely crucial discussion, of how the Christian relates to sin. We need to know that. It also gets us in touch with the reality of our spiritual condition.

I need to digress for a moment and follow up something I suggested to those of you who were here last Sunday night. Most of the profound stuff comes on Sunday night for those of you who don't come. But for those of you who were here last Sunday night, I shared that there are a number of books coming out - I read two of them last week - there are about five of them that I know of, that are speaking to the issue which is being called "the diseasing of America." That is the title of one book,

not a religious book, it is written from the vantage book of a psychiatrist, a psychologist.

But what he says in the book is most significant. What he says is that systematically in America, we are eliminating moral responsibility. We are eliminating spiritual responsibility, because we are eliminating any moral definition of human behavior. Everything has become a disease. Everything. We don't talk about sin, iniquity, wickedness, evil, wretchedness, or even those Biblical terms like lasciviousness. We don't talk about man as a moral being who is behaving in an immoral way. We talk about sickness.

When we run across a man who has killed 60 people, as one man is now claiming, or another man who has been living like a cannibal eating portions of the bodies of the people that he chops up, we don't say he is sinful, we say he is "sick."

Systematically, we have redefined everything in the moral realm into a medical model. We say that alcoholism is a disease with a genetic predisposition. And that, by the way, can be scientifically proven not to be true. We say that drug addiction is an addiction. It is an addiction for which the person really has no responsibility because they just have that kind of personality that is known as an addictive type person. Abnormal response to difficult situation; it isn't sinful response, it's co-dependency. And on and on we go with a very sophisticated and comprehensive re-titling of all abnormal, immoral, unspiritual, wicked, sinful, iniquitous behavior under disease terminology and what that does is frightening to me.

It does two things. First of all, it puts the church out of business. Since we deal only in the moral and the spiritual, and nothing any more is moral and spiritual, we got nothing to say. We're out of business. Nobody comes to us. That was brought home to me this week again as I picked up the latest edition of "Christianity Today" and read in the news section that another famous well-known pastor was discovered to have been carrying on an eight-year adulterous affair, and the statement issued by the church on this man was that he was struggling and needed some time for help and healing.

There isn't one term used there that puts us in touch with the reality of that condition. The right statement would have been he was committing adultery and needs some time for chastening and repentance. But everything is redefined in the psycho-medical-babble so that we're literally out of the picture. We have nothing to say any more. I told somebody on Friday that you will find as the year's go by that I personally will become more and more of a dinosaur, more and more of an albatross, I guess.

Some of the radio stations across the country are having difficulty with the fact that I'm so "Biblical," and I'm so Biblically defined and so theological; they find that very incompatible with the trends which they're taking and so they give the people that represent us difficult times about me and they wanted

to know what we thought we could do about that and I just said the best thing would be to hold your breath because it's going to get worse. And it really isn't that I intend it that way, or that I'm endeavoring to do that, it is that the redefinition of everything in psychological/medical terms, which by the way generates big business for that particular area, also puts the church out of business and we sound like we're talking out of the dark ages.

But the second thing that occurs in this redefinition of terms is that people no longer deal with sin as sin, and if you eliminate the proper diagnosis for the disease, you inevitably cut people off from the cure. What does it matter if I as a preacher say to an audience of people Jesus Christ will forgive you for your sins if those people have absolutely no sense of responsibility about sin? What do I have to say to them? What do I bring to bear upon their life? How can I convict people who have been systematically nurtured in the belief that there is no sin and whatever problem is in their life is some genetic predisposition, some addiction, some co-dependency, some psycho-medical problem or the result of somebody who did something to them in the past for which they are not really responsible?

The redefinition of everything in those terms cuts people off from the sensibilities towards sin that lead them to the need for a savior. And so dinosaur or albatross so be it, but we will continue in the path that we believe is established by the word of God. When you have become a Christian you came to Christ because you understood the sinfulness of sin and you sought deliverance from its power and its penalty, simply stated. You wanted victory over the domination, the sovereignty, the dominion, the mastery, that sin carried in your life. And you wanted liberation from the penalty that was inevitably on the horizon, right? That's why you came to Christ.

That's the legitimate reason. You wanted deliverance from the power and the penalty of sin. Now that you have become a believer it is essential for you to understand your relationship to sin. You must understand it - when you come to Christ you must continue to understand it after you've become a Christian. Now with that in mind, let's look at the text. The imaginary antagonist says well, what are we supposed to do, just keep on sinning so God can keep on being gracious? Paul says no, no, no, no. You don't understand. You don't understand the relationship of the believer to sin. But I'm going to help you to understand it.

And I want you to follow the wonderful, thrilling, logical flow in this passage that will unfold to you another of the simple glimpses of the reality of our profound salvation. Now Paul is a very reasoned thinker. Very logical, very sequential. And so we're going to flow through what he says here. First of all, his first point, and I'll give you several points in his argument. Point number one: the question in verse 2, how shall we who died to sin still live in it? He asks the question, but in it he makes a statement. Here's the statement: we have died to sin. That's the first point in the flow of his thought.

We have died to sin. Now if you're a believer, you're in that "we." You have died to sin. That is fundamental to his whole argument. And the question immediately is going to come, how, in what

way, what does that mean to me? Does that mean that I'm dead to sin? No, it didn't say that. Didn't say you're in a state of death, which would mean that you're utterly unresponsive to sin, sin can't move you, sin can't motivate you, sin can't awaken you, sin can't stimulate you. It doesn't say that.

It doesn't say you are dead to sin. It's not a state of being; it's a past act. The verb is very distinct. You have died to sin. You have died to sin. At some point in the past, you died to sin. Now that is not only articulated here, but elsewhere by the Apostle Paul because he understands the importance of it. In 2 Corinthians 5:14, "The love of Christ controls us, having concluded that one died for all, therefore all died." And He died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. We died, he says. Christ died and we died.

Colossians 3 essentially says the very same thing. Familiar words. "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." You have died. All of you that are believers have already had your funeral. Now this a good approach in witnessing. You can say to someone I just wonder if you've died yet? Who, me? No, not - I haven't. Well, that's interesting because I have. You have? Yes, I've died. I have died. And because I have died, I'll never really die again. What? But unfortunately because you haven't died, you will die and the death you will die will be an eternal death.

But that's exactly the way it is, isn't it? I have died. The obituary on John MacArthur can be written. John MacArthur died. The problem is, I live again. I'm talking about spiritual reality. But Paul uses these terms to help us understand this spiritual reality. The moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ you died. You were crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." Right? That's his point. Watch how it unfolds. Verse 3. Somebody says well, wait a minute, we died to sin? In what way?

All right. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? The word baptized is not wet here, it's dry. It's not literal water he's talking about; it's a metaphorical use. He's using it in the sense that it's used in 1 Corinthians 12:13 where it says "The spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, immerses us into it, plunges us into the body of Christ, joins us with the body of Christ, unites us with the body of Christ, engulfs us in the body of Christ." That's how it's used here.

All of us Christians have been plunged into union with Christ; we have been immersed into Christ. Placed into Christ. This is a very, very important point to understand in the New Testament. In Galatians, the Apostle Paul says essentially this in chapter 3, verse 27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ," listen to this, "have clothed yourself with Christ." That's the definition. "He that is joined to the Lord," says Paul to the Corinthians, "is one spirit." I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ what? Lives in me. There is that inextricable union. I have been made one with him. My life is hidden with Christ in God and I am one in Him.

Immersion in water simply symbolizes this spiritual reality. Now mark it; when you were saved, the moment of your salvation, it wasn't just that God forgave your sin and God promised you heaven, it was that you instantaneously, miraculously, supernaturally were placed into Christ. And now your life and His are in many ways indistinguishable. So, we have died and we have been immersed into Christ.

That leads us to his third and summary point. The immersion into Christ was an immersion into His death. That's how those first two come together. In verse 3 he says we've been immersed into His death. Oh, I see. I see how I died. I died in His death, that's right. You say well, now, wait a minute; when did this happen? It happened at the moment of my faith. You mean at the moment that I put my faith in Jesus Christ and was saved God somehow transported me back and I died in Christ? Yes. The mystery of it I do not understand, but that's clearly what the Scripture says.

At that point, I died with Christ. What do you mean by that? His death became my death, He paid the penalty that I deserved, my sin placed on His body on the cross. I was plunged into the very death of Christ. And so I can say I was the first to attend my own funeral. In Christ. Amazing and wonderful statement. This happened because God made Jesus Christ the living substitute who paid the penalty for my sin.

Now when you became a Christian and at that moment you entered into union with Christ, you died with Him. Now what happens to someone who's crucified? What's the net effect of crucifixion? What's the result of it? Death. You die. You die when you get crucified. And that's going to unfold as Paul continues, as he repeats the very same point.

Verse 4 he says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death in order that as Christ was raised through the dead, through the glory of the father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Oh, now we're coming to another point. We have not only been immersed into Christ's death, we've been immersed into His what? His resurrection. As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, so too we walk in newness of life. What a great statement.

I died, but I also rose again. And I rose a different person than the person who died. Back to Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." Iego, I am crucified with Christ, that means I am dead. I died. Nevertheless, Iegolive but it's a new Iego, it's a new I. The old one is dead, the new one lives! And the new one walks, please notice the end of verse 4, in new life. Newness of life. We die with Christ that we may live with Christ; we share in His death that we may participate in His resurrection. The old life dies and we walk in new life. That's why we say beloved in a theological sense; sanctification is always connected to justification.

You were saved by the union in His death and you were transformed to walk in sanctified life by the union in His resurrection. That little word "newness" kainaus(not kraunaus) not new in time but new in kind, new in essence, a fresh new quality of existence. I have a new life. In fact, the Bible says we have a new heart, we have a new spirit. We are a new creation, a new creature, a new man, with a new name and a new song. Everything is new, old things have passed away and behold all things have what? Become new. I'm new!

He reiterates this in an analogy in verse 5. If we have become soomfootas- growing together, grown together, united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection. And this word soomfootasmeans literally to grow together. I think the author probably translates it "planted together." If we were planted together and we grew together and our lives intertwined and the very fabric of our lives was woven together with that of Christ in His death, then they're woven together with Christ in the newness of life, right?

And so Paul can say nevertheless I lived yet not I but Christ lives in me and he doesn't know where Paul ends and Christ begins because they're woven together, they're planted together, they grow together. Christ's Calvary was my Calvary. Christ's Good Friday was my Good Friday. Christ's Easter was my Easter. I am one with Him. And because that is true, Paul says who in the world is going to ever come up with a statement that says shall we sin that grace may abound, right? A Christian is new, something he never was before. It is not addition, it is transformation. It is not getting something new, it is becoming someone new.

Just as a footnote, that is why it is so absolutely foolish to try to help a Christian by going back into his past from before he was saved and trying to resurrect the old man that is dead. Absolutely absurd. You see when you came to Christ, you died, you rose, you live, only you aren't you, you're you. You're a new you. It's not the way it was. You're different. Now, you say well what's the difference? Verse 6 and here's his next step: the difference is that our old self was crucified with Him. Stop at that point.

The old self got crucified; the old man was crucified. We have a similar statement in Ephesians 4:22-24. The old man is dead. It's gone. What we were we aren't and again that's why I say it's so silly to have some counselor or whatever try to go back in your life from before your redemption and exhume the old man and all of his attitudes and impulses as if they could make a contribution to who you are now. The old man is dead.

Now notice the effect. In order that our body of sin might be done away with - ooh - wait a minute. You say now wait a minute, now you're really - you're walking on the edge of heresy here. Are you saying we don't sin? No, it doesn't say that. It says our body of sin. What do you mean body? Entity, it doesn't mean your physical body. The entity of sin. The entity of sin might be - and the Greek word is kotergetto. Kotergetto. Well, just what does that mean? It means a number of things.

It's used 27 times in the New Testament. Paul never uses it to mean eradication. It isn't saying sin has been eradicated. He's not saying that; the verb doesn't mean that.

It means basically to be deprived of its strength. In fact you could translate it this way. Deprived of its controlling influence. But then he defines exactly what he means in the next phrase, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, that's the issue. It is rendered inoperative only as the sovereign of our lives. It loses not its influence all together but its controlling influence, its sovereign influence, its mastery, its dominion. You remember how he says in 7 that sin will no longer have dominion over us? He's not saying there won't be sin; he's saying sin isn't in charge any more. The tyranny of sin is broken.

Sin's not the controller any more. And he defines exactly what he means in verse 6 when he says that we should no longer be slaves. The slavery is broken; we're out from under that master. And somebody says do I sin? Yes. Must I sin? No. Its dominion is broken. So we affirm then that in salvation you died. And you can therefore look forward to your next death, not really as a death at all but only as a way to escape your unredeemed human flesh and to enter into the presence of Jesus Christ and therefore you have no fear of death and Jesus as it says in Hebrews 2 has removed the fear of death which held you in bondage.

You can look at your death, your next funeral, as the time of your liberation. The glorious manifestation of you as a child of God in the presence of God Himself. You are a new person. You've already died. You can also note that you've already risen from the dead so you're alive but the living you is not the same you that used to be. And there's one major difference in who you are and it is this: sin doesn't control you; Christ does. And the impulses of your new creation are toward righteousness, holiness, and godliness.

In fact, in Hebrews 12:14 it says, "Without holiness, no man will see God, therefore all of us who will see God must be characterized by holiness to one degree or another." Then in verse 7 he says, "For he who has died is freed from sin." What? What do you mean freed? Freed from sin as master, freed from sin as lord, freed from sin as sovereign. And so marvelous truth, we have been united with Christ. That union took us into His death; that union took us into His resurrection; that union interweaves our lives so that we pursue his holiness and therefore we are no longer under the mastery of sin but under the mastery of Jesus Christ.

Now in verse 8 the apostle takes us a step further by telling us that this is permanent. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also shall live with Him. That's going on right now, our life is intertwined with His. Why do we know that? Because Christ having been raised from the dead is never to die again. Death no longer has mastery over Him, for the death that He died; He died to sin once for all but the life He lives He lives to God. And what he is simply saying here, summing it up is, He only had to do it once and that settled it forever and so we can have that confidence that we will

never - and He will never - again, have to pay the penalty for sin.

God is satisfied, atonement is made, the penalty is paid, it was done once for all, it never needs any repetition. Christ having died dieth no more. For by one offering says Hebrews He perfected forever them that are sanctified. One offering, eternal perfection. And He died unto sin and He paid its penalty and He bore its guilt. Consequently, we have no fear. Listen. That sin will ever bring a penalty to bear on us. That's the second component.

What happened to us in this union with Christ? Sin's power was broken. And sin's penalty was completed. Understand that? So as a believer there are two things I know to be true about myself. One, I am not under the dominion and power of sin. Two, I will never pay the penalty for sin. It's paid once, that settled it. How does this flesh out in my life? First of all, if I sin, who's responsible? Do I have to sin? Must I sin? No. If I sin, who's responsible? I am. I am. Because I have the impulses of righteousness in my new self, and because I have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, because I have the truth of God, all of which can lead me through temptation and out the other side victoriously; if I succumb, the burden is with me, the responsibility is with me, but I need to know that sin does not have dominion over me.

And if I am struck over and over by besetting sins, the problem is with me not with my salvation. Right? It is not that something is missing unless I'm not truly saved at all and that may be the case. If I have unbroken patterns of sin as I did before whatever spiritual experience I had, there's evidence to indicate that I was never really saved. But if my salvation is real, besetting sins don't speak against the newness of my life, they don't speak against the broken power of sin, they speak against my own commitment to holy things and the responsibility is mine. So I need to know that sin does not have dominion over me.

And you need to affirm that as a believer. You need to reckon that to be true, he says in verse 11. Consider it. Consider that you have died to sin. Consider it. Count on it. Sin does *not*control you. It does *not*have dominion over you. You *have*the resources to be victorious.

And the second thing I can affirm is that no matter what happens in my life when I do sin, I will never have to pay the penalty. Amen? Never. So as a believer, I'm not saying boy, since God likes to show his grace because it puts his glory on display, then I'm going to sin as much as I can so he can show as much grace as he wants. I'm not even going to say well, it doesn't matter how I live, after all grace covers it. I'm going to say I'm a new creation; I'm not under the dominion of sin, I long to do what is holy, just and good. I want what is righteous; I seek to operate in the power of Jesus Christ. Christ in me wills that and I will pursue holiness but even when I stumble and fall and even when I repeat the same stumblings and the same fallings, I never come under the bondage of fear because the penalty once for all has been paid therefore I am not under the power of sin and I am not under the penalty of sin.

But still there's a battle, isn't there? You say how can I win the battle? Well, Paul gives us some suggestions and I just mentioned them to you and then next week we're going to go into this in detail in chapter 7. First thing he says in verse 11 is reckon or consider and what he means by that is to affirm what you know to be true. Affirm that you're not under the power of sin and you're not under the penalty of sin. Affirm that. And then in verse 12 he says don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. Stop obeying your lusts.

Now he's getting into your will. He started with your mind, your knowledge; it's what you know. Affirm what you know, verse 11, and now begin to engage your will. And then he says do something positive; present the members of your body as instruments of righteousness. Begin to do the righteous thing. Don't worry about sitting in a vacuum trying to eliminate sin, pursue the righteous thing. Sin has a way of taking care of itself under those conditions.

And then down in verse 16 he mentions the word obedience and now you're into behavior. First of all it's what you know, affirm these things to be true. Engage your will in such a way that you turn away from the evil desires of the flesh and you will the holy desires of the spirit. Make a presentation of yourself as an offering to do what is righteous and in your conduct obey the word of God as the very slave of God that you are.

You say well, yeah, that's easy to outline, tough to do. Right. And I want to help you to better understand that difficulty because I know in your heart you're saying I know this is true, I'm not under the power and penalty of sin. I affirm that. I affirm that. And I want to activate my will against unrighteousness and I want to present myself as an instrument of righteousness and I want to be obedient to God but I find that that is not easy to do because I've got a war going on in me, right? How am I to understand that and how am I to gain victory? And that's the word that we'll hear from the Lord next time.

Let's bow together in prayer. Father, we thank you this morning that you've encouraged our hearts so greatly to know that we're not under the power of sin, the unbroken dominant dominion of sin. It does not control us. You do. It is not the truest expression of our new self. Righteousness is. It's a present enemy to the new man.

We thank you, too, Lord that because we're not under the dominion of it we can trust Your power for victory. We thank You, too, Lord that we're not under the penalty of sin even when we do fall. That You're not counting up our sins and should we get so many all of a sudden we cancel out the death of Christ and have to pay ourselves. No. We're not under that penalty. Lord, we thank You, too, that You've given us the promise of victory even in the difficult struggle. May we live, Lord, knowing what is true about us in Christ and longing to be all that You want us to be. Give us victory.

And then, Father, we pray for those here this morning who've never committed their life to Jesus Christ. Who have not had the mastery of sin broken, who have not come under the sovereign savior. Maybe somewhere in the past there was a time, a place, an experience but never a transformation, never the death of the old self and the resurrection of the new. Lord, may this be the day, may this be the day that the old man dies and the new is born. Risen in Christ. No more under the power and penalty of sin, set on a course of righteousness and eternal glory. Amen.

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