

The Connection

(Romans Session 14)

Romans 6:1-14

- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?
- 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
- 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

OK, it looks like Paul's got some explaining to do. Because he seems to be saying that if I've been baptized then I shouldn't have any problems with sin in my life. And something tells me there just has to be more to it than that. Because I know a whole lot of folks who have been baptized, including yours truly. And I have yet to hear any of them say that when they got baptized all of their troubles with sin vanished. So we're going to have to dig a little deeper to get to the bottom of this.

Now if you will allow me to digress for just a moment, I have noticed that there is a certain skill that has become highly developed in men, but women cannot seem to master it, no matter how hard they try. For many men—perhaps even most men—this ability seems to come rather naturally. One lady who has observed this male ability for many years, has described this phenomenon with these words:

Don't assume it ever "occurs" to the man that the recycling needs to be taken out, the tub needs to be scrubbed or the refrigerator needs to be cleaned out. Things like this do not occur to men.

Now in all fairness to my fellow men, it's not that these sorts of things don't occur to us. We actually do notice that this or that needs to be taken care of. The thing is, there is a limited shelf life to our ability to retain those perceptions. Eventually, this male resourcefulness that I've been talking about automatically kicks in.

And if we have walked past the thing that needs doing several times without addressing it, that thing magically becomes invisible to us. So that thing,

whatever it is, loses the ability to register on our consciousness.

What I'm saying ladies is that it's really not our fault.

You're not buying any of this, are you?

Sorry guys, I tried.

But let me be serious for a moment. Because I'm actually trying to make a point here. And my point has to do with our ability to clearly grasp what the Bible is saying. There can be a problem with that, and it doesn't just affect the men--the ladies struggle with it as well. And the interesting thing is, this problem is more common with people who have a basic familiarity with the Bible, and is less likely to be exhibited in those who are relatively new to Bible study.

Here's the thing—as a person becomes more familiar with the Bible, the tendency can develop to overlook some important details. In familiar territory, our brains just sort of shift into auto pilot, and we don't easily pick up on details that affect the meaning of what we're reading.

My point is this: In order to really understand what Paul is driving at here, we'll need follow his reasoning very closely and not make any assumptions.

Because although Paul is using the word "**baptism**" here, he's not talking about being baptized in water. He has something very different in mind. The word "baptism" simply means "immersed" or "submerged". And Paul is using this word here in the same way that he uses it over in **I Corinthians 12**.

I Corinthians 12:12-13

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

This is a description of what takes place when a person experiences salvation. Yes, their sins are forgiven.

But along with that, the Holy Spirit immerses that individual into the body of Christ. The baptizer—the one performing the baptism—is not a minister or a spiritual leader like John the Baptist. No, the baptizer spoken of here is the Holy Spirit. And the element into which that person is being baptized? It is not water. No, it is Christ Himself.

Let's read on.

Romans 6:4-7

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection.

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Paul is speaking about spiritual realities here. Things that have been accomplished in the spiritual world that are not discernable in the physical realm.

What we have in Romans chapter 6 is a detailed description of something that has happened to every person who has placed their faith in Christ. From a spiritual perspective, these things are viewed as realities concerning you. Three statements in particular are made that relate to you, if you belong to Jesus.

Notice one thing further please: we are only concerned with **WHAT** has happened, not **HOW** it has happened.

- You were buried with Christ.
- Your old man was crucified with *Him*, (That “**old man**” is not your dad. He’s talking about old sinful nature.)
- You have been freed from sin because of your connection to His death. You have have died with Him. Whatever Paul means by that, he is not talking about forgiveness for sin. What he’s talking about is experiencing freedom from sin’s domination of our hearts and minds.

Just so you know, here in chapter 6 and in the next two chapters that follow, we are given an overview of the entire scope of our salvation.

So in the process of studying Romans 6, 7, and 8, we are drilling down deep into the bedrock of our faith. And what, may I ask, should we expect to find there? Why, we will find Jesus. Jesus will be found at the bottom of everything that concerns us as Christians.

Jesus is the Rock on which we stand. He is the Cornerstone of the Church. He is the Firm Foundation. The Author and the Finisher of our faith. And the only reason that you or I or any other Christian can have the faintest hope of living a successful Christian life is because of what Paul is describing here.

When the Bible speaks of a person being “*in Christ*” that is not just poetic language. Nor is it merely a synonym for having a relationship with Jesus. Angels have a relationship with Him. But it goes beyond that. Paul is writing in very precise terms.

He is documenting your spiritual status with the mindset of a civil engineer writing a legal description of a plot of land. And essentially what he’s saying is that as a believer, you have been connected to Christ in a way that makes angel’s heads spin. So to speak.

Again, we are talking about spiritual realities. And as stated earlier, spiritual realities supersede the laws of the physical universe. The laws of physics, the concept of time—what Paul is describing here defies any of that.

John the Baptist made it clear that when you are dealing with God, you’ve got to take the limits off.

Matthew 3:9

And do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham **FROM THESE STONES**.

God is not called the Almighty for nothing. We need to understand the power of the One we worship. The Bible teaches that He simply spoke, and the physical universe sprang into existence. Billions of galaxies, trillions of stars, spread out over unimaginable distances.

Our own solar system—a relatively tiny example by comparison, is a gem of both God’s artistry and engineering genius. The composition of the sun, the angle of the Earth’s axis, and things like the water cycle. All of this from the mind and the power of God. And then to suggest that God working above and beyond the limitations of time and space is preposterous? Well He is without limitation. He can do anything.

So don’t let yourself get hung up on the mechanics of all this. For the moment, just understand that according to God’s Word, your connection with Christ did not begin when you answered an altar call. It began when Christ was crucified. Somehow, you were included in the death that He died. That is where your history with Jesus begins, and this the doctrinal basis for what comes next.

You just have to accept God’s truth as it is plainly stated in Scripture. And besides, when it comes to what God accomplished through Christ on the cross, we are all in way over our pay grade anyway.

But as the old saying goes: “**God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.**”

You died with Christ. That’s what Paul is plainly saying. And if I accept that as God’s truth, what are the implications for me personally?

Let’s read a little further and we’ll find out.

Romans 6:7-11

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Most of us fail to appreciate the severity of our situation before we came to Christ. To borrow a phrase from vs. 17 of this chapter, Paul tells us that we were **slaves of sin**.

Slaves to sin. Sin called the shots in our minds and our hearts, and we carried out its orders. That’s what Paul is saying. But because of Christ’s death on the cross and our inclusion in His death, what has Paul said as a result?

Romans 6:7

For he who has died has been freed from sin.

That’s where Paul is leading us. Freedom from sin. The power to stop sinning. The ability to live for God the way we are called to do. All of this is made possible through our inclusion in the death of Christ.

Paul put it this way in another place:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Now this is a pretty exalted view of oneself if we were to apply it personally. “For me to live is Christ.” That’s a hard sell, when we are all so acutely aware of our own sins.

All this talk about living above sin and being freed from its power can sound a bit overly optimistic.

Let me clarify things if I may. What we are looking at today is the doctrinal foundation for an overcoming Christian life. But it is not an automatic thing. To work out this doctrine in our day to day lives will require plenty of thought, lots of effort, and definite cooperation between our soul and the moving of the Holy Spirit. But when all is said and done, it is only because we are connected with Christ in His death and resurrection that victory over sin is possible.

No one can turn over a new leaf and live the life they should before God. No one can find the resources within themselves to rise above their base nature. Even with forgiveness of all our past sins, we would still be in bondage to sin, if it were not for what the Father accomplished by placing us in Christ when He was crucified.

It is by this miracle that the enemy of our soul can finally be resisted. Resisted, and ultimately defeated.

Paul is saying that you are not stuck in your past. He's bringing new information. This stuff doesn't happen automatically. It takes the proper information. That is the power of the gospel unto salvation, as he spoke of in chapter 1.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. He was a pastor who lived in Communist Romania during the days of the Iron curtain. And until he was arrested and imprisoned for his faith made a habit of trying to reach communists with the gospel. One day he happened to meet a Russian Army captain who was on leave. And Richard discovered that this man believed in God and was longing to know more about Him.

What's more, he had never seen a Bible. So Richard asked him to join he and his wife for lunch at their home. After lunch, Richard asked if he would like to hear some of the Bible read, and the captain said he would like that very much indeed. He read him the Sermon on the Mount first, and then he read some of the Parables. After hearing these things, the captain danced around the room in rapturous joy proclaiming, "***What a wonderful beauty ! How could I live without knowing these things about Christ ?***"

He begged Richard to continue reading, and so he listened to the Biblical account of the crucifixion. The man fell into an armchair and began to weep bitterly. Then, Richard read to him the story of the Resurrection of Christ. When he heard this wonderful news, he shouted for joy, "***He is alive!***", and again began to dance around the room.

When Richard finished and said, "***Let us pray*** ", the man fell on his knees. He did not know any holy phrases. His words of prayer were, "***O, God ! What a fine fellow You are ! If I were You and You were me, I would have never forgiven You. But, You have forgiven my sins and You are a really very fine fellow ! I love You!***"

The way things were in the atheistic Soviet Army at the time, this captain knew he might lose his position as an officer, and that prison could be the ultimate outcome of his faith. But he gladly paid the price and he was ready to lose everything for Jesus Christ. Because being connected to Jesus was worth more than anything else.

What we have discussed this morning may have taken you by surprise. It might be as unexpected to you as the gospel story was to that Russian captain. But just like that man, let the gospel speak to your heart. Set aside your pre-conceived ideas, and just let this passage wash over you with all of the promise that it contains.

We speak often about the grace of God around here. It is my hope that our understanding of grace has enlarged just a little bit this morning.