

Romans Session 72

Dying to Live 2

Romans 6:1-10 (KJV)

¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

² *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up 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 planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

⁷ *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

⁸ *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

⁹ *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

¹⁰ *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

In this portion of Scripture Paul links three elements in his opening defense of the believer's holy life:

1. The Antagonist (v1)
2. The Answer (v2)
3. The argument explaining and defending that answer (vv3-10)

Romans 6:1-1 (KJV)

¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

As he frequently does, Paul anticipates the major objections of his critics.

Well before he wrote this epistle, he and Barnabas in particular, but I believe also the other apostles, teachers, and prophets as well, had already encountered considerable opposition against the preaching of salvation by grace through faith alone.

The typical religious Jew of that day could not comprehend pleasing God apart from strict adherence to the Mosaic and rabbinic law. To them conformity to such law was the embodiment of godliness.

While Paul and Barnabas were preaching in Antioch of Syria, some Jewish men who professed faith in Christ, came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren;

"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

That Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Acts 15:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*

² *And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.*

When they arrived in Jerusalem, some other Jews who claimed to be Christians, a group of Pharisees, also opposed their teaching. Here is what they said:

Acts 15:5 (NASB)

⁵ But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

During the ensuing council meeting, Peter boldly declared that;

Acts 15:7-11 (NASB)

⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

⁸ "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

⁹ and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

¹⁰ "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

¹¹ "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

After further comments by Paul and Barnabas and a summary by James, the council unanimously agreed that obedience to the Mosaic law contributes nothing to salvation and should not be made binding on any believer. Gentile or even Jew;

Result of the Council:

Acts 15:28-29 (NASB)

²⁸ "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

Some years later, after returning to Jerusalem from collecting offerings from largely Gentile churches on behalf of need believers in Judea, Paul sought to conciliate immature Jewish believers as well as to defuse some of the opposition from unbelieving Jews by going to the Temple to make a vow.

When some of the Jews from Asia saw him in the Temple, they falsely assumed he had defiled the Temple by bringing Gentiles in the restricted area.

They nearly caused a riot in the city when they cried out,

Acts 21:28-30 (NASB)

²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."

²⁹ For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

³⁰ Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

Now Paul also knew that some of his readers would be in opposition to his writings and would misinterpret his assertion that;

Romans 6:1

¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

They would foolishly accuse him of teaching sin itself glorifies God by causing His grace to increase. If that were true they reasoned, then men not only are free to sin but were obligated to sin in order to enable God to expand His grace.

If salvation is all of God and all of grace, and if God is glorified in the dispensing of grace, the sinful heart may be inclined to reason:

"the more the sin, the more grace; therefore, men should sin with abandon"

Putting it another way we might say, *"if God delights in justifying the ungodly, as Romans 4:5 clearly states, then the doctrine of grace puts a premium on ungodliness, because it gives God more opportunity to demonstrate His grace"*

That is the exact perverted interpretation taught by the infamous Rasputin, religious adviser to the ruling Romanov Family of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

He taught and exemplified the antinomian view of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and false repentance. He believed the more you sin, the more God gives you grace. So, the more you sin with abandon, the more you give God the opportunity to glorify Himself.

Rasputin declared that if you are simply an ordinary sinner, you are not giving God an opportunity to show His glory, so you need to be an extraordinary sinner.

Paul had already countered a similar hypothetical charge:

Romans 3:5-6 (NASB)

⁵ *But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.)*

⁶ *May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?*

Legalistic Jews would continue to charge the apostle with just that sort of antinomianism, of contradicting the laws of God and advocating moral and spiritual license to do as one pleases, presumably justified on the grounds that such living actually glorifies God.

These opponents had a hard time accepting the idea of salvation, on the basis of faith alone, apart from any works. To add to that doctrine the idea that increased sin somehow increases God's grace would be to compound anathema with still worse anathema.

In trying to protect the faith from that danger, however, they injected another danger: the idea that salvation as well as spirituality, even for the believer in Christ is produced by conformity to external law.

Throughout church history, some Christian groups have fallen into the same kind of error, insisting that conformity to countless manmade regulations and ceremony is necessary for true godliness.

Whether in the form of extreme ritualism or of strictly prescribed codes of conduct, men have presumed to protect and bolster the pure gospel of grace working through faith alone by adding legalistic requirements of their own making.

The Church has always been in danger of contamination by false believers who wickedly use the freedom of the gospel as a justification for sin.

Jude says:

Jude 1:4 (NASB)

4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Paul here deals a death blow to that kind of antinomianism, yet he does so without yielding an inch of ground to those who would deny that God's grace is sufficient for salvation.

Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle avoided the extreme of legalism on the one hand and of libertinism on the other.

He would neither abandon God's grace to accommodate the legalists nor abandon God's righteousness to accommodate the libertines.

As Scripture makes plain throughout its pages, from Genesis through Revelation, a saving relationship with God is inextricably linked to holy living, and a holy life is lived by the power of God working in and through the heart of the true believer.

In God's redemptive act in a person's heart, true holiness is as much a gift of God as is the new birth and the spiritual life it brings.

The life that is not marked by holiness has no claim to salvation. It is true that no believer will be sinless until he goes to be with the Lord by death for by the Lord's return, but a professed believer who persistently disregards Christ's lordship and His standards of righteousness by disobedience has no claim on Christ's saviorhood.

It is that cardinal gospel truth that Paul forcefully defends in Romans 6 and 7.

In light of the pervasive antinomianism of our own day, there is no more important truth for believers to understand than the inseparable connection between justification and sanctification as salvation components. Between new life in Christ and the living of that life in the holiness Christ demands and provides.

By their unbiblical teachings of easy believism and the worldly lifestyles of both leaders and members, many churches who go under the banner of evangelicalism give little evidence either of redemption or of the holiness that necessarily accompanies saving grace.

What shall we say then to such foolish assertions? The Apostle asks, adding rhetorically, **are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?** (to continue) *Epimeno*, carrying the idea of habitual persistence.

Paul was not speaking to the believers occasionally falling into sin, as every Christian does at times because of the weakness and imperfection of the flesh.

He was speaking of intentional, willful sinning as an established pattern of life.

Before salvation, **sin** cannot be anything but the established way of life, because sin at best taints everything the unredeemed person does.

But the believer, who has a new life and is indwelt by God's own Spirit, has no excuse to **continue** habitually **in sin**. Can he then possibly live in the same submissive relationship to sin that he had before salvation?

Put in Theological terms, can justification truly exist apart from sanctification?

Can a person receive a new life and continue in his old way of living?

Does the Divine transaction of redemption have no continuing and sustaining power in those who are redeemed?

Put still another way, can a person who persists in living as a child of Satan have been truly born again as a child of God? Well surprisingly many say yes.

But Paul says no, as verse 2 emphatically states.

We will take on that verse next time.