

Overcoming Sin Romans 6:1-10

1st John 4
Ephesians 1
Psalm 8

Today we are going to be looking at the first part of Roman's 6 again. When we were here a few weeks ago the focus was upon the baptism that Paul mentions in these verses, with a challenge to our understanding of the context being used here. That this baptism that Paul is talking about is not the practice of water baptism, but rather something that we who are in Christ share with him in his death. Throughout scripture there is a duality of the physical, and the spiritual. We see many physical practices but the event itself is not the purpose but rather it is often to point us to a spiritual truth. It is this way with baptism, there is the physical element, which we know is a biblical principle and practice ordained by Jesus himself to his disciples when he tells them, to go forth preach the word and baptize making disciples. There is a purpose, and there is a meaning behind the practice, which is to point us to this baptism that Paul is talking about here.

Water Baptism is a celebration, and public identification of the spiritual reality of being baptized in the death of Christ. The practice of baptism does not miraculously bring about a new status of holiness, nor is it necessary for salvation, but rather is an expression and celebration of that faith and salvation that we as followers of Christ get to enjoy. So the challenge last time we were here was to not look to this passage as speaking to the practice of water baptism, but rather to the true baptism in which the water baptism signifies. Last week Jim shared with us a method of reading the bible, in a real, tangible, personal way so that we may have an encounter with Christ in his word, and that is what we are looking to do here in this passage. As we approach scripture we must be wary of our own biases, and though patterns and understand and be careful that we are not applying them to scripture but rather let scripture speak for itself, looking at context of what is being said, who it is being written to, and even the events surrounding its writing at that time so that we can get the sense of what the author is saying. This passage here is one such passage in which Paul's writing of baptism when we see the word our mind goes directly to the practice of water baptism because it is a large part of what we are, as baptists. But if we read this passage and impose that understanding it makes Paul to say something here that he is not saying at all, for it would imply that water baptism is a requirement for salvation, instead of it being the physical practice to remind us, and point us to the spiritual truth, that we have been fully immersed in the death and blood of Christ and have risen with him in righteousness having our sins and guilt paid in that baptism of Christ's death of which we who are his are partakers.

So this morning I want to revisit the first 10 verses of chapter 6 and with the understanding of what Paul is talking about here being this baptism in Christ's death, we can dig in deeper into what he is saying here. So let us go ahead and read, the first 10 verses of chapter 6 (READ 1-10) Paul poses this question in verse 1, "shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" The idea he is addressing here is likely the thought process of some of those to whom he is writing, hence his instruction here. It is the idea that since God is glorified in the redemption of sinners, through his grace and mercy, then there is no reason to not continue in our sin, for God is glorified in the forgiveness of it. In Paul's answering of this question he is getting to the heart of this mindset. Up until this point Paul has been writing about the condition of mankind showing that man is either in Adam, or in Christ.

There is no 3rd option, there is no all paths lead to the same place, it is a binary either or. Either you are in Adam, under the curse of sin, set apart for wrath, or you are in Christ, forgiven, and set apart for righteousness. There is no middle ground, no 3rd option, one can not have salvation without first having Christ. Again pointing to the reality that there is no moral high ground pathway, the idea that when you die you will go to heaven if you are good enough, is a deception and false doctrine of demons, for as we have talked about previously, even in your own goodness, and morality if you are understanding it that you have good enough to earn your way to heaven creates in us pride, and arrogance..which is sin. So even our own good works that we drum up ourselves is tainted by sin making that offering of works before God a foul, profane offering. We do not work to be saved, but rather we have works because we are saved. There is a sharp dividing line, between those who are in Adam, and those who are in Christ, and there is no middle ground. Those who are still in Adam are in the kingdom that his rebellion created, and they share in the condemnation brought about by his disobedience. But those who are in Christ are in the kingdom that his obedience has brought, and they are blessed with the riches that come from the relationship that he has reestablished for his people with God. You who were once dead in Adam, have been made alive in Christ, and that being made alive is a work of God in the life of the individual believer. A change, a new birth having become a new creature in him, as Paul writes in verse 2, “How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”

Notice Paul writes in the past tense, this is something that has already been done, this is something that has already been accomplished, we have died to sin, and if we have died to it, then how can we live in it? We are no longer identified in Adam, lost in sin, subject to the curse, but rather we have now been born into a newness of life in Christ Jesus. One of the most predominate teachings throughout the new testament is about God's love toward his people. It was God's love for us shown through the giving of his Son to die for us. It was God's love that had been poured out into the hearts of everyone who believes by the Holy Spirit. As we read this morning in 1st John, “We love, because he first loved us.” There is again, this binary, this either or that is set apart by love. What you love, is a good indicator of where your heart is at. Jesus gets at this in Matthew 6, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other you can not serve God and money.” This is again what Paul is getting at here in chapter 6, you will either continue in sin, for the reality is that you love your sin, or you will despise it, because you love the father, who first loved you, and recognizing his grace and mercy toward you, an undeserving sinner whom he has forgiven, it makes the sin in our hearts and minds vile and undesirable to us.

And this isn't a mere reformation, or striving for morality, to be a better person, but this love and desire for Christ and to flee from our sinful desires is born out of his death, and our identity in him who share in that death, that is Paul's point in verse 3, “Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death 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.” Notice two things here in this statement, first..it was accomplished apart from us, that is this salvation and putting to death of our sinful nature was done by God through his Son, apart from our works, or even our desire. Second, is it is done, and accomplished, it is finished our salvation has been established in Christ on the cross and it was determined before the world was. Paul wrote in his letter to the Ephesians 1:4 “ He has chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of this will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which e made us accepted in the beloved.”

So since this has been accomplished, and since it was predetermined before the foundation of the world...how can we who died to sin live any longer in it? We have become a new creature, alive in Christ and our identity is in his death and resurrection. Paul is saying here that we who are his, our old nature has died with Christ, and we have been given a new nature in the resurrection of life and love which desires to please the Father who first loved us. We have seen Paul arguing that through the sin of Adam man died to God and came under the control of Satan and as a result became his servant, but now through Christ's death we have been freed from Satan's hold to live as those who have been redeemed, as servants of God. Paul asks in verse 3 "Or do you not know that as many of us were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We who are Christ's share in his death, that is by his death, we have died to sin, and by his death we have been made alive. The very heart of the gospel message is that Christ has set his people free from the bondage of sin, and the ultimate punishment of death and judgment has now been made of no effect in those who are baptized in the death of Christ. For by his death, the penalty of our sins have been paid, he has conquered death on our behalf so that we have no reason to fear it, for the Christian death is nothing more then passing form this life to the next, into the glorious presence of our father who calls us home.

We not only have our identity in Christ's death, but also in his resurrection, verse 5, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, certainly we also shall be I the likeness of his resurrection." As glorious as the fact of the grace and mercy of God in the forgiveness of sin through the death of Jesus Christ, what is even more miraculous I think, is the fact that we also share in his resurrection, bringing about newness of life, making us holy and righteous before God. This is the total package of salvation, having our sins forgiven so that we may be considered to be the righteous children of God. God who gives life to the dead, calls those things which do not exist as though they did. Even though I am sure it is unintentional in many ways, we can be so focused upon the cross and the work that was accomplished there, that we don't always give the resurrection the importance it deserves in the gospel message. Without the resurrection, there would also be no forgiveness or reconciliation. The resurrection is the culmination, the final signature of the gospel transaction. And it is in the resurrection that we find our hope, for with it comes life everlasting.

As I was studying through this passage, one commentary likened mankind's relationship to Satan much like a marriage, much in the same way the bible likens the church as the bride of Christ. Through Adam, we are bound to Satan from birth, and it is signified, and ratified through our sin that we are indeed bound to Satan. It is a state in which we held captive by, with no chance of escape, for scripture identifies marriage as a bond only broken by death. But, scripture says, it is given to man once to die, and then the judgment. If we are yet bound to Satan, we face the judgment solidifying for all eternity that bond and captivity. Yet, we who are Christ's have been betrothed to another, we have died to that marriage through Christ's death, as he has died in our place so that we may be free from that bondage and now are free to be married to another. Christ's death, and resurrection is the transaction which was necessary to break the marriage bonds that the fallen world has with Satan.

And to Paul's point here, we who have died to that bondage, to that sin, no longer need to live in it. We have been given a new life, fresh and renewed in the blood of Jesus. We have been given power over sin, no longer being a slave to it but having been set free we can actively work to avoid it. But this is the problem, as long as we are yet in this body, on this earth we will be haunted by sin, never full rid of it until that day that we die in this body, or the lord comes to gather us all home. But even that problem, is not truly a problem, for all of our sins, past, present, and future have been nailed to the cross.

And though we are in this state, impure, sinful creatures in the flesh, the glory of the gospel is God's mercy upon us. That through his Son, we have been made righteous, verse 10 "For the death that he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life that he lives, he lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The death that Christ died, he died to sin once, this is a finished and complete transaction, never to be repeated, or redone. The bill has been paid, the punishment has been doled out and we who are in him are free. We as Christians I think sometimes focus too much on the guilt of our sin, when the reality is that it has already been bought and paid for. Everything Paul is saying here is in the past tense, it has been dealt with, it has been taken care of..and though we as mortals live in this linear timeline, God who is not bound by such constraints has paid for the sins of his people throughout all time, past, present and future. So that means, any sin the holy spirit convicts you of, yesterday, today, or tomorrow, has been already dealt with on the cross.

Therefore we are to live as those who have been freed, reckoning ourselves dead to sin and not spending our time wallowing in it, or in the guilt and sorrow of it. God says he has not only forgiven you, but he has forgotten all your trespass against him, as far as the east is from the west. If you are in Christ, on that blessed day you will stand before God justified and righteous, not because you reached some level of sinlessness or perfection in this life, but solely and only because of what Christ has done. So therefore we are to live, not as those who are dead, receiving punishment for our sinful nature, but as those who are alive in Christ, who have been preordained to walk in this newness of life. And the side effect issue of this, is that the sinful nature though never gone in the flesh, will diminish, as we grow in faith and love God more, our love and desire for the things of the flesh fade more and more. This is why the idea of continuing in sin is even a possibility for the believer doesn't work, because it is God not only forgives and forgets, he has also enabled us, and gives us the strength and power to overcome sin and temptation, through I love of him.

Growing in worship, growing in love, growing in grace and knowledge of him is the best defense that we have against Satan and his temptations. Sin is a part of our lives, but those of us who are in Christ, it is a dead part that is dragged along with us as long as we are in this world, but one day when we pass into glory and remove this robe of flesh, that dead weight we carry will be left as well no longer apart of who we are as we will stand before God purified, justified and holy. And that is our hope, knowing that we will one day be with him in paradise apart from the sinful nature of our flesh and will have direct, pure, unhindered, communion with him. With such a hope, it makes the trials here on this earth pale in comparison knowing that it is all temporary, and that glory awaits, where there is no more sin, and suffering. Therefore, as Paul says, "do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts verse 14, for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

As we all know, and have said over and over again, the law that was given condemns, it points out mankind's failures, and inability to be righteous before God. An adherence to the law, or putting yourself under law and regulation does nothing more than direct your constant focus upon your failure, your guilt, and shame. But for those who are under the grace of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, there is no more guilt, nor shame, for our sins have been paid and we should live as those who are alive in Christ, rejoicing and praising him, not naval gazing and dwelling upon our sin and failures, but instead when we fail, when we fall, which is all to inevitable in this life, but we have the holy spirit who convicts and guides us to repent, then, rejoice in the grace by which you have been forgiven!

We human's hold grudges, even when we forgive we can struggle to truly let go, for we sometimes never truly can forget, but God is not like us, when he forgives, it is true, and pure with no strings or history attached for he casts it from him to be remembered no more. And this will be the state in which we will one day see him, as those who are pure, and holy, justified and made right, and it will be as if the sins we committed in the flesh have never existed. So again Paul says, reckon yourselves dead to sin, because we are, and live your life for Christ and in doing so you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but instead will seek ever more the good works to which you are ordained.