

Paul's Letter to the Romans:



THE PINNACLE OF
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Don't You Know? Romans 6:1-14

Let's pray together.

Father, we come to you this morning knowing that we stand in need of the Spirit to take the things of Christ and make them real to our hearts. Blessed Spirit we plead for you to come now and take the written word and as its true author and therefore its infallible teacher, please come and instruct us in the truth of your Son. Open the book we pray to see what you have accomplished on our behalf, In Christ. In whose name, we pray, Amen.

I want you to listen to this story told by Charles Spurgeon, because it really captures the reality of how I feel this morning.

"It is now long years ago. I was announced to preach in a certain country town in the Eastern Counties. It does not often happen to me to be behind time, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins. But we have no control over railway delays, and breakdowns; and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind the time. Like sensible people, they had begun their worship, and had proceeded as far as the sermon. As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should the preacher be but my dear and venerable grandfather! He saw me as I came in at the front door and made my way up the aisle, and at once he said,

“Here comes my grandson! He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel; can you, Charles?”¹

Now, I know my father is a much better teacher of the Bible than I am, and I am sure you will be able to attest to that very fact, shortly. But the only way I could stand here in his place this morning is with this knowledge: My dad may be a better teacher than I am, but he in no way could teach a better gospel.

Now, before we dig into Romans 6 this morning, I wanted to review for a moment, some highlights that we have seen in our study up to this point.

In Romans 1:16-17, we read:

^{NAS} **Romans 1:16...** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous *man* shall live by faith."

Paul emphasis in this epistle to the Romans is this: There really is a righteousness of God in Christ that we all desperately need. But why do we need this righteousness?

Look now at Romans 1:18.

^{NAS} **Romans 1:18...**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

In Romans 1:18–3:20 Paul proved all men to be sinners, separated from God, as a result of being sinners we are under God’s wrath, and headed for eternal condemnation. Why? Because a holy God must judge sin. Man has no righteousness of his own. He needs the forgiveness of sin. So the logical

question is, then what can be done? How does we receive forgiveness? We must have perfect righteousness in order to stand forgiven before God.

In Romans 3:21–5:21 Paul showed that God in his love has made a provision for men to find forgiveness of sin by being clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. All who trust in Christ alone, are credited with the perfect righteousness of Christ. What is the result of having Christ righteousness credited to their account? Paul showed that the moment a person believes in Christ he is justified (declared righteous) and receives a perfect standing or position before God. He is declared righteous through Christ's work, not through his own fallen human effort. All who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are **declared innocent** and they never again have to fear God's wrath and punishment because Christ has propitiated, (turned away) God's wrath. So, then the logical question comes up. If it's true, that we are actually declared righteous, then does that mean, I can live however I want?

On February 1st, 1997, I became a most fortunate man. I married my best friend, and the thought of being married to Stephanie, to this day, is about the best feeling this man, has ever felt. But what if I refused to believe that my being married had any implications upon how I lived? What if I was married legally and yet mentally I thought of myself as single?

What if... what if something like this happened? What if, I called my wife one Friday afternoon and told her I would not be coming home tonight to see her and our daughter because... I had just met this girl that I wanted to go out with, and "really honey, you shouldn't wait up, I don't know when I'll be home." What if that scenario happened? How would that make you feel if I did that to my wife? Would you be mad at me? Would you be angry at me?

Well, what if on Sunday, I showed up to church with my Bible under my arm as if nothing happened? How would that make you feel?

What if upon being confronted by all my friends and family and elders, I told them something like this...

“What’s the big deal? I can do whatever I want, when I want, because, man, I’m covered in the righteousness of Christ, so ya’ll just chill.”

Wives, how do you think you would feel, if your husband cheated and used the excuse that it’s okay, because he’s a Christian, **he is free**... he can do whatever he wants? Would you be angry? How would you feel?

Well, however that would make you feel, I want you to remember that feeling because it’s Paul’s feeling this morning in Romans 6:1-2.

You see this morning, we are going to see Paul answer an imaginary objection in which someone will bring up that exact question, “If we have already been forgiven, and Christ righteousness is credited to me, then “Why not just live however we please?”

Does the doctrine of justification produce antinomianism? Now by antinomianism I mean lawlessness. In other words, does the doctrine of justification produce in Christians a spirit of independent lawlessness? It’s a great question don’t you think? And it’s the question at the heart of where we are this morning in Romans Chapter 6.

Now the way Paul answers this question, this concern about lawlessness is really wonderful. He is going to answer the question, “Can’t we just live however we please?” by asking three questions of his own.

Those three questions are:

- 1) **Don't you know what you are:**
- 2) **Don't you know who you are:**
- 3) **Don't you know what you should do:**

I want you to watch for the words, "know". They are going to come up. Paul's emphasis in this section is what you should "know."

That's important, because many commentators and preachers have come to this section of Romans 6 and said, there is something in here we need to do. But Paul is going to stress there is something we need to know. Again let me say,

Paul is asking the questions...

- 1) **Don't you know what you are..**
- 2) **Don't you know who you are...**
- 3) **Don't you know what you should do...**

Now look with me at Romans 6:1.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:1**...What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

The logical question that comes up, and the question that has been raised since the gospel of grace has been preached is "Can I just go on sinning?" Paul answers the question, emphatically."

Look at the **first part** of verse 2.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:2**...May it never be!

It's an extreme negative. In Greek it's "*me genoito*" which is one of the strongest Greek negatives.

Paul answers the question, "No way." One way to say it would be, "No, No, No!" I like that because it really captures the emphasis that Paul is making. Paul is arguing here that the fact that the question comes up, is illustrative of someone who really doesn't understand justification and all of its benefits. So, Paul is now going to say, okay, look, there are a few things you need to know. **Don't you know what you are...?**

The first thing he says, is don't you know what you are?

Look at the last half of verse 2.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:2**...How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul says, first, this is what is true of you. You are dead to sin.

Now what does it mean to be "dead to sin?" Before I talk about what being dead to sin is, I want to emphasize what it is not. There are 2 things that I see that are common misinterpretations. These are not my own observations, I am borrowing these now from James Montgomery Boice and his commentary on Romans.

The first misinterpretation of what it means to be dead to sin is..

1. The Christian is no longer responsive to sin.

This misinterpretation goes like this: If you are walking along the street and see a dog lying by the curb and you are uncertain whether or not it is alive, all you have to do is what? Take the toe of your shoe and nudge it a little. If it moves and runs off, it's not dead, but if it lies there lifeless, then

it's dead. Well, some say the person who has died to sin is unresponsive to it. So, when temptation comes, the true believer neither feels nor responds to the temptation.

We know this can't be the case from the next chapter. Paul says in Romans 7:19,

^{NAS} **Romans 7:19**...For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.

Also if the Christian is no longer responsive to sin, then why on earth does Paul tell us in Romans 6:12,

^{NAS} **Romans 6:12**...Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,

You do not implore people to quit sinning, if they are unresponsive to sin.

The second misinterpretation of what it means to be dead to sin is...

2. Christians are dying to sin day by day.

You see we have an issue here with the tense of the verb. Now I readily admit that there is a sense in which we die more and more to sin each day as we progress in our sanctification, but surely that is not Paul's point here. If Paul wanted to stress the idea that Christians should be dying to sin, then Paul has used the wrong word, for Paul has used the word "died". You see Paul's emphasis is not on something we are doing, or should do, no, his emphasis is on something that has already been done. You see Paul is stressing what is already true of us, there is something that has already happened to us. We are dead to sin.

Now, what does it mean to be dead to sin?

First, it's important to see how Christ has died to sin, because Paul has linked our death to sin with Christ' death to sin. Look quickly at some phrases with me.

Look at verse 3.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:3**... have been baptized into His death?

^{NAS} **Romans 6:5**...have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death...

Look at verse 6 and the opening phrase...

^{NAS} **Romans 6:6**...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*...

You see our death to sin, is linked to Christ' death to sin, so in order to understand what it means to be dead to sin, let's consider how Christ died to sin. First, we know that Christ died to sin by suffering its penalty. He was punished in our place.

Listen to Isaiah 53: 6,11

^{NAS} **Isaiah 53:6**...All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him...¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it* and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

Listen to 1 Peter 2:24

^{NAS} **1 Peter 2:24**...and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Jesus suffered the penalty of sin in our place. He suffered the penalty for sin, and what Paul is now going to say is that, we too are actually dead to sin's penalty and sin's guilt because of our union with Christ. We are no longer subject to the penalty of sin because Christ endured the penalty for us. We are

no longer subject to the guilt of our sin, because our guilt was placed on Christ, and we have received his righteousness.

As a result of the work of Christ, we are dead to sins penalty and guilt. But there is another benefit. We are also dead to the dominion of sin. I heard Sinclair Ferguson put it this way. He is from Scotland, (*that will help you understand his humor*), he put it like this:

He said if he ever had the sense to become an American citizen, and the queen of England sent word to him that she needed him to come serve in her majesty's army, he could stand on the shore and shout across the pond, "No way you old hag, you have no more authority over me."

We are dead to the dominion of sin. Colossians 1:13 says,

^{NAS} **Colossians 1:13**...For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,

Paul is saying, "**Don't you know what you are:**" You are dead to sin's penalty and your dead to the dominion of sin. Now Paul is going to say, "Here's why."

Don't you know who you are...?

Look at verse 3.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:3**...Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

I want you to focus with me on the word, "know" in verse 3. Paul says, "do you not know". It's interesting that the word "*know*" is mentioned in Romans 6 in verses 3, 6 and 9.

However, Paul uses three different Greek words in each verse. The word that Paul uses in verse 3 is "*agnoeo*". That word is used several other times in the New Testament, and I want you to see how the word is usually translated.

Look quickly with me at Acts 17:23. This is Paul in Athens and speaking to the philosophers.

^{NAS} **Acts 17:23**... "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

The word that Paul uses when he tells the Romans, "do you not know" is the word for ignorance. Paul is emphasizing something that the Romans needed to know. He stressed to them, "Are you ignorant of who you are?"

When I was 15, I wasn't the smartest guy on the block. My sister and I, going to the same school, brought home report cards on the same day. It was always good for her and bad for me. One time when I was fifteen, my sister handed her report card to my parents, and the praises and "showers of blessing" rained down. Then it was my turn to give my report card to my parents. I handed my report card to my Mom, and she noticed that I had a "D". She asked me why it was that I had a "D"? I told her, and I don't know what I was thinking, but I actually told her, "**Mom, you know, it's really none of your business.**" Well, my Dad was at the table, and I'll just let you think for a minute what the overwhelming response was to such a statement. His response was to bring my ignorance to an end by a quick infusion of knowledge. My dad was happy to apply the rod of learning to my seat of knowledge until all ignorance in my world was forthwith and finally swept away forever.

Look at verse 3 again with me.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:3**...Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Paul wants the Romans to not be ignorant of this fact, that they have been baptized into Christ and everyone who is baptized into Christ is baptized into his death.

Now there are quite a few commentators, and many of them good men, who say that Paul is now talking about water baptism, and some say that Paul is actually talking about the mode of baptism and even who the right recipients of baptism should be.

I don't think that's what Paul is talking about here. Paul is using baptism here as an illustration. The baptism analogy is to signify our union with Christ. Paul has not discussed baptism up to this point, he doesn't discuss it after this point, and not every time baptism is mentioned, does it mean water baptism.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Turn to 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

^{NAS} **1 Corinthians 10:1**...For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Now, if baptism always means water baptism, or immersion, who were the only people "baptized" in the sea when the children of Israel passed through? The Egyptians were the only people immersed in water. So what is Paul speaking of when he speaks of baptism into Moses? He is stressing that the children of Israel were united to Moses. Paul is stressing to the Romans, "Don't be ignorant of

your union with Christ.” Do you not know who you are? You are united with Christ, because when Christ died, you died.

John Stott put it this way:

“Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self of me before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun.²

Look at verse 4-5.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:4**...Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection,

Here is Paul’s conclusion of the believer’s union with Christ in His death. Since Christ died to sin, we died to sin, and we are buried, just as Christ was buried. Our burial marks the end of the old life, and it also marks a transition to a new life.

But that union to Christ is also our hope of resurrection. Just as sure as Christ died, was buried and rose again, we have died, we were buried, and we have risen. We have a new life. Don’t misunderstand. There is a future resurrection, and the union that we have with Christ is our guarantee of that future resurrection. But just as Christ was raised, so we were raised from death to life by the regenerating power of the Spirit.

Paul is saying... **Don't you know who you are?** You are united with Christ, in his death, burial and resurrection. You see Christians are identified with Christ and Paul wants us to know that.

Now look at verse 6-7 with me.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:6**...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷for he who has died is freed from sin.

Paul now, says the word "knowing" which in Greek is a different word than the word he used in verse 3. The word here is, "*ginosko*". Which means, to come to know and perceive.

Paul is saying, since you have now come to know and you now perceive that our old self was crucified with Christ, don't you know that you are freed from sin.

Now, what is our old self. There are many commentators and preachers who vary in their interpretation of what the "old self" is. But let's consider the "old self" in the context of the book. Remember, before in chapter 5 Paul spent a great deal of time talking about what we were in Adam before Christ righteousness was imputed to our account. The "old man" or our "old self" that has been crucified, is who we were "in Adam."

John Stott puts it this way in his commentary on Romans.

"So what was crucified with Christ was not a part of us called our old nature, but the whole of us as we were in our pre-conversion state.³

You see who we used to be in Adam was crucified. The man we once were has been crucified with Christ. Notice too, that this crucifixion is not an ongoing

present experience. It is not a daily crucifying of self. It is in the past. Our old self "was crucified".

Paul says much to the same effect in Galatians 2:20.

^{NAS} **Galatians 2:20**..."I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me.

Can you hear Paul asking, "**Don't you know who you are?**"

Who you used to be, has been crucified with Christ. Who you were in Adam has been crucified, and because of your union with the ever-blessed Savior, you are freed from sin. No longer are you slaves to sin.

Now, Paul sums up his argument in verses 8-10 that he has just made in verses 3-7. Look at verses 8-10 with me.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:8**...Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him.

If we are united to Christ, we died with Christ. If we are united to Christ we will live with Christ. But look at verse 10 again.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:10**...For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

The finality of the language used here is hard to miss. Christ died once.

Listen to F.F. Bruce here:

“In His death He dealt effectively and conclusively with sin, winning a victory that needs no second fight, and leaves no second foe.”⁴

This one text alone is sufficient to obliterate the blasphemous doctrine of the Roman Catholic mass, which claims that Christ is sacrificed all over again, weekly, even daily for sin in the mass.

But there need not be any more sacrifice to atone for sin.

So, when the Roman Catholic priest performs his so called, “miracle” of the mass, he says, “Christ, your death is not sufficient, we need it weekly, and even daily.” But Paul says, no, don’t you know who you are. Christ work is completed. It is truly finished. The apostle says, “He died once.” Christ is never to be re-sacrificed in the mass, and if you think that you need his sacrifice for you over and over, is to miss altogether, the finality of Christ work on the cross. You see Christ died once.

Oh do you see the beauty of what Christ has done? We are united with Christ, so that his death is our death to sin, his burial, our burial, his resurrection, is our resurrection, and it’s completed.

Now look at what he says in verse 11.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:11**...Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

When we get to verse 11, we see the first command in all of Romans. Did you know that? We have gone through almost 6 and a half chapters of this great Epistle, and we have not had a command at all. The first command we see is in verse 11. And I want you to see clearly the nature of Paul’s exhortation. You see,

you would expect that an exhortation at this point would be to do something but Paul's exhortation is not like that at all. His exhortation, his command is to know something. And he wants us to know two things. He wants us to know that we are dead to sin, and he wants us to know that we are alive to God.

We are dead to sin. However, we are not immune to sin or its temptation. To be dead to sin doesn't mean we will cease from sinning. It doesn't mean we are free from the presence of sin, it doesn't mean we are free from the influence of sin. No, it means we are dead to our old life, when we were connected to Adam. We are no longer under the dominion, or the reigning power of sin. Who we were in Adam is dead. Sin's penalty is dead, sin's dominion is dead. Paul is not saying here that we need to daily die to sin. He is saying our death to sin, has already been done, in Christ.

What Paul is saying, is that you are dead to sin, because of your union with Christ, now **count on it. Believe it. Reckon it to be true.**

As a matter of fact Paul uses a word here in Greek which is "*logizomai*" which is translated, "reckoned or consider". Paul uses that word throughout chapter 4, when speaking of being reckoned as righteous in the sight of God. Because of Christ work on our behalf, God has reckoned us righteous in his sight.

We are dead to sin, and now Paul says, "**reckon**" it to be true for you.

We are united to Christ like a bridegroom is united to his new bride. There is a new union, a new relationship, a new status, a new dominion, a new territory, a new way of life. We were buried with Christ. When Christ died, we died with

Him. When Christ rose, we rose with Him. Christ has joined Himself to us, and **Paul says, “Don’t you know now who you are?”**

Do you know that to be true? Do you believe it? Paul says, Brothers and Sisters, **believe it. Count on it.**

Then Paul says, if you know what you are, and you know who are, then “Don’t you know what you should do?” In other words, Paul has spent 6 and half chapters explaining what and who we are. He has spent many verses on the indicative, which means, what is true of us, before he ever gets to the imperative. Before Paul ever tells us to do anything he says, these things are true of you because of your union with Christ. You are dead to sin and alive to God, and before I tell you what to do, first, you must know this.

So now Paul says, in the light of knowing what you are and who you are, don’t you know what you should do?

Look at verses 12-14.

^{NAS} **Romans 6:12...**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

We are reminded time and time again, of what we are, and who we are in Christ, before we are told to do anything. Why? Because gratitude is the Biblical motivation for obedience. Knowing what we are and who we are in Christ is the key to the Christian life.

That's why Paul spends so much time talking about what and who we are in Christ, before he ever tells us to "do anything."

You see we really need to grasp, we really need to know, what we are and who we are in Christ. Brothers and sisters, do you know that you are dead to sin because of your union with Christ?

Thomas Carlyle had married his secretary, whom he dearly loved, but he was thoughtless and absorbed in his own interests and activities, treating his wife as if she were still his employee. Stricken with cancer she was confined to bed for a long time before she died. After her funeral, Carlyle went back to his empty house. Disconsolate and grieving deeply, he wandered around aimlessly downstairs, engrossed in thinking about the woman he had loved. After a while he went upstairs to her room and sat down in the chair beside the bed on which she had been lying for months. He realized with painful regret that he had not sat there very often during her long illness. He noticed her diary. While she was alive, he never would have read it, but now that she was gone he felt free to pick it up and thumb through its pages. One entry caught his eye: "Yesterday he spent an hour with me. And it was like being in heaven. I love him so much." He turned a few more pages and read, "I listened all day to hear his steps in the hallway. And now its late. I guess he won't come to see me." Carlyle read a few more entries and then threw the book on the floor and ran out into the rain back to the cemetery. He fell on his wife's grave in the mud, sobbing, "**If only I had known...if only I had known.**"⁵

Brothers and Sisters...

Don't you know what you are? You are dead to sin.

Why? Because of who you are.

Don't you know who you are?

You are united to Christ.

Do you believe it to be true?

The Apostle Paul says, **“No.”**

The Holy Spirit says to you this morning, **“Believe it, count on it to be true.”**

And as a result, **don’t we know what we should do.**

May all praise and glory be to Christ, who has accomplished all these things for us. May we respond in grateful obedience to Him first by thinking rightly about what He has done for us, and then by applying ourselves to live in light of that wonderful reality.

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, “All of Grace” from the Spurgeon CD Rom by Ages. Published October 7th, 1915.

² John Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News For the World*, (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 48-49.

³ Stott, 176.

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 139.

⁵ Clarence Macartney, *Macartney’s Illustrations*.