

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

Dr. Stephen Felker, Pastor

[Swift Creek Baptist Church.com](http://SwiftCreekBaptistChurch.com), 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834

8/3/08

Rom. 6:1-11 “The Christian and Sin”

Intro. This morning we begin a new section of the book of Romans. Up to this point Paul has presented his teachings about justification, or how to be right with God. We have seen the need for justification in chapters 1-3, the means of justification in chapters 3-4, and the blessings of justification in chapter 5. Now in chapters 6-8, Paul instructs us about the moral results of justification, or the doctrine of sanctification. Here he tells us the theological basis for living right with God. Furthermore, in the context we see that justification must precede sanctification. Before you can live the Christian life, you must *become* a Christian by faith. In other words: You do not live right to get saved, you get saved so you can live right.

At this point we will not talk about specific instructions about how a Christian is to live each day. That will come beginning in chap. 12. But for now we will learn how it is possible for a person to live the Christian life. Before you can do anything you must first learn how to do it. Three times, in vv.3, 6, & 9, Paul refers to certain truths that Christians should know. Knowing right doctrine is foundational to right living.

Let me illustrate this. Let's suppose I handed you a trombone and commanded you to play a song with beautiful tone quality and ability. The vast majority of you could not do it! First you must be alive and have the mental power to learn and strength to breathe & the lips for a good embouchure. Then in time, with enough practice, you could learn to play the trombone beautifully. In the same way, God does not simply command you to live the Christian life. First, He must save you and give you life. Then He will give you the understanding and the ability to obey Him. Then, in time, you can learn to obey Him consistently.

If you are not saved today because you just cannot see yourself living the Christian life, then I hope you will listen carefully. I will show you how you can indeed live the Christian life. If you are saved, I hope you will listen and learn how you can live right. First of all, I want to encourage you to:

I. REJECT A WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

Living the Christian life involves avoiding sin. We are to obey God, not sin. So in the first part of v.1 Paul asks, “Shall we continue in sin ...?” What does Paul mean by that statement? “Sin” (singular) refers to the sin nature of a person, & not just to acts of sin. Then “continue” is from a Greek word (*epimeno*) that can mean “to abide in someone's home as a guest” (Acts 10:48; 15:34; Acts 21:4; 21:10; 28:12, 14; 1 Cor. 16:7-8; etc.). It has in it the ideas of fellowship, of a friendly relationship. So to “continue in sin” is to gladly remain under its power & influence. In fact, back in 5:21 Paul described our condition before we were saved by saying, “sin reigned.” If you continue in sin, then it is pretty clear that sin continues to reign over you.

We have all experienced the controlling power of sin within us. Many who have become involved in immorality have a hard time stopping it. Those who lie have a hard time telling the truth. Quite a few have trouble controlling their bad temper, and they keep saying & doing things in anger that hurt them.

There are quite a few professing Christians who have continued in sin even though they claim to be Christians. There is little change in their lifestyle. They are all too happy to find an excuse for continuing in sin. In v.1 Paul refers to one common excuse for sin. He says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" We have to look in the context to see why Paul refers to this objection. One of the great statements of the grace of God is found in 5:20, "Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." The gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of grace. Salvation is a gift provided by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We do not earn forgiveness, but we are freely forgiven by our faith in Jesus Christ. But whenever Paul preached full and free salvation by grace alone, the reaction of the crowd was negative, even as it is today. The most common, and yet the most unfounded objection to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, is that it supposedly allows people to live in sin that grace may abound even more. The argument goes something like this: the more we sin, the more forgiveness we receive by God's grace. Therefore, let us sin that grace may abound, & God's grace be praised all the more.

Long ago Rasputin taught and exemplified the doctrine of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He held that, as those who sin most require most forgiveness, a sinner who continues to sin with abandon enjoys each time he repents, more of God's forgiving grace than any ordinary sinner.

Sinful man just loves such excuses for sin. Professing Christians who continue in sin do great harm to the cause of Christ. Opponents to the doctrine of salvation by free grace will always give examples of Christians "living in sin." People are indeed quick to spot the hypocrites among us. But shouldn't we also give attention to the lives that have been made pure by the gospel of the grace of Christ? Shall we stop preaching the grace of God just because some people pervert God's grace into an excuse for sin? No! The truth of God is a litmus paper which tests a man's heart. That is why we are to proclaim the truth in every place and to all men, without thought of its effect.

In light of v.1 I ask you, "Have you continued in sin after you became a Christian? Are you still under its control? If so, you need to make sure you are truly saved. Or perhaps you have just had a wrong & uninformed attitude toward sin. Should a Christian continue in sin that grace may abound? The answer is no. In fact, Paul's answer is an emotional one, "Certainly not!" or "May it never be!" There is something terrible wrong with a Christian who continues in sin in the way I have described. So instead of making excuses for sin, we should reject such a wrong attitude toward sin.

Now, beginning in v.2 we see that we should:

II. EMBRACE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

The first step in right action is right thinking. Here Paul gives several reasons why a Christian should not continue in sin. It is based on the true nature of a Christian (note "that" is *hoitenes*, "who are of such nature.") Paul is saying that anyone who argues like that shows that he has not begun to understand the true believer's relationship to sin, and to Christ. When you truly become a Christian, you become one with Christ in several ways:

A. We Have Died to Sin – Paul says in v.2 that we have "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Likewise, in v.6 Paul describes this saying our "old man was crucified." "Our old man" is the old self of ego, the unregenerate man in his entirety. Also, the tenses here for "died" &

“crucified” suggest that this took place at the moment of conversion. No man can crucify himself. This is something that God must do in you.

The fact of having died to sin is the fundamental premise of the apostle’s thought. A Christian living in sin is not merely an inconsistency, but a contradiction in terms. It is to speak of a live dead man or a good bad man. If a man lives in sin he is not a believer. The true believer does not want to go back into sin any more than Lazarus wanted to go back into the tomb dressed again in his grave clothes!

Notice the results of this death to sin: We are now free from the power of sin. Paul raises an important question in v.2, “How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Then Paul explains in vv.6-7 why the true believer no longer lives in sin, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin¹ might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” Death itself implies separation. When you die physically, your soul is separated from the body. When we die to sin, we are no longer bound to sin, but we have been set free from sin. God used His surgical knife to cut the believing sinner loose from his evil nature. Furthermore, the word translated “done away with” (*katargeo*) in v.6 means “rendered inactive, made of no effect.” The same Greek word is translated “released” in Romans 7:2. If a woman’s husband dies, she is “released” from her marriage vows and is free to marry again. There is a change in relationship. The law is still there, but it has no authority over the woman because her husband is dead.

In v.7 Paul gives an illustration of this freedom from sin. The decisive break with the reigning power of sin is viewed after the analogy of the kind of dismissal which a judge gives when an arraigned person is justified. Sin has no further claim upon the person who is thus vindicated.

The theological basis for our death & freedom from sin is found in what Christ did for us on the cross. Paul said in v.10, “For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all...” This does not mean that Christ was a sinner, & He died to sin like we must do. Rather, here we see that our Lord’s death not only paid the penalty of human sin, but it was used of God to break the power of indwelling sin in the believer’s life.

I want to illustrate the change in our relationship to sin that Christ has made possible. Imagine a unarmed American soldier standing helpless before a rifle aimed by the enemy. That was our position before Christ died for us. Our old man had the power and we were the prisoner. But when Christ died, the rifle was knocked from the hands of our captor. Now he must stand with *his* hands raised, while the rifle points at him. He will tell us that our rifle is not loaded, that the bayonet is only made of rubber. He will challenge us to lay it aside and fight him with judo, of which he is master. But when we realize that the weapon of triumph has been put into our hands, that our captor is now our prisoner, we can have practical victory over sin. [Barnhouse, p. 95].

So I want you to understand that as a Christian, you have died to sin, and sin no longer has power over you. Now you *can* resist temptation. You are no longer a servant of sin. You are free in Christ.

Death to sin is not the only reason we do not continue in sin the way we did before we became Christians. There is more. Being a Christian is not just a matter of saying “no” to sin. There is also a positive side to living the Christian life. So notice also:

¹ The expression “the body of sin” (genitive of possession) refers to the physical body possessed by or dominated and controlled by the sinful nature. The body is an integral part of a person’s being. Sin is a terrible master, and it finds a willing servant in the human body.

B. We Have Been Given a New Life – Paul said in the last of v.4, “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk [or live²] in newness of life.” The main theme of this section of Romans is that God wants His redeemed children to live resurrection lives now. People who are spiritually dead cannot live the Christian life. But those who have truly experienced new life in Christ can live the Christian life.

We need to understand that for the believer, the power of sin has been replaced by the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Now, through the power of our new life in Christ, we can conquer sin. The power of indwelling sin is great, but the resurrection power of Christ that dwells within us is greater! Based on v.10 I can say that just as Christ had the power to live for God, even so we have the power within to live for God. The transformation of the Christian from sin to a life of righteousness ought to be as dramatic as the transformation of Jesus from death to resurrection life!

How is all this possible? How can we be set free from sin’s power, and live for God by His resurrection power? It is possible for:

C. We Have Died to Sin & Are Alive to God Because We Have Been United with Christ - Paul shows that a believer’s continuance in sin is a moral impossibility, because justification involves union with Christ. In this passage of Scripture we are going to see that Paul refers to the believer’s union with Christ many times, in many different ways.

When a Christian woman marries she takes the name of her husband. Even so, when we are saved & baptized we take the name of the Lord Jesus. We are no longer Miss Worldling but Mrs. Christian. In marriage the Bible says that the two become one. Even so, when you repent of sin and trust Christ as Savior, you become one with Him. You are forever identified with Him, and are to honor His name.

The fact of our union with Christ in His death is stated & restated by Paul in 3 different verses. In v.6 he says, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him.” Then in v.8 he says, “Now if we died with Christ...” In v.4 he says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death...”

Paul gives a number of illustrations of this union. In vv.3-4a we see baptism used as an illustration. Paul says that the believer has been “baptized [or immersed] into Christ Jesus.” When you trust in Christ as Savior, you become one with Christ, and you become part of His Body, the Church. Paul is probably not speaking directly of water baptism here in v.3. However, baptism symbolizes our union with Christ. When you are baptized, we bury you in the water, symbolizing that you have died to sin. You have been buried with Christ in baptism. Our identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in His burial is a very important truth, for it teaches that our sins can never again be brought against us. By the way, have you been baptized?

We have also become united with Christ in His resurrection life. Paul says in v.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.” The physical aspect of the resurrection, namely, the glorification of our bodies, is not in the apostles’ mind here, for he is writing in a context of sanctification, not glorification. He is talking about the fact that when you become a Christian, you share in the resurrection life of Christ now. This is clear from what Paul says in the last of v.4, “just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” It is participation in the resurrection life of Christ here and now.

² “Walk” can be translated, “begin to walk” (ingressive aorist). The word is frequently used in the Bible to denote one’s conduct.

Do you remember the story of Martha, and what she said after her brother Lazarus died? When Jesus arrived on the scene she went out to meet Him. Then Jesus said to her in John 11:23, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha then said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” To which Jesus replied, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” Then Jesus proceeded to demonstrate His power to give resurrection life now in this life by raising Lazarus from the dead. Martha’s attitude is typical of millions of true believers. God had promised resurrection life and power for our activities in this present life. But we continue to regard triumph over sins as reserved for the future. Yet Paul shows that we can experience the power of Christ’s resurrection life now in this life! Of course, our future resurrection life is also assured. Paul said in v.8, “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”³

In v.5 we see another illustration of our union with Christ in His death & resurrection, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be⁴ in the likeness of His resurrection.” “United together” literally means “to grow or spring up together” (*phuo* “spring up” with the prefix *sun*, “with”). Paul sees our death & resurrection with Christ pictured by two plants springing up from the ground together. The word is also used of twins being born together.

On the coast of California there are great forests of redwoods, *sequoia sempervirens*, and the manner of their growth is unique. Two trees may grow year after year a few feet from each other. Finally, after fifty or a hundred years (as the tree rings prove), they touch, and the bark overlaps and fills out so that the two trees become one. Near Santa Cruz are two trees at an angle to each other. Contact between them has been made a hundred feet in the air, and from that point up they are one tree—a single top growing from two trunks. [Barnhouse, p. 86].

Even so, Paul speaks of a living, vital union of two individuals becoming one. Paul wants to emphasize how our lives are vitally linked with Christ’s life. Jesus Himself said in Jn. 14:19, “Because I live, you shall live also.” When you believe in Christ, you share in His resurrection life. What a profound thought!

So we have seen that because we have become a part of the body of Christ, we share in both His death & life. There are too many people who want to share in the life of Christ, but they do not want to share in His death to sin. The two must go together. How can you be united with Jesus, the holy Son of God, and continue in sin?

Now, with that understanding of our death to sin & resurrection life by virtue of our union with Christ, Paul presses home one primary application. Based on our union with Christ, we see in v.11 the truth that we should not only have the right attitude toward sin, but also:

III. TAKE THE RIGHT ACTION

I have already referred to the fact that 3 times in this text Paul refers to the fact that believers know or need to know the truths that I have just shared with you. It’s one thing to know something; it’s altogether a different matter to act upon it. So the big question now is, “How do I make this work in daily experience?” Well notice what Paul says in v.11, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It’s not enough for you to simply know that you are dead with Christ & alive with Christ. Paul says you

³ Though this is a future tense, even here Paul may have in mind our present resurrection life in union with Christ. Notice how the future tense is used in v.5.

⁴ “We shall be” in v.5 is not a predictive future so far as time is concerned, but that of a logical future.

must also “reckon” that these truths apply to you as a Christian. The word translated “reckon” (*logizomai*) means to “consider, acknowledge, take into account.” This does not mean to pretend to be, but to recognize or judge yourselves in fact dead to sin and alive to God. It is to act upon these truths. We are to live consistently with who we are in Christ.

After the Civil War a man went to Texas and settled on land which contained great gushers of oil; he died leaving a tremendous estate but no children and no will. His lawyer sent papers to a lawyer in New York, asking him to look up the next of kin of his wealthy client. It was discovered that he had a sister who had lived in Philadelphia and that she had died leaving only a grandson who turned out to be a beggar. The New York lawyer investigates and after considerable checking, he becomes convinced that the Philadelphia beggar is the rightful owner of the estate in Texas. This discovery is communicated to the attorney in Texas, who arranges for a considerable sum of money to be made available for the immediate use of the heir, who will eventually possess the entire estate. Suppose you walk down the street with the lawyer and watch the beggar. “That man,” says the lawyer, “is worth approximately thirty million dollars, and I have just deposited one million of it in the bank for immediate use.” The man certainly does not look like a millionaire nor act like one. His condition is that of a beggar, but his position that of a millionaire. You now approach and listen while the lawyer informs him of his new position and estate. All he needed to do was to believe the good news, act upon it by claiming his riches, and stop living like a beggar, and start living according to his riches. [Illustration from Barnhouse, p.115].

Even so, the Lord Jesus Christ has died on the cross and by His death has prepared for us wonderful spiritual riches, including power for living that can produce purity of life. So the next time you are tempted to sin, act upon the fact that you are dead to sin. Say to sin, “I am dead to sin; you have no power over me. I am alive in Christ & I have power over you.” But the devil doesn’t want you to know this truth, or live by this truth. He wants you to sin and then excuse it by saying, “I just couldn’t help myself.” So I call upon every believer here to stop making excuses about sin, and just obey God’s Word and consider yourself to be what God says you are in Christ: dead to sin, and alive to God. I also want you to have the attitude that you have died to sin regarding your desire. When sin tries to take you captive again through lust, remember that you died to sin when you placed your faith in Jesus as your Savior. You should respond to lust the way a dead man responds!

Conclusion: The vast majority in my audience today would say that you are a Christian. Take a look at your life. Are you continuing to live in sin? Does sin continue to reign over you? Are you making excuses for continuing in sin? If so, it may mean that you have never truly been born again. You need to repent of sin and trust in Christ as your Savior. He can not only forgive you, but He can also set you free from sin. You can’t live right in the eyes of God until you become a Christian.

On the other hand, if you have continued in sin, it may mean that you just haven’t learned what Christ has done for you when you became one with Him. You have died to sin. Now you are free from its control. You are also alive in Christ. The power of His resurrection life is now available to you. Now it is time to translate that knowledge into action and *live* like a Christian. Consider yourself dead to sin & alive to God. Claim what you have in Christ. As Paul says in v.12, don’t “let sin reign in your mortal body.”

Sources: Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Expositions of Bible Doctrines Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959); F.F. Bruce, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); Bruce Corley & Curtis Vaughan, *Romans: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Stephen Felker, [*Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible*](#)

(Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2008; Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950 reprint); John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Right: Romans* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Romans (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

© Dr. Stephen Felker. These notes may be used and even shared for personal study or ministry, but not for commercial purposes. The author credits the sources listed above and footnotes for much of the content. Since Dr. Felker's sermons are generally preached without notes, the "live" recording of this sermon will be more completely in the author's own words. To obtain an audio recording of this message, you may send \$2 for each CD ordered, plus \$2 shipping & handling for each order mailed in. Up to 2 messages come on each CD. Make checks payable to Swift Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Colonial Heights, VA 23834. His email address is S+Felker+2@aol.com (remove + signs).