

Now Free from Sin

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- [0 : 00] It comes from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 6. How can we live in it any longer?
- Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
- For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him, so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.
- Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again.
- Death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God.
- [1 : 44] In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its evil desires.
- Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.
- For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. Thanks be to God for his words. Well thanks Jack for reading, let me add my welcome to Tim.
- My name is Andrew, I'm one of the ministry trainees here at the church. It will be a great help to us all if you keep your Bibles open, it's at page 1132 of the church Bibles.
- And you'll find an outline of where we're going this evening in the service sheet that you should have been handed on your way in. Hopefully that will be of use to you. Let's seek the Lord's help together now and pray as we open his word.
- [3 : 02] Heavenly Father we praise you for the death and resurrection of your son the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the good news that it brings. So we pray that as we come before your word now, you'd open our hearts, open our eyes, to see afresh or for the very first time, the good news of Easter, and the life-changing implications it holds for all who turn to Christ.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, hope. We've heard a lot about it already tonight. But if we went round the room asking, what is Easter all about?
- I guess that many of us would say that it's about hope. It'd be the main answer by a country mile. Hope not as a possibility, but as an expectation that is certain to come true.
- It's certain to pass because of who God is and what he has done. Pushed further perhaps to say, well, what is it that you are hoping in or hoping for?
- I wonder what it is that you would say. Many of us would say that it's hope for life after death. Hope that Christ will return and usher in the new creation.

- [4 : 19] Hope that one day I'll be reunited with someone I lost, who I really miss. Hope that one day there'll be no more pain, tears, or suffering. They are all true things.
- They are all wonderful truths. But they're all future-orientated. Hope in what is to come. They're precious things. But what about the here and now?
- What difference does Easter make to the rest of our lives on earth? Well, what Paul says to the church in Rome in his letter says that this fundamentally changes who they are and who we are.
- And specifically this evening in this section, he says it permanently changes how we relate to sin. At the end of chapter 5, just before our passage, he's shown how God's grace, that is God's free gift of salvation to his undeserving people, abounds all the more as sin piles up throughout history, as it piles up in our own lives, how God's grace expands and abounds.
- Sin, the rejection of God's authority over his creation, of how he designed us and wants us to live. And sin has permeated all of humanity, but God's grace abounds to cover all of the sin of those who accept his Savior.
- [5 : 47] And in response to that, Paul starts our passage this evening by tackling what could wrongly be taken from that. Verse 1, What shall we say then?
- Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? What kind of response should we have to the immense grace of God in the death and resurrection of Christ?
- Well, our first point then, Christ's death is our death. That's verses 1 to 4. Shall we stay as we are?
- Shall we go on sinning so that God's grace may abound more? Like, surely more grace is better. So why not carry on? Why not carry on in sin and rebellion and just wait for Jesus to come back and sort it all out for us?
- I've heard many people say very similar things. One of my friends at school just couldn't understand how Christianity was anything other than a free pass to do whatever I wanted and then seek forgiveness after I'd had my fun.
- [6 : 50] He just didn't get it. Or as the poet W.H. Oldenboot in the 20th century, I like committing crimes and God likes forgiving them.
- Really, the world is quite admirably arranged. I like committing crimes and God likes forgiving them. Really, the world is quite admirably arranged.
- I.e., why change? This seems to be a good situation. But Paul is clear that God's abundant grace is not a free pass to go on in sin.
- That's cheap grace. He slams that potential false teaching with a characteristic by no means. Such teaching makes no sense for Christ's death is our death.
- For Luke at verse 2 with me, we are those who have died to sin. How can we live in it any longer? As Christians, we have died to sin.
- [7 : 52] Sin no longer has a hold on our lives that we cannot shake. And since we've died to sin, how can we still live in it? Why would we still live in it as if it has that hold, that power, that control on our lives?
- It's no longer who we are. We are no longer sinners in the eyes of God. So we shouldn't act like it. Living as if sin still controls us is like a dog who goes back to its own vomit.
- But Paul continues, verse 3, or don't you know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? When you become a Christian, you are united with Christ.

You're united in his death. Baptism here is not so much the act of baptizing someone, but what happens when you become a believer, when you become a friend of Jesus, you die to self and become alive in God.

Through Christ. We really do die with Christ, even buried with him, verse 4. His death is our death. Our union with him means his death to sin is our death to sin.

[9 : 08] As Christ paid the price of sin that is death, as he hung on that cross at Calvary, he broke the power of sin. All that's rested on humanity since Adam, that power of sin, the control on human lives, that hold has been broken, and Christ broke it.

And we are united to him in order that, verse 4, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

He was raised, and we who are united to him live a new life as we await our own resurrection.

Christ's death is our death. How important is Easter? How important is Christ's death and resurrection that we celebrate?

Well, ultimately, it solves our biggest problem in life. By God's grace, he's given us a way to break free from the hold of sin through Christ.

[10 : 16] And it means that we can be so thankful to God for his abundant grace. Whatever is happening in life, whatever we're dealing with, the problems we face, the struggles we're going through, struggles when we encounter sin, we can sing, sin's curse has lost its grip on me, for I am his, and he is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ.

We are dead to sin. It's our state. It's our status. And that brings real, meaningful freedom. Our second point, Christ's freedom is our freedom.

Verses 5 to 11. Paul goes on to show the Romans how they can live that new life. Well, Christians can live a new life because of the freedom that is found in Christ, the freedom that Christ won.

Freedom from sin, and freedom from death. We don't have to attain it. We just embrace it. Freedom that's achieved by Jesus' death and resurrection.

And Paul has real certainty in that. Verse 5, For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

[11 : 39] The resurrection is not some far-off idea or vague possibility. It's a certain hope of what will come to pass. We are fully united to Christ.

We share in his death. We share in his resurrection. But it's not just hope for the future. In verses 6 and 7, Paul shows how Christ intrinsically changes our relationship to sin as we live on this world in the here and now.

Being crucified with him, verse 6, rids us of our old self that was ruled by sin. Unable to break free of the rule of sin over our lives, that old self has been done away with.

It's gone. That means that we are no longer slaves to sin, no longer stuck obeying its call to rebel against God's design, suppressing truth, denying what has been made plain by God throughout creation.

Through our death with Christ, we're set free from sin's hold. It's not that we can break free. Paul says we are free, free is our state, free is our standing.

[12 : 57] Perhaps it's helpful to think of it like this. You might remember the TV game show Hole in the Wall. It should have a photo coming up here on the screen. Well, Hole in the Wall is a game show where celebrities try to get through differently shaped holes on the wall that is moving between them, moving towards them.

And if they fail, they end up in the water. Different walls keep coming, and they have to keep changing shape to avoid being hit. And perhaps, before Christ, battling sin was like trying to twist and turn and leap and jump through impossibly shaped holes to avoid being hit by that wall of temptation and pushed into the deep dwelling of sin.

Not an occasional sin, but being ruled by it in your life. It's like being there and playing Hole in the Wall, but with a treadmill and weights on your back. So if you fall into the water, you're not going to get back out.

It's a battle that we'd always lose. We might make the first one or two walls and get through them, but we'll soon tire and get smacked down into sin, into the rule of sin over our lives.

And then, however much we try, we couldn't get back out of that. Maybe, actually, that sounds how you relate to sin right now. But being in Christ means that whatever wall of temptation is thrown at us, Christ stands in front of us, and he makes that hole.

[14 : 31] Because we're united with him, there is no temptation that can overcome him. And so sin does not rule our lives. If we stand united to him, which we are, we're safe.

We only fall, we only get hit by temptation into sin if we stop trusting that Christ is more powerful than sin, that Christ is more powerful than that temptation, that Christ cannot keep us safe.

And when we do that, well, Christ reaches out and helps us out of that deep pool of sin and brings us back on our feet and welcomes us back into his arms.

The game has fundamentally changed for Christians. It would be a rubbish TV show. No one would watch it. For those united in Christ, which is all Christians, sin does not rule.

It doesn't rule our lives. When it comes to sin, we're free from its power. Whatever shapes it throws up, we have the power of Christ to reject that wall, to stand behind Christ and to trust in him and say, no, I am dead to sin and alive in Christ.

[15 : 50] In Christ, sin cannot and will not have mastery over us. As it once did, Christ's death to sin is our death to sin and Christ's freedom is our freedom.

And in some ways, we live in quite a nihilistic culture where our way of dealing with evil, of sadness, of hurt is actually just to shrug our shoulders and go, well, sadly, that's the way that it is.

Saying almost that boys will be boys approach but to wider life, saying nobody's perfect, this is the way the world works. It's just the world we live in. There's nothing that we can do about it.

And sometimes that thinking seeps into the church. Sometimes it seeps into our own lives and we mustn't let it because then the seriousness of sin is downplayed.

We go, it's just the way the world is until Christ returns. We mustn't let a, oh well, these things happen. There's nothing we can do about it. Mind set, mind set, slip in.

[16 : 55] because we are united to Christ and we have been set free from that. The Roman church faced lots of pressures to amalgamate with Roman culture and normalize the prevalent sins of the day to think that this isn't a big deal, we'll just deal with what we're facing in our culture, fit in a little more and wait for Christ to get back.

But Paul wanted them, Paul needed them to know that in Christ they are equipped to stay faithful, to stay firm, united to him and we need, I need to remember that so much and freedom from death.

Paul really piles up the dead in a live language from verse 8 to 11. Just look at verse 8 with me. Now if we died with Christ we believe that we will also live with him.

For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again, death no longer has mastery over him. Death tried to hold him under his chains but Jesus burst them wide open and he rose again.

As he stirred in the tomb, as he walked out he proclaimed victory over death, freedom from death. In Paul's words, death no longer has mastery over him and since we share in his freedoms, death no longer has power over us.

[18 : 27] We're united in a resurrection like his. And death confronts everybody in life. Many of us just in the last few weeks in the last year have been confronted with the reality of death in a very visible and personal way.

Many of us are mourning the loss of people we miss dearly and it hurts. That is the reality of living in this world. It's a power of life that we all have to face.

But Christ's resurrection radically transforms how we face death. Because of Christ we are free from the mastery of death and though we die as Christians we live in Christ.

We believe we have certainty that we'll stand again with those who have gone before us. We have real hope and while death still hurts we can cling on to the coming moment when Christ returns and we'll be united in Christ with all those Christians that we've lost.

And it will be cute. Verse 10 three lives three dies look at it with me. The death he died he died to sin once for all but the life he lives he lives to God in the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[19 : 56] Christ died to sin and lives for God united to him he has paid the wages for our sin that is death so that we too may be alive and may live for God and so we too are dead to sin but alive to God able to serve him able to please him as we were made to do but if you've not yet trusted in Jesus and accepted God's gift of free grace in the death and resurrection of Christ what will you do about death?

It comes to us all at some point and the point that it's here it's too late to do anything about it Jesus' resurrection is only good news for those who put their trust in him there will come a day when Christ returns to judge the living and the dead for what they've done and only those who have been set free from sin who have died to sin will be safe and brought into the resurrection and new creation to live with him forever Christ's freedom is freedom for all who turn to him acknowledging their need to be saved from the hold of sin if you've never done that for yourself before why not ask the person who brought you or myself or somebody else who's here tonight what that might look like investigate more as Tim said well if there's the hope then you've got to investigate it and after you've received

Christ's freedom received God's grace how do we respond do we go on sinning so that grace may abound well by no means no instead we offer our lives to God in worship and service of him our third point in view of what we've seen our life is God's life verses 12 to 14 having been given the free gift of a new life where sin no longer has hold on us the proper response is to give our whole lives to God Paul lands a big therefore at the start of verse 12 as he moves from stating the reality of all those in Christ to encouraging the right response in his readers or in other words from all of the glorious truths that he has just laid out he now tells us how we ought to respond because Christ's death is our death and his freedoms are our freedoms our life in response is

God's life look at it with me at verse 12 therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires don't live as if nothing has changed don't live as if sin still has mastery over you the game has changed we don't need to earn it we can just embrace it we can absolutely smash it away now one of the tensions that we feel in this passage that we feel in our lives of being a redeemed human is that sin gloriously has no hold over us but at the same time it's yet to be removed from our mortal bodies Paul speaks much much more about that in chapter 7 I would encourage you to read what he has to say there but here he's clear that the only way sin rules over us has that hold on our lives is if we choose to let it if we step out from behind

Christ Tim opened this evening by asking what difference does Easter make tomorrow morning well it's earth shattering it's life changing everything we do must be done in light of what Christ did on resurrection Sunday read verse 13 with me do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument for wickedness but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness the contrast is clear you can offer yourself to sin or to God our lives can be instruments of wickedness or instruments of righteousness and God calls for every part of ourselves to be offered to him all we do all we say all our time energy possessions all our lives offered to him for his righteous purposes what difference does

[24 : 51] Easter make on Monday well it changes who we are and who are what we serve verse 14 as Paul concludes this section for sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law but under grace we are under grace not sin and so our response is not to kick back boot our feet up as if nothing has changed but to embrace Christ's freedoms that are ours to embrace being under God's grace and in response say God I give my life to you so let me ask you what is!

are you offering all of your life to God's or are there parts where you live as if sin still has its hold on you as if you don't have a way of breaking free as if it still has mastery do do you believe that you have been set free from sin the gospel is that we are free from the rule of sin in the here and the now and I know I need to remember that in every single day and believe that I have been equipped with everything that I need to live for God there's not a battle that we need to win it's just a battle that we need to finish and united in Christ we have all that we need and so on Monday morning or Tuesday if you get the bank holiday when you're back at work and you feel the usual temptations to join in the gossip starring about one of your colleagues and the temptation is to join in and to be like them we have the freedom to reject that and instead live being under grace that while we may still struggle with that and sometimes we know that we are not bound by it we have freedom in

Christ to reject it Easter is not just hope in death it's hope in life too or when sin comes calling seeking to reign over our body late at night and the temptation is there once again to indulge in its evil desires and its twisting of God's good design for sex and relationships because we live under grace with the help of the Lord we can choose to offer ourselves to God instead there's nothing inevitable for us about falling into sin because we are free from it or perhaps there's another sin that you've been battling for a long time and it just keeps coming back what would it look like to remind yourself of the truths we've looked at tonight that you are free in the face of temptation when you stand united to Christ maybe that would be to repeat verse 7 to yourself as often as you need to what would it look to plaster these truths across our lives so that we could never just think that we're not free from this but that we would actively be living for

God whatever situation we find ourselves in knowing we're united to Christ in his death and that his freedom is our freedom means we can live as who we are dead to sin alive in Christ and when we succumb to sin we know that God's grace abounds all the more so that we can come back to him and find forgiveness and cling once again to Christ we're not under the law that demands a payment for sin we're under grace that says your sin has been paid for go and serve the Lord and so now we'll praise God that Jesus rose on Easter Sunday so that we can be dead to sin and able to give our lives to God let's pray and then we'll sing heavenly father we praise and thank you for the immense grace you've shown us in the giving of your only son to die on the cross for our sins and to rise again thank you that you've saved us from the rule of sin and given us freedom so that we may love and serve you and so we pray that by your power you'd help us to offer every part of our lives to you in humble worship and service in light of all that

Christ has done for us impress in us the real wonder and difference it makes to be dead to sin and alive to you in Christ's name we pray amen well if I can invite you to stand we'll sing